

**AN EVALUATION OF THE EXISTING PRACTICE OF PRIMARY  
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN:  
ENSURING THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
CURRENT REFORM OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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## SYNOPSIS

In 1998 the current reform of the General Education System (GES) started in Oman. Redefining the existing or finding a suitable new school leadership model has become important to enable Omani primary headteachers to redefine and transform the existing practice of school leadership and to implement and integrate the new educational and leadership tasks which were introduced by the current reform.

Studies indicate that educational reforms generally require a powerful mechanism to get things done. Thus, Omani educators (policy makers and headteachers) face a challenge in redefining the present model or choosing a suitable new one. One of the two is, however, urgently required to reform the practice of school leadership in Omani primary schools. Therefore, this research focuses on both redefining and transforming the existing practice and implementing the new tasks (in possibly a new form) of school leadership. This research focuses mainly on three major themes, as follows:

- (1) The historical background which underlies primary school leadership in Oman.
- (2) The current practice of primary school leadership.
- (3) Redefining the existing school leadership model or choosing a new one to develop more effective primary school leadership and ensure the success of the current development of the GES in Oman.

Therefore, this research project concentrates on an examination and evaluation of the current practice of primary school management and leadership in the country's primary schools. Furthermore, this research evaluates the practice of leadership in schools by collecting the necessary data (in a subjective approach) and by using a specially constructed scale (in an objective approach) based on transactional and transformational theories of school leadership. This provides a way of assessing to what extent the current practice of primary school leadership is effective or not in terms of these theories. Overall, this research seeks to ensure the successful and effective implementation of the current reform of the GES.

**SPEECH BY HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID TO THE OMANI  
PEOPLE:**

*“I will proceed as quickly as possible to transform your life into a prosperous one with a bright future. Every one of you must play his part towards this goal”.*

*(MI, 1995, p. 11)*

## DECLARATION

*This work which is submitted in this thesis has been entirely developed and investigated by the researcher. Any other material, whether quotations, adaptations or references are marked and noted.*

*Harith Nasser Said AlHinai*

## DEDICATION

*The researcher dedicates his work to the Omani Educational Leaders, scholars who enriched the Omani heritage of knowledge including 'Leadership in Education', and advanced it to the 21st Century to be received by the new generation of Omani children.*

*Harith Nasser Said AlHinai*

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Special thanks to the interviewees of this research who have contributed essential points during both the pilot study and the main fieldwork; this represents both the officials (policy makers and administrative officials) and the practitioners (Omani and expatriate primary headteachers).

The deep appreciation of the researcher goes to his academic supervisor, Dr. Desmond Rutherford, who has provided major comments and given his precious time in commenting, advising, supervising and directing the ideas as well as discussing in depth every part of the procedure on this research project.

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## KEYNOTES

**AlBatinah North:** The biggest region of Oman in population to be included in the targeted region of this research project, it is located on the coast of the Gulf of Oman to the north of the capital city, Muscat.

**AlBatinah South:** One of the targeted regions of this research project, located to the north east of the capital city, Muscat.

**AlDakhiliah:** The interior region of Oman, one of the targeted regions of this research project.

All the **quoted and cited references** are included in the reference section, including the references for the appendices, apart from those for the conference papers, which are added at the end of each paper. This is for the sake of ease of reference in both the thesis and its appendices.

*AlShura* is a traditional school leadership model from Oman, meaning ‘consulting and sharing responsibilities with others’. It is unique to Omani society. It can be said that *AlShura* is known intuitively – based on experience and intuition, but not generally thought through in a rational, transparent way. It is not explicit, but implicit, not analysed, not written down, and has no detailed guidelines. Also, it can be said that *AlShura* is unspoken but is nonetheless understood by Omani headteachers.

**Arabic names** are written as they are pronounced, because there are no standard ways of writing these names. They are, therefore, written so as to reproduce as closely as possible the English way of pronouncing the original Arabic (including authors’ names).

**Each respondent** is indicated by using one of the numbers from 1 to 82 (the actual population number for this research project). After each number at the end of a response there is a dot followed by another number, for example (1.10). Number one here indicates the respondent’s number; whereas number ten indicates the number of his/her response. In other words, respondents may have contributed by providing more than one response during the interview; for example, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3; hence, all the responses numbered 1 come from the same interviewee.

**Key Research Questions** are those which are considered the major questions of the research (they are also represent the aims of the research); however, there are also **Methodological Questions** which were prepared to underpin the major questions and to

be asked in the interviews.

**Muscat:** The capital city of the Sultanate of Oman, which is also a targeted region of this research project.

**Officials:** The policy makers of the Ministry of Education, either in the central office (the Ministry) or in the Omani regions, e.g. Directors General.

**Practitioners:** The practitioners who were involved in contributing to this research project, including official or acting headteachers, whether male or female.

**Spaces between the two parts of Arabic surnames/words:** The researcher has preferred to leave no space and add no hyphen between the two parts of an Arabic surname/word (e.g. Al-Hinai is here written AlHinai or Al-Shura is written AlShura), keeping the two parts of the surname/word together. Thus, the two parts of the surname/word are shown distinctively by the initial capital. In addition, ‘AlHinai’ can be written in block capitals like this: ALHINAI, if applicable.

The **quotations** may be recognised through being printed in *italics, in single spacing statement and indented*. Similarly, English quotations which are found in the middle of the text are also written in *italics* but they are clearly indicated between quotation marks. However, sometimes the researcher **cites ideas** drawn from books and articles in both Arabic and English; these are printed in *italics*.

The term ‘**model school/s**’, meaning ‘**reformed schools**’ is used by the researcher in order to make a distinction between the existing and the reformed schools. Also, ‘model schools’ can refer to the first phase of the new system, the Basic Education System.

The term **school leaders** is meant to refer, according to the focus of this research, only to Omani primary headteachers, unless, the term clearly includes other school leaders such as deputy headteachers and senior teachers, as it sometimes does.

The titles of **Arabic references** are written so as to reproduce the Arabic by transliteration, e.g. [AlNuttq AlSs’ami] (see MI, 1995a).

**Transactional** school leadership is a model which deals with maintenance and day-to-day school crises; this model is complementary to the transformational school leadership.

**Transformational** school leadership is a model which deals with educational change and innovations.



## ABBREVIATIONS

**BELMAS:** British Educational Leadership, Management & Administration Society.

**BES:** the Basic Education System, the new system introduced by the current educational reform in Oman. In some ways it is assumed to be replacing the existing system, the General Education System.

**CDP:** Committee of Documentation and Publishing in the Omani Ministry of Education.

**CEs:** Colleges of Education (third group of educational organisations for training teachers in Oman).

**DDGs:** Director Deputy Generals.

**DGs:** Directors General.

**EFAC:** the Educational Foundations and Administration Course which is taught at the College of Education, Sohar City, Oman.

**ESMs:** Educational Supervision Managers.

**GES:** the General Education System is the existing educational system in the state of Oman. Within this system, the researcher conducted his research project, in particular, within its primary schools.

**GESG:** (the General Education System Guide), the old guide of the existing educational system.

**ICs:** Intermediate Colleges (second group of educational organisations for training teachers in Oman), now described as Colleges of Education.

**ID:** The Intermediate Diploma which was awarded by the ICs in Oman.

**ME:** Ministry of Education.

**MI:** Ministry of Information.

**MSG:** (the Model School Guide), the guide to the new educational system (BES) of the current reform of the GES.

**OMDO:** Oman Daily Observer.

**OMNP:** Oman Newspaper.

**SAD:** the School Administration Diploma, a programme which qualifies graduates as school leaders offered by the Sultan Qaboos University, Oman.

**SQU:** Sultan Qaboos University (the first university which was built in Oman, offering first and post-graduate degrees).

**T&T Model:** The transactional/transformational (T&T) school leadership model, which is drawn from both these school leadership models in combination for the purpose of the analytical and theoretical framework of this research.

**TTA:** Teacher Training Agency.

**TTI:** Teacher Training Institute (the first educational organisation for training teachers in Oman).

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## **PHASE ONE: SETTING THE SCENE**

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## **Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

*When the term evaluation research is used, it means using research procedures for the process of evaluation, that is, collecting data and making decisions (value judgements) about some educational program, policy, phenomenon, or the like. (Wiersma, 1995, p. 428)*

This research focuses on an evaluation of the existing practice of primary school leadership in Oman', i.e. those schools which are following the General Education System (GES). Indeed, this research can be considered a complementary research project to that which was conducted by AlHammami (1999)<sup>1</sup>.

This research topic has become the concern of the researcher for a variety of reasons, because it is relevant to his specialist subject field which requires him to conduct this kind of research and because he holds the post of assistant lecturer, training teachers in the Educational Foundations and Administration Course (EFAC) at the College of Education (CE), the Ministry of Higher Education, in Sohar City, Oman, his home country. Therefore, it has encouraged him to study in depth a topic relevant to his specialist subject field. It is important to study the current situation of the Omani educational system so as to provide the up-to-date information on the school leadership required for redefining practice and ensuring effective and efficient implementation of the new developments of school management and leadership. Also, this topic may provide useful information for Omani educational leaders, as policy makers - the officials in the Ministry of Education, and as practitioners - school leaders including headteachers. It is hoped, in addition, that this research will form a resource for the CE's lecturers who prepare student teachers to teach in the Ministry of Education's schools, to be used either as a reference or as a textbook related to the curricula of 'Educational Administration'. Furthermore, this research may contribute to the study of the practice of educational leadership, particularly within the existing system in Omani primary schools, the

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<sup>1</sup> AlHammami's research project evaluates the need for the current educational reform in Oman. This reform was planned to develop the existing system, the GES, or even to replace it. His research addresses questions of why and what to reform (these two questions lead to the question of how to reform – which becomes the concern of the present research). In addition, he includes the new developmental areas in Omani education, such as the development of the school curriculum. He focuses on the educational system in general; however, the present research, precisely, focuses on the evaluation of the existing practice of primary school leadership within the GES itself. The link here between AlHammami's research and the present work is that both evaluate major components; the reform of the GES and the primary school leadership within the GES. Therefore this research can be considered a complement to AlHammami's in being a study which serves the current educational development of the GES in Oman.

GES.

During the Easter vacation, April 1999, in a pilot study the importance of the selected research topic was discussed with Omani colleagues and officials and the researcher collected positive comments on it. His colleagues' reactions helped him to become more familiar with the needs of his research topic and to focus on a narrow area related to the practice of primary school leadership in Oman, run within the GES. Furthermore, from the Ministry of Education he learned about the perspectives of the Omani educational leaders - Directorates General in regions and in schools, and received comments from nine primary headteachers. He assessed the importance of the research topic and learned more about researching the subject and relating it to his previous experience, as well as to the Ministry's purpose of developing school leadership within the GES.

Furthermore, during the pilot study, the researcher was convinced by the official letter he received from the Ministry of Education that his research should be conducted within the existing primary schools in order to benefit both them and the developmental process of the GES (see the officials' agreement, Letter 5, p. 287), rather than within schools which were being reorganised in the new system of education in Oman, known as the model schools of the current reform (Basic Education Schools). The following section gives an overview of the developmental process of the current reform of the GES.

### **THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM (GES) IN OMAN**

In September 1998 the Ministry of Education started the model schools of the current reform programme, the Basic Education System (BES) programme, which was initiated within *17 schools in all regions*; for instance, in the academic year 1998/99, the AlBatinah North region started with two model schools (AlBelushi and AlKitani, 1997).

Furthermore, developing the GES has been taken in two directions. First, new schools have been built (fully equipped) or the old ones refurbished in order to comply with the implementation of the 'model school' (BES school). The second direction is that new tasks of school leadership have been introduced progressively within the GES primary schools. For example, in addition to the existing school responsibilities, the Ministry of Education has started to give the GES primary schools new responsibilities according to the requirements of the current educational reform, such as administrative supervision and implementing senior teachers' positions (AlHinai, 2000, see Figure 1, p. 5). AlBelushi and AlKitani (1997) state the following:

*The Government suggested recommendations to the Ministry of Education and the result of that was Vision 2020, which included goals to be met by the Ministry of Education. (p. 111)*

The continuing process of developing the GES requires new enhanced leadership tasks within the existing schools and at the same time the implementation of these new tasks within the 'model schools' of the current reform of the GES. These 'model schools' are attempting to implement a new curriculum, with a new name, the BES, which is planned to replace the GES at the end of the current project of the educational reform (see Figure 1, p. 5).

The Ministry's vision and mission for improving and transforming the primary school leadership practices are summed up in the following statements:

1. *Seeking for a suitable form of [leadership in] education which would secure [the implementation of the current reform of the General Education System]. (ME, 1997, p. 9)*
2. *... the needed educational development ... mainly [deals] with [raising] the standard of achievement, enhancing the practices [of primary school leadership] and widening the educational spectrum so that there would be [room] for contemporary thoughts, innovations and developed performance to secure the safe implementation which fulfils the [Ministry's] hopes and helps [it] develop[s] the human resources in [primary schools]. (ME, 1997, p. 5)*
3. *... the Ministry has given all the components of the education process [including school leadership] due care and consideration, in both ... its quantitative and qualitative aspects ... which gives more care [to] the quality of education rather than the quantity. (ME, 1997, p. 6)*
4. *... the planning for developing education was characterised by far-sightedness, and care given to it was comprehensively considering [the successful practice of primary school leadership in Omani schools]. (ME, 1997, p. 3)*
5. *The proper implementation will never be acquired unless a clear-cut educational strategy is applied in the field through a well-planned educational system with: a proper structure, well-established hierarchy, well calculated [costs] and adequate financial allocations. (ME, 1997, p. 4)*
6. *[Integrating an] innovative development of the [primary school] curricula so as to cope with the scientific and technological trends, [e.g.] by reinforcing the experimental teaching and learning. (ME, 1997, p. 9)*
7. *The Ministry [of Education] has a comprehensive plan to modernise the education system to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. (MI, 1998, p. 198)*

Figure 1 also includes initiative resources as well as the scope of redefining and transforming, improving and thus developing the existing practice of primary school leadership and the new developments of the current reform of the GES (see below).

**Figure 1- The process of developing the GES in Oman**

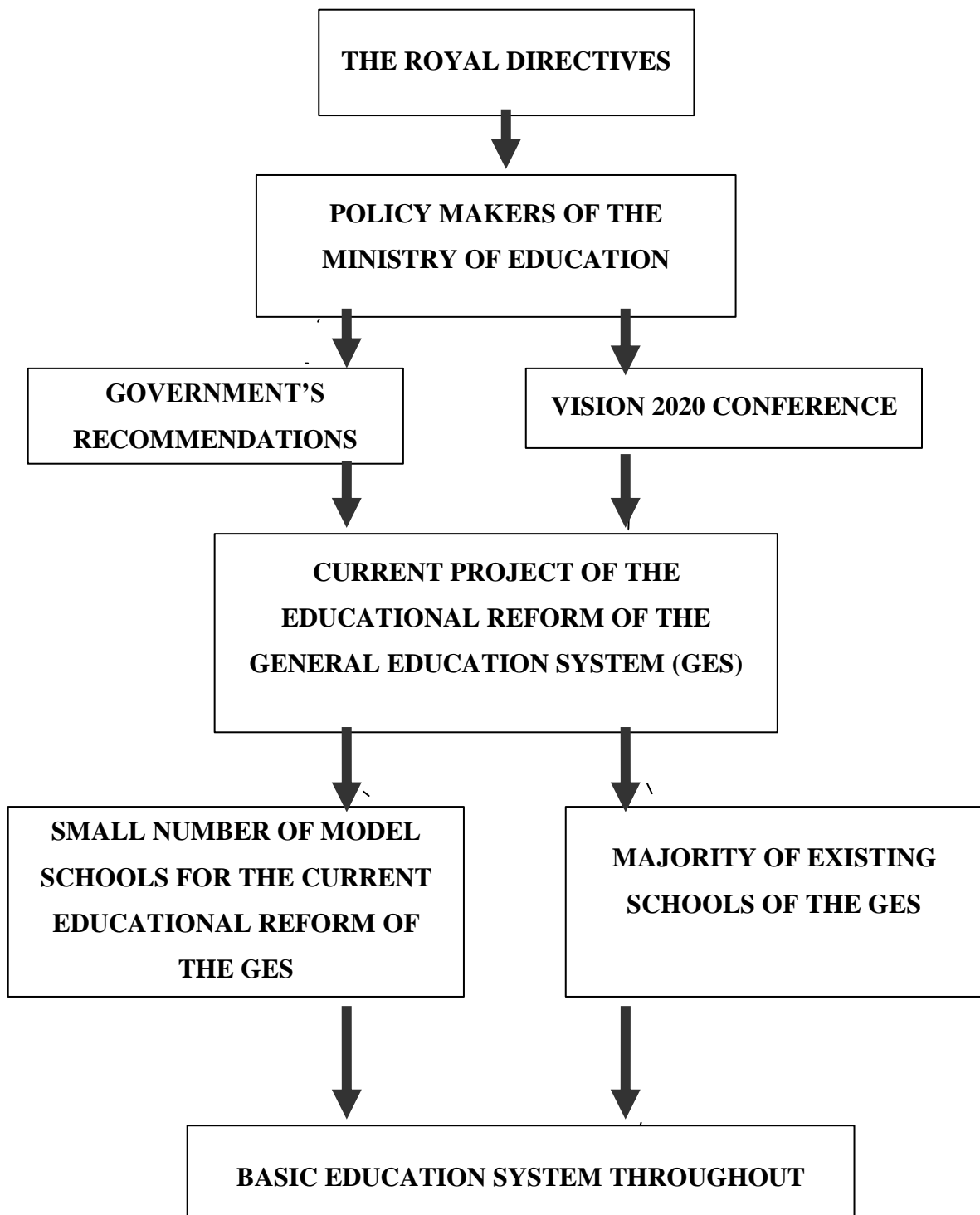


Figure 1 is modified and adopted from the researcher's paper which was presented at BELMAS Conference 2000 (AlHinai, 2000, p. 3) and also based on collected information from other sources: ME, 1997, p. 2; AlBelushi and AlKitani, 1997, p. 111; AlHinai, 1997, p. 203; AlHammami, 1999, p. 162. Figure 1 also indicates the process of the current educational reform in Oman, which is based on a number of sources in order to rest on solid information. Since 1998, educational experts have been observing the whole process of the current educational reform of the GES in order to provide efficient feedback.



In connection with both the existing practice of primary school leadership and the current reform of the GES, the following section will highlight a proposed research project through which the researcher would play his own part towards the goal of *building a bright future for Oman* (MI, 1995) by contributing to the current educational developments.

### **THE PROPOSED RESEARCH**

The development of the research proposal for this project was determined progressively, from selecting a topic related to the researcher's role (assistant-lecturer in a College of Education) to the perceived need for a study of primary school leadership in Oman. Therefore, it was essential for the researcher to select an appropriate area for his study, i.e. primary school leadership. However, the crucial reason in selecting the precise topic for the research was to produce a thesis which would be of value to Omani educational leaders, including primary school leaders. Fortunately, at the time (1998) the Ministry of Education was just starting to implement new leadership tasks at the primary school level as part of its educational development plan. The idea of developing the GES has helped the researcher to decide on this research topic, which is 'An Evaluation of the Existing Practice of Primary School Leadership in Oman'. Research into educational leadership is, of course, very broad, and there are many approaches to the study of leadership. Consequently, the researcher narrowed the area of his research topic to one confined within two particular theoretical frameworks, i.e. those of Transactional and Transformational Leadership (see Table 4, p. 55).

Also, the study will consider the ideological background of Omani educational leadership, as well as current developments in the Omani educational system.

The researcher considers five key research questions to be central to his research problem. These questions formulate the main outlines of the research problem and constitute a framework for the research, which includes three distinctive areas, as follows:

- The ideological background (question 1: What is the history and what are the values which underpin primary school leadership in Oman?);
- The practice (question 2: What is the practice of primary school leadership which is currently employed in Omani schools that are implementing the General Education System (GES)? question 3: Does the practice of primary school leadership within the GES place enough emphasis on both achieving tasks and supporting staff who are implementing the GES? And question 4: What practice (model) of school leadership is needed to transform the existing practice and to implement the new leadership tasks which are introduced by the current reform of the GES in Oman?);
- An approach (transactional/transformational) to school leadership in terms of redefining and transforming, improving and developing it (question 5: What is the relevance of

Transactional and Transformational leadership theories and other approaches to developing more effective primary school leadership and ensuring the success of the current development of the GES in Oman?).

These key research questions indicate the boundaries of this research project which were conducted within the current schools of the GES (for further detail about the Key Research Questions, see Table 5, p. 67).

In conclusion, the proposed research reflected fundamental points which are crucial for both the researcher and Omani society. For the researcher, who had already gained some experience of school leadership in Oman, it was a chance to broaden his knowledge from an advantageous position. For Omani society, the study promised to examine the current practice of primary school leadership in Oman and to provide positive criticism and comment for Omani leaders to take into account. Also, it is, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the first research project which has dealt with this topic of primary school leadership in the current development of the education system, the GES. In connection with the proposed research project, the following section will address the problem of this research.

#### **STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The researcher decided to study the existing practice of primary school leadership within the current development of the Omani education system in order primarily to evaluate and assess the impact of the recent educational reform and development in Oman and, in particular, its implications for primary school leadership. The research will study leadership practice in the existing primary schools, in order to make recommendations for the training of school leaders, in particular, headteachers, to enable them to meet the new challenges of school leadership more effectively. In other words, its concern will be to examine the impact of leadership upon the roles of school leaders, their responsibilities and performance in state schools, above all to raise pupils' achievement. The Ministry of Education (1997) reports that:

*... the Ministry has started [its educational reform] in the light of the Royal directives of His Majesty the Sultan to study the different modern educational systems with a view to derive and frame a suitable educational curriculum that complies with the Omani educational philosophy, which in its turn is deduced from the True Islamic Teachings, the cultural heritage and traditions and values of Omani society. (ME, 1997, pp. 2 & 19)*

This quotation offers an effective starting point for the research questions. Having realised at the beginning of 1998 that an educational reform had been planned and was now under way, the researcher thought it would be useful to examine the existing practice of primary school management and leadership as the reform proceeded in order to suggest

positive comments for productive improvements.

In addition, this study will assess both the positive and negative aspects of leadership as practised in Omani primary schools. It is hypothesised that effective practice in leadership will secure the successful implementation of the recent educational development of the GES, including redefining the current practice of headteachers. The research will review a range of approaches to leadership in meeting the needs of teachers and in improving pupils' achievement.

The research will focus on effective leadership values and practices in primary education, (Grades 1-6 of school levels; pupils' ages 6-12), in order to secure better school and classroom management and better learning.

The researcher expects that the study will indicate how primary school leadership can deal with problems of school management. Again, the research will study current leadership practices in depth, and will discuss whether they need to be updated and adapted during the process of the development of the Omani education system. In particular, the practices will be examined to evaluate whether they help school headteachers to become *effective leaders* (Hoyle et al. 1985).

In addition, this research will study the current values and practice of educational leadership in Omani primary schools, and bring out the reasons to develop more effective practice in the leadership/management of Omani primary schools. It will clarify what primary headteachers need to prepare them for becoming 'school leaders'.

On the basis of the precise nature of educational leadership as currently followed in Omani primary schools, the study will examine how leadership approaches derived from an extensive survey of the literature can best be adapted, and then implemented in programmes for the preparation of school leaders who would do more than merely implement the directives from the Ministry.

In connection with the research problem, the researcher asked for officials' and headteachers' perspectives, in order to feel convinced of the importance of conducting research on such topic. The following section provides more details about the urgency of such research.

### **CHECKING THE NECESSITY OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC**

The researcher was advised to discuss the topic of this research with colleagues and officials in Oman. He visited several locations in order to meet colleagues and officials e.g. in the Ministry of Education and schools. Most of them were familiar with the area of the topic and they encouraged him to take specific further steps in starting the research. They mentioned that the results of this research would be a good resource for Omani educational

leaders, because of its concern about the way in which the existing practice of primary school leadership could be developed in order to match the current development of the General Education System (GES). Also, because this research was going to study the practice of male and female school headship, including roles, responsibilities, and regulations which exist in the school environment of the GES, it would look at the educational situation from a fresh point of view.

During the pilot study the researcher collected related documents about the existing and reformed schools, e.g. “The GES Guide” and “The Address of H.E. Sayyed Saud bin Ibrahim AlBusaidi, the Minister of Education: Before *Majlis AlShura*” (Consultative Council). These documents are essential and helped the researcher to understand the existing practice of school leadership and the new developments in education, providing him with much needed information on the process of the development.

During the summer vacation, 1999, the researcher also visited the main library of the Sultan Qaboos University and collected relevant documents on the subject of Omani school management and administration. These documents offered further evidence, as they contained useful information related to the practice of educational leadership in Omani primary schools. For example, most of the literature review will be linked to the updated documents relevant to primary school leadership, whether conducted in Oman or elsewhere.

In conclusion, the researcher was persuaded to take further steps in his research, because the Ministry of Education gave him permission to do so (see Letter 5, p. 287. According to the officials’ perspectives, research of this kind is needed to raise useful questions which would contribute to improving the existing practice of primary school leaders. More information about the selected research topic is given in the following section.

### **SELECTING THE RESEARCH TOPIC**

The selection of a suitable research topic for the thesis was essential not only to the researcher, but also to both the Omani male and female school leaders and indeed to Omani society. The Ministry’s new programme is planned to develop the General Education System (GES) and gradually to replace it with the new system of the reformed schools by 2020 (AlHammami, 1999, see also Figure 1, p. 5). With this in mind, the Ministry of Education started the current reform of the GES in the academic year 1998/99 (ME, 1998; MI, 1998).

The developmental programme introduces new ideas to redefine and support the GES, including primary school leadership responsibilities. The Ministry of Education (1997) points out that:

*The development plan pays great attention to [the] development of school management .... (ME, 1997, p. 29)*

From this point of view, the researcher was curious to examine the practice of primary school leadership within the GES and see how it could be developed to meet the Ministry's expectations for running both the existing system, the GES, and also the new model of the reformed schools.

As stated above, the focus of this research is to examine the practice of primary school leaders within the existing primary schools of the GES (taking pupils from six to twelve years old). This will require an examination of the practice, and this will enable the researcher to tell whether the development of the GES is secured by running schools under an effective form of school leadership which takes more than an administrative or management approach. Similarly, the researcher brings together evidence on whether Omani headteachers practise their style of school leadership within the existing boundaries or the new developmental boundaries of the GES.

In conclusion, it is hoped that Omani primary headteachers currently run their schools according to models of effective leadership, but this will be examined in this study. From this point of view, this research will evaluate the practice of current school leadership to judge the extent of its effectiveness. This is done in order to ensure the successful implementation of the current development within the GES at primary school level.

Thus, this research project will, it is hoped, serve the Ministry of Education by investigating a major priority of the current development of education in Oman, namely, 'developing the GES, including primary school leadership'. The current reform of education was set up in 1998 as a continuation of the education system at the time which had extended from 1970 until that date (MI, 1998; AlBelushi, 1997; AlHinai, 2000). The following section provides a chronological structure of the thesis.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis is divided into ten chapters, covering five major phases (areas). The first phase includes setting the scene; the second phase is the literature review and the selected theoretical framework for this research project. The third phase is the research methodology and methods in both the pilot study and the fieldwork. Next, the fourth phase introduces the collected data and the research findings drawn from the discussion of the two major targeted groups of the research population: officials of the Ministry of Education and primary school headteachers. The results of this research project are included in the fifth phase of this thesis, which discusses the research findings and offers conclusions and recommendations.

To be precise, the researcher has tried to make a thorough evaluation of the existing practices in Oman's primary schools. According to Southworth and Conner (1999), there are four questions which are simple in structure, but complicated in implementation. These

questions are as follows:

- *What do we need to look at?*
- *Where are we now?*
- *Where do we want to be?*
- *How do we get there? (p. 2)* (see also Wallace and Pocklington, 2002)

The researcher has tried to consider answers for the above questions within the ten chapters of this thesis, each phase of which generally includes complementary chapters as applicable.

In more detail, the first phase of this research covers two chapters: Chapter 1 which gives information about the proposed research, its topic and some clarification of the background to the statement of the research problem; and Chapter 2 which gives some information about the Sultanate of Oman, including its people and the ideological background of the educational leadership in Oman.

The second phase also includes two chapters: Chapter 3 which focuses on definitions of school leadership and school leaders, a review of the available studies of primary school leadership (i.e. background of primary school leadership institutions; current studies of primary school leadership practices; theories and models of school leadership). It includes also Chapter 4 which focuses on the theoretical research framework and its critiques; two related school leadership models (the transactional and transformational); the strengths and weaknesses of the transactional and the transformational leadership models; assessment factors, desirable attitudes for school leaders; and, finally, factors in the attitudes of transformational leaders (characteristics). These two leadership models will be used to underpin the scaling and measurement for the practical activities of leadership in Omani schools by matching them to the characteristics of transactional and transformational leadership theories.

The third phase of research is covered in Chapter 5, which also deals with the experiences and reflections gained from conducting the research, such as considering officials' perspectives. In addition, there is an explanation of the general paradigms used in this research project, including the socio-anthropological and eclectic paradigms (qualitative and quantitative approaches), identifying the research problem and its aims and the collection and analysis of the data.

The fourth phase introduces the collected data in three chapters. Chapter 6 covers an analysis of the first theme, exploring primary school leadership, and its sub-themes, culture and values. Chapter 7 analyses the second theme, perceptions of practice, together with its

sub-themes, conflicts and successes. Chapter 8 analyses the third theme: redefining and transforming, improving and developing the practices of primary school leadership in Oman.

The fifth phase of this thesis focuses on discussing the findings on the basis of the three previous chapters. In other words, Chapter 9 focuses on a discussion and assessment of the findings which bring in the three themes and related sub-themes of this research project mentioned in the above paragraph. This phase also focuses on reporting and evaluating the results of the thesis. Finally, Chapter 10 includes research conclusions and recommendations. This chapter also highlights major and complementary contributions as well as major and complementary recommendations to the research project as a whole.

At the end of the thesis, appendices and references will be included. The twelve appendices are divided into six main parts according to the topics of this research. The first part includes the field materials of the research project (Appendix 1); the second includes documents collected from the Ministry of Education and its Directorates General (Appendix 2 to Appendix 6); the third introduces samples of assessment for the factors of the research findings and samples of interviews (i.e. assessment Resource Tables which are based on the scale factors of the transactional and the transformational models (T&T Model) associated with Table 4, p. 55 (Appendix 7, p. 323); also a translated transcript of an interview conducted with an official and one of another which was conducted with a headteacher. These are in Appendix 8, p. 326 and a sample of the 'Evaluation Form for Headteacher's Performance' (EFHP) is shown in Appendix 9, p. 344. The fourth part includes papers presented at conferences (i.e. the Muscat International and three BELMAS Annual Conferences, four presented papers altogether, which appear in Appendix 10, p. 351). The fifth part includes a statement of the responsibilities of the headteacher in Omani primary schools, including the responsibilities of deputy headteacher and senior teacher, seen as complementary to those of the headteacher (Appendix 11, p. 392). Finally, the sixth part highlights some relevant issues about the educational system and school leadership history in Oman (Appendix 12, p. 395).

## **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER ONE**

This chapter covers initial topics as an introduction to the research project. These topics open the door to the rest of the thesis by introducing each chapter in brief in order to give an initial idea of its contents. The link between the first and the second chapters is that they provide information about the history of school management and leadership, in particular that based on the GES. Hence, the following chapter will introduce a historical view of Oman's educational leadership, tracing its history from the year 1914 to 2000.

## **Chapter 2 - THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

### **IN OMAN**

#### **THE SULTANATE OF OMAN**

Oman has a very long history; the AIOzd tribe created the name of 'Oman' at the beginning of the fourth century AD; therefore, the name of 'Oman' can be found even before it became a Muslim country. In addition, its name is based on the Arabic history of the AIOzd people (AlQaisi, 1980; AlKharusi, 1995; Ghubash, 1997).

Oman occupies the south-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula and has 1,700 km of coastline. Its land area is about 309,500 sq. km and it "*is located between latitudes 16 40' and 26 20' North and longitudes 51 50' and 59 40' East*" (MI, 2000, p. 21). Therefore, it is considered a warm country; hence, it is also considered the land of palm trees. 10 million date palms are found in Oman, which produce about 175,000 tonnes of good quality dates annually (MI, 2000; ME, 1999).

According to the Ministry of Information (2000), oil is a major economic resource for the country; "*Oman's oil production in 1999 from over one hundred fields averaged around 900,000 barrels a day*" (p. 90). There are also other economic resources for the country such as natural gas and industrial resources.

In conclusion, Oman is considered a wealthy country; its economic resources could promote it to the level of the developed countries. However, its people should be valued for the way in which they improved and developed the early educational system and the primary school leadership of Oman. The following section provides some information about the people of Oman.

#### **PEOPLE OF OMAN**

The native Omanis are *Arab*, the majority belonging to the tribe of AIOzd. However, minorities from other backgrounds can also be found as residents in Oman; for example, *Indians* (AlHammami, 1999).

Since 1970, when the current Sultan, Qaboos, took over the country, the people of Oman have been provided with free education and health services, as it is the major concern of the government to serve the people. The government also considers *employing Omanis to be its main priority*. The first person to choose should be Omani, so long as he/she can meet the job requirements; for instance, by an appropriate qualification. This covers both government and



private sectors, e.g. education, communications and transport (MI, 2000a).

In conclusion, most of the people of Oman showed independence in educating themselves; therefore, the Omani educationalists surely are willing to foster the current developments in education as that they did for the past eight decades. However, they were much more deeply involved in the last three decades. The following section addresses school developments, briefly between 630 AD and 1914 and covers in more details the period between 1914 and 1999. The development of school management and leadership of the GES is divided into four major stages. They are covered in the following section.

## **IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

### **Philosophy of primary school leadership**

In order to understand educational leadership in Oman, the historical background of Oman's educational system should first be outlined. The roots of education are linked to two main cultural components: *the Arabic and Islamic cultures*. Omani society, before it became Islamic, was genuinely Arabic (Ghubash, 1997; Obaidali, 1984; AlQaisi, 1980; AlSalmi, undated).

In 630 AD, *the sixth year of the Hegira Calendar*, the Prophet Mohammed sent his representatives, Amr-bin-Elass and Abu-Zaid AlAnssari to Oman; they handed a letter from the Prophet to the Omani leaders (kings) Abid and Jayfer. The Prophet invited the Omani leaders to embrace Islam and *they welcomed the Prophet's invitation* (MI, 2000; Ghubash, 1997; AlMarhubi, 1994; Kashif, 1994). Thus, Islam became the official religion in Oman (see Appendix 12, p. 395). Hence, Omanis regard the Prophet as their first leader, in religious, political and social matters, including obviously educational leadership. He was the leader in influencing morals and values.

The Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions became the main sources of Omani educational foundations. Thus, *the Omanis adapted the Qur'anic teachings for every educational need*, such as concepts, knowledge, beliefs and theoretical and practical activities (AlSalmi, 1989; AlKhalily, 1989).

In this regard, the philosophy of the Ministry of Education reflects its Islamic traditions in the direction of the current development (reform) in education. The Ministry of Education states the following:

*[The Ministry's] expectations for such developments would be greater during the [21<sup>st</sup>] century ... in order to prepare [the] citizen[s] in a global integrated manner that would enable [them] to face the different and rapid scientific developments of today's world ... to study the different modern educational systems with a view to deriv[ing] and fram[ing] a suitable educational curriculum that complies with the Omani educational philosophy, which in its turn is deduced from the true Islamic Teachings, the cultural heritage and traditions and values of the Omani society.*

(ME, 1997, pp. 1 & 2)

It seems here that the Omani government, which is represented by the Ministry of Education, is here merging two concepts in one for the purpose of the educational reform. The traditional and the modern educational concepts are being merged in order to transform and enhance the practices of primary school leadership according to today's educational requirements. Combining the two concepts also allows the government to raise the standard of primary school leadership as well as of teaching and learning.

In connection with the educational philosophy in Oman, this research will investigate the proposed *Omani government's vision and mission* as regards school leadership (ME, 1997; AlHammami; 1999). The following section will discuss the historical stages relevant to the development of primary school leadership within the General Education System (GES) in Oman. They are as follows:

### **The development of primary school leadership within the GES**

#### ***Stage 1 - Overview of the establishment of primary schools in the GES: 1914 - 1969***

In 1914, the first foundation elementary school of the General Education System (GES) was established; however, it looked like a traditional (Qur'anic) school, for example, (1) in its classroom arrangements, teaching all the pupils in one room, (2) teaching all pupils the same thing, despite their learning levels and their ages, (3) in its curriculum, which was the same as that of the Qur'anic school. Going further, this school which was established in 1914, could be considered the first school of the GES, perhaps, because (1) it had the first expatriate teacher, called Mohammed AbuDhaynah, who was employed by the government to teach and manage this school (whereas the Qur'anic school never employed an expatriate teacher), (2) *it was funded by the government*, whereas the Qur'anic schools were funded privately (ME, 1971). Mohammed AbuDhaynah was expected to bring new educational concepts which would distinguish this school from traditional ones (see Table 1, p. 16). Later on, the school became known as the 'AbuDhaynah School'.

Again, the first GES school *ran a similar system to the Qur'anic Education System* (QES), because this school had only one big room and taught boys and girls at the same time, like the QES schools (AlDhahab, 1987). There was a further similarity in its providing a weekly holiday, namely on Fridays. Thus, there were no major differences in schools during the period from 1914 to 1930 (see below Table 1, rows 1 and 2). AlDhahab (1987) reports that:

*In 1914, during the reign of Sultan Taymur bin Feisal, the government rented a huge Arab house in Muscat for use as a school ... The school day was divided into six classes, four held in the morning and two in the afternoon, except on Thursday, when there were classes only in the morning. Friday was a holiday. (p. 100)*

The above account is also supported by AlSalmi's research (1994). AlDhahab (1987) and AlSalmi (1994) write in more detail about the development of education in Oman between 1914 and 1970.

The traditional (Qur'anic) system existed in Oman for more than thirteen hundred years, from 630 to 1970, and is still found in more specialised organisations, serving the people of Oman and saving many of them from illiteracy.

**Table 1 - Development of school management within the General Education System (GES) in Oman: 1914 - 1970**

Rows	Schools	Establishment Dates	Nationality of Headteachers
1.	AbuDhaynah	1914 - 1930	Expatriates
2.	AlSultaniah First	1930 - 1935	Expatriates
3.	AlSultaniah Second	1935 - 1940	Omanis
4.	AlSaidiah - Salalah	1937 - still running	Expatriates & Omanis
5.	AlSaidiah - Muscat	1940 - still running	Expatriates
6.	AlSaidiah - Mutrah	1959 - still running	Expatriates
<b>Columns</b>	<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>

Table 1 combines information collected from different sources, that is, Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, 1985, pp. 45-92; AlDhahab, 1987, pp. 99-109; AlSalmi, 1994, pp. 100-107 and AlHammami, 1999, pp. 95-98. It indicates that the first school of the General Education System (GES) had several names as it developed, such as AbuDhaynah (the name of the school commemorating the name of the first expatriate teacher) which then changed into AlSultaniah First and AlSultaniah Second (this name is connected to the royal family or the Sultan). The AbuDhaynah School (row 1) served the children of the royal family. The three early (elementary foundation) schools which were established between 1914 and 1940 (rows 1-3) were replaced by the last three (advanced foundation) schools which were established between 1937 and 1951 (shaded rows 4-6) which were established up to 1970, the beginning of the Omani national renaissance. Indeed, those three schools introduced the first elements of school management and leadership within the GES. In this regard, Omani headteachers ran two schools throughout the period 1930 to 1970 as GES schools (rows 3 and 4, column 3).

In addition, *by the summer of 1970 there were three primary schools of the GES in Oman* ((AlDhahab, 1987; MI, 1998); at the same time there were hundreds of *traditional* (Qur'anic) schools spread all over Oman (AlSalmi, 1994, see also Appendix 12, p. 395). Table 1 provides a managerial view of the stages of the GES schools.

In addition, AlDhahab (1987) claims that the AbuDhaynah School was the first government school established according to the GES. As discussed above, this school was meant to be different from traditional ones (Qur'anic schools). However, the idea was not yet

clear enough to develop; for example, the number of classrooms and their arrangements and a different school curriculum from the Qur'anic one. Hence, the school curriculum included five major components: Holy Qur'an, Arabic, History, Geography and Mathematics (this curriculum was not in fact much different from the traditional school curriculum). Moreover, the AbuDhaynah school can be considered the first elementary school of the GES in its approach to the school curriculum, the school day and the fact that the building was rented by the government for an educational purpose (see Table 1, p. 16, row 1, Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, 1985). However, as discussed above, this school followed the traditional pattern of gathering the pupils in one large room; therefore, its leadership was in the hands of one person, playing the roles of both teacher and headteacher (this is typically Qur'anic, see also Appendix 12, p. 395). Further evidence that AbuDhaynah School was the first school in the GES is that it taught mathematics, which was not one of the subjects which appears to have been taught in basic Qur'anic schools.

The idea of the GES school took at least twenty-one years to become fully accepted in Omani society under continued governmental encouragement for the developing educational system. This was evident in 1930 in the teaching of English in AlSultaniah Second, perhaps for the first time in Oman. Of course, English was added to those subjects taught at AbuDhaynah and AlSultaniah First (AlSultaniah First school was more or less similar to AbuDhaynah, except for using another building; hence there was a greater difference between the first two schools and the third one (AlSultaniah Second, see Table 1, p. 16, rows 1-3) in terms of teaching English in the third school of the GES which can be seen as the opening of a door to outside knowledge for Omani pupils, indicating a crucial step in terms of connecting Oman to the wider world. Also, it was an essential step at that time for both officials (policy makers) and headteachers (practitioners). It should be said that at this stage the first formal school management was born, since there were headteachers assigned for both AlSultaniah First (the first official expatriate headteacher, called Ismaeil Khalil AlRussasi) and AlSultaniah Second (the first official Omani headteacher, called Hilal bin Mohammed bin Said AlbuSaidi) (see Table 1, rows 2 and 3). In fact, these two headteachers were considered the first school leaders within the GES.

In addition, there were three Omani headteachers in the history of the GES (including the one mentioned above) as it developed between 1935 and 1969, before the national Omani renaissance in 1970. there were at this stage three primary schools already running under the GES (MI, 1998): AlSaidiah in Slalah, AlSaidiah in Muscat and AlSaidiah in Mutrah. There were operating in 1970 under the GES (only one school of these three was managed by an Omani headteacher at that time, see Table 1, rows 4-6).

To explain further, the first three schools which were established in 1914, 1930 and 1935 (AbuDhaynah, AlSultaniah First and AlSultaniah Second) can be considered the foundation elementary schools of the GES in Oman (see Table 1, p. 16, rows 1-3). Again, the first government school at primary level in the whole of Oman was established in 1914 under the name of AbuDhaynah (Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, 1985; AlDhahab, 1987; AlSalmi, 1994).

In addition, the last three schools which replaced the previous ones (established in 1937, AlSaidiah - Salalah; 1940, AlSaidiah - Muscat and in 1959 AlSaidiah - Mutrah, see Table 1, rows 4-6), should be considered the advanced foundation schools of the GES.

For further explanation, as discussed above, AbuDhaynah School is considered the first school established under the GES (AlSalmi, 1994; AlDhahab, 1987). But AlSaidiah in Muscat was considered the first school to be properly established under the GES; the difference being that AlSaidiah in Muscat was the first school which was equipped properly according to the GES requirements (ME, 1975; AlSalmi, 1994).

### ***Stage 2 - Overview of the first decade of the educational renaissance: 1970 - 1979***

The national Omani renaissance in 1970 covered most areas of life, including education. The new government decided to put more emphasis on developing both the General Education System (GES) and the Qur'anic Education System (QES). The development plan of the GES has been pursued vigorously during the past three decades up to 2000. This research will trace the development of school management within these thirty years of the Omani renaissance.

This period brought a new educational concept which would develop the existing system of General Education, because it included all the subjects needed to build a modern school curriculum. Several subjects were taught within the GES, namely, Islamic Education, Arabic, English, Social Studies, Science, Maths, Physical Education and Art. These subjects were required for both the primary level (6-12 years) and the preparatory (13-15 years). Afterwards, the curriculum was extended to include the secondary level with other subjects required at this level, such as Physics, Chemistry and Algebra.

Furthermore, in 1970 the Omani government represented by the Ministry of Education decided to redefine and spread the GES all over the country in various stages and this has taken thirty years so far.

At the beginning of the first year of the Omani renaissance, many Omani teachers and headteachers were employed; however, they were qualified only to teach in Qur'anic schools or were less qualified than today's conditions would require. The current sultan, Qaboos, led the educational reforms in 1970. Sultan Qaboos called for a wide-ranging revolution in order

to transform Oman into *a modern country* (MI, 1998; MI, 2000). His goals were that the *country's infrastructure* should be built up as a matter of urgency: a developed education system, sufficient health services for citizens and expatriates, roads (especially motorways connecting major cities, as well as neighbouring countries), electricity and communications (MI, 1998).

Thus, in connection with educational development, and in the light of the royal directives, the Omani educators, including policy-makers (officials) and primary headteachers (practitioners) were stimulated to put all their efforts into meeting educational goals as soon as possible. Indeed, the royal directives led both groups (officials and practitioners) to implement targeted plans and projects as rapidly as possible. For example, the number of primary schools rose sharply (see Table 2, p. 20, rows 1-6, column 2). As discussed above, in summer 1970 there were only *three schools with 909 pupils* altogether under the existing system, the GES (MI, 1998; Beauclerk, 1980), but at the end of the academic year 1970/71, there were *sixteen primary schools with 6,856 pupils* (see Table 2, see also ME, 1971).

The Ministry of Education found itself facing a great challenge in catering for all the Omani children of school age (6-12 years) as well as creating programmes for adult education in order to replace illiteracy. Thirty classrooms were equipped for adult education in *March, 1972* (ME, 1971). The responsibility was great; however, this problem began gradually to be solved within the first decade of the Omani renaissance.

Indeed, the headteachers' responsibility became more complicated as the rate of growth of schools and pupils increased. Table 2 (below) indicates examples of the growth in education from 1970 to the year 2000.

In connection with the growth in numbers of schools and pupils, the number of headteachers of course rose year by year, as the number of the schools rose. Indeed, the first decade of the Omani renaissance witnessed an extremely rapid growth in school management. Therefore, there were many expatriate headteachers who came to work in Oman from neighbouring and other Arab countries in order to fulfil the development requirements in education, including school headship requirements. Of course, the first decade concentrated on primary education as the basis of more advanced work; hence, the primary headteachers played a major role during the second stage of the educational development under the GES. However, the third stage of the educational development would concentrate, to some extent, on higher school levels, e.g. preparatory school level.

### ***Stage 3 - Overview of the second decade of the educational renaissance: 1980 - 1989***

One of the government's targets was that the country should be transformed into a modern state; this meant equipping the country with major items of infrastructure in order to

be able to implement the projects needed for further development in all spheres of life, e.g. the current reform of the General Education System (GES) which was due to start in 1998. For instance, in order to implement this educational reform, the Ministry of Education would have to provide school buildings, human resources, sufficient equipment and a sufficient budget.

In the third stage of the development of the GES (the second decade of the Omani renaissance) the number of primary schools grew considerably between 1985 and 1990 (see Table 2, above, rows 5 & 6, column 2). This meant that the greatest number of headteachers, as well as school administrators, was required for this period (between developmental stages 3 and 4).

**Table 2 - The growth of GES primary schools in Oman**

The Developmental Stages of the GES	Rows	Academic years	Numbers of Primary Schools	Numbers of Pupils
Stage 1 (1914 – 1969)	1.	1969/70	3	909
Stage 2 (1970 – 1979)	2.	1970/71	16	6856
	3.	1975/76	181	54457
Stage 3 (1980 – 1989)	4.	1980/81	175	91652
	5.	1985/86	326	155389
Stage 4 (1990 – 1999)	6.	1990/91	386	258390
	7.	1999/00	219	279791
Columns		1.	2.	3.

Table 2 illustrates the educational and managerial development of primary schools within the General Education System (GES). Also, it indicates examples of the developmental stages of the system from 1914 to 1999. These examples highlight the differences between one stage and another in terms of the growing numbers of schools and pupils. In addition, the indicated numbers for both schools and pupils indicate the developmental growth in this area; for example, at the end of the first stage and the beginning of the following stage. However, the indicated number of primary schools at the end of the fourth stage declined from the numbers at the beginning. This indicates that some primary schools were promoted to preparatory school level as well as being changed to model schools of the current reform (as Basic Education Schools, see the differences between school numbers in column 2, rows 6 and 7). The growth in numbers certainly indicates the need for headteachers and school administrators (assistants) who could run the primary schools, a need which varied from one academic year to another. This also shows that the responsibilities of primary schools, including those of headteachers, were growing rapidly, in particular between 1976 and 1990 (see Table 2 above). This table combines information from different sources: MI, 2000, p. 110; ME, 1999, pp. 42, 44 & 62; MI, 1998, p. 198; AlSalmi, 1994, pp. 109 - 109B; Allawati, 1992, p. 5; ME, 1990, p. 53; ME, 1985, p. 37; ME, 1980, pp. 8 & 29; ME, 1975,

In conclusion, the past two decades of the Omani renaissance are considered the basis of the Omani educational reform; hence, the following decade (the fourth stage of educational development, between 1990 and 1999) may be considered a golden age in terms of establishing educational reforms which would serve the country and prepare primary schools, including their headteachers, for the new challenges expected at the beginning of the new millennium.

#### ***Stage 4 - Overview of the third decade of the educational renaissance: 1990 - 1999***

The fourth stage of the educational development within the General Education System (GES) witnessed well-planned and more advanced projects. The government, studying the progress of education from 1914 onwards, could see what would be needed for the future. For example, the current reform of the GES in Oman which has been *in progress since 1998* (MI, 1998; AlHammami, 1999; ECS, 1995a; AlHinai, 2000) would attempt to improve primary school leadership. The Ministry of Education (1997) states that considerable attention is being paid to upgrading the quality of primary school management and leadership, as confirmed by the following statement:

*... administrative staff were given a great deal of consideration so that the whole system would serve and provide the sustainable educational services needed. (ME, 1997, p. 4)*

Also, the Ministry has promised to provide the headteachers with enough training courses to prepare them to face the new challenges of the reform. AlHammami (1999) states that a major concern of the current reform is to provide “*intensive in-service training for ... headteachers [and] administrators*” (p. 162).

Again, the current Sultan, who began to reign on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1970, aimed at spreading education in all the regions of Oman under the GES. Hence, the Ministry of Education invited many expatriate headteachers from neighbouring countries to run primary schools. However, this changed gradually throughout the 1980s and 1990s when the Ministry of Education established the School Administration Course (SAC) to qualify nominated teachers to become headteachers and deputy headteachers. In 1995 the Ministry provided *a one-year programme*, a Diploma of School Administration from the Sultan Qaboos University (AlHammami, 1999; AlGhafri, 1996). This diploma is considered to be a major component in the process of the current development of primary school leadership within the GES. It covers *the organisation of schools, the management of human resources, the control of educational budgets, the raising of standards in teaching and learning* and so on (SQU, 1999).

Since 1970, the educational system has been continuously developed on the basis of the



GES. The third stage of the development was in the 1980s when the Ministry of Education adapted the '*Semester System*', which has been implemented at the preparatory and secondary school levels.

The fourth stage of the development was continued in 1998 when the Ministry of Education began its new reform of the GES. The main difference between the GES and the modified school system (model school) is that the GES provides six years at primary school level, three years at the preparatory level and three years at the secondary level whereas the 'model school' system offers *ten years of basic education* including Stage One and Two, and two years at secondary level (ME, 1999).

Furthermore, the fourth stage of the GES development requires, for example, the creation of new administrative posts to support school management and thus enable primary headteachers to become effective leaders. The current reform is planned to redefine, transform or, perhaps, to replace the GES by stages until 2020. AlBelushi and AlKitani (1997) state that:

*The Government suggested recommendations to the Ministry of Education and the result of that was Vision 2020, which included goals to be met by the Ministry of Education. (p. 111)*

Therefore, the Ministry of Education worked out its educational goals immediately in the light of the suggested recommendations by the government and through the Oman 2020 Conference. AlHammami points out that:

*The framework of the reform was decided by the Cabinet after the Development Council reviewed the needs of the country as expressed in the views of the Oman 2020 conference. (AlHammami, 1999, p.162)*

Therefore, the Ministry of Education *started the new reform of the GES with 17 of the 1,039 State schools* throughout Oman in the academic year 1998/99 (ME, 1998a; MI, 1998; AlBelushi and AlKitani, 1997).

Also, primary school leadership has been intended to develop throughout this reform in order to serve the needs of the country, build a unique education system and to improve the GES. The reform should introduce new ideas to support the GES by redefining it, as discussed earlier; this includes reforms in primary school leadership.

However, the plan is to secure the implementation of the new reform whether for full implementation through the model schools of the current reform or gradual percolation through the GES schools.

## **ETHICAL ISSUES OF THIS RESEARCH**

The researcher has been very conscious of the implications of the following issues related to the nature of the Omani leadership:

The ideological background of the educational leadership in Oman, as explained earlier, shows that the educational system developed in various stages. For example, the period before 1914 describes the ideology and traditional philosophy (connected to Islam) of primary school leadership; however, after 1914 the school leadership was connected with the GES, the focus of this research. Also, there were only three schools developed in the whole country during the long period: between 1914 and 1969; thus, an educational renaissance started in 1970. Hence, the actual development began from this date. The CDP (1993) reports as follows:

*Since the beginning of the blessed renaissance, the education system has passed through various stages presenting distinct steps in the building up of an Omani individual able to contribute [to] the modern renaissance of Oman. (p. 3)*

As discussed above, the Omani education background is Arabic/Islamic; therefore, the practice of Omani school leadership will reflect the Islamic faith (values) e.g. the way it deals with human relations, its respect for team work, its recognition of the value of work, the way it undertakes responsibilities ... etc. Another ethical issue is its centralised system.

The education system in Oman is fully centralised, so that headteachers run schools according to directions and regulations from the Ministry of Education. The headteachers have to set school targets, which should be agreed and approved by the Ministry. The researcher's concern is to study the practice of headteachers within this system, and to explore the extent to which this practice can be improved and developed so as to lead to more effective and efficient schools. The relationship between individual headteachers and the Ministry of Education is clearly a very delicate matter and one which raises a number of ethical issues.

As discussed above, between 1914 and 1959, the Omanis started the GES by building three modern schools (see Table 1, p. 16):, in only two different regions, Muscat and Salalah. *"In 1940, the first modern school, al-Saidiya School, was built in Muscat"* (AlSalmi, 1994, p. 105).

AlSalmi refers to the fact that the new type of school was meant to exemplify a system which would replace the former type of school (e.g. the Qur'anic school). Also, as discussed above, in 1970 the GES was extended to all regions of Oman. This study has briefly described the system and traced its administrative development from 1914 up to the year 2000.

Moreover, this of course brings up a great number of ethical problems in connection with the GES and its current reform. In public, people talk for example, about the new idea of mixed classrooms (boys and girls) which seems to them to be as unacceptable way of nurturing their children. In addition, a debate on the same topic was presented on the

broadcasting service of Oman TV (Oman Broadcast, 2000). Thus, to ask people responsible for such management decisions, to give an account of themselves and the way in which they reflect on their job is to question them in ways which many may not find acceptable. Answers may be misleading, vague or not forthcoming at all.

However, if people have answered truthfully and thoughtfully, they may, on reflection, be led to change their approach, but it is questionable whether such interference on the part of the researcher can be ethically justified.

In conclusion, what the researcher can do about the ethical issues is an even more difficult question. The first thing, of course, is to guarantee confidentiality, so that no participants feel personally threatened as a result of what they may say. Secondly, the researcher must be aware of the ethical implications. Thirdly, he should try to be open-minded so as to let the respondents as far as possible voice their own ethical concerns.

## **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO**

It should be noted that an ethical issue arose: that the model schools of the current reform of the GES (or the new system of Basic Education) are a way of *changing* the whole existing system by gradual steps (AlHammami, 1999) over many years. Replacing the GES seems to be a decision already taken by the Ministry of Education; whereas in public there is a debate on what to change and the question here is whether the present changes are for the better (e.g. improving the quality of primary school leadership in order to improve the quality of education).

According to the *AlShura* Council meetings, there was a big debate held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2000 and broadcast on night sessions of Oman TV (the researcher recorded two video tapes for the purpose of his study, Oman Broadcast, 2000). The debate of *AlShura* members (members of the consultative council) raised many crucial points such as that the Ministry of Education should consider public opinion on how schools can be led and managed within the current development of the GES. According to AlHammami (1999), this is the most sensitive topic; in fact, the Ministry of Education does not seem to be considering public perspectives in the implementation of this particular educational reform.

## **PHASE TWO: RESEARCH LITERATURE**

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## **Chapter 3 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many researchers claim that an effective and comprehensive approach to school leadership is needed for *productivity*, for educational reform and for *change* (Leithwood et al., 1999). Thus, choosing the best approach to leadership is important for school leadership reform and in turn affects the whole development of Omani society. Therefore, the leadership approach which is proposed for implementation in the current educational reform in Oman should be adequate, useful, productive and effective. This is also needed to implement the Omani *government's targets*, educational values and the new vision of leadership and direction of future education (Gunraj, 2000). Educational reform is desperately needed and the current Sultan, who seems to represent transformational leaders, since he has put much effort to transforming the country into a modern one was the one who called for this reform. Since 1970, Sultan Qaboos has set out his vision for all sectors (e.g. political, economic, social and educational), including primary school leadership, when he called for the propagation of the General Education System (GES) over all the regions of Oman, because the primary school level is considered the *basic stage* of education (CDP, 1993). The Sultan made the following announcement:

*The power of change, and the stimulus for progress, were inherent in our people, and were just waiting for the time to [be] unleash[ed]. (MI, 1995, p. 35)*

The above statement indicates a sense of a transformational and charismatic leader who can put into words what changes he wants. In this regard, the educational leaders, both policy makers (officials and official administrators at the Ministry of Education) and primary headteachers, should realise the need for the current educational reform; hence, the royal directives provide the major impetus to address genuine requirements for redefining, improving and transforming primary school leadership in Omani schools. Furthermore, the royal directives enlightened the educational leaders in their understanding of their roles and duties. Sultan Qaboos *emphasises the leadership propensities*, whether political or educational leadership, since there are strong ties between them (ME, 1997). Similarly, the educational leaders can model their leadership style on the transformational model shown by the Sultan himself.

However, the focus of the present research is to evaluate the practice of primary school leadership within the existing schools of the GES and see how it can be redefined, improved,

transformed and, perhaps, developed in considering the current educational reform. Again, it is clear that the connection between the political and educational visions is that both deal with *power* (Hoyle, et al., 1985), in particular the power to change. His Majesty, Sultan Qaboos also states the following major components, which are considered major issues for school leadership:

*... we must equip ourselves with teachings of our religion [Islam] and true Omani values, and learn from our previous experience. (MI, 1995, p. 159)*

In connection with the above statement, Omani educational leaders were in charge of increasing the scope of what should be developed in connection with primary school leadership tasks. No doubt the Ministry of Education uses the royal directives in order to carry out its implementation of the current reform. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has identified its new aims and objectives as to *why* and *what* to reform (AlHammami, 1999), especially those aims of primary school leadership associated with the current reform of the GES. The Ministry of Education finds that the major purposes of the reform are as follows:

*To cope with the numerous social, economic, political, cultural and technological changes dominating all nations including our Country, [Oman]. (ME, 1997, p. 14)*

Certainly, the policy makers of the Ministry of Education and its Directorates General in the district regions, including headteachers, would be able to implement the major task of leadership, that of turning the current situation to a positive direction. Hence, both the existing and the model schools (BES Schools) need to be prepared for the current educational reform in terms of being equipped and providing headteachers with needed information about *what* to reform in their own school leadership, *how* to tackle the new tasks of school leadership (Gunter, 2001) and when to recognise that “... *improvement has occurred* ...” (Louis and Riley, 2000, p. 4).

As stated above, a review of the literature of educational leadership, and particularly the approach to primary school leadership reveals that it is an important factor in the process of educational reform. Therefore, it has to be examined in the context of this research. Hence, the headteachers must be recognised as key persons; for instance, because they should be involved in providing a good example of school leadership in order to implement the current reform of the GES effectively.

Considering the nature of the Key Research Questions (see Table 5, p. 67), this chapter will address the definitions and typologies of school leadership, including a definition of the ‘school leaders’.

## **REVIEW OF AVAILABLE STUDIES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

The researcher has investigated related studies in connection with educational leadership in primary schools, whether published or unpublished, by using several sources including books, theses, journals and electronic sources (e.g. Joint Academic Network (JANET)), On-line Public Access Catalogues (OPAC) and the British Library). The available studies which are connected with primary school leadership practice will be reviewed in the present chapter, in connection with the focus of this research project, which is to evaluate the practice of primary school leadership in Omani schools.

The researcher tackled the key research questions by reading, interpreting, investigating and analysing other researchers' arguments. In connection with key research questions, it is necessary to review three major areas: (1) the historical background (connected with Research Question 1), (2) current practices of primary school leadership (connected with Key Research Questions 2-4) and (3) the choice of the proposed school leadership approach (connected with Key Research Question 5, see Table 5, p. 67). The researcher explored related knowledge in each area in order to refine his ideas and understanding for improving and transforming the primary school leadership performance in Omani schools.

To this end, the researcher will trace previous studies which were conducted by other researchers in relation to the practice of primary school leadership in Oman. The following sections will discuss the three areas stated above, including leadership theories and models.

### **BACKGROUND OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE GES**

The Omani educational system, the General Education System (GES), has been developed through various stages: '*during the 1914-1969, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s*' (AlHammami, 1999; MI; 1998; ME, 1997; AlSalmi, 1994; CDP, 1993; AlShanfari, 1991; AlDhahab, 1987). For example, as discussed earlier, there were only *three schools* of the GES found in the academic year 1970/71 (MI, 2000, see also Table 2, p. 20, row 1, column 2). Similarly, two primary schools of the GES were run at various times by Omani headteachers throughout the period from 1935 to 1970 (see Table 1, p. 16, rows 3 and 4, column 3). This means that the first school was run from 1935 to 1940 (AlSultaniah Second) and the second school was run from 1937 to 1970, illustrating the developmental stages which are indicated in Table 2 (AlSaidiah – Salalah; this was the one of the three schools which were open in 1970 according to the GES and is still running). This indicates that the GES took a very long time before it became the official system of education in Oman. Many reasons caused this delay, such as economic deprivation; Oman was not able to produce oil before *August 1967* (MI, 1998).

In 1970, as stated in the previous chapter, the current Sultan called for an educational revolution which should spread the GES over all the regions of Oman. This was a historical event for primary school leadership in Oman, which also required extensive development such as the building of new schools and the recruiting of Omani headteachers to lead them. Therefore, *many Omani educators were involved from the beginning of the renaissance in managing and running primary schools* (AlSalmi, 1994; CDP, 1993). The educational leadership was controlled by the Omanis themselves, whether at the Central Office (the Ministry of Education) or at the level of the practitioners (headteachers and teachers). However, there were many headteachers from other Arab countries who were already employed on short and long-term contracts. They were needed *to supply the shortages of staff in primary schools* as increasing numbers began to be built (AlSalmi, 1994; CDP, 1993). Again, the Ministry of Education promoted many Omani teachers in order to secure genuinely Omani human resources, even though these teachers were not well qualified according to today's expectations of suitable school leaders (e.g. headteachers). This kind of employment was accepted as an *urgent solution* in order to make sure that the schools had someone to take charge of them (AlSalmi, 1994; CDP, 1993). As another solution, discussed above, the Ministry invited expatriate headteachers from many countries of the Arab world. The opportunity was given to many countries (e.g. Egypt) to contribute by sending qualified headteachers. Of course, this decision was taken in order to employ Arabic native-speakers in the teaching and running of schools.

In the 1970s, the Ministry of Education created its own Teacher Training Institutes (TTI) as a way of *qualifying Omani teachers*<sup>2</sup> immediately and considering them for promotion later (MI, 1998; CDP, 1993). Many primary headteachers who graduated from the TTIs were involved in managing schools for many years after years of experience *in teaching* (AlSalmi, 1994).

In the 1980s, the Ministry turned the TTIs into Intermediate Colleges (ICs)<sup>3</sup>, also as a short-term solution, because these colleges were *offering only the Intermediate Diploma (ID)* (MI, 1998). However, the ID is not considered an adequate qualification in terms of today's requirements and *in terms of the requirements of primary schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (AlHammami, 1999). However, the ID holders among the primary headteachers should be considered well experienced, since they have been involved in school management for many

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<sup>2</sup> The TTIs require the Third Preparatory Certificate for the admission, the ninth graders; the duration of the study was three years (AlSalmi, 1994, p. 22). These institutes were established in the First-Five Year Plan (1976 – 80), specifically in 1977 (MI, 1998, p. 202; Committee of Documentation and Publishing, 1993, pp. 5-6).

<sup>3</sup> The ICs require the General Secondary Certificate for admission; the duration of the study was two years, later extended to three years. These colleges were established in the Second Five-Year Plan (1981 – 85), specifically in the academic year 1984/85 (MI, 1998, p. 202; AlSalmi, 1994, p. 22; Committee of Documentation and



years, from the 1980s onwards (see Chart 13, p. 225).

In the 1990s, the ICs were turned into Colleges of Education (CEs); nowadays, the CEs offer a four-year course leading to a bachelor's degree under the control of the Ministry of Higher Education and also still serving the Ministry of Education by *preparing well-qualified teachers* (MI, 1998). Similarly, the Ministry of Education provided its employees, including those who were ID holders, whether headteachers or teachers, with national, regional and international scholarships. Thus upgrading of their qualifications was crucial in enhancing primary school leadership (see also Chart 7, p. 167). In addition, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) was another genuine source of ideas for primary school leadership by *preparing headteachers academically as well as administratively* (AlHammami, 1999; SQU, 1999).

Furthermore, before 1970, many Omanis went abroad for many reasons; for example, to work. Some of them had an opportunity to study and returned to Oman when the educational revolution began in order to make a contribution to their home country. Because of their educational history, many of them gained positions as headteachers; however, Oman was still in *desperate need of headteachers with good qualifications* (CDP, 1993). In point of fact, yesterday's Omani students have become today's researchers.

Altogether, the TTIs, ICs, CEs, SQU and the scholarships for Omani headteachers and teachers and those who managed to educate themselves abroad, also created good candidates for primary school leadership posts (the researcher himself may be considered one example of these; he graduated from the TTI and was given scholarships to study abroad).

During the past three decades, foreign and national researchers, in one way or another, also contributed to primary school leadership in terms of researching and studying issues of primary school management and leadership. In addition, the Ministry of Education itself sponsored comprehensive studies in order to raise the quality of school management by inviting teams of experts; for example, *to design a School Administration Course* (ME, undated).

Many studies of different countries describe a similar situation to that in Oman in terms of redefining the existing educational system, preparing primary schools for a reform so that they are prepared to face the *challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (Hall and Southworth, 1997, Bush and Coleman, 2000).

In conclusion, the researcher has investigated the historical background of primary school leadership within the GES in Oman. He sets the scene for previous educational stages which cover crucial details of the historical background of both the GES and of primary school management and leadership. There are four initial stages of primary school leadership in

Oman according to the GES, which were discussed in the previous chapter (see pp. 15 to 21).

### **CURRENT PRACTICES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

The Omani Ministry of Education began *a new reform* of the General Education System (GES) in 1998 (AlHammami, 1999; ME, 1997). This reform attempts to redefine, improve, innovate and transform the existing practices of primary school management and leadership as well as to integrate useful new leadership tasks in terms of adding to the existing practice (e.g. integrating technology in school management) or incorporating other related tasks of school leadership such as working in an independent school building (not to sharing the same school building), modernising the school curriculum, extending the school day or year, adding more classes by teaching new subjects (e.g. teaching English from the first grade), using different teaching styles (e.g. field subjects such as Islamic/Arabic and Mathematics/Science) and integrating the concept of student-centred learning. All these were introduced by the current reform as innovations in the Omani primary schools; of course, the practice in the modified schools (model schools of the GES – the BES schools) would be slightly different from those in the existing ones. This also attempts to change the school environment by introducing change in the substantial tasks with which headteachers are concerned in leading their schools; this will remodel their practices. However, this research project evaluates the existing practice of primary school management and leadership in Omani schools in order to discover what tasks need to be redefined, improved and innovated. These comments, it is hoped, will provide close insight into the headteachers' needs according to their present situation in order to upgrade the quality of their performance in post. In contrast, the current reform introduced leadership tasks which are concerned to facilitate educational innovations in general; however, this research hopes to serve the headteachers' needs in this process of educational reform. Also, the comments which we try to draw from this research are about how the existing leadership practices should be transformed and the new leadership tasks (introduced by the current reform) should be integrated in ways which are suited to the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As discussed earlier, these requirements are meant to embody the Omani government's vision and mission to prepare the country's human resources to face the challenges of today's world.

Above all, this study was requested by officials of the Ministry of Education for the purpose of studying in depth the present practice of primary school leadership to gain useful advice about innovations that might be needed (for more information about the official letter of request, see Letter 5, p. 287). No doubt, primary school leadership is considered a major component within the Omani educational process which certainly needs to be studied in depth to make useful recommendations for improving schools.

For example, the development of primary school leadership practices has taken the following course: during the past three decades, the first five-year development plan was between 1970 and 1975 and the last five-year development plan was between 1996 and 2000 (CDP, 1993; ME, 1997). Thus, the literature reveals that the idea of developing the practice of primary school leadership in the Sultanate of Oman is built on the idea of ‘*starting to innovate at the point of where others stop*’ (Sulaiman, 1984, i.e. not re-inventing the wheel). This means that the current educational reform, including that of primary school leadership, considers updated leadership approaches for both the existing and the model schools. Thus, at the State Consultative Council (*Majlis AlShura*), the Minister of Education announced his *commitment* to improving primary school management and leadership practices so that they will fit into the requirements of the present millennium (ME, 1997).

According to the available literature, the Ministry did not dictate any particular new approach to primary school leadership as a way of transforming the existing primary school leadership practice and effecting the current reform of the GES. The basis of primary school leadership has always been traditional practice. Yet, to be successful, primary school leadership as a way of implementing the reform needs to be specific in approach in order to achieve its targeted goals. However, this requirement was not fully addressed by many researchers, including the experts of the Ministry of Education. For example, AlHammani (1999) provides very basic ideas about school administration requirements when he proposed a certain model of school leadership, but he did not clarify any ideas of reforming styles of leadership. In other words, his study introduced the component of school leadership as a major component in the reform of the GES; however, what he provided in this regard was in need of development. Also, other researchers such as AbdAlmawgood (1999) and Cassidy (1999) consider school administration which can fulfil the requirements of the educational reform. In such considerations the Omani Ministry of Education (1997) also seems to have paid similar attention. Exceptionally, in terms of Omani researchers, Ahmed AlHinai (1997) highlights school leadership as a necessary component for such a reform. At this stage, altogether, the Omani researchers and the experts of the Ministry of Education should realise that the current reform cannot be effectively implemented without clearly identifying a productive school leadership model.

Other researchers, however, have recommended that the transformational leadership approach is *the best model* to carry out educational reform and school innovations, (e.g. Gunraj, 2000; Law and Glover, 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999). Indeed, ignoring the problem of recommending a particular school leadership approach may cause delay or even failure in implementing the educational reform in Oman (see the proposed school leadership model,

Figure 3, p. 271). According to the above research, the Omani school leaders need enough time to transform the existing practice and to implement the new leadership tasks within the educational reform.

Furthermore, the TTA (1998b) introduced five key areas of headship to be considered in school improvements, as follows:

- A. *Strategic direction and development of the school*
- B. *Teaching and learning*
- C. *Leading and managing staff*
- D. *Efficient and effective development of staff and resources*
- E. *Accountability. (p. 9)*

In connection with these five major areas of headship, Omani primary headteachers are urged to work cooperatively with other senior school leaders, teachers and even the pupils in order to achieve the expected outcomes. This requires the headteachers to work directly with each group (e.g. inspectors and senior teachers) in terms of improving and transforming the old teaching style into an advanced one. The practice of primary school leadership should without question accomplish the standards of these five key areas of headship.

Furthermore, many studies which were conducted in Omani went side by side with the ideas of the Ministry of Education by investigating the needs of the present primary headteachers. It was found that the present primary headteachers were in desperate need of professional training programmes to make them aware of the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; hence, many studies found that primary headteachers' programmes should be based on *partnership* (to involve the targeted headteachers in running the programme), creating a suitable *training atmosphere* (AlGhathithi, 1995), involving Omani headteachers of long experience to enrich the programme activities and in addition using ICT resources effectively. Similarly, AlLawati (1992) found that training primary headteachers is seen as *a problematic issue* in providing efficient courses and running successful schools. However, his study assessed headteacher performance and addressed some of the difficulties which the primary headteachers face in their schools, such as insufficient school budgets, and also he indicated that the headteacher's experience could strengthen his/her competencies in solving school problems. In addition, however, the well-qualified headteachers were not always those who have appropriate competencies in dealing with school conflicts, for many of them do not have enough experience. Here it can be said that academic qualifications should provide a support in understanding the headship responsibilities. However, outstanding work can be produced when the headteacher has practical experience and a theoretical updated knowledge; these

must strengthen the headteacher's competence.

Moreover, there is a possibility for headteachers to play the role of curriculum leaders; an interpretation of this task could be that they should lead curriculum development. This means that they would only facilitate the development, for example, through their teaching teams, by receiving greater support from *subject leaders* (Rutherford, 1999; DfEE, 1999; TTA, 1998b). Hall and Southworth (1997) cite other researchers' studies and claim that "... *heads should be curriculum leaders ...*" (p. 156).

In addition, Hall and Southworth (1997) argue that the headteachers describe themselves as "*resident inspectors*" (p. 157) but this concept lacks evidence from academic results which might indicate their efforts to make themselves truly resident inspectors. If they were, they would be able to observe academically all subjects and comment on the content of the curriculum, as well as providing teachers with instructional support. Otherwise, they might more aptly be called resident advisors, because they are recognised as *their colleagues' bosses* (AlHinai, 1995).

Furthermore, Hall and Southworth (1997) provide more detail about the sensitivity of the headteachers over the process of inspection. They state that:

*... some heads see the inspection process as a major, possibly the most significant, test of their professional credibility. (p. 158)*

The above statement indicates that headteachers are sensitive about being inspected and as they see themselves as resident inspectors, they try to behave like independent observers making inspections in their own schools in order to display their powerful influence over school administration, as well as academic areas. However, it is impossible for headteachers *to manage* and run schools by themselves (Hall and Southworth, 1997; AlHinai, 1995).

In conclusion, the proposed school leadership approach should aim to provide a proper style of school leadership which suits the Omani situation and copes with the evolutionary changes (e.g. the ICT revolution), which affect all nations, including Oman.

Thus, Omani officials of the Ministry of Education may need to think of giving extra courses to headteachers if they want to make headteachers capable of playing the role of inspectors even within their special subject fields. It is possible for headteachers to be professional inspectors only if they inspect their own subjects, since they have been promoted gradually through a series of academic positions, from teachers to senior teachers, deputy headteachers and then headteachers and inspectors at the same time. Hence, it is important for them to be provided with professional courses relevant to their academic background in order to update their knowledge and to contribute to their role as headteachers and resident inspectors (this should increase the Ministry's efficiency). Thus, the headteachers in primary

schools could also be managers of their own subject departments. Hence, they will occupy three roles at the same time: as headteachers, middle managers and resident inspectors. However, this would probably be incredibly difficult. From this point of view, it is impossible for headteachers to manage and run schools by themselves, as is argued by Hall and Southworth (1997). ECS (1995), states that:

*Headmasters [in Omani primary schools] would continue to be responsible for in-school updating and supervision of their senior teachers .... (pp. 7 & 10)*

Above all, the headteachers should be in charge as first leaders of running their schools effectively.

## **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP APPROACHES**

*[There are] six broad categories, referred to subsequently as 'models'. Included in the six categories of approaches to school leadership are instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial and contingent leadership. (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 7)*

## **THEORIES AND MODELS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:**

### **Instructional school leadership theory**

Instructional leadership focuses on *leaders' behaviours* and concerns about the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the effect on pupils' achievements (Leithwood et al., 1999). Some researchers use the term *pedagogical leadership* which means more or less the same (Leithwood et al., 1999; Memon, 1999). For this model, Leithwood et al. cite Hallinger and his associates that instructional leadership practice consists of *mission*, managing *instructional* programmes and promoting a school *climate*. Instructional leaders are seen by Leithwood et al. as *change agents* and as programme *facilitators*, in particular for school reforms (Wohlstetter et al., 1997; Hallinger, 1992).

### **Moral school leadership theory**

Moral leadership is *associated with values* as all school leadership models should be (West et al., 2000). Leithwood et al., (1999) claim that "... *values are a central part of all leadership and administrative practice*" (p. 10).

This model is associated with values and moral purpose because these constitute an important aspect of school leadership. For example, celebrating occasions in school will bring happiness to its members. This indicates a sense of common morality within social/educational relationships in school and also in the local community, if parents are invited to participate in such celebratory occasions (e.g. the Omani national day, which represents the moral quality of loyalty among the Omani people). To do so is considered a matter of sharing the headteacher's appreciation of his/her people. Also leadership in Omani schools requires moral imperatives in order to spread equity, justice, trustworthiness, *job*

*integrity and commitments* (Rinehart et al. 1998). Leithwood et al. (1999) state that:

*Values central to this form of leadership are derived from democratic theory, and give credit to wide participation of organisational stakeholders as a reflection of the society in which we live. (p. 11)*

Furthermore, moral leadership is connected with the educational curriculum by including appropriate disciplines for the youngsters at primary school level; it deals with teachers' respect for their pupils and also with the effect of *teachers' behaviour* that of pupils, e.g. to reduce deviance (Lawton et al., 1978).

In conclusion, moral activities and morality are connected with the success of school leadership as shown by an exemplary model; for example, transformational leadership attempts to raise the level of "*morality in both the leader and the follower[s]*" (Northouse, 2001, p. 132).

### **Participative school leadership theory**

*Participative leadership refers to leaders who invite subordinates to share in the decision making. A participative leader consults with subordinates, obtains their ideas and opinions, and integrates their suggestions into the decisions regarding how the group or organization will proceed. (Northouse, 2001, p. 92)*

This approach to school leadership requires the leader to allow others to participate actively, whether as colleagues or community members (parents). The leader should involve everyone who can participate and express his/her opinion. This type of school leadership may encourage the school leader to solve problems in groups; thus, it leads to *effective team work* which in turn could be a productive school leadership style (Leithwood et al., 1999).

### **Managerial school leadership theory**

*Managerial leadership assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks, or behaviours and that if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organization will be facilitated. (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 14)*

The above model of school leadership seems to be associated with any kind of school leadership in terms of the concern of the leader to check whether other people's work is being done accurately and precisely. This kind of habit may lead to advantage as well as disadvantage. The advantage can be seen as providing needed support for the headteacher's colleagues while asking them if their job going smoothly and so forth. This behaviour also may lead to a clash between the leader and their colleagues since some of them do not like to have someone checking on their performance; they would prefer to be trusted.

In conclusion, the managerial school leadership style need to be performed well in order to raise productivity in schools. This style is important in school leadership as it is considered a complementary component to effective school leadership (Northouse, 2001; Leithwood, 1999).

## **Contingent school leadership theory**

*This approach assumes that what is important is how leaders respond to the unique organizational circumstances or problems that they face as a consequence, for example, of the nature and preferences of co-workers, conditions of work and tasks to be undertaken. (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 15)*

Contingent school leadership is associated with leaders' responses to varying circumstances and the way in which they treat different conflicts and problems (Leithwood et al., 1999). It seems to be the case that this model makes leaders deal with conflicts in a somewhat unconfident way and, perhaps, with some hesitation, because it is essentially reactive in character. Some studies align this model of leadership, to some extent, with the approaches of charismatic and transactional leadership. For example, Waldman et al., (1990) state that:

*... contingent rewards [were] positively correlated with charisma .... (Waldman et al., 1990, p. 389)*

Regarding this finding, as discussed under the factors of Table 15, p. 145, it should be recalled that the Omani primary headteachers were dealing with stressful school situations. Hence, they did their best to draw attention to their success in coping with such difficult problems, Table 16, p. 166, indicates the headteachers' capabilities in dealing with school difficulties, because they turned negative situations into positive ones; the fact that some primary headteachers *failed to do so* can be explained by their circumstances, such as not being provided with sufficient numbers of administrative assistants (Bush and Coleman, 2000).

In conclusion, this model can only be achieved successfully if headteachers *delegate responsibilities* among their colleagues (Gunraj, 2000).

## **Transactional/transformational (T&T) school leadership model**

Two complementary types of school leadership were identified: transactional (as a form of management) and transformational (as a form of productive school leadership). These leadership theories were developed and associated with manufacturing management theories, providing an influential environment between leaders and employees which in its turn influenced the whole system of manufacturing industry. However, educators found themselves developing both transactional and transformational leadership theories for educational contexts and adapting them to the educational organisations (e.g. primary schools) which were trying to change.

Again, transactional and transformational leadership theories have led the manufacturing environment to greater productivity at work since the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. Thus, it is known that transformational leaders are associated with *effectiveness* and employee



*satisfaction* (Leithwood et al., 1999) and with inspirational leaders (see Transformational Factor 7, p. 59), as well as effectiveness from the employees, promoting their productivity. Moreover, transformational leadership positively influences employees' behaviour, making them respect their tasks and accept involvement in them (see Transformational Factor 5, p. 58). In other words, its approaches imply some knowledge about the way in which leaders and employees influence one another. Influential patterns of transformational leaders shown in Table 3, p. 43 (see rows 1 to 12, column 2), appear to offer high levels of employee involvement and expectation (see Transformational Factor 9, p. 60), whereas transactional managers provide less influential qualities, but the transactional becomes a powerful model in so far as it is joined with the transformational and the reverse is also true. In other words, they should work together in order to remedy each other's weaknesses (see the discussion in the section of research framework critiques, pp. 47 to 53).

Thus, the Transactional and Transformational school leadership models are *complementary* to each other (Southworth, 1998); hence, in this section they are presented as a combined model. Indeed, together they create a significant model which can be called a T&T Model. It should be noted that there are transactional issues which may exist in the Omani system, although it is considered a centralised one. By presenting these two school leadership models in one, we may obtain a suitable model to redefine and transform the existing practice of primary school leadership. This will be easier because the relationship between these two models is remarkably strong.

Specifically, transactional leadership is considered to provide a basis which leads to transformational leadership but of a less effective kind, with lower employee expectations. As indicated in Table 3, p. 43 (see rows 1 to 5, column 1), transactional leaders exchange benefits with employees, e.g. you do that for me and I will do this for you. Deluga (1988) discusses the point that transactional leaders can use multiple sources of power, such as rewards and punishments, in order to control outcomes, i.e. they can influence followers' performance.

Transactional leadership is a model which represents a major component in the proposed theoretical framework (T&T Model), because it supplies the "*stability and continuity for a school to operate efficiently*" (Southworth, 1998, p. 48) which is a necessary foundation for the transformational leadership approach to create further educational and leadership innovations. Southworth (1998) sees these two leadership approaches as supplementary and complementary to each other in running a school efficiently, as paramount for the transactional and effectively, as paramount for the transformational. In addition, West et al. (2000) define the difference between these two models by identifying the following:

*In the more stable system, where maintenance has a higher priority than development, and the headteacher is seen as playing a major role in protecting and promoting the interests of the system, a transactional approach is frequently found. (West et al., 2000, p. 32)*

According to the above statement, the transactional approach focuses, for example, on the school's interests as well as its difficulties. Also it is concerned about equipping schools, solving staff problems and keeping its reputation as high as possible in the eyes of the community. Its targets are to keep the school running smoothly by using its resources as efficiently as possible. Furthermore, it can be said that the transactional approach to school leadership may keep the school tidy and ready for innovations, so that the transformational approach may put an emphasis on developmental actions (e.g. the existing practice of primary school leadership in Oman may find useful guidance here for ensuring the effective implementation of the current educational reform). However, the transactional leadership is seen as not always fulfilling the needs of the leader's colleagues, because the leader (manager) focuses more on school maintenance than on his/her colleagues' interests. Gunter (2001) finds that:

*Engagement between leaders and followers is a struggle that is controlled through transactional leadership, that is, negotiation, and the motivations and resources within it do not challenge but seek to satisfy. (p. 69)*

The above quotation, indeed, indicates the difference between the two school leadership models, the transactional and the transformational, in terms of their concerns in achieving targets as well as in involving the followers.

However, the transformational model more heavily involves the team working together to achieve targeted goals, especially for adaptation. Southworth (1998) finds that "*Transformational leadership has been strongly associated with managing change*". (p. 45)

In connection with the above statement, the transformational school leadership is a model which promotes school productivity and encourages leaders to be visionary in setting their personal and organisational goals. Also, it is associated with the effectiveness of leaders and the satisfaction of their colleagues. It is considered *the best model* for redefining and improving, innovating and transforming, remodelling and changing schools for *the better* (Gunraj, 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999; Avolio et al., 1991; Deluga, 1988; Bass et al., 1987). Furthermore, it is postulated that this theory requires an extensive understanding of the way in which people learn from their own experiences, environments, societies, cultures and research in order to see what is valuable and how this can be used in the service of succeeding generations of leadership. In addition, many researchers consider the characteristics of *charismatic leaders* to be among the factors of transformational leadership (Deluga, 1988; Bass et al., 1987). Thus, the transformational theory includes the following characteristics

which can be found among Omani school leaders: *charisma* (idealised influence, vision and a sense of mission, the power to gain respect and trust, Hoyle, 1986; Hoyle, 1988); *inspiration* (communicating, motivating, having high expectations of all the school's members, e.g. colleagues and students, expressing important purposes in simple ways); *intellectual stimulation* (promoting intelligence, rationality and careful problem solving); *individual consideration*, focusing on each person in order to encourage everyone to produce the best possible results in accomplishing targets (Bush and Coleman, 2000; Bass and Avolio, 1994; Avolio et al., 1991).

Other researchers explore slightly different territory from the last-mentioned in listing the characteristics of transformational leadership. On the same lines, Southworth (1998) propounds that:

*Transformational leadership is concerned with four contested and conflicting values: equity, excellence, efficiency and liberty. (p. 54)*

This statement distinguishes four areas which the approach of transformational leadership takes into account. In other words, transformational leaders should treat colleagues fairly in order to gain their respect and trust. They need the *ambition and motivation* to achieve the best results through themselves and through their colleagues (Northouse, 2001; Leithwood et al., 1999). They should allocate minimum expenditure for every job, using their own discretion but should share decision-making with others in order to practise an independent and confident leadership.

It is clear from the above survey that the researchers are far from any consensus about what the qualities of a transformational leader should be. This is only to be expected in such rapidly changing conditions and given such a fluid and debatable topic (see the following chapter, research theoretical framework critiques, pp. 47 to 53). However, the general characteristics needed for effective reform are surely agreed (e.g. vision, goals, intellectual stimulation, individualised support, inspiration motivation ... etc.; for more detail see Table 4, p. 55). Given these qualities, whether school reforms were carried out in the USA or the UK, China or Oman, they would have a good chance of success.

In conclusion, the transactional school leadership factors are considered complementary to those of transformational school leadership. In this sense, these two school leadership models are by nature able to become a single model, since the latter cannot be considered effective unless it is based on the former model.

## **DEFINITIONS OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

Since the late 1970s, many school leadership theories have been developed and, perhaps, taken over from the *industrial* environment by educational policy makers and scholars; two examples of this are the transactional and transformational leadership theories (Deluga, 1988). These new leadership models can fit any society; whereas, the traditional models which belongs a certain society would not be applicable to some societies; for example, highly commercialised or industrialised societies. However, the new types of educational leadership can be used in both kinds of society to discuss one of the aims of a school, which is efficient production; indeed, they seem to be used universally. Therefore, the researcher has linked Omani and global concepts of school leadership since there are interests in common between countries, for instance, *economic competitiveness* (Bates, 2002) and *Information Communication Technology (ICT)* (Bush and Coleman, 2000). This indicates some of the influences on the current practice of primary school leadership in Oman, in terms of sharing the experience of globalisation. Hence transforming the practice of primary school leadership should be considered an initial step in tackling the challenges of *globalisation* (AlHammami, 1999). This means that headteachers have to adopt new approaches and techniques of leadership in addition to the familiar ones from traditional leadership styles which were certainly based on the culture of Omani society. This will allow them to improve and update their knowledge and practices.

Furthermore, a question can be asked, here: why do we need to raise the quality of primary school leadership in Oman? The following sections will highlight the scope of this question in different ways and the short answer to this question is that we must meet the unparalleled requirements of the *21<sup>st</sup> century* (AlHammami, 1999; ME, 1998). Again, the scope of this question leads us to think critically about the model of school leadership which is practised in Omani primary schools and which now needs to be transformed for the sake of the current development of the GES.

### **School management**

School management is associated with day-to-day routine, minimises school crises and attempts to run the school smoothly in terms of being fair and kind to everybody to make sure that they perform their jobs. Bush and Coleman (2000) cite Hoyle's (1981), statement (below) which describes management in education as:

*... a continuous process through which members of an organisation seek to co-ordinate their activities and utilise their resources in order to fulfil the various tasks of the organisation as efficiently as possible. (p. 4)*

Thus, school management seeks to raise efficiency in school as well as the quality of

managing its performance, including teaching and learning activities. It can be said that school management is different from school leadership in terms of the headteacher's concerns. For example, management merely focuses on achieving goals associated with compulsory policies such as "*planning, coordinating and organising*" (Southworth, 1998, p. 8) the "*processes and structures*" (Bush and Coleman, 2000, p. 4) which are set by the Central Office, the Omani Ministry of Education. Consequently the headteachers seek to approach their targeted goals appropriately. In addition, researchers identify school management as:

*... a continuous process through which members of an organisation seek to co-ordinate their activities and utilise their resources ... (Hoyle, 1981) ... an activity involving responsibility for getting things done through other people (Cuthbert, 1984) ... concerned with ... the internal operation of educational institutions, and also with their relationships with their environment, that is, the communities in which they are set ... (Glatter, 1979) .... (Bush and Coleman, 2000, p. 4)*

In terms of what managers and leaders should do, the headteachers are considered as managers as they set about transforming and improving the practice of their own school management; *good school management* should lead to effective school improvement (Glatter, 1988).

It may be useful, in considering the twin concepts of school management and leadership (e.g. T&T Model), to clarify the difference between them. There is, of course, a connection between school management (considered more or less as transactional) and leadership. Clearly, the tasks of school management are distinct from those of leadership; however, the two kinds of school management and leadership tasks must be integrated. This means that while it is easy to separate the tasks of school management from those of leadership, it is difficult to separate leadership itself from management and the difference will depend on the leader's understanding of the two terms – what is management to one headteacher may be leadership to another. In this regard, the primary headteachers are easy to categorise according to their practices, either as managers or leaders (for more information, see Table 3, p. 43).

Bush and Coleman (2000) cite Everard and Morris (1990), who identify five major stages of management. They are as follows:

- a) *Setting direction, aims and objectives*
- b) *Planning how progress will be made or a goal achieved.*
- c) *Organising available resources (people, time, materials) so that the goal can be achieved in the planned way.*
- d) *Controlling the process (i.e. measuring achievement against the plan and*

*taking corrective action where appropriate).*

*e) Setting and improving organisational standards. (p. 4)*

In conclusion, school management is different from school leadership in terms of the educational targets aimed at. Thus, managers seek to achieve immediate (short-term) goals efficiently; whereas leaders seek to achieve long-term goals effectively as well as efficiently. However, management tasks are complementary to those of school leadership.

**Table 3 - Features of managers and leaders**

<b>Comparative Concepts between Transactional and Transformational Leaders</b>		
<b>Rows</b>	<b>Transactional manager</b>	<b>Transformational leader</b>
1.	Take action only when employees fail to meet performance objectives	Able to unite followers
2.	Described as engaging in an exchange relationship with employees	Able to transform (change) followers' feelings, attitudes, goals and beliefs
3.	More susceptible to employees' influence	Capable of having a profound and extraordinary effect on followers
4.	Followers may feel that they are treated unfairly	Able to inspire followers to accomplish feats
5.	Limit followers' efforts to gain goals, job satisfaction and effectiveness toward contributing to organisational goals	Articulate difficult goals
6.		Build an image
7.		Demonstrate confidence
8.		Arousing motivation
9.		Respected and trusted by followers and are viewed as having attainable mission and vision (charisma)
10.		Provide symbols and cultural dimensions and simplified emotional appeals to increase awareness and understanding of mutually desired goals (inspiration motivation)
11.		Encourage followers to question their own way of doing things (intellectual stimulation)
12.		Treat followers differently but equitably on a one-to-one basis (individual consideration)
<b>Columns</b>	<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>

Table 3 combines information from different sources: Northouse, 2001, pp. 131-158 & 196-198; West et al., 2000, pp. 32-36; Gunter, 2000, pp. 68-76; Leithwood et al., 1999, pp. 43-114; Southworth, 1998, pp. 43-55 & 119-127; Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987, pp. 650-653;

### **School leadership**

Leadership always deals with developments, innovations, reforms and also the change of the educational system as well as school leadership practices. To look first at other researchers' definitions; Beare et al. (1997) clarify the concepts of leadership in Dubin's study, producing a good definition of the term 'leadership'; that, in Dubin's phrase, leadership is "*the exercise of authority and the making of decisions*". (p. 25)

Furthermore, leadership is a term used in many sectors of society, such as the educational, social, religious and political. Leithwood et al. (1999) state that:

*Leadership is a term used frequently in conversation both inside and outside organisations. Such everyday uses of the term are typically prefaced by such adjectives as 'good', 'effective', exemplary', 'poor' and 'terrible'. (p. 5)*

Leadership is far more than management or technical competence; it seeks to create the conditions in which the leader and the team can make productive changes. Beare (1997) collects different definitions of leadership, and says that:

*Stogdill ... had a broader context in mind when he defined leadership as 'the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal setting and goal accomplishment. (p. 25)*

AlHamami (1999) cited Dalin's (1978) view that the present educational reform in Oman focuses on role definitions and role relationships. From this point of view, the current reform of the GES should cover Omani primary headteachers' roles and responsibilities as well as having an impact on their related tasks, such as their use of modern ICT.

In conclusion, school leadership is considered to some extent an exercise of power in terms of *leadership qualities* (Hoyle, 1986), in the sense that it is desperately needed for primary headteachers in Oman to be able to put things into action on their own.

Furthermore, a clear definition of certain school leadership is required for Omani school leaders for crystal clear guidelines to help them implement the requirements of the current reform as well as to enable them to redefine the current practice of their own school leadership. Of course, according to Beare's (1997) finding (quoted above), this is required in order to improve the existing school leadership practice; thus, it must be a major requirement of the current educational reform in Oman.

### **DEFINITIONS OF THE SCHOOL LEADER**

It may be useful here to give a brief definition of the term 'leader'. The meaning emerges in the following statement:

*Fiedler ... considered the leader to be 'the individual in the group given the task of directing and co-ordinating task-relevant group activities'. (Beare et al., 1997,*

p. 25)

In addition, the above researchers find that leaders should pay attention to two main dimensions of leadership: the accomplishment of the tasks and the building of good relationships with and among staff members. Also, leaders are urged to make their contributions to school leadership, not merely to the performance of related tasks; they should also be thoughtful, creative and should provide:

*... emphasis ... [on] transforming rather than transactional leadership, ... the intent being to change attitudes and bring about commitment to 'a better state' which is embodied in a vision of excellence for the school. (Beare et al., 1997, p. 37)*

Therefore, leaders should be creative and act wisely in implementing their visions of the future, i.e. the clear targeted goals which need to be accomplished, whether personal or organisational. Also, it is commonly believed that the distinctive characteristics of an institution reflect *the quality of its leaders* (Southworth, 1999). The researcher believes that headteachers cannot be the leaders of their teams if they are not aware of the model which they need to follow. For example, they need to learn about leadership models to take the lead in their schools; they need to reflect on and evaluate whether or not their practice fits their desired model. It is almost impossible, however, for headteachers to follow any model without being aware of its limitations, as well as its requirements. From this point of view, headteachers are urged to learn all they can about the model of leadership which they are expected to practise, especially when they are facing new challenges of integrating the new leadership tasks required of them; for instance, in implementing the current educational reform in Oman.

In other words, leaders are expected to propel things forward, not simply to provide a minimum level of performance. They are always committed to developing, creating, encouraging others to be creative and leading them to be so and they set new standards in *getting things done* (Macbeath and Macdonald, 2000). Also, school leaders should take into account, for example, official regulations, but they should think seriously about how to do things in the spirit of these regulations in transactional terms (efficiency and effectiveness) and to strengthen staff members' understanding about ways of using them in transformational terms (continuous improvement to make changes for the better).

For instance, one of the differences between an ordinary headteacher and an effective one is that leaders know when they need to delegate responsibilities and they realise the importance of consulting others and sharing responsibilities with colleagues. Also, they support decisions which have been made by staff members, so long as they are based on solid evidence. Thus, Omani primary headteachers should be knowledgeable enough to have



confidence in judging and providing solutions for problems and conflicts in school. If headteachers are not aware of the best models of school leadership, then certainly they will act only according to routine and this is the main difference between managers and genuine leaders.

In conclusion, strong and outstanding leaders can only help schools to *work better* (Davies and Ellison, 1997).

### **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE**

This chapter highlights primary school leadership according to the available literature; this brings the ideas together in terms of the focus of this research (mainly evaluating the current practice of primary school leadership in Oman).

There are three major areas which were addressed in this chapter: tracing the historical background of primary school management and leadership in Oman, reviewing the current studies, in particular, at primary school level and reviewing relevant school leadership models. These may provide concrete information for distinguishing what the researcher decided to use as a framework for this research, which in one way or another can be associated with the proposed model as a framework. This framework is mostly based on the two complementary notions (transactional and transformational) of school leadership. These two models will be addressed in more detail in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This section provides a rationale for using the Transactional and Transformational (T&T Model) Leadership Theories as a theoretical framework. The researcher will discuss in brief what is meant by ‘framework’. Evaluation of the research framework will include a review of both the transactional and the transformational leadership theories and a clarification of their characteristics as illustrated in Table 4, p. 55. This section ends with a comparison between transactional and transformational leadership. In addition, a section on the action research framework will include a discussion on the need for a transactional/transformational leadership framework. It shows the researcher how to clarify the fitness and suitability of the selected framework to transform the existing practice of primary school leadership and to perform the new leadership tasks brought in by the current educational reform.

The researcher asks how and why to clarify the purpose of using his framework in this context, which is to describe the aims of the reform. The researcher will also explain why the transactional and transformational approaches will help to reach the goals of the Omani leaders efficiently and effectively. Critiques of the T&T Model will be addressed.

The development of the GES calls for assessing and enhancing new approaches in relation to updated theories and practices for the better development of Omani primary schools, above all. The available literature, as discussed in the previous chapter, supports the view that this framework of the T&T Model would serve the current educational development in Oman adequately (see Table 4, p. 55 and Figure 3, p. 271).

### **RESEARCH THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK CRITIQUES**

The current practice of primary school leadership in Oman is intended to be redefined and improved during the process of the educational reform of the General Education System (GES). In fact, what we have called school leadership in the GES could be considered as a driving force (transformer), because if the school leadership is practised efficiently and effectively, then it will provide the power to implement its ideals successfully. Hanks et al. (1986) state that ‘transformational’ is an adjective from the noun ‘transformation’ which means “*a change or alteration*” (p. 1615).

On the basis of a wide range of literature, the researcher was persuaded to use the factors of the T&T Model as an analytical framework for assessing and evaluating the practice of primary school leadership in Omani primary schools. This framework was selected because it

involves all school members in practising leadership and allows school leaders and teachers to share leadership activities. Also, it encourages all school members to choose wisely in problem solving, creativity and decision-making. Again, as discussed earlier, the T&T Model will be used in this research as an analytical framework or a scale to measure whether or not the existing practice in Omani schools is efficient and effective enough. However, the following sections will highlight both the strengths and weaknesses of this framework, as follows:

### **Strengths of the T&T Model**

This framework is expected to fit the Omani situation of transforming the existing practices and of coping with the new leadership challenges of the current educational development. It is evident that this framework *deals with change* and, perhaps, leads to change, as is required in primary schools in Oman (Leithwood et al., 1999). As mentioned above, the Ministry of Education started its current educational reform of the GES in 1998; hence, it is planned to create a proper school environment for the teaching/learning process which must gradually meet the goals of the year 2020. The government's targeted goals are, for example, preparing youngsters to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and modernising the school system. Therefore, Omani officials and primary headteachers should draw up leadership targets which serve those of the Omani government.

The T&T approach is a model which is concerned with making intentional progress according to the targeted goals of the organisation. In connection with the character of Omani culture, this model will enable school leaders, including primary headteachers, to manage change in the school system and even to welcome it, since transformational leadership deals with *sharing a creative vision and wisdom in development* (Hopkins, 2000). What is meant by a creative vision is that this theory requires school leaders to think creatively in ways which develop and advance their managerial performance and produce new ideas, trends, concepts and thoughts which might enrich school outcomes, e.g. making academic use as well as administrative use of the Internet. Also, what is meant by wisdom in development is that school leaders should be capable of making developments in school curricula and should understand how this can be carried out efficiently and effectively, e.g. by updating the contents of the textbooks, improving techniques of teaching and advising on more productive classroom management.

The researcher has chosen to recommend the T&T Model for several reasons. He believes that these theories will allow him to measure objectively the findings of the research, in particular, in terms of certain transformational leadership factors. Also, its factors are capable of assessing both the context of school leadership and the leaders' characteristics and attitudes

(personal and professional, see further discussion on assessing primary school leadership in Oman, Chapter 9, p. 200). In other words, what will be examined is whether or not the current practice of primary school leadership in Oman resembles that of the transformational leadership model (perhaps some features might be considered transactional). The current reform of the GES in Oman has been taking place since 1998, requiring Omani leaders (officials and practitioners) to cultivate suitable leadership practices for the new vision and mission of primary school leadership and should adapt it to this present century. However, the transactional factors which are associated with those of transformational leadership will enable the researcher to describe in full the desired framework of school leadership when considering the currently practised model in Omani primary schools.

For example, Bass et al. (1987) investigate the practice of transformational leadership in New Zealand and conclude that this type of leadership requires a headteacher who is charismatic (an idealised influence) and treats each subordinate as an individual, as well as being intellectually stimulating. In addition, Leithwood et al. (1999) introduce transformational leadership as productive in creating and sustaining modern schools. The last-mentioned writers carried out case-study research at Central Ontario 'Secondary' School (COSS) in order to explore the practices of transformational leadership, because this school;

*... has experienced significant change and improvement over the past ten years.*  
(Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 43)

This is a similar situation to the Omani primary schools which have undertaken continuous developments during the past three decades, particularly since 1998. Leithwood and his associates conducted their case-study at a different school level; however, they used part of the same framework as this research project. Using this research framework at different school levels may indicate its adequacy and productivity. Leithwood and his associates find that the transformational approach to leadership provides a comprehensive guide for change in a school. In other words, transformational leadership is considered as essential in ensuring change such as the COSS has experienced. Leithwood et al. (1999) state that:

*Transformational leadership entails not only a change in the purposes and resources of those involved in the leader-follower relationship, but an elevation of both – a change 'for the better'. (p. 28)*

Leithwood and his associates identify seven factors to describe the higher level of school management which transformational leadership brings. These are:

*... building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modelling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations;*

*creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 9)*

In connection with the above statement, modifying and transforming the existing leadership practices and integrating new ones require a framework of this kind to assess the effectiveness of school leadership practices. The assessment will be crucial for identifying the practice of Omani schools and measuring to what degree it is effective. Also, this framework will measure leadership productivity.

Similarly, in connection with the above argument, the researcher finds that the transactional leadership model can be brought in as a basis for transformational leadership approaches. This is evident from Southworth's study (1998), which states that:

*If transactional leadership provides the stability and continuity for a school to operate efficiently then transformational leadership builds upon this foundation. (p. 48)*

Furthermore, the researcher realises that the terms T&T Model need to be fully understood by Omani school leaders, including headteachers, in order to ascertain whether they suit the current development, and also whether they fit the centralised Omani system. This can be done by considering the situation of Omani school leaders who need to be creative, visionary and knowledgeable, on the one hand, and to run the development according to centralised guidelines and directives, on the other.

Regarding the current educational reform in Oman, it is a good time now that the current development process has started for Omani educationalists to think of adapting some useful transformational elements (to deal with current developments of the GES) since they may already have experienced those of the transactional model.

Oman for its part started its developmental plans by implementing the GES for reasons of educational development and this educational development has been reinforced since 1998. Therefore, the reform of the GES was introduced to prepare the youngsters to face challenges, for at least the next twenty years, until 2020. Thus, it is time for Omani primary school leaders to identify themselves as true educational leaders. Omani schools need to be provided with an efficient and effective style of school leadership which matches those eight dimensions of transformational leadership (quoted above, p. 49-50). In this regard, the school leadership is expected to exemplify an efficient and effective style for the task in order to ensure that Omani leaders gain benefit from this research project, transforming their existing practices and being prepared to implement the new leadership tasks of the reform.

In conclusion, the practice of the school leadership within the GES will be tested according to the factors of the T&T Model (see Table 4, p. 55). In this case, the research analytical (theoretical) framework is used to describe and measure the primary school

leadership in Oman and the way in which it can be transformed and identified. Omani educational leaders (policy makers and headteachers) are responsible for updating their own style of primary school leadership in order *to secure* the development of the GES and its reforms (AlHinai, 2000). The qualities required for both styles of leadership (the existing and the proposed leadership models) will be considered together in assessing the present practice of Omani primary school headteachers and gauging what qualities still need to be developed in their leadership practice.

In the researcher's belief, using the T&T Model as the preferred research framework, promises more insight into efficient and effective leadership than other frameworks do. This is supported by research conducted by Southworth (1998); he finds that the transformational leaders should be:

- ❑ *Open and transparent in their dealings with people, rather than manipulative;*
- ❑ *[Able] to treat people as persons rather than objects;*
- ❑ *[Able] to regard staff as colleagues rather than as sub-ordinates;*
- ❑ *[Able] to strive for the school to be a community rather than a purely instrumental organization;*
- ❑ *[Able] to be learners and educators developing themselves as well as others;*
- ❑ *To be inclusive in monitoring, evaluating and planning the school's improvements, rather than ... exclud[ing] colleagues and governors and restricting such dialogues to a privilege[d] group. (pp. 53-54)*

The above points surely will be accepted as desirable to adapt into the existing practices of the present headteachers in order to raise the standards of school leadership. As this section highlights some strengths of the T&T Model, the following section will argue its weaknesses.

### **Weaknesses of the T&T Model**

Southworth (1998) believes that some headteachers may not be in favour of losing some of their power, since the T&T Model urges them to delegate responsibilities and to empower their colleagues; unfortunately, this attitude would not help any reform of the educational system. In this regard, if the school leadership is shared then everyone becomes *powerful* (Southworth, 1998). This is true, but, perhaps, there are some headteachers who are strictly autocratic, if so, these headteachers must rethink if they want to benefit their schools by moving forwards in terms of transforming their behaviours and advancing the school system. If they are strictly autocratic, this would certainly affect school leadership practices.

Gunter (2001) cited Leithwood et.al. (1999) that the transformational model requires "*a broader and deeper approach*" (p. 70). However, this, for example, may offer a challenge to the Omani Ministry of Education in preparing primary headteachers to adapt the useful

elements of the T&T Model. In fact, this model is more *widespread* in Western countries (Gunter, 2001) rather than in the Eastern hemisphere. However, leading schools are the same, whether in the UK or Oman, especially when the government has called for a reform. It then becomes urgent for the school leadership to cope with the requirements of the reform. Clearly, the weakness here would be recognised if the educational system is remained too centralised in implementing reform.

Furthermore, West et al. (2000) argue that the transformational model requires cultural change. This might be hard to accept for Omani primary school leaders who may lack adequate authority. Similarly, Gronn (1996) identifies three core tasks which the leaders should own for cultural realignment: “... *articulating a vision, devising strategies to attain that vision and empowering followers*” (p. 21). Implementing such tasks needs the school leaders to be independent and empowered in order to be able to bring empowerment to their colleagues. This may be difficult to find in such a centralised system as Oman’s. However, it is not impossible to release limited but adequate authority to primary school leaders for fulfilling their responsibilities in serving the current reform in Oman.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) cite Gronn (1999) who thinks that the T&T Model brings together views of transformational and charismatic leadership. In this sense, the school leaders should be given enough authority and empowerment to enable them to transform their own schools in a way which is hardly found in the primary schools of Oman. However, it may become one of the current reform requirements, if the enthusiastic introduction by the Ministry is any guide.

In connection with school management, as discussed above, transactional leadership often represents an efficient style of school management. If weaknesses are found in using the transformational leadership model on its own as a framework for this research project, the transactional model could remedy them. Thus, the researcher has tried to cultivate the complementary concepts of these two leadership models in order to create a comprehensively productive, efficient and effective research framework to evaluate the existing practices of primary school leadership in Oman. Researchers argue that some weaknesses might occur in using the transformational leadership model, even though the transactional elements are implicitly included in it. Thus, the researcher has tried to include the transactional elements within the T&T Model implicitly and explicitly (see Table 4, p. 55 and Appendix 7, p. 323, Resource Tables 1 to 3). In this section; however, weaknesses might be occurred in using this model as a new guide to redefine and transform the existing practice and to implement the new tasks which have been introduced by the current reform of the GES.

### **Difficulties of adaptation**

The T&T Model can be seen as not fully fitting into the Omani educational system, because its school leaders are not yet ready for innovations. However, the Ministry of Education has heralded the idea of change enthusiastically. From this point of view, the Omani primary schools should now be ready for major innovations, since this reform has been in action in 1998. Despite the changes which might have taken place since the reform was started, possible weaknesses in accepting the partial adoption of the T&T Model should be considered. This model might be weakened in terms of the following points:

- The T&T Model does not consider specific ethical issues relevant to Omani society; however, it can support whatever issues exist in the schools' culture.
- The centralised system may not accept some elements of the T&T Model, in particular those elements which oblige the Ministry of Education to empower and provide school leaders with adequate authority in order to run their school, to some extent, in an independent way.
- Perhaps some Omani primary school leaders are not aware of this kind of school leadership model; thus, they need enough time to understand it and realise its implications. The Ministry should provide them with adequate partnership programmes for this purpose. It requires extensive preparation at the beginning when useful elements are being adapted which suit the Omani schools' conditions; this is a big challenge for the Ministry and the school leaders.
- It requires close attention from the officials; without this, there is no hope of improving the existing practice of primary school leadership as a way of serving the current reform.

However, transformational leadership engages the followers, but also it is its weakness to put greatest pressure on the leader. Furthermore, considerations drawn from the T&T Model are explained, as mentioned below, including such (transformational) factors as are needed for assessment. These last will be discussed in the following section.

### **ASSESSMENT SCALE FACTORS**

The researcher considers that the factors of the T&T Model serve as a framework to analyse the research findings. Table 4, p. 55, indicates the characteristics which are expected to be included, to some extent, in practising the existing primary school leadership in Omani schools; hence, the focus of this research is on redefining and transforming the existing practices of school leadership. Therefore, this section discusses the proposed model of school leadership which is associated with these assessment factors and offers it for consideration to Omani primary school headteachers as a suggestion to improve their performance.

As stated in Table 4, there are ten factors associated with a transformational leader's



attitudes (characteristics) which will be used to construct scales to measure the existing practice of primary school leadership in Omani schools. In addition, there are six further managerial factors to be found in transactional leadership, which are considered complementary to those of transformational leadership. The sixteen factors together will enable the researcher to explore the type of leadership practice and categorise practices according to scale factors shown in Table 4 (results and discussions are included in Chapter 9, p. 200; see also Appendix 7, p. 323). Altogether, these scaling and measurement factors are selected for the purpose of evaluating the existing practice and to measure the efficient and effective implementation of the new tasks of primary school leadership which have been introduced by the current reform.

The scaling and measurement factors are explained in more detail in the following sections.

### **Desirable school leaders' attitudes**

As discussed above, the factors of the transactional leadership are complementary to those of the transformational leadership; however, they represent a management perspective which in one way or other would be likely to lead to efficiency in undertaking school responsibilities. Table 4, p. 55, rows 1 to 6, column 1, indicates these transactional (managerial) factors. Taken together the transactional and transformational leadership factors can be considered as leading to effective leadership. Again, the transactional factors on their own will not lead to a desired leadership model for the Omani primary schools, as transformation is needed in addition to the existing leadership qualities so as to implement the new leadership tasks of the current reform; however, it should be complemented with the factors of transactional school leadership.

Considering the assessment of the research findings, the existing practice of Omani primary school headteachers can be measured against the transactional factors as well as against the transformational ones. Specifically, these transactional factors in headteachers' practice within the features of primary schools show that the schools are run on a centralised educational system, or might indicate that their practice is necessarily more a matter of *management* than of leadership (AlAdawi, 2002). In particular, here, the researcher focuses on combined factors; however, the transactional factors are included implicitly (as desired factors in the assessment) and may in fact, be considered as factors of both the transactional and the transformational (the T&T Model's factors). These factors will be discussed briefly in the following sections. Distinctively, the transactional factors have already been listed in Table 4 (see below), in which the sixteen subjected factors of the T&T Model are explained in turn.

**Table 4 - Transactional and transformational (T&T) leadership assessment factors**

<b>TRANSACTIONAL MODEL</b>		<b>TRANSFORMATIONAL MODEL</b>
<b>Rows</b>	<b>What Headteacher Does or Should Do</b>	<b>What Headteacher Does or Should Do</b>
1.	<b>Goals</b> (e.g. clarifies his/her subordinates' immediate goals that will enable the school to move forwards).	<b>Values:</b> (e.g. talks about his/her values, beliefs, hopes and aspirations for the school and its pupils).
2.	<b>Contingent Rewards:</b> (e.g. negotiates on exchange of one thing for another and provides rewards for good performance).	<b>Culture:</b> (e.g. works towards a participative and productive school culture that is supportive of change).
3.	<b>Passive School Management:</b> (e.g. intervenes with subordinates only if goals are not met).	<b>Vision</b> (e.g. a future for the school that is desirable, feasible and in tune with the new BES; builds on emotional commitment to this vision).
4.	<b>Smooth School Management:</b> (e.g. provides managerial and administrative expertise to maintain systems).	<b>Goals</b> (e.g. clarifies his/her immediate and long term goals that will enable the school to move forwards towards the vision).
5.	<b>Focus on Immediate Tasks and Duties:</b> (e.g. always busy but doing the 'little stuff' of leadership).	<b>Intellectual Stimulation</b> (e.g. encourages followers to take on new professional challenges).
6.	<b>Respect of the Rules:</b> (e.g. follows official guides and regulations).	<b>Individualised Support</b> (e.g. supports followers to build their own confidence and competence).
7.		<b>Inspiration/Motivation</b> (e.g. harmonises school and individual aims and motivates followers to contribute and to work towards the vision and goals of the school).
8.		<b>Best Practice</b> (e.g. shares leadership and good practice with followers).
9.		<b>High Expectations</b> (e.g. expects all pupils to graduate and staff to continue their own professional development).
10.		<b>Participative Decision Making</b> (e.g. involves followers in the processes of problem solving and decision making).
<b>Columns</b>		
1.		2.

Table 4 indicates a combination of transactional and transformational (T&T) leadership theory characteristics collected by the researcher from different sources (Northouse, 2001, pp. 131-158 & 196-198; Gunter, 2001, pp. 68-76; Bush and Coleman, 2000, pp. 22-24; West et al., 2000, pp. 32-36; Leithwood et al., 1999, pp. 9, 56-65, 68-69, 72-81, 83, 86-90, 105, 136-139, 143-144, 184-186 & 204-216; Day et al., 1998, pp. 66-67; Southworth, 1998, pp. 43-55 & 119-127; Southworth, 1997, pp. 43-44; Avolio et al., 1991, p. 13; Bass et al., 1987, p. 74;

Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987, pp. 650–653; Deluga, 1988, pp. 457-459).

The measurement scale levels which will be used to judge the existing practice of primary school leadership range from: (1) highly acceptable (**HA**) to (2) acceptable (**A**) (see criteria of constructed scale factors of transactional/transformational leadership model, below).

However, the following transformational factors are considered the most relevant factors and the transactional factors must be added to them. Therefore, the researcher focuses on these factors to provide a brief explanation of the scale factors which are included in Table 4, see column 2, rows 1 - 10.

### **Factors of transformational school leadership model**

#### ***Transformational Factor 1 – Values***

This factor is considered a higher category in the transformational leaders' appreciation of the quality of leadership and teaching. Also 'values' means something to be considered when one seeks to accomplish targeted goals as part of the leader's beliefs and treated as legitimate guidance to be followed (Leithwood et al., 1999). Such values are normally associated with social and religious respects (ECS, 1995). The researcher would think of morality as a valuable factor to be practised in schools as well as in society. Also, one's morality is seen as a personal quality to hold on to, as part of one's own personality. Leithwood and his associates (1999) point out that:

*A value is an enduring belief about the desirability of some means or action.  
(p. 105)*

In this regard, some of the features required of a headteacher could be examples of high morality; high pupil achievements; a high quality of teaching; school goal accomplishments; good parent-teacher relationships; leadership efficiency and effectiveness; teamwork; integrity in doing the job and a sense of responsibility. All the above-mentioned form the basis for values which should be considered in Omani schools and society in general. Also, Leithwood et al. (1999) point out the desirability of certain other values, as listed below:

*... commitment to the community; fairness; concern for the morality of decisions made in the school; commitment to family; being a 'good' person; being human; and ignoring personal biases. (p. 123)*

Also, values are crucial for school leaders who are in contact with members of the school in such areas as staff relationships and respect for others. One of the most important values for building the personality of transformational leaders is respect for knowledge. According to the work of Leithwood and his associates knowledge, is a highly valued possession for transformational leaders in primary schools (Leithwood et al., 1999).

In a sense, transformational leaders could be guided by their values when they consider

them as helpful and important for their progress and effectiveness as leaders. Also, Leithwood et al. (1999) note that values allow school leaders to accomplish their targets according to their personal and social values. Also, these authors claim that transformational leaders are very much aware of their values, habitually use them in solving school problems and also use them as alternatives where there is insufficient knowledge about a problem (Leithwood et al., 1999). For example, these writers state that:

*The leader who values efficiency and frugality in the running of schools may not 'hear' the community's expressions of willingness to spend more money on better education for their children. (p. 106)*

It is important to identify values for all types of leadership and administrative practices. For example, moral leadership requires a critical focus on values and ethics, social leadership is concerned with right and wrong, representing a treasury of values. Also, instructional leadership, if it is wise, articulates values which are directed from a democratic perspective (Leithwood et al., 1999).

### ***Transformational Factor 2 - Productive school culture***

Leithwood and his associates (1999) have conducted a study which shows that transformational leaders empower “*culture building*” (p. 30). Through a productive school culture, leaders should nurture a collaborative attitude for both staff members and pupils and should exemplify the way in which pupils should be treated *to achieve the best possible results*, including pupils with *special needs* (TTA, 1998; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999). Also, leaders should seek to focus attention on public *communication*, express cultural values which are shared with staff and which call, for example, for participation in community events and use bureaucratic mechanisms in support of these values (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Furthermore, in order to build an effective school culture leaders should share responsibilities and power, and should express trust in staff members' capacities to handle their jobs. Also, they should involve staff members and other groups in participating in decisions and providing them with opportunities to update their knowledge, for instance, through in-service courses or workshops in which help them do their job better.

In addition, transformational leaders should encourage staff members to reach high expectations of school productivity by creating teaching/learning environments and partnership programmes, specifying duties in relation to certain roles and *delegating* responsibility (Day et al., 1985).

### ***Transformational Factor 3 – Vision***

It is commonly agreed that charismatic leadership provides vision and a sense of mission. This is the way in which charismatic leaders gain respect and trust from their colleagues and followers. Leithwood et al. (1999) point out two types of charismatic leader: “*visionary*” and

*crisis-produced*” (p. 57). The visionary type seeks attractiveness and inspirational influence. The perspective of motivational theory is that:

*crisis-produced charismatic leadership enhances [the] followers’ ... beliefs. (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 57)*

In this regard, the transformational leaders of Oman should be able to describe a future for the school which is desirable, feasible and in tune with the new leadership tasks introduced by the current reform, in addition to the old tasks of primary school leadership which already exist in Omani schools.

Articulating visions means that transformational leaders should share their future vision of new opportunities with their colleagues. Developing a vision and sharing it could be done for the sake of accomplishing organisational objectives and goals, e.g. to modernise their schools by using computers in school management and in the teaching/learning process. Moreover, sharing a vision between the leader and the followers may require articulating similar ambitions and aspirations.

#### ***Transformational Factor 4 - Clarity of goals***

Within the current reform of the GES there are some goals considered necessary to achieve in order, for example, to raise the quality of leadership performance through improving pupils’ achievements and creating a better teaching/learning environment. Hence, the Ministry of Education has certainly set itself the goal of reforming such areas as reducing class sizes, replacing and improving teaching facilities, encouraging the use of computers and building *resource centres* (ME, 1997; ECS, 1995). The ECS (1995) add to this:

*The national development goals of the Sultanate of Oman require ... that national performance standards are equivalent to those achieved by pupils of comparable age in developed countries. (p. A4.1)*

Thus, pupils are at the core of a school’s goals since the headteachers are considered to be stakeholders. The ECS (1995) state that:

*The proposed educational reforms are designed to achieve the knowledge and mental skills and attitudes that young Omanis will need to learn and adapt to the very different future most of them will face. (p. 1)*

In this connection, if the targets of primary school leadership are to be achieved within the current educational reform, they should serve the aims of the teaching/learning process. In this regard, the headteachers can easily identify, understand and implement their leadership targets.

#### ***Transformational Factor 5 - Intellectual stimulation***

Here transformational leaders play the role of influential agents in order to widen the education of their followers. Also, leaders seek to plan events which will stimulate the

intelligence of their colleagues and set examples of careful problem solving. Thus, they should lead their colleagues to successful ways of thinking and raising their own personal accomplishments, as much for the sake of the colleagues as for the sake of the organisation. Of course, accomplishing goals related to school activities may require teachers to be skilful in tackling problems, for example, the problem of integrating co-operative learning techniques. These techniques require calculating how many pupils should be involved for the technique to be effective, to be under the control of the teacher and at the same time capable of creating an atmosphere of autonomy. All kinds of school activities need to be prepared and thought through in terms of their limitations and requirements. The sort of intellectual stimulation which develops the capacity of the team is described by Leithwood et al. (1999):

*... intellectual stimulation would be attempting to persuade a teacher that he or she has the capacity and support to attempt new grouping practices or to take on new professional challenges, such as leading a school team, providing some professional development to colleagues or mentoring a novice teacher. (p. 75)*

In connection with the above statement, Omani primary headteachers are urged to learn how to create a stimulating atmosphere within their own school and among their colleagues.

#### ***Transformational Factor 6 - Individualized support***

From the viewpoint of this factor, transformational leaders seek to support their colleagues and followers in tackling their own problems. Thus, the followers are supported in building their confidence;

*... for questioning their own beliefs and values and, when appropriate for solving the current problems confronting their organization. (Bass et al., 1987, p. 75)*

For example, leaders are concerned with the stress on teachers from teaching and managing their classrooms; therefore good leaders make an effort to support them in coping with such problems. In this case, school leaders should study teachers' needs and help them to deal with their *aspirations* and feelings (Leithwood et al., 1999). In addition, the concept of the above factor pays attention to all members of the school staff. This is why the transformational leader is different from others; the leader has a sense of influencing each member so everybody feels that he is close to him/her and pays him/her direct attention in return. This in turn creates an active and productive atmosphere in the school.

#### ***Transformational Factor 7 - Inspirational motivation***

Charismatic elements are considered as important in transformational leadership; they motivate colleagues and followers by providing ideas and projects which staff members are inspired to work towards, using power and authority to support their vision. In this way, the team's beliefs and behaviours change to parallel those of the leader. Being charismatic means that the school leader has an idealised influence in terms of supporting, encouraging,

engaging and involving the followers in the school's efforts. This type of approach allows the leader to create a very active school environment which in turn will make the school leap forward in its standards. Leithwood et al. (1999) state that:

*... transformational leadership is not considered to be synonymous with charisma, although charisma is often considered to be an important part of such leadership. (p. 56)*

Thus, transformational leaders influence followers' goals and *behaviours* and also motivate them (Leithwood et al., 1999).

In conclusion, effective leaders seek high expectations, use symbols to focus efforts and express important purposes in simple ways which all their followers can understand.

### ***Transformational Factor 8 - Best practice***

Transformational leaders are urged to achieve best practice for all the requirements of effective leadership. Thus, it is meant by *best practice* that leaders should implement all transformational factors in their practice of school leadership, such as stimulating colleagues intellectually in order to discharge their responsibilities in the light of knowledge and experience (Leithwood et al., 1999). Also, leaders become motivators for both staff and pupils, leading them to accomplish better results and achieve targeted goals, e.g. a higher quality of teaching/learning performance by engaging everybody in a productive programme of school activities. Furthermore, leaders should integrate the concept of sharing leadership with others. For example, school leaders may suggest that teachers should exchange experiences or new teachers be urged to shadow old teachers to gain the benefits of their experience. Thus, implementing transformational factors in school leadership enables teachers to perform well. In addition, leaders should be good problem solvers in order to highlight the important leadership capacity of destroying the barriers to good school practice.

### ***Transformational Factor 9 - High Expectations***

Leaders' expectations for the academic year apply to both staff and pupils. For example, their expectations of the teaching staff should be that teachers should accomplish their targeted goals in covering the course work in due time, and that pupils are all expected to graduate. Also, schools may set their expectations for more than one academic year; for instance, they may have a five-year plan. Also, headteachers' expectations include building up teachers' capacity to practise school leadership through their own jobs; for example, dealing with effective classroom management according to specific and clear objectives (e.g. to implement cooperative learning among pupils). Furthermore, headteachers must support teachers' practice of leadership when they become involved in carrying out their own tasks, giving each of them individual consideration. For example, Leithwood and his associates (1999) state that:

*... transformational leaders perform that task in ways that give special meaning to those directions for each member of the school. (p. 70)*

Omani school leaders should be aware of the individual consideration that transformational leaders provide for their colleagues. This will allow them to update their own style of school leadership by raising the quality of the consideration which they show to their staff.

#### ***Transformational Factor 10 - Participative decision-making***

Leaders and followers should work together for finalising agreements related to the mission of the school and the accomplishing of its goals. Therefore, both parties are responsible for contributing the best of their knowledge to the making of decisions which are crucial for school development and leadership effectiveness. However, the most active element in decision-making is the leader, because he/she always has the final responsibility for what the school does. Thus, allowing others to carry out their own decisions is required for effective leadership. Making decisions should be based on knowledge and logical analysis with sufficient evidence to convince others. Leithwood et al. (1999) state that decision-making may be captured in the following phrases:

*Structure-serving vision; collaborative but realistic; delegated authority and responsibility; problems as learning opportunities; flexible, targeted and problem-oriented; analytic; efficient. (p. 91)*

In conclusion, the above factor indicates that the transformational leader's attitudes rely on all the other leadership models; however, in connection with the above factor the leader should be democratic in creating visions and missions; hence, he/she should think in terms of team leadership by involving experts and other senior colleagues in designing school plans, projects and programmes.

#### **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR**

Many researchers found that the outcome of transformational leadership approaches in many developed countries ranked it highly among possible approaches to *facilitate* reform (Leithwood et al., 1999). This claim was also supported by a study conducted by Southworth (1998), who found that this approach is associated with successful school *developments* and reforms. Therefore, the scale which is based on the T&T Model will help the researcher to tell what level the practice of Omani leaders has reached. This chapter also completes the circle between what has been viewed of previous studies in the literature chapter and the methodology and methods which produced the data (see the following chapter).



## **PHASE THREE: CONDUCTING RESEARCH PROJECT**

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## **Chapter 5 - METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The methods which were used in this research project were chiefly 8 individual and 16 focus-group interviews in addition to a single sheet of questionnaire and the evaluation of relevant documents, the Evaluation Form for Headteacher's Performance and the guides of both the old and the new schools, in particular, the section on the headteacher's responsibilities (see Appendix 9, p. 344 and Appendix 11, p. 392). This gives twenty-four interviews in total, including both individual interviews and focus group interviews in this research (see Table 7, p. 83 and Table 8, p. 84). The methods were conducted within four out of the ten regions of Oman, Muscat, AlBatinah North, AlBatinah South and AlDakhiliah.

Individual interviews were carried out with General Directors (policy makers and administrative officials) in both the Ministry of Education (Central Office) and in the Directorates General in the regions of Oman. Also, Deputy Generals, Supervision Managers and some headteachers were also involved in individual interviews (exceptionally, only four individual interviews were conducted with headteachers).

The researcher intended to conduct focus group interviews with 124 headteachers; individual interviews in the regions were conducted with six Directors General, two Deputy Directors General and four Supervision Managers (these managers were requested to attend the individual interviews instead of the Deputy Directors General (DDGs)), since there are no official deputies in the Directorates General, according to the *Ministry's hierarchy* (ME, 1993).

The suggested length of each individual interview was 90 minutes, whereas each session of the focus group interviews was 120 minutes. Each focus group interview was held separately according to the gender of the interviewees, all headteachers; thus, each group (session) consisted of between 3 and 17 members. Each of the focus group interviews lasted longer than had been planned, for example, from 120 to 180 minutes.

Later in this chapter, the researcher will analyse why he chose both individual and focus group interviews and a semi-structured interview style (see p. 75).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher needs to keep in mind four ideas, in order to handle the term 'research methodology'. These ideas are: to understand the meaning of the term, its use in general terms, its use in specific terms and its use in relation to his own particular research. Each idea

possibly also includes several sub-ideas. They are as follows:

The first idea of understanding the meaning of methodology, possibly, can be divided into two aspects: its linguistic and research meanings. Hanks et al. (1986) state the linguistic meaning as follows:

*... the system of methods and principles used in a particular discipline. (p. 970)*

The statement mentioned above covers the way in which principles justify the use of certain methods for a particular research project. The research meaning can be divided into several dimensions: they are the interpretative-positivist dimension, the qualitative-quantitative dimension and the particular characteristics of the research in question. Cohen and Manion (1994) also describe the subjective-objective dimension. They go on to argue that the term methodology is used broadly for analysing assumptions related to the nature of the research process. It is important for researchers to be aware of their research approach, whether subjective, objective, or a combination of the two. Thus, methodology can be explained according to the nature of the research, whether it is a subjective approach; e.g. ethnographic, or an objective approach; e.g. quasi-experimental or experimental. Bell (1997) has a similar way of explaining the meaning of methodology according to the research methods: a subjective approach will tend to use qualitative methods whereas an objective approach will tend to use quantitative methods. This distinction helps the researcher to select the most *appropriate* methodology and methods for data collection (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992). Bell (1997) points out that;

*...understanding the major advantages and disadvantages of each approach is likely to help you to select the most appropriate methodology for the task in hand. (p. 13)*

Furthermore, researchers should be careful to describe and analyse the methods which they have chosen for their investigations; this makes it easy to ensure that the initial steps of the research are correctly followed. This may enable them to explore and discuss the chosen *methods related* to their own research (Butterfield and Davies, 1996). In this regard, the researcher should think of formulating reasons by answering the following questions:

*What are the advantages of the methods you have chosen? What are their disadvantages? What other methods might you use as alternatives? (Blaxter et al., 1996, p. 78)*

With these definitions in mind, the meanings of the methodology and methods should be clear (for this research has a nature of a survey). The researcher should be aware of each method's advantages and disadvantages, and this would help him to understand the strengths and the weaknesses of particular methods; e.g. individual and focus-group interviews. The questions mentioned above indicate that the researcher should always think of alternative

methods to use (for this research could be a case study in an alternative methodology). This probably will broaden his thinking about other possibilities of conducting fieldwork and may enable him to clarify the research objectives. Hence, the answers to these three questions should clarify the methodological perspectives. The researcher will take advantage of this chance to broaden the methodological perspectives and will reflect on them in the arguments for the methods finally chosen (i.e. individual and focus group interviews, questionnaire and document analysis).

In conclusion, the methodology is based on a description and justification of the reasons for selecting, *designing* and using certain *methods*, and then analysing data which has been selected because of its relevance to the targeted aims of the research (Blaxter et al., 1996, Wiersma, 1995; Cohen and Manion, 1994).

In this research, the prevalent approach is throughout qualitative, but for certain areas, quantitative methods supplement and support the qualitative findings. In other words, it is mainly qualitative and only to some extent quantitative, so it can be described as qualitative-quantitative in its approach or subjective-objective. It is subjective in its interpretation of its original information and objective in assessing its findings according to Table 4, p. 55, which is based on factors from the T&T Model. Furthermore, the data of this research was collected by using a survey methodology and the methods of interviews as well as a questionnaire (see Questionnaire 1, p. 71). The interviews were individual and focus group (see the methodological questions, Table 6, p. 68), whereas the questionnaire was designed to collect some personal and professional information about the interviewees. In addition, a document analysis method was used against the headteachers' responsibilities and an evaluation form for their performance (see Appendix 9, p. 344 and Appendix 11, p. 392).

### **The socio-anthropological and eclectic paradigms**

Sociologists and anthropologists have developed an anthropological paradigm, which commonly uses qualitative research methods. Researchers can assess anthropological research more reliably by using a process of triangulation. In other words, they use different methods to investigate the same evidence related to their research objectives. Anthropology is concerned with the study of human matters, events, relationships, religious beliefs and cases, activities and characteristics of social phenomena, here, the educational activities in Omani society. Primary school leadership in Omani schools is an aspect of human activity, relationships ... etc.

For hundreds of years, ever since an educational system existed in Omani society and was practised by the Omanis themselves, this system (i.e. traditional system) has had its own distinctive features, styles, and techniques (skills and competencies) in managing schools, as

well as in managing the entire educational system. All these features reflect the background of the educational system in Oman, which is based on the acquisition of knowledge. The knowledge which is derived from formal education is recognised as the heritage of Omani society which makes it rich in knowledge, and which can be researched. From this knowledge, the researcher can describe the culture of the past, its heritage, conventions and the life-style of the Omani people. Any of these areas is anthropological in nature. Therefore, this research focuses on one of the areas of Omani expertise: that is, the practice of primary school leadership in Omani primary schools. Thus, this research is within the anthropological paradigm and typically uses qualitative methods almost throughout, some quantitative data is presented in, for example, the form of tables, charts and figures.

This is the distinctive nature of this research. It takes the socio-anthropological approach, which is also the way in which this paradigm formulates questions defining the problems to be addressed. Accordingly, the researcher has been following this research approach to construct mainly a survey. This survey adopts two types of interviewees' perspectives (officials and primary school headteachers) in order to interpret their opinions inductively. Robson (1993) provides a thorough explanation of the qualitative research approach, as is taken in the present research.

This research is also eclectic in terms of interpreting the respondents' perspectives and at the same time by using the measurement scale factors of the transactional and the transformational leadership models (subjective-objective approach).

### **Identifying the research problem and aims**

The problem investigated in this research is stated in question form, testing the practice of Omani primary school leadership within the GES. The aims of this research project are threefold; aim 1 focuses on the background of primary school leadership (Key Research Question 1), aim 2 focuses on the practice of it (Key Research Questions 2, 3 and 4) and aim 3 is used to draw an assessment scale in a framework based on the T&T Model. Conversely, the factors of the T&T Model will be used to create a scale to assess the research findings. However, the assessment will match the research findings to those factors, but the scale is not to be considered a final judgment on the findings<sup>4</sup>. Rather, it is to be used as guidance in order to inform the research results. Therefore, the reason for using this scale is to report as suggested above on the approaches of the T&T Model by considering its factors in the scale (see Table 4, p. 55). Likewise, the research findings will be interpreted according to those factors or they may have their own interpretation confirmed by other research conducted into

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<sup>4</sup> The assessment scale is used as guidance, because certain issues, ethical, cultural and moral, which are relevant to the Omani society might be difficult to be assessed by this scale.

primary school leadership, whether in Oman or elsewhere. In order to recognise equivalent leadership approaches to that of primary school leadership practised by Omani primary headteachers, the researcher sought common characteristics in the literature which could be linked to the data from the fieldwork in order to clarify and classify the descriptions and define the special nature of Omani leadership. Also, the scale factors were selected to examine the current practice of primary school leadership in order to ensure the effective development of the current educational reform. Thus, as argued above, assessing the findings by the scale factors will indicate something similar, different or equivalent to those factors of the scale of the T&T Model.

**Table 5 - Key research questions**

1. What is the history and what are the values which underpin primary school leadership in Oman?
2. What is the practice of primary school leadership which is currently employed in Omani schools that are implementing the General Education System (GES)?
3. Does the practice of primary school leadership within the GES place enough emphasis on both achieving tasks and supporting staff who are implementing the GES?
4. What practice (model) of school leadership is needed to transform the existing practice and to implement the new leadership tasks which are introduced by the current reform of the GES in Oman?
5. What is the relevance of Transactional and Transformational leadership theories and other approaches to developing more effective primary school leadership and ensuring the success of the current development of the GES in Oman?

Table 5 includes the Key Research Questions; thus, the above questions formulate the research problem, which when answered will be able to modify primary school leadership as practised in Omani schools of the existing system, the General Education System (GES). This also implies what the researcher was trying to find out from conducting this research project.

To clarify the terms of the assessment, the first key research question concerns the history and the values of Omani educational leadership. Also, defining its qualities may show similarities or differences in its leadership style compared with styles in other countries, e.g. the way it deals with human relations (see Table 5, above).

**Table 6 - Methodological questions**

<b>SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS</b>	
<b>SCHEDULE</b>	
(90 Minutes for an individual interview and 120 Minutes for a focus group interview)	
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>What do you understand by school leadership in the GES?</b> (15/20 Minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please give details of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What is the History and what are the Values which underpin the primary school leadership in Oman?</li> <li>b) How do you implement school administration/leadership in your primary school (s)?</li> <li>c) Describe the implementation of school administration/leadership in primary school level of the GES.</li> <li>d) Who are responsible for implementing primary school leadership? Why?</li> <li>e) Male/Female leadership in primary school level.</li> <li>f) Other topics you wish to cover related to point one.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>What ideas has the GES introduced about primary school administration/leadership?</b> (15/20 Minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please give details of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Omani educational leaders' concept of school leadership</li> <li>b) Describe Omani school leaders' characteristics that are required for running primary school level of the GES.</li> <li>c) Describe school leadership that is required for the implementation in primary school level of the GES.</li> <li>d) What does the word a 'headteacher' mean to you? How and when do you consider him/her as an educational leader?</li> <li>e) What is the role of leadership do you play in relation to school leadership?</li> <li>f) Other topics you wish to cover related to point two.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>What practices has the GES introduced in relation to primary school leadership?</b> (15/20 Minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please give details of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Responsibilities for headteachers in primary schools.</li> <li>b) Responsibilities for deputy headteachers.</li> <li>c) Distinctive practices in primary school level considered as different from the other school levels in the GES.</li> <li>d) Could you tell me about the time you need in order to finish all the work you are supposed to do every day?</li> <li>e) Other topics you wish to cover related to point three.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Have you ever faced any difficulties or conflicts since the GES was introduced to Omani/your school(s) in relation to primary school leadership?</b> (15/20 Minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please give details of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What have been the difficulties or conflicts in managing the work of the school day by day?</li> <li>b) What specific disadvantages have already appeared in leadership practices in the GES at primary school level?</li> <li>c) How do you manage the work of the school if teachers are absent?</li> <li>d) Ineffectiveness in administrating school activities (ineffective implementation).</li> <li>e) Unawareness of school leaders (teaching staff) of their responsibilities.</li> <li>f) Do you think the GES will enable school leaders to be less effective? How?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g) Ineffective educational leadership guidance (Ministry of Education guides) which are followed in primary school level.</li> <li>h) Other topics you wish to cover related to point five.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. How can the success of school leadership within the GES in primary school level be ensured?</b> (15/20 Minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please give details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Effective implementation of school leadership/administration in primary school level</li> <li>b) Feedback from the field to the Ministry of Education (as Central Office) and the opposite.</li> <li>c) Effective educational leadership guidance (Ministry of Education guides) which are followed in primary school level.</li> <li>d) The ambitions for headteachers to become effective leaders in the future.</li> <li>e) School leaders' outstanding performance (e.g. managing workshops and seminars and presenting papers relevant to the work of the school).</li> <li>f) Effective leaders in the Central Office as well as in the Directorates General in regions.</li> <li>g) Do you think the GES will enable school leaders to be more effective? How?</li> <li>h) Effectiveness in administrating school activities (duties) (the extent of successful GES management/leadership).</li> <li>i) What specific advantages have already appeared in leadership practices in the GES at primary school level?</li> <li>j) Awareness of school leaders (teaching staff) of their responsibilities.</li> <li>k) Other topics you wish to cover related to point four.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>6. How can school leadership within the GES at primary school level be developed?</b> (15/20 Minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please give details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Upgrading leadership (administration) performance in primary school level.</li> <li>b) Professional training programmes for deputy headteachers.</li> <li>c) What do you need in order to perform your job more effectively?</li> <li>d) How could you improve your own effectiveness?</li> <li>e) What about your own professional development? What do you need in order to develop your practice and update your knowledge related to your own job?</li> <li>f) What are the most important ways in which you support your colleagues to perform effectively?</li> <li>g) School leaders and staff development programmes for upgrading their performance.</li> <li>h) Do you wish to add any new positions related to school leadership development? If yes, how do you link them to school leadership improvement?</li> <li>i) Other topics you wish to cover related to point six.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 6 includes Methodological Questions (detailed questions based on the big questions of the research) which were asked in both the individual and focus group interviews. These interviews were meant to be semi-structured in order to get as much information as possible drawn from the respondents' experience (Fisher et al., 1993, pp. 325 – 327). These questions were conducted in individual interviews with Directors General, Directors Deputy-General and Educational Supervision Managers, whereas focus group interviews were conducted with groups of primary school headteachers. These questions cover five areas associated with the Key Research Questions (the big questions of the research). These areas are: (1) respondents'



understanding of primary school leadership; (2) primary school leadership practices within the General Education System (GES), (3) difficulties or conflicts which face the present primary headteachers; (4) successes of which the primary headteachers are proud; and (5) officials' and headteachers' opinions of ways in which primary school leadership can be redefined, improved, transformed and perhaps developed.

The second key research question concerns primary school leadership practice within the existing schools of the GES. The third key research question concerns the impact of primary school leadership regulations on school leaders, especially headteachers. Questions about this were put to headteachers as well as officials. The fourth question concerns whether Omani leadership has placed enough emphasis on the tasks which are to be carried out to improve primary school leadership in connection with the current reform of the GES. The fifth key research question concerns the relevance of the T&T Model, in order to provide more effective and *productive* leadership (Leithwood et al., 1999) in relation to the Omani school environment.

All the above questions were split into sub-questions to explore their meanings more specifically (also they were translated into Arabic). Of course, they were conducted through the chosen methods, i.e. individual and focus group interviews, in order to address the research problem (see Appendix 1, List 1 - Arabic version of the Methodological Questions, p. 282).

In addition, the findings which were collected throughout the qualitative data were supported by collecting some quantitative data which might be crucial for filling in the gaps and serve as further evidence for discussion of the research findings. The quantitative data were planned to be collected on a single sheet of the questionnaire (see Questionnaire 1, below and also Questionnaire 2, an Arabic version, p. 284).

### Questionnaire 1 – Respondent’s Professional Information

Name (Optional)	School/Division/ Directorate	Present Occupation	Years of experience	Position Held
Promotions to Present Position				
Promotion 1	Promotion 2	Promotion 3	Promotion 4	Promotion 5
Promotion 6	Promotion 7	Promotion 8		
Last Degree Awarded	Institution / University	Specialist Subject	Year of Graduation	Country of Graduation
				Type of Study

Questionnaire 1 was used to collect some information that maybe the respondents would have hesitated to talk about. The respondents might have judged the information which was collected through this single sheet questionnaire to be personal and might have preferred to supply it anonymously, all primary headteachers were invited to focus group interviews. Their hesitation was evident by the fact that some of the respondents did not provide certain information such as their qualifications (see Chart 11, p. 196). This questionnaire was also used to collect information about established headteachers as well as about those who were

on probation. This aspect was held to be very sensitive; however, the respondents often offered crucial information relevant to it (see Chart 5, p. 88 and Chart 10, p. 194). This questionnaire was written in Arabic and distributed to the interviewees during the session (for more information about the Arabic version, see Questionnaire 2, p. 284). In addition, Questionnaire 1 indicates the fields of information which support the findings and which were collected through the methodological questions (see Table 6, p. 68).

### **PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING**

A purposeful sample is different from a random sample and each is used for a different purpose. The reason for using a purposeful sample is that qualitative research considers more specific cases as objects to be studied in depth, which call for “*a sample of information-rich cases*” (Wiersma, 1995, p. 298). Who are drawn from the population because they can yield plenty of data (e.g. the present Omani primary headteachers) and assumed to be valuable data sources in conducting qualitative research. The purpose of using a random sample is that it examines samples which theoretically represent the whole population accurately. However, a random sample is difficult to examine qualitatively for several reasons, such as that the researcher may not have access to an entire group, or it might be impossible to investigate individually a huge section of the population e.g. millions of pupils; or it might not be appropriate ethically. Therefore, a purposeful sample was judged to be better for this research.

The purposeful sample which was used to study both groups, consisting of officials and practitioners (Omani primary headteachers), presented separate cases but ones which are closely linked. This approach is used also because of the light which it throws on all levels of the research problem. Furthermore, the researcher became aware of the sorts of cases which were coming up. The researcher also became aware of the value of using purposeful samples when he wanted to select a proper sample for his enquiry into developing primary school leadership in Oman at present. Thus, he decided to focus on two major groups, officials and headteachers, in his study.

In conclusion, many qualitative research studies are conducted according to the scope of the study and generalisation is not a major concern. Purposeful sampling is used broadly in ethnographic research for studying cases “*in depth*” Wiersma (1995, p. 16) and this is what the researcher has targeted in focusing on two major and powerful groups of research population (officials and headteachers).

## **TRIANGULATION**

Triangulation is used to ensure the reliability and quality of information by examining the same research problem using different research methods. Triangulation was developed in socio-anthropological research as a means of checking the reliability of data. Using different methods or techniques for different audiences or resources of information can achieve this, e.g. information gained from the focus group was checked against information from individual interviews (such as were used with Directors General (DGs), Director Deputy Generals (DDGs) and Educational Supervision Managers (ESMs)). The interviews were used to focus; for example, on the reality of practising school leadership in Omani primary schools.

### **Necessity for using triangulation**

The researcher focused on two major groups as his research population; officials in the Ministry of Education and its regional Directorates General (policy-makers) and primary headteachers (practitioners). The researcher believes that these groups would play a major role in the development of primary school leadership. Thus, he decided to interview officials (individually) and headteachers (in groups), on the basis of strengthening the collected evidence by gathering both officials' and practitioners' perspectives. In addition, the researcher designed a single-page questionnaire (see Questionnaire 1, p. 71), which was used to gather personal and professional data to support his major research findings. Hence, he used a triangulation of methods, individual and focus group interviews with at least two different groups. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) define triangulation as follows:

*Qualitative researchers depend on a variety of methods for gathering data. The use of multiple-data-collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data. This practice is commonly called "triangulation" and it may also involve the incorporation of multiple data sources, investigators, and theoretical perspectives in order to increase confidence in research findings. (p.24)*

Thus, the researcher believes that triangulation is important from several points of view; it creates multiple points of access to the information needed for the research depending on the respondents' positions and it approaches the collection and analysis of data from different angles. Moreover, it allows the gathering of different perspectives among the respondents by the use of different methods.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

This section will focus on the particular methods which were chosen for use in this research. The researcher will try to explain the nature and describe the function of the selected methods.

## **Methods**

The meaning of methods have been described by Cohen and Manion (1994):

*... we mean that range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction. (p.38)*

For example, interviews are a type of method, which can be used for gathering data from different respondents in order to create an explanation from their responses, because different interviewees may produce different ideas. Also, methods mean collection tools, such as questionnaires, which can be also used for the purpose of gathering data.

In conclusion, methods mean different techniques or procedures which can be used for collecting information from a group of people or individuals, in order to enable the researcher to continue his investigation according to his research interests.

## **Interviews**

The interview is a method used for questioning individuals, pairs, or groups of people. It is commonly used in educational research, as well as in the social, medical, scientific, and industrial sectors. Also, it is used in both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Blaxter et al. (1996) state that;

*The interview method involves questioning or discussing issues with people. (p.153)*

In Blaxter's et al. statement, above, it is clearly mentioned that the interview can be used for discussing certain topics, as well as questioning and getting answers from respondents. The statement covers both an individual interview with an individual participant and a group-interview with two (pairs) or even a group of respondents. The individual interview does not normally include a discussion, because the interviewer should let the participant express his opinion on topics and items related to the research project, without any commentary by the interviewer. The individual interview style is clearly defined by Ackroyd and Hughes (1992) who state:

*Interviews are encounters between a researcher and a respondent in which an individual is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of the research. (p.100)*

However, the participant may misunderstand the meaning of the questions, or possibly the questions may not be clear enough for him/her; in this case, the interviewer can solve the problem by providing an explanation (this is an advantage of interviews over questionnaires). Furthermore, the interviewer may query any unclear answers, but should not argue about them. The group-interview allows more than two respondents to discuss and negotiate topics (this is an advantage of focus group interviews over the individual ones). In such an interview, the discussion was carried out by the respondents themselves, and the interviewer

plays his part by controlling the discussion; e.g. by facilitating the sessions of the focus-group.

### **Semi-structured interview**

The semi-structured interview employs techniques from both the structured and unstructured types. The semi-structured interview is described by May (1997), as being;

*In between focused and structured methods ... [using] ... techniques from both.*  
(p.112)

It is also a flexible method in managing the collection of information, because its requirements for questions allow selected-response or open-ended questions to be asked and also it allows the researcher to specify the questions, to use tape recording, to make a comparison between responses, and/or to use standardised questions as well. Moreover, this type of interview allows respondents to answer in a more free manner than the structured interview does and also allows the researcher to use more contrasting ways of gaining information than the unstructured interview does.

Furthermore, the semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to use a level of understanding of the conversation, related to the context and the content of the interview. In addition, there was no need to involving other people in the interviewing process (as assistants for the researcher for example); it was managed by the researcher himself, which also safeguarded the confidentiality requirement of the research.

In conclusion, the researcher had to be aware of the content in all the types of interview; this gave him more confidence to conduct and manage the semi-structured interviews, especially with individual interviewees and making slight alterations for groups of headteachers in order to suit the focus-group interview. Thus, the research questions were designed to suit both the individual and focus group interviews (see Table 6, p. 68).

### **Focus group interview**

The group interviews are commonly known as 'focus groups'. The researcher used this method to create an active atmosphere of discussing issues related to his research topic because respondents were able to draw upon their experience to speak on certain topics related to the practice of primary school leadership in Oman. This also enabled the researcher to generate information, analyse results and/or make a contrast between the respondents' opinions (officials and headteachers). Thus, focus group interviews required a number of respondents to hold a discussion on a certain aspect of the research topic, and respondents were invited to express their opinions following each point. In this case, the researcher would ensure that respondents reach a conclusion at the end of each part of the discussion. These decisions would help the researcher to make clear judgements on the results of the research

which would be collected from different groups on major points. May (1997) finds that:

*Group interviews constitute a valuable tool of investigation, allowing researchers to focus upon group norms and dynamics around issues which they wish to investigate. (p.113)*

The meaning of the focus groups is that stated by the BT (1997):

*A focus group is a method for gathering people to think creatively and to share openly their opinions about a chosen topic. (p.1)*

Both statements cover a more or less similar meaning for both group interviews and focus groups, so they represent one type of interview, which can be named the 'focus group interview'.

Moreover, the focus group method stimulated fruitful interaction between the members of the group and this enabled them to end the discussion with a finally agreed statement. Furthermore, this method allowed the researcher to extend the argument of each point within the limited time for the discussion in order to explore in greater depth the subject under discussion.

In conclusion, using the focus group interview allowed the researcher to gain experience in controlling meetings. Also, the respondents were allowed to express their views openly on primary school management and leadership.

### ***The location of the meetings***

The location of the focus group interviews had to be convenient for all the respondents within a reasonable distance between their schools and the located place. Also, it had to be air-conditioned in order to make the respondents feel relaxed during the meeting, because in general the weather is warm in Oman. Therefore, the researcher met the Directors General of the educational regions to discuss the most convenient location for meeting the headteachers in each region, and several locations were used for different meetings in the region.

### ***Meeting atmosphere***

Consideration was given by the researcher to creating a relaxed atmosphere for the respondents (headteachers) in order to maximise the chance to gain *positive results* (Wellington, 1996). The researcher believed that the atmosphere of the session would help the respondents to react positively. Indeed, respondents need to see the point of their participation; they need to see themselves as bearing a responsibility in developing the research (partnership). Also, it was reassuring that the respondents' reaction showed their interest in and concern for reform and willingness to discuss its benefits to the Omani primary school leadership. The researcher arranged refreshment for the respondents (drinks and snacks) to create a helpful environment for effective participation.

Finally, the researcher tried to provide a favourable environment for the respondents in

order to gain useful comments on the key topics of the research.

### ***The major points for discussion***

The main points for discussion were decided by the researcher. Each point covered a particular area related to primary school management and leadership, such as the responsibilities of the headteachers. The discussion also covered respondents' perceptions of what were reasonable and unreasonable responsibilities. Therefore, they raised several issues related to their responsibilities under each main point. In this case, each main point was discussed for a certain time; for example, a quarter of an hour or so was allowed to address each point and the need for flexibility in using time was kept in mind.

### **Document analysis**

The document analysis was based on official publication sources in the Ministry of Education which were produced for headteachers as guidance in the existing school system, the GES. In addition, some consideration ought to be given to the new publications relevant to the current reform of the GES. These documents describe headteachers' responsibilities. Also, a form for evaluating headteacher's performance was included in the assessment, see Appendix 9, p. 344.

In conclusion, the purpose of analysing official documents is to supply the necessary information through analysis of the documents. This supported the findings through a triangulation of the research methods (see Questionnaire 1, p. 71 and Questionnaire 2, p. 284).

### **RESEARCH VALIDITY**

This research was conducted within the society of Oman, and it is based on the conditions of primary school leadership and the management practice of the existing schools of the General Education System (GES). This system is thought of as the old system; the new system, still in process, has been running since 1998, and of course the old system is influenced by this development, which is meant to be a reform in the educational system covering the whole of Oman. To be precise, this study concentrates on primary school leadership activities: roles, regulations and responsibilities related to Omani society and its culture. Also, it is concerned to evaluate the practice of these activities. In addition to the care taken in designing it, the validity of the research is safeguarded through the link between the research problem (how primary school leadership in Oman can be developed in regarding the current reform of the GES) and the questions that were used in trying to solve it. The researcher can claim that his methods enabled him to find out what he needed from the research questions. Of course, he was fortunate to find respondents who could give detailed and reflective answers. In a while, the researcher was also enabled to assess whether the



methods he used measured what they were *supposed to measure* (Bell, 1997; Blaxter, 1996). In addition, the researcher arranged his questions in the interviews in a sequence which built up a coherent sequence of ideas in the responses. The coherence of these ideas helped him *to generate related data* and explore the concepts and opinions which the interviewees provided (Hart, 1998). This also helped him to discern major themes which are included in the analysis chapters. Indeed, individual and focus group interviews were both effective methods for exploring relevant data, which in turn provide answers for the research problem through the data analysis.

In conclusion, the methods are judged to be valid if the tools measure accurately what they are supposed to measure.

### **RESEARCH RELIABILITY**

Research reliability is shown by the consistency with which similar answers come from respondents asked the same questions at different times or by different researchers. In other words, it is shown by using *accurate instruments*, which provide similar information for the same questions asked at different times (Wiersma, 1995). These instruments should show the reliability of the research if the designed questions are used in different locations and also in different seasons, e.g. autumn and winter, because they provide similar answers. The similarity of answers means that the answers, though not exactly the same, should cover similar related points or ideas. It does not matter if the answers bring different opinions, but they should always cover the main points needed for each question. All that has been mentioned above was confirmed by the researcher as he investigated data from both groups, drawn from individual and focus group interviewees.

Cohen and Manion (1994) draw attention to the possibility of *increased reliability* of the interview when a higher control of its questions is generated.

In conclusion, reliability is shown when triangulation confirms one set of data by another.

### **EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTIONS GAINED FROM CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH**

This research passed through several stages in exploring the needs of the Omani Government, as represented by the Ministry of Education. These stages included sharing the officials' perspectives when they considered whether they would agree to this proposed research. The following sections will highlight, in brief, the different stages of gaining experience from conducting the research.

#### **Considering officials' perspectives**

At an early stage of writing up the research proposal, the researcher took the decision to study and examine the practice of school leadership within the GES. The researcher had

received permission to interview the targeted population. He had received official approval for his proposal and letters of introduction to the targeted officials and headteachers.

Previously, the researcher had to take an official letter addressed “To Whom It May Concern” from his sponsor, the Ministry of Higher Education, to the officials of the Ministry of Education (see Letter 4, p. 286). This was considered necessary to inform the officials in the Ministry of Education about the focus of the researcher’s study and also in order for him to be provided with official letters to the selected population (respondents) in different locations in the targeted regions.

This research required the researcher to have access to these locations in order to meet the respondents, e.g. headteachers. Hence, the researcher spent a considerable time seeking official permission for his fieldwork. However, the officials in the Ministry of Education needed time (four weeks) to decide in favour of the research proposal as agreed. Later on, the researcher was ‘directed officially’ by the Ministry of Education to study the practice of primary school leadership within the existing schools of the GES. The researcher was in regular contact with his supervisor (by telephone and e-mail); he discussed the Ministry’s agreement and received encouragement from his supervisor, to proceed in accordance with the Ministry’s plans.

Receiving official agreement for the researcher’s study of primary school leadership in the GES allowed him to make some progress in reproducing his materials, such as research questions, in a form which would suit those respondents who deal with the GES schools. Therefore, the researcher was asked to submit an Arabic version of his research questions to be attached to the official letters and sent to the respondents in advance (see List 1, p. 282).

Also, the official directive indicates two major points which have been suggested in the official letter (see, Letter 5, p. 287). This letter indicates the officials’ perspectives in the Ministry of Education. The first point is that the Ministry of Education welcomed a study on this topic. The second point is that most Omani schools still run under the GES; therefore, the researcher felt that he would prefer to study the current practice of primary school leadership within the GES rather than to study the same topic within the model schools of the current reform (i.e. new schools of the Basic Education System (BES)). The reason for this is that if he did so, he would not spend time on “show schools”, the model schools were set up to show the latest educational advances, but would concentrate on schools where conditions were typical of those in charge of the vast majority of headteachers. The officials agreed that this research into the existing schools of the GES is needed in order to contribute a developmental feedback. In addition, it seems clear that the model schools of the current reform are not yet ready for evaluation or examination and also they are considered to be a diversion from the

developmental process for the GES, whereas studying the practice of school leadership within the GES itself may provide genuine results for developing the GES as a whole.

This procedure was adopted for both the pilot study and the fieldwork. According to these official letters, they had to send the circulars informing the respondents and invite the headteachers to the focus group interviews. This was done according to agreements between the researcher and the DGs.

### **Procedures required**

Furthermore, the researcher used two main ways of communication: he made a first visit to those who were nominated for individual interviews, e.g. Directors or Deputy Directors General and he spoke to the Directors General, since they are considered responsible for what their employees do (e.g. headteachers), asking them to send circulars to the primary headteachers (see the actual population in comparison with the targeted population, Chart 1, p. 82). The researcher always followed up the official letters by his own letters, in particular when he received no reply for a week or two to the official letters to the DGs which had come from the Ministry. This enabled him to remind the DGs, for example, to reschedule the focus group interviews. Frequently, in his letters he suggested certain dates for the focus group interviews and also indicated that the suggested dates could be fitted into the DGs' schedules, so that they could at will use or change the dates suggested at first (see the researcher's letters to the DGs, Letter 12, p. 298, Letter 15, p. 308, Letter 16, p. 309, Letter 19, p. 312, Letter 21, p. 314 and Letter 25, p. 320). The researcher tried to get circulars published as early as possible in order to minimise delay when arranging sessions. Normally, letters to schools need to propose a date at least a complete working week in advance in order to be sure that all respondents, especially headteachers, would have received the research questions in time (the researcher had attached a covering letter and the research questions with related circulars to distribute). He also supervised the distribution of those handouts to school mailboxes. Usually, schools collect materials sent from the Directorates General on certain day according to a fixed sequence.

### **The pilot study**

Conducting the pilot study took almost ten weeks (16<sup>th</sup> January – 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2000). Mostly, this period of time was spent in obtaining official agreements for conducting the research in Omani primary schools and gaining permission to visit the respondents in their locations. Indeed, the researcher learned some fundamental lessons from the piloting, which enabled him to be better prepared for conducting his fieldwork. For example, he learned how to arrange both individual and focus group interviews, to lead the sessions, to test audio and videotape procedures for recording and to set time limits for discussion either during the

discussion related to each targeted theme or during the session itself. In addition, the researcher learned how to negotiate agreements with DGs in order to conduct focus group interviews at the proper time and place. Finally, he learned how to communicate better with all kinds of respondents, whether officials or practitioners (headteachers).

The researcher focused on the Directorate General of AlBatinah South as a whole for conducting the pilot study. In this region he conducted two individual and two focus group interviews. However, he also decided to spend some time in this pilot study interviewing other individuals in AlBatinah North and in the Central Office, the Ministry of Education. There were thirty-three people (40%) in total involved in the pilot study (see Chart 1, p. 82).

Also, the researcher had to reschedule his plan as a result of unexpected circumstances, such as official delays and those due to religious holidays, etc. Thus, the researcher decided to extend the number of individual interviews with officials from ten to twelve (see Table 9, p. 85).

Furthermore, the researcher had decided to conduct a pilot study in order to test the methods which would be used for data collection. This allowed him to see whether his methods would work as well as they ought. Thus, piloting allowed him to understand better how to plan his methods. Robson (1993) supports this:

*The first stage of any data gathering should, if at all possible, be a 'dummy run' – a pilot study. This helps you to throw up some of the inevitable problems of converting your design into reality. (p. 301)*

In conclusion, piloting helped the researcher to ensure that the methods had been designed well. It also indicated the strengths and weaknesses of using the selected methods, i.e. individual interviews and focus group interviews. Moreover, conducting a pilot study enabled the researcher to raise the quality and reduce the vagueness of the collected data.

### **The fieldwork**

Conducting the fieldwork took almost fourteen weeks (19<sup>th</sup> May – 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2000). Like the pilot study, the fieldwork was interrupted by a religious holiday. As a matter of fact, the fieldwork ran smoothly in the sense of the necessary official letters having been delivered before the researcher conducted the pilot study. However, schools were busy at the time in preparing for and holding final examinations for the academic year 1999/00. Also, the summer vacation fell between June and August and schools were due to start a new academic year in September 2000. The actual period of the fieldwork was between June and September. The researcher tried to conduct all the focus group interviews before the end of the academic year 1999/00, but there were some still left at the beginning of the new academic year, 2000/01. He had planned to interview individuals during the school vacation and to transcribe previous interviews then, to make best use of his time (for more detail, see Chart 1, below).

**Chart 1 - Research population contrasting the pilot study with the fieldwork groups**

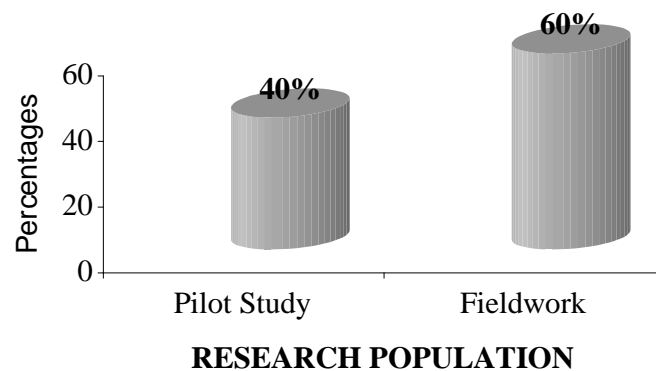


Chart 1 indicates a contrast between the population of this research project who were involved in the pilot study and those in the fieldwork. As expected, the number who contributed to the fieldwork is higher than those involved in the pilot study; however, it was expected that there would be some difference between the two populations. The reason that this difference is so small is that some of the people who were invited to take part in the fieldwork were not able to attend. However, to waste none of the data, they were drawn from both the pilot and the fieldwork sessions.

Individual interviews were granted by the DGs, DDGs and the ESMs; however, the researcher also conducted some individual interviews with headteachers in the pilot study (there were four headteachers; one male and three female).

The time taken was 60 minutes for each individual interview in the pilot study, but changed to 90 minutes in the fieldwork, also the time for each focus group interview was extended in the event to 180 minutes. However, many sessions exceeded the assigned time for each session, both in individual and in focus group interviews.

In addition, this makes a total of sixteen people interviewed as individuals and sixty-six who were involved in focus group interviews (see Table 8, p. 84). In other words, there were altogether twelve officials and seventy practitioners (male and female headteachers, see Table 9, p. 85). Moreover, the interviews which were conducted in the pilot study become an expansion of the fieldwork agenda (see the dates of the sessions, Table 7, below).

**Table 7 - Dates of the individual and focus group interviews**

		<b>Individual Interviews</b>		<b>Focus Group Interviews</b>	
<b>Rows</b>	<b>Dates</b>		<b>Dates</b>		
	<b>Officials</b>	<b>Headteachers</b>	<b>Headmasters</b>	<b>Headmistresses</b>	
1.	8/3/00	14/3/00	27/3/00	28/3/00	
2.	18/3/00	21/3/00	13/6/00	18/6/00	
3.	25/3/00	22/3/00	17/6/00	21/6/00	
4.	26/3/00	27/3/00	4/9/00 (missed)	5/9/00	
5.	27/6/00		5/9/00		
6.	28/6/00				
7.	9/7/00				
8.	9/7/00				
9.	9/7/00				
10.	18/7/00		<b>Individual and focus group interviews Total</b>		<b>24</b>
11.	24/7/00				
12.	26/8/00				
<b>Subtotal</b>	16		8		
<b>Columns</b>	1.	2.	3.	4.	

Table 7 indicates the dates for the individual and focus group interviews in both the pilot study and the fieldwork. It indicates also that the researcher spent a considerable time in convening the headteachers' groups.

In conclusion, the researcher was directed by his academic supervisor to use a focus group method; however, he was not sufficiently aware at first of how useful such a method could be, so it was a kind of challenge for him in conducting his research. The researcher became more interested later in using this kind of method, but it is an uncommon one in Oman. Therefore, he found one Director General who was unwilling to bring all his primary headteachers together at once, for example, to invite all headmistresses to meet on a certain date and to do the same for the headmasters (each group had to be invited separately). Possibly the DG was worried about so many schools lacking headteachers for the sake of focus group interviews. What this shows is that the headteachers were not supported by assistants to take over when they were absent; hence, the Director General's nervousness about releasing the headteachers. As a result, he reduced the number of people he would allow to attend the focus group interviews. Despite his reluctance, this method was successful in gathering together various perspectives from both male and female headteachers. It can be described as a seminar or workshop. It creates an interactive atmosphere and might suit any group with shared interests, not only headteachers. Nevertheless, the agenda was tightly controlled by the researcher and all interviewees showed their appreciation of what he was doing.

**Table 8 - Conducting individual and focus group interviews**

Rows	Individual Interviews		Focus Group Interviews	
	Officials	Headteachers	Headmasters	Headmistresses
1.	12	4	31	35
2.	16		66	
Columns	1.	2.	3.	4.

Table 8 indicates the research population who contributed in both the individual and focus group interviews, both officials or practitioners (headteachers). It also shows that some headteachers were involved in individual interviews and this reflects that could not participate in the sessions of the focus groups. However, the researcher understood that circumstances made it impossible for some headteachers to attend the focus group interviews.

### **Reviewing information**

This is an essential step for the researcher and this process (reviewing the collected information) enables him to identify the information he seeks, according to the methodological questions. In addition, he could also review his data in order to double-check the information related to the targeted aims for his study.

### **Collecting data**

At this stage, the researcher prepared appropriate methods for investigating the research questions precisely and concisely. Indeed, it is an important step which involves selecting the proper tools (chosen methods), designing them specifically, testing them carefully through a pilot study, and using them in an acceptable manner. Also, the researcher prepared himself properly for using these tools, aware of his role as interviewer and aware of the particular skills (techniques) needed for putting his interviewees at ease (e.g. using sufficient number of amplifiers, microphones and, most importantly, creating a relaxed atmosphere for the interviewees; for example, by providing refreshments).

### **Analysing data**

This step follows the collection of data from both the pilot study and the fieldwork and at this stage the researcher had to have a full understanding of the chosen tools in order to ensure the proper analysis of the data (see interview samples in Appendix 8, p. 326). He used some of the techniques adapted from the Nudist-Invivo (a computer package of analysing qualitative data), SPSS package for analysing quantitative data, the Excel computer package, spreadsheets and word processing for computer applications.

### **Drawing conclusions**

The last step of the research process is to draw conclusions. At this stage the researcher felt able to draw conclusions about his data as he always guided himself by directions drawn from other writers' experiences (e.g. Wiersma, 1995).

Finally, the research process helped him to organise his study and steer it in the right direction. These steps divided his study into periods of time, with each period having an estimated time for completion.

### Overview of conducting the research

The following four chapters focus on data analysis and discussion of the research questions which were prepared for the individual and focus group interviews, conducted in both the pilot study and the fieldwork (see Table 5 - Key research questions, p. 67 and Table 6 - Methodological questions, p. 68). There were two major groups used as a key population for this study, who were expected to enrich the findings of this research project: the officials of the Ministry of Education, including officials of the different Directorates General in the targeted educational regions of Oman and the primary headteachers within the GES. Consequently, officials and some headteachers (if their special circumstances allowed it) were involved in the individual interviews; whereas only headteachers were involved in the focus group interviews (see the actual population of this research project, Table 9, below, also for more details see Chart 2, p. 86).

**Table 9 - Actual population distribution**

<b>THE CENTRAL OFFICE AND TARGETED REGIONS</b>							
<b>Rows</b>	<b>RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>Muscat</b>	<b>AlBatinah North</b>	<b>AlBatinah South</b>	<b>AlDakhiliah</b>	<b>Ministry of Education (Central Office)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1.	Headteachers	12	18	25	15		70
2.	Officials	2	2	2	2	4	12
3.	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Columns</b>		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.

Table 9 indicates the practitioners (headteachers) who represent the bigger population among the interviewees of this research project, the remainder being the population of officials (policy makers and official administrators).

Headteachers represent a higher percentage (85%) than the officials, because they were targeted to be involved in greater numbers to serve the focus of the research study and also because there are more of them than the officials (for more information, see Chart 2 and Chart 3, below).



**Chart 2 - Actual population of the research project**

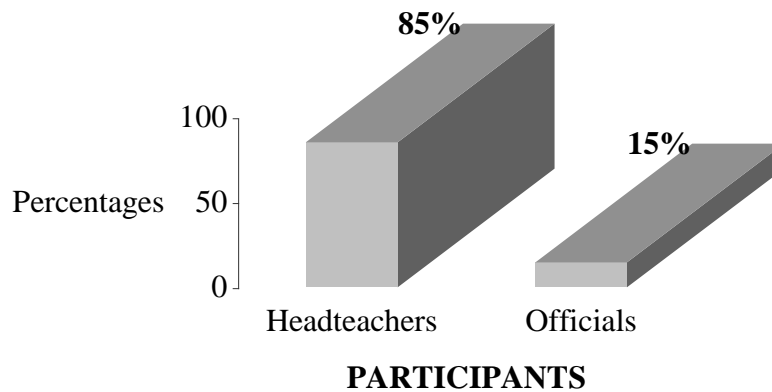


Chart 2 indicates the actual population of this research project divided into two groups; officials (policy makers and official administrators) and practitioners (headteachers). This chart is adapted from the researcher's paper which was presented at BELMAS Annual Conference 2001.

In addition, this chart also shows something of the conditions for conducting fieldwork in such a research project. It indicates some possible percentages which can be approached among the targeted population; hence, this reflects the nature of the educational research project.

**Chart 3 - Targeted population of primary headteachers**

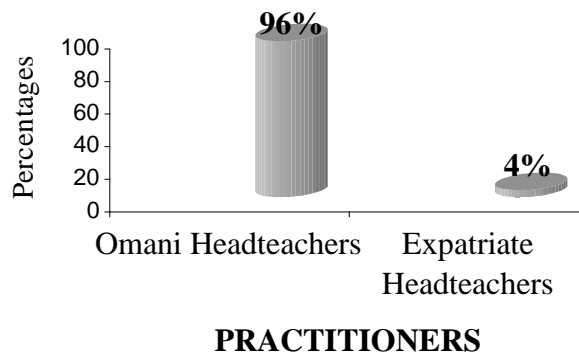


Chart 3 indicates the whole population of primary headteachers, whether Omani or expatriate; hence, the vast majority of those in the actual population were Omanis. This means that this research would investigate vital information which represents the Omani headteachers' perspective in terms to transform the existing practice of primary school leadership.

However, it has been possible to study a reasonably high percentage of the targeted primary schools and to have interviews and discussions with a great many of the targeted primary headteachers. The targeted schools were concentrated in the four regions mentioned above (see p. 63, see also primary schools in the targeted regions compared with those in the

unstudied regions in Chart 4, below).

Consequently, the targeted population of the primary headteachers is 59 percent of all Omani and expatriate primary headteachers in the country and this also represents the targeted number of primary schools. In other words, the targeted headteachers numbered 124 respondents from the same number of schools. None of the schools was represented by more than one person, i.e. the official or the acting headteacher. Moreover, the targeted population of headteachers was divided into two groups: Omani (96%) and expatriate headteachers (4%, see Chart 3 above).

Of course, those who represented their schools were considered to be headteachers, whether official or acting. The official headteacher, it should be explained, is the person who officially holds the position of headteacher whereas the acting headteacher is someone who is on probation for the position of headteacher. Remarkably enough, it was found that the percentage of acting headteachers was higher than those who were considered official headteachers (see Chart 5, p. 88). This means that the majority of primary headteachers were not yet fully confirmed post-holders.

**Chart 4 - Primary schools in the targeted regions compared with those in the unstudied regions**

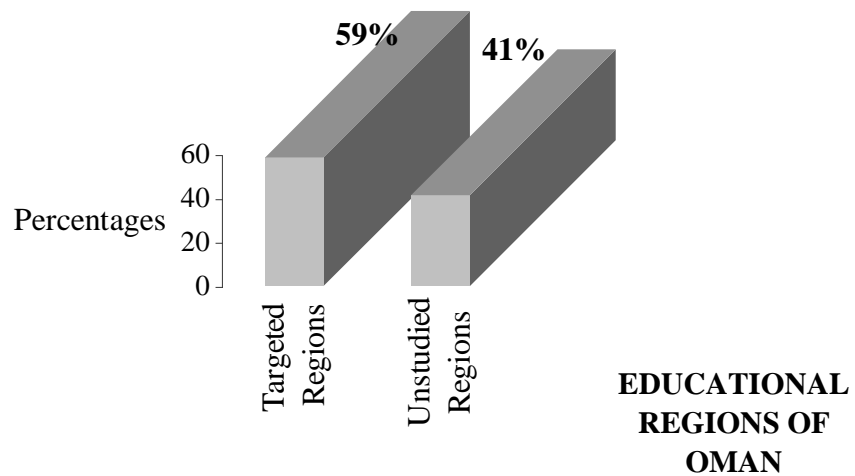


Chart 4 indicates the percentages of primary schools in the targeted regions of this research project and in the remaining educational regions in Oman (outside the present study). Also, the chart shows that a higher percentage was targeted to be covered by the scope of this research. This chart shows that the research project targeted a large proportion of the primary schools for study. This chart is modified and adapted from the researcher's paper which was presented at the Annual Conference of BELMAS 2001 (see Appendix 10, Paper 3, p. 369). It is also based on information gathered from the list of the targeted primary schools of this research project, provided to the researcher officially from the Ministry of Education,

Altogether, Chart 3, p. 86, Chart 4, p. 87 and Chart 5, see below, provide basic information about the population of this research project; hence, they provide the reader with a clue to the way in which this research was conducted.

Clearly, the questions of this research were drawn from five major areas which match the aims of this research (Table 5 - Key research questions, p. 67); they are as follows:

- Respondents' (officials' and primary headteachers') understanding about primary school leadership (questions 1 and 2).
- Primary school leadership practices within the GES (question 3).
- Difficulties or conflicts which face the present primary headteachers (question 4).
- Successes of which the primary headteachers are proud (question 5).
- Officials' and headteachers' opinions of ways in which primary school leadership can be developed (question 6, for more information about the methodological research questions, see Table 6, p. 68).

**Chart 5 - Staffing in the targeted primary schools**

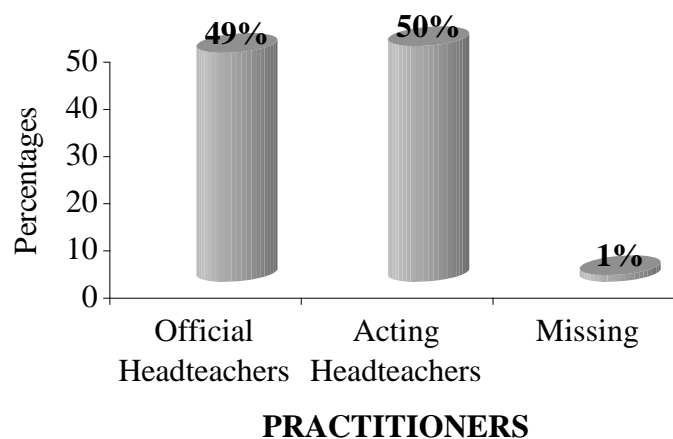


Chart 5 indicates two major possibilities for school leaders: official headteachers or acting headteachers (on probation). Those acting as headteachers have the actual rank of deputy headteachers and sometimes even teachers. This chart is modified and adopted from the researcher's paper which was presented at the Annual Conference of BELMAS 2001 (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2001, p. 4).

In the following four chapters presenting, analysing and discussing the data of this research project, there are several tables and charts which indicate the findings of this research project. For the most part, the tables indicate the qualitative data, whereas the charts indicate the quantitative data (the quantitative data are set out to support the qualitative

findings).

In addition, each factor of the research findings has its own distinctive topic and also its own serial number, e.g. 1, 2, 3 and so on. Moreover, each factor should be complementary to those in the indicated tables (in Chapters 6, 7 and 8). The factor serial numbers do not overlap. For example, only one factor is designated “factor 1” in the thesis. This is intended to help the reader to find the indicated factor easily. There are forty-four factors of the research findings in total which were explored from the data in the answers to the key research questions. Again, the following four chapters will present the data and analyse and discuss the findings (see Chapter 6, p. 91 to Chapter 9, p. 200).

#### **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FIVE**

The methodology and methods chapter highlights experiences and reflections gained from conducting this research, such as considering respondents’ perspectives, in particular the officials of the Ministry of Education. In addition, there is an explanation of the research paradigm (mainly subjective but in part objective, which can be also described as eclectic) which is used in this research project. Furthermore, this chapter also introduces the procedures which were used for both collecting and analysing the data. Particularly, the following three chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) will report on the collected data with some clarifications, quotations and examples.

## **PHASE FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTED DATA**

### *Contents*

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- **Chapter 7 – PRESENTING THE PRACTICE OF OMANI PRIMARY SCHOOL  
LEADERSHIP** p. 125
- **Chapter 8 - REDEFINING AND TRANSFORMING THE PRACTICE OF  
OMANI PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP** p. 181

## **Chapter 6 - EXPLORING PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN**

### **ANALYSING THE FIRST THEME: EXPLORING PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND ITS VALUES AND CULTURE**

*... the important thing is that there should be education, even [in] the [shade] of [a tree]. (MI, 1995, p. 23)*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The following sections will highlight the respondents' opinions on their own leadership, as practised in primary schools of the General Education System (GES). This section focuses, as mentioned above, on the first theme and its two sub-themes. Tables 10, p. 94, 11, p. 100, 12, p. 106, and 13, p. 117, indicate major points which the researcher derived from the respondents' comments. These major points will be explained and clarified according to each area, arranged under headings, such as leadership; its values and culture (headteachers' professional characteristics) and educational management. Thus, in most cases the researcher will use the term 'school leaders' to refer to 'primary headteachers' because they are contributors to this research and the key element of the population.

Some quotations from the respondents (officials from the Ministry of Education and headteachers) will be presented and discussed according to the similarities and differences between their perspectives and finally critical comments on them will be made.

The Exploring Leadership theme may lead to many answers for researchers and perhaps would go beyond many writers' scope in describing primary school leadership in Omani schools. Indeed, current leadership reflects a powerful sense of the actions taken on the basis of school developments and national reforms. Some writers claim that *the focus of leadership in education is quality learning* (Dimmock, 2000), or *transforming schools to achieve effectiveness and efficiency* (Leithwood, 1999; Davies and Ellison, 1997; Northouse, 2001). Indeed, what the above researchers have discussed must be considered within the current development of the current reform of the GES. This should be the case within these educational developments, which also should support the modernisation of primary schools to face the challenges of the third millennium, such as meeting the Omani government's goals of preparing the new generations of pupils to tackle the economic and labour market challenges.

The first sub-theme of Exploring Leadership is values, which is based on traditions and principles which the headteachers make a priority and also informs the practice of leadership, and this practice may in turn lead to theory-based knowledge emerging from the Omani

culture. Thus, the respondents are encouraged to hold a debate on the relevant tasks of the school, leading them to certain conclusions about the traditions and principles which they hold (i.e. their explicit or implicit theories). In this research, culture is seen as being based on the traditions of Omani society and its religious principles which can be transmitted into actions and practices. For example, Omani society is firmly based on Islamic principles and teachings; thus, if a member of staff becomes ill then he/she receives visits from his/her colleagues, including the headteacher. This is considered a religious obligation as well as something to strengthen the relations between school members and the community. In this regard, the second sub-theme of culture of the first theme Exploring Leadership is drawn on to transmit the traditions of Omani society and its religious obligations in order to put together a theoretical framework for primary school leadership and the characteristics of Omani primary school leaders (see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380). Bennis et al. (1985) refer to:

*... diagnostic and developmental efforts which focus upon aiding people to acquire insights derived from principles, theories, or models (p. 61).*

In connection with the above statement, a major source of this research is the knowledge of, for example, Islamic principles, which have a place in the culture of Oman and also characterise primary school leadership in Omani schools.

Furthermore, the respondents' assumptions in their theorising will be examined against a model of leadership which is based on both transactional and transformational leadership models (Table 4, p. 55).

Under this theme (Exploring Leadership) the respondents expressed their opinions of the way in which school leadership is practised in Omani primary schools at the present time. In fact, most of the respondents were familiar with the term "School Leadership" and they talked about it with confidence (AlHinai, 2000; AlHinai and Rutherford, 2002). In other words, the respondents differentiated between issues of school management and school leadership (see Table 10, p. 94 and Table 13, p. 117).

## FINDINGS ABOUT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

*I believe primary school leadership will succeed if it is encouraged by both school leaders' and officials' ambitions in order to take advantage of useful up-to-date knowledge, and by identifying weaknesses in its implementation (headteacher 5.25).*

### **Issues of primary school leadership in Oman**

The essential factors which emerged from discussions held on the theme of Exploring Leadership reflect both the officials' and headteachers' perspectives. Table 10, p. 94, summarises these factors which characterise the leadership of primary schools within the General Education System (GES). Furthermore, these elements also draw attention to a model from which can be identified a leadership framework at Omani primary school level. Again, Table 10 indicates these factors which are relevant to primary school leadership in Oman, each factor of which will be clarified under its own heading in the following sections.

#### ***Factor 1- Transmitting educational values and goals and ensuring their acceptance and implementation (Table 10, p. 94)***

Respondents argue that headteachers should practise primary school leadership on the lines of the educational philosophy and according to the targeted goals set by the Ministry of Education. Conflicts (see Table 15, p. 145) must be resolved along these lines as the Ministry's philosophy is based on these values and principles as the best way to serve pupils and their parents.

The above factor is well illustrated by the following quotations. One official states that:

*The concept of leadership is of tasks which should be performed according to a limited plan and limited goals. These arrangements and goals are drawn from the philosophy of education in the Sultanate of Oman. (Official 1.6)*

One practitioner adds that:

*The characteristics of school leadership which is practised in Omani schools should enable the headteachers to accomplish school-targeted goals. (Headteacher 2.6)*

Both officials and practitioners agreed that the practice of primary school leadership should be open and determined by mutual consultation between headteachers and their colleagues. One practitioner states the following:

*Headteachers should be aware of the goals targeted by the Ministry of Education and its philosophy, because this is needed by them for school leadership. (Headteacher 19.13)*

The headteachers' responsibilities are to run their own school in the light of clear guidance; this is the way to practise school management and leadership. Thus, headteachers who ignore the advantages of the crystal clear guidance offered may lead their schools inappropriately. Another practitioner adds more detail in terms of transmitting the educational



values and goals throughout the headteacher's leadership and acts of management. He/she points this out:

*The implementation of primary school leadership is performed according to an arranged plan and advised according to Directorates' General circulars in order to accomplish the Ministry's targeted goals. (Headteacher 17.1)*

**Table 10 - Issues for primary school leadership in Oman**

<b>RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THAT THE ESSENTIAL TASKS OF PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS WERE ...</b>
<b>Factor 1 - TRANSMITTING EDUCATIONAL VALUES AND GOALS AND ENSURING THEIR ACCEPTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION (SEE p. 93).</b>
<b>Factor 2 - ENSURING ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR PUPILS AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL (SEE p. 94).</b>
<b>Factor 3 - SUPPORTING ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES, FOR EXAMPLE, ACCOMMODATING BOYS AND GIRLS SEPARATELY (SEE p. 96).</b>
<b>Factor 4- PROVIDING THE DRIVING FORCE FOR SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT (SEE p. 97).</b>

Table 10 indicates some of the general points on which participants responded in question 1 of the key research questions. It clarifies the idea of the process of school leadership which headteachers embody and, perhaps, draws together the characteristics of the primary leadership framework as practised in Omani schools. Also, it shows a close correspondence between the officials' and practitioners' perspectives.

Factors 1, 3 and 4 were adapted from AlHinai and Rutherford (2002), see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380.

Another source emphasising this factor (transmitting educational values and goals) is that the headteachers should consider each circular and judge how to transform it into action.

In conclusion, the discussion which was held on Factor 1, p. 93, indicates that the respondents wanted to emphasise that the style of leadership which they practise in their own schools is influenced by Islamic principles and traditions and by Omani culture and guided by the educational goals set by the Ministry. Naturally, practising their leadership would transmit the valued elements relevant to their own culture and this must also serve their goals.

***Factor 2 - Ensuring academic success for pupils at primary school level (Table 10, p. 94).***

Officials and headteachers consider that a key task of leadership is to ensure academic

success at primary school level, which is the foundation of education (this is a response shared by officials and headteachers). In addition, one official claims that school leadership is the key factor in the teaching/learning process. One practitioner states that:

*School leadership is the key factor which can be used for accomplishing general educational goals and the headteacher is responsible for the success and the failure in meeting the targeted goals. (Headteacher 2.1)*

In the above statement, response 2.1 confirms that school leadership is the most important tool for accomplishing school goals.

Officials and practitioners agreed that headteachers are fully responsible for administration and for monitoring school performance, although teachers are also responsible for implementing the tasks of school leadership throughout the school by their classroom management.

In addition, to ensure academic success for pupils, headteachers should seek good relations with staff members to help them take their responsibilities in their stride; hence, headteachers should see for themselves that their schools are performing well and running smoothly.

Thus, in general, leaders of both sexes are trying to set outstanding examples of school leadership in practice. This can be exceptional when the individual is exceptional, whether male or female. One official indicates that:

*We have many primary schools which demonstrate the best model of male leadership; although they have fewer school resources they manage their schools in a better way by using their resources efficiently. (Official 6.41a)*

The above statement shows that there are some male leaders who set an example by outstanding school leadership. For example, some headteachers managed to expand their school budgets by recourse to members of the community, for example, parents and the managers of institutions, and this in turn supported their schools in much-needed school activities for pupils. These activities may be assumed to have a positive effect on students' results. Here it seems that the respondents answered according to their individual positions and locations. In other words, certain tasks (e.g. collaborative team work) may be successful in one school, but not necessarily in another.

Furthermore, it is widely believed that each group of leaders can bring about academic success better with pupils of the same sex as themselves, as they find it easier to consider their needs. One practitioner points this out as follows:

*There is a necessity to separate boys from girls, because they are different in their psychology and also it is a matter of Islamic faith to nurture each sex by a member of the same sex. (Headteacher 60.8)*

Another practitioner raises another idea which supports the above quotation; he/she says,

*I think it is very difficult for a headmistress to look after a mixed school of children over the age of ten. Similarly, it cannot be acceptable in Omani society for male staff to look after girls of the age of ten or over. (Headteacher 61.11)*

In conclusion, the argument under the heading of ‘ensuring academic success for pupils at primary school level’ means that headteachers should act as leaders in making things happen; their targeted goals should serve both the pupils and their followers (colleagues) since the respondents consider leadership a key task in ensuring success.

***Factor 3 - Supporting Islamic principles, for example, accommodating boys and girls separately (Table 10, p. 94)***

Under this factor there was an argument which encapsulated the respondents’ perspectives about whether primary school leadership policy in Omani schools should be considered open and able to be practised by mutual consultation between headteachers and their colleagues.

Furthermore, under the guidance of Islam, male and female pupils and staff members should be accommodated separately. As discussed earlier, though pupils should be separated from the age of six years at the pre-primary school level, pupils and staff members of different sexes may use the same school building at different times (this is practised in most of the GES primary schools).

Shared perspectives between officials and practitioners indicate that this concept should be modified in order keep costs down, but maintaining the faithfulness to the Islamic concept. As discussed earlier, female leaders in particular raised the possibility of mixing boys and girls up to grade 3 (ages six to eight years old) in the same classes. However, they realise that there may be some difficulty in running their schools if they teach mixed groups after the age of eight. Mixing the two sexes is not often found in Oman. It is generally accepted that leaders of each gender should deal with pupils of the same sex.

In addition, another new task for primary school leadership is to stop having school shifts in the same building (i.e., taking turns to use the building for morning and afternoon school), although most of the schools at present work in shifts. One official points this out:

*It is possible to find two school levels in one building (primary and preparatory) but it is unusual to find three levels in one building, including secondary level. (Official 1.1a)*

However, using the school building in shifts, as far as the staff members of the schools are concerned, is recognised for the moment as an efficient solution, making the best use of the school buildings; clearly, accommodating all schools in separate buildings must bring additional costs. Therefore, the current reform can be to this extent considered as inefficient,

or at least incomplete.

The respondents believed that the school leaders who convey the genuine principles of Islam in their personal and social lives are seen as setting the best examples of human relationships. From this point of view, school leaders are expected to set the best example and to act as role models. Accordingly, one official makes a connection between the principles of Islam and the current practice of primary school leadership. He/she states that:

*The general educational goals of primary schools are linked to the teachings of Islam. Thus, we believe that the concept of nurturing comes before teaching/learning. Therefore, primary school leadership is valued for strengthening the relationship between home and school. Also, it is valued for enhancing seriousness at work, respecting commitments and people, cooperation and justice. In addition, education involves concepts, values, attitudes and morals. Furthermore, the primary school is considered as a social organisation which serves members of the Omani society. (Official 70.2)*

In conclusion, the respondents think that the current practice of primary school leadership is based on Islamic principles; for instance, AlHinai and Rutherford (2002), citing Ghubash (1997), find that the term *AlShura* itself can be exemplified by the best traditional leadership in Oman.

Under Factor 3, p. 96, the respondents were agreed that the current practice of primary school leadership enhances, in broad areas, the principles of Islam, e.g. *AlShura* (Ghubash, 1997, for more information on *AlShura*, see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

***Factor 4 - Providing the Driving Force for School Development (Table 10, p. 94)***

With this factor there is a sense of powerful leadership, which drives everything in the direction of the current school reform, including the performance of leadership-related tasks, pupils' and teachers' achievements and raising the standards of school performance in general. Also, this factor expresses the responsibility of the leader to keep every school member mindful of his/her duties and responsibilities. Therefore, headteachers and staff members, including teachers, have the job of implementing the tasks of primary school leadership as a matter of personal responsibility.

Another thing included within this factor is that headteachers should consider their staff as creative employees, capable of improving the teaching and learning in their classes and capable of providing teachers and pupils with sufficient and adequate advisory support. Thus, headteachers have to take charge of delegating tasks relevant to school leadership, e.g. controlling the work of school examinations or even running the schools during their absence, given the shortage of assistant heads (see Conflicts in this chapter, Table 15, Factor 26, p. 149). On this point, respondents argue that their leadership should be considered a fundamental component in achieving success.

Furthermore, the respondents consider that leadership at primary level builds the basis for education at subsequent school levels; thus, it must represent a powerful force for directing education as a whole along the right path. Response 20.1 indicates components which should be considered major priorities for school leaders, especially headteachers. This response is as follows:

*One of the targeted goals for primary school is to nurture children's needs; also it is considered as a foundation of education. Thus, teachers should be capable of dealing with pupils' needs. (Headteacher 20.1)*

Another practitioner describes the primary school leadership as the heart of running the school; he/she says that:

*School leadership provides the central impetus of schoolwork. (Headteacher 5.10)*

It seems that primary school leadership is considered as the dynamic which generates school effectiveness and success; this of course has much to do with the headteacher's understanding and experience in achieving higher standards of effectiveness in school leadership. One practitioner sums it up as follows:

*Primary school leadership in Omani schools should enable the headteachers to plan and organise/arrange their work effectively. They should be capable of directing school members and using the resources of the school to accomplish targeted educational goals. This would enable them to nurture human relations, accept other people's opinions and be free to make decisions and make use of valuable ideas when they are offered from others' perspectives. (Headteacher 4.14)*

In conclusion, Factor 4, p. 97, concluded from the ideas and opinions, mostly drawn from practitioners, that primary school leadership represents a fundamental component of running education. Table 10, p. 94, summarises the factors which are relevant to school leadership as practised in Omani primary schools, whereas Table 13, p. 117 of this theme, summarises similar factors which describe the style of primary school management in Oman. Table 13 indicates respondents' opinions on how primary school management should run under the GES. Also, its factors can be considered as the basis of a possible framework which characterises school management. In this regard, there is a link between Table 10 and Table 13 in that they show in schematic form the frameworks for both the primary school management and leadership (see the discussion on p. 117).

## FINDINGS ABOUT EDUCATIONAL AND LEADERSHIP VALUES

*Certainly, Omani educational values are based on the society's culture which entail genuinely Arabic and Islamic traditions. In addition to this the Omani society also has its own distinctive features in dealing with citizens, such as tribal prestige. (Official 66.2a)*

### **Educational values and beliefs**

The sub-theme of values was discussed in the light of the respondents' experience; hence, they expressed their opinions extensively. The term values refers to what is high on the list of the headteachers' school priorities, and what is progressively less and less important; thus, they always talk about and want to consider, for instance, teaching and learning activities; they think it is vital to value the quality of teaching, which in turn is reflected in the pupils' high achievements. Therefore, Table 11, p. 100, includes some factors which provide a selection of educational values and beliefs as they are perceived by Omani primary school leaders.

### ***Factor 5 - Enhancing patriotism and loyalty (Table 11, p. 100)***

The respondents expressed their opinions about Omani primary headteachers who valued patriotism and at the same time they draw a connection between this task and the Islamic faith. Thus, the respondents see that the pupils require a clear understanding of patriotism. It seems that there is a close link for staff between the duties of patriotism and loyalty, in terms of providing the pupils with adequate information and services. Thus, both aspects are linked to Islamic principles, e.g. trustworthiness, honesty and loyalty in serving the pupils.

Also, enhancing patriotism leads to social and economic outcomes in terms of seeing everybody achieve success in school. To give an example, keeping the school tidy represents a sense of loyalty to the school and, in turn, this can be transmitted into good citizenship in general; hence, those who want to show patriotism should be cooperative.

The above topic of Factor 5, 99, is well illustrated in the following quotation. One official claims that:

*Primary school leadership values can be drawn from four major categories: religious, social, economic and moral. (Official 65.3)*

Thus, the primary school leaders should derive their educational values from those categories, because they are creating a strong sense of Omani patriotism among pupils. This means that the headteachers always build their own school activities according to their scale of values in order to achieve their targeted goals and raise their school standards, by providing education to turn Omani children into good citizens.

The following factor will clarify another crucial educational value which is also derived from Islamic principles as well as educational, social and political concerns.

Table 11 - Educational values and beliefs

<b>RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THAT THE KEY VALUES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS WERE ...</b>
<b>Factor 5 - ENHANCING PATRIOTISM AND LOYALTY (SEE p. 99).</b>
<b>Factor 6 - IMPLEMENTING <i>ALSHURA</i>, WHICH MEANS THAT HEADTEACHERS SHOULD PRACTISE THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM, FOR EXAMPLE, SHARING RESPONSIBILITY, TRUTHFULNESS, TRUSTWORTHINESS, HONESTY AND SELF-DISCIPLINE (SEE p. 100).</b>
<b>Factor 7 – EXTENDING COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY (SEE p. 101).</b>
<b>Factor 8 - INTEGRATING SOCIAL QUALITIES SUCH AS EQUITY, CREATION OF A PEACEFUL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND FAIRNESS IN DISTRIBUTING DUTIES (SEE p. 102).</b>
<b>Factor 9 - TRANSMITTING MORAL INSTRUCTION AND PROVIDING A ROLE MODEL (SEE p. 103).</b>

Table 11 indicates some values which are emphasised by primary headteachers in Omani schools. These values are found in the principles of Islam, social traditions, the school curriculum and the proper appreciation of goods and services. Factors 6, 8, 9 and 10 were adapted from AlHinai and Rutherford (2002).

***Factor 6 - Implementing Alshura, which means that headteachers should practise the principles of Islam, for example, sharing responsibility, truthfulness, trustworthiness, honesty and self-discipline (Table 11, p. 100).***

According to Factor 6, the respondents recalled practising *AlShura* (an Islamic term which means the sharing of responsibilities with others). Thus, *AlShura* may allow everybody to take part in and be responsible for running the school. Thus, each school member would be making some contribution to the work of his/her colleagues. According to the researcher's experience, this term (*AlShura*) is not yet fully practised in schools, especially perhaps primary schools; *AlShura* is practised more by politicians. Thus, considering the desires expressed by the research contributors (respondents), the practice of *AlShura* is needed to spread more extensively to schools to achieve a distinctive Omani primary school leadership which is also genuinely based on Omani culture. Therefore, *AlShura* may become a significant developmental task, if the officials (policy makers) consider the respondents'

request. Their request certainly will enable the headteachers to clarify related tasks in the light of *AlShura*, "to secure their own style of school leadership" (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2002, p. 6) which would lead to exercising Islamic principles relevant to *AlShura*.

The term *AlShura* may in fact include many leadership issues; this is well described in the following quotations. One practitioner makes the following point:

*We are brought up according to Islamic teachings, e.g. to dress decently, to respect religious teachings as well as social traditions, and to be the best possible examples for pupils. (Headteacher 5.12)*

Moreover, one official in explaining *AlShura*, says that:

*The values in education are considered a major component of primary school leadership, which are mainly derived from traditions and the principles of Islam such as AlShura. Equally, all school members are considered colleagues; therefore, they have to share and to be consulted in performing school responsibilities, of course, according to the obligations of their role. (Official 68.3)*

Indeed, primary headteachers may already be practising *AlShura* in their daily school routine; indeed, many seem to have adopted *AlShura* in practice (see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380). One official describes this:

*According to school regulations, the headteacher should appoint school board members among school staff (the senior school committee council) in order to share responsibilities in running their school. This committee is responsible for addressing all school matters before taking action. Also, this committee should reach consensus about each topic needing to be addressed; thus the headteacher is not making decisions on his/her own. (Official 65.11)*

In fact, part of the consultancy should be shared with Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members, specifically to enhance the involvement of parents; thus, *AlShura* must also be used to build strong relationships between home and school. In other words, because the PTA members should play an active role in guiding and supporting schools, the headteachers should consult them in carrying out any school project; this is in fact a requirement of *AlShura*.

In this regard, the following factor will address the clarity of school communications, whether external or internal.

***Factor 7 - Extending collaboration and partnership to strengthen the relationship between schools and the community (Table 11, p. 100)***

School communication is vital as a leadership task; thus the respondents expressed their opinions that this is also a key task at the level of external and internal school relationships. Communication by the school has become a major concern of primary headteachers; this indicates that they are well aware of the needs of school management and leadership and this in turn enables the primary headteachers to be good school leaders. The topic of the above factor is well explained in the following statement. One practitioner points this out:



*We try to build good relations between our school and other institutions in society and we always seek to participate by introducing programmes and activities representing our school locally. (Headteacher 4.9)*

Thus, school communications may take different forms, such as building relationships with PTA members, companies and factories and maybe also with schools at different educational levels, e.g. secondary schools, in order to exchange experiences. Thus, primary schools could support other institutions in, for example, carrying out shared projects in order to benefit the school and to advertise the sponsorship of certain companies. One practitioner extends the idea of school communications. He/she states that:

*Primary school leaders should value a good conscience, cooperation and honesty. (Headteacher 52.1a)*

As the above quotation makes clear, school relationships require from the headteachers honesty and justice in all cases, including those which get no publicity. The hidden purpose cannot be negotiable, but it is kept in the person's mind (conscience), whether or not it was initiated for an educational reason.

In the following factor, Omani primary headteachers' values are extended in terms of considering valuable every task which reflects a leadership opportunity, action or activity.

***Factor 8 - Integrating social qualities such as equity, creation of a peaceful school environment and fairness in distributing duties (Table 11, p. 100)***

Under this factor, the headteachers should value fairness in distributing duties among teachers and this also may lead to the creation of a peaceful school environment. This means that the headteachers should be capable of creating a helpful teaching/learning atmosphere in their own schools since they value justice and equity in their work. This topic is well illustrated by the following quotations. One official points out that:

*Primary school leadership is based on justice and equity in terms of headteachers' distribution of school duties among their colleagues. (Official 63.1)*

As discussed earlier, creating a peaceful school environment requires good relationships with both teachers and pupils, because these major groups are the main population in school. Thus, the headteachers need to build close relationships with both groups in order to support them in their teaching and learning needs. From this point of view, the headteachers would be able to learn, for example, about pupils' behaviour since teachers will volunteer information. One practitioner explains the following:

*Good relationships between the headteacher and his/her staff can be gained if he/she distributes school duties among teachers equally, for example, timetabling responsibilities. (Headteacher 59.1)*

As discussed earlier, it is clear that equity and relationships can both be considered the most important factors in creating a peaceful school environment; thus, it is vital that Omani

primary headteachers consider a peaceful school environment in their own schools to be valuable in terms of institutional security. This also can be considered as a sign of their school leadership (for more information on Omani headteachers' capability in leadership, see Factor 32, p. 168).

Moreover, the following factor adds another value, which is also complementary to the values mentioned in Table 11.

***Factor 9 - Transmitting moral instruction and providing a role model (Table 11, p. 100)***

The respondents discussed that the Omani primary headteachers are urged to be precise and concise in clarifying school responsibilities and school managerial matters. They have to make every managerial task as clear as possible in order to lead their colleagues according to school requirements and also according to their colleagues' needs. This procedure would help the headteachers to fulfil their commitments and perform them well. In other words, the school commitments go hand in hand with school responsibilities. From this point of view, even when headteachers are performing a single task of school leadership, such as timetabling procedures, it gives them a chance to show their honesty and their care in handling things justly among their colleagues. As discussed in Factor 8, p. 102, it seems that equity has to be one of their commitments, because, for one thing, it creates good relationships between the headteachers and their colleagues and leads to cooperative team working. In addition, no doubt, the commitments of the headteachers must be something like having full responsibility for clarifying unclear managerial and leadership tasks as well as providing support for their colleagues. More evidence from the fieldwork is provided in the following quotations. One official goes into detail about this:

*The role of the primary school leader (headteacher) is to distribute certain tasks or information, but the main point is that the role of the leader should clarify and empower his staff in their implementation. For example, a teacher's morality is considered his/her own responsibility, but the school's morality should be looked after by the leader. Thus, the school leader may clarify what is the benefit of nurturing and practising morality. Perhaps many teachers ignore the benefits of keeping a high moral standard. New teachers may be most ignorant, but leaders should guide them all by clarifying the dimensions of morality. (Official 1.42)*

The above-mentioned statement extends the headteachers' commitments into something like taking responsibility for setting a good example of the best and most desirable behaviour to the staff. This would indeed lead the headteachers to be more respected in both the staffs' and pupils' minds. Another official supports the above idea. He/she points this out:

*If the pupils in primary schools are trained to be well disciplined this will lead them to be so as they go up the school system. (Official 6.25a)*

Indeed, this indicates that the headteachers should keep their sense of commitment in

training their pupils and raise them to be capable of self-discipline.

Table 11, p. 100, includes the values of primary school leadership as they were drawn from the respondents' perspectives. As the respondents represented the two major groups of the research population (see Table 9, p. 85), they were giving a voice to the headteachers, at least, those in the whole targeted educational regions, if not in the whole of Oman. Hence, the values discussed under Table 11 are drawn up as the headteachers would wish to describe them.

## FINDINGS ABOUT THE CULTURE

*The concept of 'organizational culture' is especially important in educational institutions because of their 'people-centredness' and high dependence on the nature and effectiveness of interpersonal relationships. (Law and Glover, 2000, p. 116)*

### **Headteachers' personal and professional characteristics**

A discussion was held on the sub-theme of culture. Culture, here, may be described, as Law and Glover (2000) claim as being different from one school to another; hence, primary schools may possess an “*almost pure task culture*”, whereas secondary schools may show “*a predominance of the role culture*” (p. 117). Thus, schools may have different cultural contributions from different staff members, which is reflected in the ways in which they deal with *solving problems* and *changing behaviours* (Borman and Glickman, 2000). Furthermore, Law and Glover (2000) cite Prosser, 1991, who identifies five kinds of culture, as follows:

1. *The wider culture of national norms.*
2. *The culture appropriate to different types of institution.*
3. *The genetic culture (linked to human individuality) which [distinguishes] one institution from another.*
4. *The culture as tone [or] 'feel' – exemplified in displays, litter etc.*
5. *The culture or ethos as seen by outsiders: a sum of all aspects and 'what people say about the place'. (p. 116)*

Hence, Table 12 summarises some factors which should provide a description (in terms of the culture of primary schools in Oman, concentrating on the essential part only, which is the leaders' characteristics in connection with their own culture) of both the personal and professional ideal characteristics of a school leader which are embodied and reflected by the Omani primary headteacher whenever he/she is judged as a successful school leader.

***Factor 10 - Primary headteachers should be capable of enacting the principles of Islam by using AlShura (an Islamic term meaning consultation or sharing responsibilities with others), (Table 12, p. 106)***

The respondents argue that school leaders should be capable of enacting the principles of Islam (*AlShura*). This means that they should be diplomatic, kind, flexible and considerate, but not indulgent. Also, they should be experts in their subject fields, able to negotiate and solve problems, and able to appoint staff members who will be accountable and to reward them appropriately. Also, they should be persuasive, patient, enthusiastic, and not easily angered. Furthermore, school leaders should be loyal, just and equitable. They have to be fully aware of all aspects of the work of the school, visionary, prudent, sociable, capable of creating friendly relations with colleagues, creative and independent in decision making.

Omani primary school leaders should be considered as experts in school leadership and in the other tasks related to their responsibilities in school, aware of the school's work, and capable of exercising *AlShura*.

The respondents indicated a huge number of responses which called for practising the principles of *AlShura* in their own schools.

**Table 12 - Headteachers' personal and professional characteristics**

<b>RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THAT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS WERE ...</b>
<b>Factor 10 - CAPABLE OF ENACTING THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM BY USING <i>ALSHURA</i> (AN ISLAMIC TERM MEANING CONSULTATION OR SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES WITH OTHERS) (SEE p. 105).</b>
<b>Factor 11 - EXPERIENCED, PROBLEM SOLVERS, CAPABLE OF NEGOTIATION, PERSUASIVE AND PATIENT (SEE p. 109).</b>
<b>Factor 12 - ABLE TO BE CONSCIENTIOUS, CREATIVE, OPEN-MINDED AND KEEN TO GATHER USEFUL KNOWLEDGE (SEE p. 110).</b>
<b>Factor 13 - REALISTIC IN THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF COLLEAGUES AND ABLE TO HOLD THEM TO ACCOUNT (SEE p. 112).</b>
<b>Factor 14 - ABLE TO BE INNOVATORS - CHANGE AGENTS - (SEE p. 115).</b>

Table 12 summarises the respondents' understanding and awareness of the desirable personal characteristics which Omani headteachers should possess in order to be successful as school leaders.

Factor 10, also indicates a great number of comments made by both officials and practitioners. The consensus on Factor 10 encapsulates all the opinions of the two major population groups of the respondents, officials and practitioners (headteachers), which comprises eight officials out of twelve and sixty-nine headteachers out of seventy, in total seventy-seven responses (this also makes eleven respondents who were involved in individual interviews and sixty-six in focus groups). In addition, the researcher received different responses from each participant on this topic. For example, each participant was able to discuss the topic from different perspectives, such as suggesting that the headteacher should be aware of the principles he/she needs to enhance and in addition to this he/she should consult his/her colleagues to be sure of enhancing them appropriately. This also indicates the respondents' care and concern to raise such responses in order to contribute extensively to

this topic. Also, if we consider many of the other responses which were received from the focus group interviews, these responses strengthen the level of consensus on this factor, i.e. that of the male and female headteachers who were involved mostly in the focus group interviews.

This is well illustrated by the following quotations from both officials and practitioners. One practitioner says that:

*The headteacher should bear in mind the Prophet Mohammed's speech: "all of you are nurturers and all of you are responsible for your own followers ...", and also the headteacher should consider Allah's commands in performing his/her job. He/she has to be capable of building good relations with his/her subordinates, such as teachers, pupils, school workers and even other people in the community. He/she should not be arrogant, otherwise, he/she will lose his/her subordinates and they will not cooperate. (Headteacher 4.20)*

Thus some specific tasks can be drawn from the above statement relevant to Islamic leadership in education; these tasks are based on the teachings of Islam, whether on the basis of Qur'anic verses or the Prophet's traditions. Hence, headteachers and teachers too are influenced by their own culture (Arabic/Islamic culture). Therefore their personal characteristics and, perhaps, their professional activities are derived from their national culture. The following response adds more details of the Omani headteacher's characteristics. One practitioner points out this:

*There are three main characteristics that headteachers should possess: to be communicative, persistent and capable of enhancing AlShura (principles of Islam). This means that they should appear in public to be persistent in solving problems and should implement the related principles of AlShura. (Headteacher 45.1)*

Similarly, one official points out that:

*AlShura can be translated by similar meanings of other words in order to understand its context, such as cooperation or the 'Democracy of Islam' which transmits Islamic principles, but slightly differently from that of the Western term democracy. (Official 66.4a)*

Another official listed what can be accepted as desirable characteristics among school leaders, especially in meeting the new challenges of the current leadership reform. The official tried to link his/her thoughts to characteristics which can be considered as *AlShura* principles related to modern thinking about the best blend of characteristics for school leaders. Although there is no one particular set of characteristics for school leadership which can be clearly identified as something for Omani school leaders to follow, acceptable school leaders' characteristics may be clearly described in the following quotation. One official states that:

*In fact, I would think that the relevant characteristics are three kinds of*

*characteristics which should be shown by school leaders. Firstly, what is known as specialist related subjects (an expert in his/her field of competence). 'Specialist' means that he/she must be aware of all the branches of the discipline (dimensions) in order to be able to manage his/her own work and lead his/her subordinates. Secondly, he/she should have a visionary characteristic, which means he/she should be able to have a vision of the future and this would help to plan and to implement plans as they should be implemented. Thirdly, the remaining characteristic is sociableness: the person should get on well with others, as this is important in building relations with others and especially those who are supervised by him/her. This characteristic always leads to friendly relations in the educational organisation. I believe these are the three characteristics which should be shown by any educational leader. (Official 1.7)*

By reviewing the above statements from both the officials and the practitioners we find that both sets of respondents are knowledgeable about the essential personal and professional characteristics which should underpin school leadership in terms of Omani culture and the points which they provide are crucial. The following quotation illustrates that:

*The concept of school leadership represents skills, therefore, school leaders should be capable of leading their schools and should seek to modernise and update their skills of school leadership. Also, primary school leaders should be well-balanced, knowledgeable in their administrative and monitoring tasks and should build good relations with both the officials and the community members. Also, school leadership should enable school leaders to strengthen relationships with both school members and their community (official 3.7). Furthermore, school leaders should play the role of innovators; seek useful and new ideas from research for improvement. (Official 3.9)*

It should be noted that the above statements indicate a connection between the officials' and practitioners' perspectives as they commented on school leaders' responsibilities and what they do and even what they should do. Their comments indicate three main areas: things that they are aware of and perform; and things they are aware of but want encouragement to perform; and things they are cannot perform because they lack resources.

Nevertheless, under Factor 10, the researcher focuses on the respondents' perspectives in identifying school leaders' personal characteristics and, as discussed previously, the respondents indicated crucial elements relevant to the personal characteristics of Omani school leaders, especially headteachers, which are certainly influenced by the Omani culture. In addition, the respondents advocated the enhancement of *AlShura* and expressed their opinions on this crucial matter at some length. In other words, their comments called for the practising of school leadership according to the associated principles of Islam, because they are so appropriate for guiding the role of the Omani primary school leader (headteacher).

In conclusion,

*... the concept of AlShura is, perhaps, not yet fully practised in the existing schools of the GES; thus, the respondents called for a full exercise of AlShura. This indicates that the respondents are looking for the practice of AlShura which reflects*

*their own culture and their own traditions, and which in turn informs their style of leadership in their own schools. (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2002, p. 13)*

**Factor 11- Primary headteachers should be experienced, problem solvers, capable of negotiation, persuasive and patient (Table 12, p. 106)**

The factors of Table 12, including this factor, clarify a possible framework for Omani primary school leaders' characteristics. These characteristics, as discussed previously, encapsulate the respondents' opinions of what an ideal Omani primary school leader should be. In general, they have to be experienced enough in managing and monitoring leadership tasks which enables them to be capable of solving their own schools' problems, meeting their staff members' and pupils' needs; and they have to be fully skilled in reaching agreement through negotiation in order to persuade colleagues and strengthen their understanding in carrying out their duties.

Moreover, the leaders' (headteachers') should be influential on their colleagues' performance; this should be one of their characteristics. In other words, they have to be able to convince their colleagues in order to encourage them to do their best at work. In addition, they have to be patient while negotiating in certain areas with colleagues in order to succeed in their leadership-related tasks. Leadership-related tasks can be, for example, developing teaching and learning processes such as supporting teachers in managing their classrooms. In return, this helps to create a peaceful school environment. Also, the respondents argue that the headteachers need to think of empowering their staff members according to the requirements of each one's position. This means that it is important for headteachers to act as leaders in providing their colleagues with the needed authority (e.g. delegating responsibilities among them) in order to achieve teaching/learning goals and to provide sufficient support for headteachers to enable them to achieve effective school leadership.

As discussed earlier, it is believed that headteachers should be considered leaders who are capable of setting a good example in any area requiring leadership and good human relationships, such as being irreproachable in their personal lives. The responses in Factor 11 of Table 12 represent a significant consensus of perspectives shared between officials and headteachers (71%). Also we have to keep in mind that these responses represent other colleagues who were involved in focus group interviews and who supported the responses on this topic, without raising any objection, whether through verbal or nonverbal indications which were observed during the interviews, in both the individual and focus group interviews, even though the researcher explained at the beginning of each session of the focus group interview that if any of the interviewees wanted to raise any objections they should not hesitate to do so.

The above topic is well illustrated by the following quotations. One practitioner points



this out:

*I would like to add that the good headteachers should only be those who are capable of solving a school's difficulties. (Headteacher 5.8)*

The above statement indicates a skill which school leaders should add to the other qualities of a headteacher: school leaders must have the capacity to sort out all the difficulties which face their schools. Similarly, Bush and Coleman (2000) find that:

*... the most effective managers are those who are able to perceive events from a number of different perspectives and 'shift frames' as appropriate during the course of events". (p. 39)*

Indeed, the capacity to solve problems and sort out difficulties conferred by practical experience, as well as being linked to expert knowledge. It is believed that the headteachers can gain skills and knowledge from their experience of school problems if they deal with them clear-headedly and do not seek to ignore them.

One official indicated another aspect of considering headteachers as leaders; he says that:

*We consider headteachers as leaders if they can create a peaceful school environment and adapt useful and updated knowledge to improve school leadership performance. (Official 3.11a)*

Of course, school leaders should build their experience on a basis of solid knowledge, with a good understanding of leadership and leadership-related tasks. Therefore, updating their knowledge is an important way of developing their thinking and strengthening their beliefs. By discovering new ways of working with colleagues and responding to their needs conscientiously, the school leaders become capable of creating a healthy school environment. Thus, school leaders should actively seek out useful knowledge and new ideas which will help them in developing their leadership

In conclusion, Factor 11, p. 109, considers an important characteristic which links leaders' experience with their intelligence and their capacity to solve problems and make decisions. However, the next factor deals with similar issues but is different in focus as a further item among the characteristics of the Omani primary school leader.

***Factor 12 - Primary headteachers should be conscientious, creative, open-minded and keen to gather useful knowledge (Table 12, p. 106)***

This factor attempts to evoke another characteristic which is influenced by both one's inherent grasp of the situation and the knowledge gained from life's experiences. Intelligence and sharpness of intellect can be considered hereditary qualities whereas, for example, creativity and useful knowledge can be built up over a lifetime. Thus, in this factor the primary school leaders should be capable of introducing positive educational principles and implementing official regulations, for example, in an open-minded way, treating staff

members considerately. Also, they have to listen to other people's experiences and opinions in order to gather useful knowledge.

Another thing is that the headteachers are urged to be good planners, organisers, capable of understanding the school curriculum, capable of influencing staff members' performance positively and achieving their targeted goals effectively. They should also be good thinkers and intelligent, innovative and keen to discover knowledge which might be of use to them. In addition, primary school leaders are expected to be capable of creating a peaceful school environment and of responding appropriately to the initiatives and issues of the GES guide. Also, they have to possess vision in establishing school plans and creating needed projects for their schools. Furthermore, they have to be capable of creating an interactive atmosphere for the teaching/learning process in cooperation with teachers as well as with senior teachers. All the above-mentioned issues require them to be conscientious in dealing with internal and external school responsibilities and to be well organised in handling leadership tasks and putting things in order.

The above-mentioned factor draws a consensus from fifty-eight officials and practitioners, comprising six officials and fifty-two headteachers out of eighty-two (71%). These responses were supported by the opinions of other respondents involved in focus group interviews who made no verbal or nonverbal objections.

Factor 12, p. 110, is explored in the following quotations. One practitioner points out that:

*A headteacher means a leader, responsible for and taking trouble over schoolwork.  
(Headteacher 5.15)*

This statement indicates that the headteachers should be in charge, key persons who deserve their high position by supporting their staff members and leading them in the right direction to secure the implementation of their plans, especially within the current reform of the GES. At the same time, they have to secure the teaching/learning process by integrating and enhancing needed programmes relevant to the children's development, as one official mentioned in the following statement:

*Primary headteachers who are knowledgeable about child development are vital in order to deal with youngsters' needs. (Official 70.1)*

The above discussion leads us to realise that the school leaders must implement the right things. In other words, as mentioned below in response 5.16, school leaders must take well-planned steps when they act, thinking before they put them into practice and should seek feedback on every aspect of their actions in order to build up improvements and raise the standard of their leadership. One practitioner states that:

*The headteachers can be considered as leaders when they introduce positive educational principles and implement official regulations in proper ways, for example, in being open-minded and treating staff members considerately. (Headteacher 5.16)*

Finally, Factor 12 links leaders' actions with their intelligence and capacity to understand leadership and leadership-related tasks. At the same time, it focuses on the leader's appreciation of others' perspectives, on the basis that he/she should share responsibilities with colleagues and influence their perspectives as appropriate (see Factor 18, p. 126). Logically, the purpose of running schools is to achieve educational goals. For example, the role of school leaders is to provide citizens with a good standard of education, meeting the mission set by the country to nurture youngsters and prepare them to face the challenges of the future. This leads us to think of the major components which are considered the basis of running the educational system in primary schools; these major components are: pupils, teachers, school curriculum, school leaders and school buildings which create a chain with five major links. Thus, school leaders are not alone in handling the question of leadership, but must handle it in co-operation with others.

***Factor 13 - Primary headteachers should be realistic in their expectations of colleagues and able to hold them to account (Table 12, p. 106)***

This factor draws attention to the fact that school leaders should have self-control and be ambitious and capable of building good relationships with officials as well with their own staff. They have to be capable of performing leadership tasks and so accomplishing school goals. Under this heading the respondents discussed further primary school leaders' characteristics; thus, this factor indicates a similar idea to the previous factor in order to complete the portrayal of school leaders' characteristics. Of course, this argument was bounded by the respondents' perspectives; it will be examined later against a measurement scale which is adopted from transactional and transformational leadership models (see Table 4, p. 55).

The above-mentioned factor indicates a significant consensus in the respondents' opinions; officials and male and female headteachers, comprising six officials and seventy headteachers altogether (93%). Also we have to bear in mind that these responses represent other colleagues who were involved in focus group interviews and who made no objection to these responses on this topic.

Factor 13 is well illustrated by the following quotations. One practitioner points out that:

*I am responsible, as a headteacher, for school accountability among school members. (Headteacher 5.6a)*

The above statement indicated the accountabilities which headteachers need to pay attention to in order to keep their schools running smoothly (i.e., the role of 'chief

executive’). However, it is believed that primary headteachers also play the role of pedagogic leaders (i.e. the role of ‘*leading professional*’, Bell, 2000; Hughes, 1988); thus they are responsible for finding ways to improve and move their school forward.

It is clear that the response of 5.6a which represents the opinions of many headteachers in this research indicates that the headteachers have taken on the full responsibility of running their own schools without being provided with any kind of assistants who might share this responsibility, e.g. deputy headteachers or school secretaries (see Factor 26, p. 149). A few schools have both headteachers and deputy headteachers (only 9 percent of primary schools are staffed by both a headteacher and deputy headteacher, see Chart 6, p. 150). However, a considerable number of schools are run by acting headteachers, who actually hold the rank of deputy headteachers, whether officially or on probation (see Chart 5, p. 88). Balancing school responsibilities is likely to be difficult in such a situation with no administrative assistants. In this case, the officials might ask them to do more than is possible, e.g. a headteacher cannot manage too large a school without assistance.

Another thing which is often taken for granted is the capacity of the headteachers to cope with their school situations, whatever they may be. One official indicates the following:

*Usually in a primary school the leader balances the implementation of school leadership responsibilities. If this leader is mindful of the administrative, monitoring and social issues, then certainly his/her effectiveness would be strong. However, the leader who is poor in understanding these issues (school leadership responsibilities) would struggle and as a result he/she would not be able to meet the targeted goals of the institution. Also, a negligent leader would not do the work of the institution. Therefore, you will get some differences between one school and another, between one leader and another, and this can be related to the extent to which they understand leadership issues. (Official 1.9)*

If we accept the official’s argument, response 1.9, such cases would be exceptional. However, it seems to be that the Omani primary headteachers are facing many challenges connected with running their schools under very difficult circumstances, e.g. without being provided with administrative assistants or adequate funding for them (for more information about inadequate school budgets, see Factor 27, p. 153). Furthermore, one practitioner supports the argument that balance is a necessary quality by saying that the headteachers should use their intelligence and their capacity of skilled leadership in order to be able to balance the conflicting demands of school leadership.

Indeed, school leadership needs to be well balanced also in managing and carrying out school responsibilities. The headteachers need to strike a balance between internal and external school responsibilities, because they have to be recognised in both the school and the community environments, and both require the balancing of responsibilities in time and in the number of duties for which they should be responsible, whether weekly or even monthly. An

example of an internal duty among school responsibilities indicated by a practitioner, is that:

*The headteacher should be seen as resident advisor/inspector and should always provide positive feedback about his/her school's performance including staff members' performance. However, it is important also to trace careless actions which might be caused by some of the school members, because such carelessness ought to be considered within the confines of each school. Thus, negative comments should be sorted out privately among staff members. Also, the headteacher should evaluate teachers' performance logically, e.g. not to give way to anyone's negative or positive actions. (Headteacher 4.41)*

Therefore, the headteachers should be proud of their staff members' achievements and should have high expectations of them, because they should be always directing and supporting them in proper ways to raise the productivity of the school. In other words, if their staff members fail, they fail in delivering effective school performance, in approaching acceptable standards and creating a healthy school environment. One official also gives his/her ideas supporting the concept that the headteacher can be considered as 'resident advisor/inspector as well as a leader'. As headteacher/leader, he/she has to assess school performance through staff members' achievements, and in turn this will show up in pupils' results. In addition, one practitioner indicates crucial points which reflect his/her awareness of the keeping of school administration regulations according to official directives. He/she states that:

*The headteacher is responsible for monitoring the administrative performance of the school and in providing his/her staff with the necessary resources in order to implement the Ministry or the Directorate's circulars. (Headteacher 5.6)*

Also, the previous statement, response 5.6, shows an understanding of the administrative routine which is in common use, such as implementing the official directives received through circulars in all respects.

Balancing schoolwork also needs headteachers to treat their colleagues in a friendly manner; otherwise the leadership may become too rigid. No doubt, headteachers are always seeking to create a social atmosphere which helps school members to be more cooperative and serious in their actions in order to achieve their targets. This helps schools to create a peaceful school environment which in one way or another will raise the school's productivity. One practitioner cites a situation which might lead to unsettled schools, saying that:

*In addition, a headteacher's rigidity could lead teachers to transfer to another school, but the important thing is that the headteacher should play the role of resident advisor and inspector for his/her school. (Headteacher 4.38)*

The main point discussed under this heading is that headteachers should strike a balance in monitoring the work of their schools. This indicates an important factor of their professional characteristics as primary school leaders, crystallising their role as resident

advisors/inspectors and leading them to be more balanced in carrying out their responsibilities.

In conclusion, Factor 13 summarises the leader's practice in holding colleagues to account, whether in connection with an individual's or a group's responsibilities; for example, teaching a single lesson is the responsibility of a certain teacher, whereas subject heads are responsible for improving the teaching skills among their colleagues, e.g. by exchanging experiences. The leader should make a point of arranging for individuals to share their experiences in meetings called by subject leaders.

The overall argument on the factors of Table 12 summarises the personal and professional characteristics of Omani primary school leaders. Therefore this heading can be described as a single link in a complete chain which is the 'professional characteristics framework of Omani primary school leaders'.

***Factor 14 - Able to be innovators - change agents – (Table 12, p. 106)***

Further to this point, school leaders may possibly become innovators as they are seeking to develop their knowledge and in turn this will strengthen their performance in their practice of school leadership. However, they have to be experienced and trained in order to become effective innovators. The following quotation summarises the character of an innovator. One official states that:

*Furthermore, school leaders should play the role of innovators, seeking useful and new ideas from research in the interest of improvement. (Official 3.9)*

In addition, improving school leadership performance, for example, requires that the school leaders, especially headteachers, should focus on and be knowledgeable about certain issues relevant to leadership, such as introducing new information and communications technologies into school curriculum so as to raise the standard of school performance (for more information about E-learning and ICT, see Factor 40, p. 185). One practitioner adds the following:

*Primary headteachers should be capable of planning what innovations will raise pupils' achievements and the performance of all members of the school, including teachers and school workers. (Headteacher 5.16a)*

The following quotation from one practitioner also highlights that the headteacher should possess an open minded; he/she states that:

*The concept of school leadership represents skills, therefore, primary school leaders should be capable of leading their schools and should seek to modernise and update their skills of school leadership. Also, school leaders should be well balanced in managing their responsibilities, knowledgeable in their administrative and monitoring tasks and should build good relations with both the officials and the community members. Also, school leadership should enable school leaders to*

*strengthen relationships with both school members and their community. (Official 3.7)*

In conclusion, taking the tasks of leadership in their stride (including the innovative steps) will support school leaders in handling their responsibilities and will enhance the teaching/learning process. An explanation will be provided for the factors of Table 13 (school management in Omani primary schools) in the following sections.

### **ISSUES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN OMAN**

The essential findings of Table 13, p. 117, emerged from a discussion held on the first theme of Exploring Leadership in which respondents were eager to discuss the major factors of management in Omani primary schools. Table 13 summarises these factors which characterise the management of primary schools in Oman. Furthermore, these factors also draw attention to a possible future framework for primary school management. Again, Table 13 indicates those factors which characterise primary school management, each of which will be clarified in the following sections.

#### ***Factor 15 - Primary headteachers are administrators and implementers of central reforms (Table 13, p. 117)***

Factor 15 of Table 13 indicates solid evidence for the presence of stress in primary schools at present because the headteachers have realised that, within the current educational reform in Oman, they still are restricted to the role of *implementers* (Gunter, 2001) of official directives. In other words, the sense of stress arises when they believe themselves to be treated as implementers rather than leaders; hence, they should no longer be considered implementers of central directives and initiatives and a new concept, that of the 'school leader', should replace it. Also, the feeling of stress comes when they see themselves described as postmen (see response 6.10b, p. 118). Those who carry things from one place to another, and are not required to know the contents of each package. At best, the primary headteachers' role is regarded as communicating information from official directives to their own schools. This process requires undertaking and implementing the tasks of leadership in order to transform their own schools according to the current reform of the GES. At present, the headteachers are not fully enabled to play a genuine role in the process of the reforms as leaders and initiators of change; however, they felt that they should be considered an important group in processing and implementing the reform.

However, stress cannot dominate the situation in all primary schools in the targeted regions, as was argued in the previous Table 10, p. 94, because there was evidence of good practice in leadership despite the pressures of being a headteacher. However, Table 13 draws attention to stress in school leadership evidenced by quotations taken from both officials and practitioners. Thus, this table indicates managerial issues which are considered less of a

priority than those which were raised in Table 10. From this point, it appears that the headteachers of primary schools are considered as administrators only but not yet as leaders. This is evidenced by the following quotation. One practitioner states that:

*A headteacher means the person who is appointed to run a school according to the official directives, thus he/she is urged to implement these in his/her school. (Headteacher 81.5)*

**Table 13 - Issues for primary school management in Oman**

<b>RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THAT THE AREAS OF CONCERN WERE THAT ...</b>
<b>Factor 15- PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS ARE ADMINISTRATORS AND IMPLEMENTERS OF CENTRAL REFORMS (SEE p. 116).</b>
<b>Factor 16 - PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS ARE NOT YET INITIATING AND LEADING SCHOOL-BASED REFORMS (SEE p. 119).</b>
<b>Factor 17 - SCHOOL REFORMS ARE NOT SUCCEEDING AS WELL AS HAD BEEN EXPECTED, FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER (SEE p. 121).</b>

Table 13 summarises the responses to sub-questions b,c and d of the first Methodological Question (see Table 6, p. 68) and reflects the dissatisfaction among the respondents about the headteacher's role in Omani primary schools. The factors in this table are mostly relevant to managerial issues. Also, while each group of respondents expresses a distinctive concern they also express agreement on certain issues.

Furthermore, the respondents agreed that some headteachers have a stressful time in managing and running their schools; because they are not yet fully empowered as school leaders. A shared perspective drawn from the officials' and practitioners' opinions indicates that some school leaders have not been delegated enough authority to enable them to carry out their duties as they should (for more information about authority, see Factor 42, p. 191). Some primary headteachers were described as playing the roles of postmen and gatekeepers. Also, some of them considered themselves to be very strict implementers of the GES guidelines and believed that they were not yet playing the role of school leaders.

Of course, this is caused by different factors; a lack of professionalism which includes too little in-service training (see Factor 43, p. 193), a lack of opportunities for school leaders to get proper qualifications (see Factor 44, p. 195), and also a lack in the continuity of feedback on monitoring leadership performance. Also, there is too little support, which includes not enough teaching resources, no attention paid to school leaders' involvement in school development and a shortage of administrative assistants (Factor 41, p. 189).



As mentioned above, the respondents argued that primary headteachers are used as mere postmen who carry information to the other school members and they have also been described as night-watchmen for school buildings, because of their habit of asking everyone their business.

This suggests that the headteachers are providing too little professional supervision in connection with their own responsibilities for improving teaching, learning and standards. The headteachers themselves said that they were merely following official guidelines and instructions in order to implement them in their own schools. In addition, the headteachers were given too little authority, inadequate school budgets (see Factor 38, p. 184), and all school projects and reforms were planned centrally. All these factors, it is believed, put them in a weak position as headteachers. In other words, their role is so limited that it does not enable them to act as school leaders. For instance, as discussed previously, there are no major school reforms which can be carried out independently and the headteachers are not fully involved in the current development of the GES including the development of school leadership.

The consensus on Factor 15, p. 116, summarised the opinions of sixteen respondents: two officials and fourteen practitioners. However, these fourteen respondents represented two focus groups of practitioners, in which no one objected to their responses and it was clear that they articulated a consensus in each group on this issue.

The above discussion is well illustrated by the following quotation from one official which indicates the stress under which headteachers work. The official says that:

*I regret that headteachers should be used as postmen or postwomen; they are overloaded with paperwork. Nor should they be used as gatekeepers for the buildings, supervising pupils and teachers in and out. They have to be released from such duties and supported with administrative staff; e.g. school timetable designers and deputy headteachers. (Official 6.10b)*

One practitioner describes the stress in the following statement:

*The educational leaders in both the Ministry and the General Directorate in the regions see the headteachers as implementers of their own ideas and that they are able to evaluate our performance. These leaders cannot imagine what sort of things we are dealing with in our own schools, but we know the situation in the educational field better than anybody else. I would like to say that the headteacher could play the role of a supervisor or advisor. The officials in the Ministry of Education and in the Directorates General in the regions should not only give orders to us on which initiatives they would like us to implement. These officials think that our schools are equipped according to what is mentioned in the Ministry's guideline to the GES, but on the basis of this guide the headteacher faces the difficult situation of managing 1,200 pupils without the support of a deputy headteacher. The head has to manage 36 teachers and there is no school secretary. Moreover, the administrative assistant positions are listed in the guideline from the*

*Ministry but have not been filled; therefore, when officials want to visit our schools they have to forgive us for not being able to perform some of the administrative schoolwork as they wish, or else they have to provide us with enough administrative assistants. (Headteacher 4.16)*

In addition, the headteachers should be released from being only administrators and it is hoped that they will be empowered within the current reform of the GES to move towards primary school leadership. In future, they will have to be considered as colleagues of equal standing to the officials. If they are accepted as colleagues, it will enable them to be consulted on tasks relevant to the current school development and to share in decision-making. This also should give them credibility in, for example, carrying out the developmental requirements of school leadership within the current educational reform, side by side with the policy makers. One official adds that:

*Headteachers used to be considered as implementers of the Ministry's policy, but this has now changed to the current developmental concept. Now the headteachers are empowered, to some extent; thus the supreme power, e.g. the Minister of Education has agreed to provide the headteachers with more authority in running their schools. (Official 7.14)*

To sum up, the respondents agreed that some primary headteachers are considered nothing more than school administrators without individual strengths which would distinguish them from other school administrators who merely deal with paperwork, e.g. school secretaries.

Furthermore, the respondents agreed that headteachers need to be regarded as school leaders in the interests of encouraging them and preparing them to take the steps required to face the challenges of implementing the current reform of the GES. The respondents provided frank comments on this factor which portrays the reality of many situations in primary schools at present.

Finally, all factors of Table 13 discuss school management, but each factor discusses different but linked aspects which together form a picture of primary school management as a whole. Thus this factor, Factor 15, identifies a fundamental point which is similar to what will be discussed in the following factors of Table 13, p. 117.

***Factor 16 - Primary headteachers are not yet initiating and leading school-based reforms (Table 13, p. 117)***

This factor indicates that headteachers are inhibited by the central system which prevails in Oman. The central system limits the headteachers' authority (see Factor 42, p. 191, for example; the current reform of the GES was planned and is being carried out centrally. This means that officials (policy makers) in the Ministry of Education decide how the current reform of the GES should be implemented in the existing schools of the GES. Of course, the reform is implemented in model schools which are newly built; however, the implementation

of this reform must in the end reach the existing schools but this has not yet been decided by the officials. To put it simply, headteachers must agree with any plan suggested by the officials to be implemented in their schools. In this regard only 20% of the *new schools have been turned into the model schools of the current reform* since 1998 (OMNP, 2002). Thus, headteachers are not initiators of any major school reforms (Omani primary headteachers can initiate only small projects in their own schools after receiving permission from officials). Therefore the current reform can only be implemented in certain schools, because officials would not have enough time to create and control the process if they extended it to all schools at once. It follows, then, that headteachers should be empowered to create their own school reforms independently. As discussed in Factor 27, p. 153 and Factor 38, p. 184, the headteachers have no power over the budget for their own schools, no control over the employment policies of the staff members, and they are treated as if they were not capable of running their schools independently. In this regard, sometimes officials do ask for headteachers' perceptions on some aspects of the current reform in education, but the headteachers have realised that the officials ask for their opinions in order to gain information rather than to share power and consult with them. Thus, the headteachers conclude that they are not in a position to initiate any plan for any major reform (see Factor 15, p. 116).

Again, as discussed earlier, the respondents agreed that the headteachers are considered implementers of the current reform, but not as equal partners with the policy-makers. However, the headteachers wanted to be involved in the current reform of school leadership and they seek to be recognised as stakeholders. In addition, the respondents agreed that headteachers should not always be recipients of instructions from officials, but should be enabled to make their own decisions to a much greater extent.

The agreement on Factor 16 summarises the common opinions of eleven respondents including ten practitioners in one of the focus groups. This is well illustrated by the following quotation from a practitioner:

*The headteacher should possess professional competencies and should also have freedom in decision-making and should appreciate that school administration is based on knowledge and skills (Headteacher 4.13).*

The officials may think that headteachers are not yet well enough prepared to take full responsibility for the implementation of the current reform of the GES and therefore cannot be given such responsibilities. Indeed, not many headteachers do seem to be prepared, because they lack the needed support, such as administrative and financial assistance. Also, they need to gain leadership skills, as is indicated in response 4.13 (see above).

Finally, Factor 15, p. 116 and Factor 16, p. 119, summarise the headteachers' role, which is seen to be not fully supported by the Ministry of Education. The officials should bear in

mind that the current reform of the GES is at risk, unless the lack of knowledge, resources, training and qualifications which headteachers should be provided with is remedied (see Table 18, p. 192. This is necessary if they are to carry out the current reform and all of their schools are to become model schools for the nation.

***Factor 17 - School reforms are not succeeding as well as had been expected, for one reason or another (Table 13, p. 117)***

There are complementary ideas found in Factor 17 to those of the previous one. The reasons which cause the delay in the school reform can be divided into three major areas: insufficient involvement for primary headteachers in the current educational reform; too few fully empowered headteachers; and a shortage of school and human resources. Thus, as discussed above, Factor 17 identifies similar ideas, such as that the headteachers were considered merely as recipients and were not enabled to initiate their own school projects and this in turn affected the whole process of school reform. As such, they could not by definition play a major role in shaping the current school reform. Possibly headteachers may assume that to undertake effective implementation of the new system is not their responsibility, because they see themselves as implementing other peoples' ideas even when they are not fully aware of what they entail; there is a widespread lack of awareness of many of the details related to the current reform of the GES. As a result, this sense of being a recipient could cause the failure of the implementation of the reform, especially as regards the tasks that are related to primary school leadership.

The above-mentioned obstacles to implementing the current reform will be covered as a whole later in this chapter (see Conflicts, Table 15, p. 145).

Respondents agreed that the headteachers need to be well prepared and to be provided with all the resources which would support them in carrying out their new responsibilities as school leaders effectively.

The headteachers had tried to initiate their own small projects in their schools, but they had not succeeded. This was because they were always interrupted by other programmes which officials had decided to put first and headteachers have had to accept this.

Furthermore, primary headteachers are not empowered to carry out their own projects for their schools, even though they might wish to do so. Hence, again as discussed earlier, if the headteachers wish to initiate their own small projects they have to ask for official permission. Thus, the lack of delegated authority in their position forces them to act according to the proverb, which says:

*Stretch your legs according to the length of your blanket. (Headteacher 45.2)*

The above statement is an Omani traditional proverb, equivalent to the English "Cut your

coat according to your cloth”. This brings to mind another factor which weakens the headteachers’ position: that is, they cannot promote the work of their schools, either at local or national level. The above Omani proverb also indicates that the present headteachers are not supported with any adequate school budget, and lack any adequate authority. At the same time they are held responsible and accountable by the officials of the Ministry of Education in running their own schools perfectly. There is no doubt that this situation will force many of the present headteachers to resign early from their current job or to change it to completely different one.

The consensus on Factor 17, p. 121, summarises the opinions of several practitioners and their responses represent the voices of many other respondents, in total 33 practitioners out of eighty-two participants. All respondents supported the conclusions under this heading. This is well illustrated by the following quotation provided by one of the practitioners, who points out that:

*In fact, the Ministry of Education always makes the policies and expects the headteachers to implement them. However, the action of initiating reforms is taken by the supreme power (officials). The Ministry has given us attention in order to consider our opinions, but we should bear in mind that the Ministry has the right to accept or reject our opinions; we are only providing our perceptions in order for the officials to consider them. (Headteacher 36.7)*

The above statement which is provided by one of the practitioners indicates that headteachers understand but do not necessarily agree with their restricted authority, which covers only very limited and routine responsibilities within their schools. In a sense, as discussed in Factor 16, p. 119, primary headteachers cannot be innovators or initiators of major programmes such as developing primary school leadership within the current reform of the GES.

In conclusion, Table 10 and Table 13 point to theoretical frameworks for both primary school management and leadership. Thus, the factors on both tables will be examined according to the suggested framework of this research project (see the factors of the T&T Model, Table 4, p. 55).

## **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SIX**

The first theme, Exploring Primary School Leadership in Oman, includes two sub-themes; Values and Culture (for more information about the ideas of the three themes of this research project, see Figure 2 - AlHinai Model of primary school leadership , p. 201).

The discussion of the first theme covers Table 10 - Issues for primary school leadership in Oman, p. 94, Table 11 - Educational values, p. 100. Table 12 - Headteachers’ personal and professional characteristics p. 106 and Table 13 - Issues for primary school management in

Oman, p. 117. In other words, these four tables focus on different areas; also each table includes certain factors which lead to conclusions about the subject of the table. For example, Table 10 concerns issues of primary school leadership as practised in Omani schools. Thus, it assumes that this table will provide a description of the primary school leadership model which is used currently in Oman. Hence, Table 10, p. 94, includes factors which altogether draw a complete picture of the primary school leadership framework, the formulation of which is urgently needed. In this regard, it is hoped that the model of primary school leadership which is practised currently in Omani schools can be defined in sufficient detail.

Furthermore, Table 10 (Exploring Primary School Leadership) summarises the perspectives of the respondents, whether officials (policy makers) or practitioners (headteachers) on the way in which they describe the model of primary school leadership used by them in the existing system, the GES. Thus, the researcher has tried to report the respondents' opinions as he has received them, according to the indicated responses under each factor of every table, i.e. Table 10, p. 94, Table 11, p. 100, Table 12, p. 106 and Table 13, p. 117.

Table 11 summarises the respondents' opinion of what kind of values the Omani primary headteachers hold in regard to their school responsibilities as well as their educational targeted goals which in turn all serve the teaching and learning processes. By investigating these educational and leadership values we can interpret the headteachers' quality of leadership in such areas as performing the tasks of management and leadership. These leadership or educational values can also lead us to explore more information relevant to the headteachers' cultural and social assumptions in relation to their own leadership model.

Table 12 includes a number of factors reported as defining elements of the characteristics of Omani primary school leaders, especially for the headteachers; thus this table includes respondents' perspectives on what they consider desirable personal and professional characteristics for Omani headteachers at the present time. However, these characteristics seem to be derived from the good understanding possessed by Omani headteachers. Nevertheless, these characteristics are still difficult to judge from a practical point of view. Furthermore, the respondents' opinions, which are summarised in Table 12, is endorsed by the selection of relevant quotations drawn from both the officials (policy makers) and the practitioners (headteachers).

Table 13 also includes a number of factors reported as issues of primary school management which are certainly considered as complementary to issues of school leadership, but at the same time indicate less play given to leadership factors and more emphasis on management in terms of the day-to-day running Omani primary schools. In this regard, these

managerial issues allow the researcher some scope for comment, by considering the transactional scale factors which were prepared for this reason (see Table 4, p. 55, column 1, rows 1 to 6).

In conclusion, it should be noted that the responses which are included in Table 13, p. 117 (school management), are considered as complementary to those of Table 10, p. 94 (school leadership).

## **Chapter 7 – PRESENTING THE PRACTICE OF OMANI PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

### **ANALYSING THE SECOND THEME: PERCEPTIONS OF PRACTICE AND ITS CONFLICTS AND SUCCESSES**

*In fact, all new educational tasks [including primary school leadership tasks], which are introduced by the current reforms, can be integrated into the existing system, the GES. (Official 69.25)*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This section focuses on the second theme and its two sub-themes. The respondents' opinions of their own practice of primary school leadership will be discussed. Table 14, p. 128; Table 15, p. 145 and Table 16, p. 166, indicate the major factors which the researcher has derived from what was said by the official and practitioner respondents.

Also, the major factors will be explained and clarified according to the title of each table, such as the practice of primary school leadership, and conflicts and successes experienced in running primary schools within the GES. Some quotations from the respondents will be reported to illustrate points made in each of three tables (as stated above) and commented on.

#### **FINDINGS ABOUT THE PRACTICE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

*... headteachers' responsibilities could be classified under three issues: administrative, financial and monitoring. (Official 1.12)*

#### **Perceptions of practice in Omani primary schools**

Some essential factors emerged from a discussion held on the second theme of this research project, Leadership Practice. Respondents were eager to discuss both the officials' and the headteachers' (practitioners') perspectives. Table 14, p. 128, summarises factors relevant to the practice of primary school leadership in existing Omani schools following the General Education System (GES), which also exemplify the key elements of effective practice in Omani schools. Furthermore, these factors indicate a particular style from which can be identified a distinctive framework for leadership practice. Seven factors emerged from the data and these, it is hoped, will be the basis for describing current primary leadership practice in the existing schools of the GES. In this regard, identifying the elements of leadership practice could lead to a genuine development or, if necessary, a change in the major leadership tasks. Therefore, the current reform would be implemented according to concrete evidence derived from the nature of the existing leadership practice. However, the



GES itself is in any case targeted for re-definition, development and maybe for replacement. Nevertheless, this research, by introducing a framework for leadership practice at primary school level, seeks to some extent to influence the current reform. Each factor of Table 14, p. 128, will be clarified in the following sections.

***Factor 18 - Respondents thought that the practice at primary school level indicates that headteachers share responsibilities with others (Table 14, p. 128)***

Respondents indicated their agreement on issues relevant to their own practice of primary school headship. We think of it as leadership because this research seeks to trace the evidence of leadership which may be found and practised in Omani primary schools (see Table 10, p. 94). However, there are some of the issues which might be more accurately described as questions of school management. Both kinds of issues, whether leadership or management issues, are closely linked to and complement each other, because it is believed that school leadership must include managerial activities. Thus, what might be regarded as a routine management activity to an experienced headteacher might be an exciting innovation to another headteacher which requires skilled leadership. Hence, the respondents reported on their school situations, for example, either in terms of satisfaction (Table 16, p. 166) or of dissatisfaction leading to stress (Table 13, p. 117 and Table 15, p. 145). However, respondents discussed practice-related issues as they exist in their schools. From this point of view the purpose of their discussion is to tell us how they run their schools on a day-to-day basis.

Furthermore, Factor 18, indicates crucial points of the actual practice in Omani primary schools. For example, the respondents reported that the headteachers share responsibilities with school members. Also, they believe that the deputy headteachers' responsibilities are *complementary* to those of headteachers (Garrett and Mcgeachie, 1999). In addition, the respondents agreed that Omani primary headteachers also consult colleagues (e.g. school board council members), when they are planning or implementing new projects needed for their schools, in order to share as many as possible of their school responsibilities with their colleagues. Sixty-three respondents were agreed on this topic.

The consensus on this topic was drawn from all the targeted groups of respondents: officials, male headteachers and female headteachers, numbering three officials and sixty headteachers. It may be recalled that the headteachers represent fifty-six interviewees in separate focus groups and the seven (3 officials and 4 practitioners) who were involved in the individual interviews. This, considering the overall representation, again makes three officials and sixty practitioners; in total sixty-three respondents out of eighty-two would agree with this point.

Factor 18 is well illustrated by the following quotations where one practitioner points out

the following:

*The role of the deputy headteacher is similar to that of the headteacher. When the headteacher is absent he/she should carry similar responsibilities to the headteachers or take over his/her duties. For this reason, the deputy headteacher should be given a chance to monitor and perform the work of the headteacher under his/her supervision, because some of the deputy headteachers are new and they do not have any experience in dealing with the actual duties. Thus, the headteacher is urged to allow his/her deputy to gain experience, because one day he/she will have to lead the school. (Headteacher 4.21)*

Regarding the sharing of responsibilities with others (this is considered *AlShura* in character, see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380), deputy headteachers' responsibilities should be allocated by headteachers when they assign certain jobs to them, but this rarely happens in practice since many schools have no deputy headteacher (see Chart 6, p. 150). However, headship tasks include delegating certain responsibilities to staff members, such as organising school timetables. Again, the reality of Omani primary schools indicates a level of stress which makes it difficult for the headteachers to delegate anything to their busy teaching staff, because their timetables are already overloaded (see below, Conflicts, Table 15, p. 145). There should be opportunities for the headteacher to delegate responsibilities to both the deputy headteacher and other teachers. This is supported by the following quotation from one official, who states that:

*Commonly, the deputy headteacher takes over the headteacher's position when he/she is absent, and while the headteacher is in school, they should share responsibilities and duties. Thus, you can see both of them at school, each dealing with separate responsibilities and duties within the school building. (Official 1.15)*

At the same time, the following statement indicates how little room there is for discretion in the actual practice of primary schools. In the words of an official:

*Deputy headteachers' roles are complementary to those of headteachers; hence, their responsibilities are clarified in the GES guide. (Official 3.12)*

The above statement gives a general idea of what is included on this point in the guidance of the GES. From this point, this research is concerned to discuss the developmental requirements of primary school leadership (see below, the third theme, Developing Primary School Leadership in Oman, Factor 37, p. 182). A major issue in this argument is that the deputy headteachers should be empowered by the headteachers as well as by officials by having their responsibilities spelled out so that they do not overlap those of the headteacher and are dependent on the generosity of the headteacher. Indeed, the deputy headteachers' responsibilities should be clearly indicated in the guide to make it unnecessary for the headteachers to assign duties to their deputies. Actually, the responsibilities which the headteacher can delegate to the deputy surely must depend on the experience, competence

and commitment (motivation) of the deputy and, of course, on the head. In addition to the elements in the guide which clarify the deputies' responsibilities, the headteachers could direct them to deal with other issues relevant to school leadership responsibilities (for further information about school leaders' responsibilities, see Appendix 11, p. 392). One practitioner claims the following:

*Deputy headteachers should be empowered by headteachers' assigning them to specific jobs, e.g. school records, in order to demonstrate their capacity. (Headteacher 5.17)*

**Table 14 - Perceptions of practice at Omani primary school level**

<b>RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THAT THE PRACTICE AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL INDICATES THAT HEADTEACHERS ...</b>
<b>Factor 18 - SHARE RESPONSIBILITIES WITH OTHERS (SEE p. 126).</b>
<b>Factor 19 - ORGANISE ACTIVITIES TO WELCOME NEW PUPILS TO THE SCHOOL AND OTHER ACTIVITIES TO ENRICH THE FORMAL CURRICULUM (SEE p. 129).</b>
<b>Factor 20 - UNDERSTAND THEIR SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES, FOR EXAMPLE, ADMINISTRATIVE, MONITORING AND FINANCIAL ONES (SEE p. 131).</b>
<b>Factor 21 - PLAY A PARENTAL ROLE WITH THE CHILDREN (SEE p. 133).</b>
<b>Factor 22 - USE EVALUATION PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSING THEIR PERFORMANCE (SEE p. 135).</b>
<b>Factor 23 - EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR THEIR TEACHERS (SEE p. 138).</b>
<b>Factor 24 - ENCOURAGE STAFF MEMBERS TO RESPECT THEIR COMMITMENTS TO THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY (SEE p. 141).</b>

Table 14 includes the answers to question 3 of the research questions and reflects the respondents' opinions about practising primary school leadership. The issues above mentioned might lead to genuine evidence from both the officials' and practitioners' perspectives of what constitutes good practice in Omani primary schools. Factors 18 and 24 were adapted from AlHinai and Rutherford (2002).

It is commonly understood (ME, 1993) that the deputy headteachers are more involved with administrative duties than with leading colleagues; for example, they are sometimes given the responsibility of initiating certain projects relevant to school development. It is

believed that the deputy headteachers normally do less in connection with school leadership than the headteachers, unless they are considered as a superior in any ordinary administrative work with the school staff. Thus, the deputies share the responsibility of leadership, but the main point is whether they discharge their own responsibilities fully and effectively.

This factor is one of the eight factors of Table 14, p. 128, which gives us an idea about Omani primary school leaders' practice, and goes into some detail about their practice.

***Factor 19 - Respondents thought that the practice at primary school level indicates that headteachers organise activities to welcome new pupils to the school and other activities to enrich the formal curriculum (Table 14, p. 128)***

The respondents believed that the primary school level is distinct from other school levels (e.g. secondary school) because it has its own characteristics required for nurturing youngsters who cannot always benefit from standardised programmes, because of their varying individualities and level of development. Thus, primary school leaders should always be clear about the need for a wide range of knowledge in connection with the practice of primary school leadership and should have the skills of solving its problems. They require such skills in order to meet new problems and to prepare the school environment to welcome the youngsters. Therefore, nurturing the youngsters requires the headteachers to support teachers, for example, in creating suitable programmes for the youngsters and involving them in activities which will build up their self-discipline and educate them positively, among other things.

In addition, headteachers should always carry out their daily responsibilities according to a pre-arranged strategic plan for the immediate academic year and beyond and they have to lead the way along two simultaneous paths: relations between the school and the community and relations between staff members. Thus, headteachers' responsibilities may be found inside and outside the school, because human relations in their widest sense are considered a major component in school administration and management.

In addition, headteachers also play the role of organisers in the responsibility for managing and supervising school transportation. Hence, school transportation is considered one of the greatest responsibilities if their schools are to run smoothly. The headteachers provide direct supervision of school transportation and, for this reason, they may personally arrange the schedules or at least supervise them.

Another area in which primary headteachers play the role of organisers is in providing useful teaching/learning aids by running suitable workshops and encouraging teachers to create their own visual aids for the classroom.

The topic of the role of organiser which is taken by headteachers was raised by a wide range of respondents. Therefore, the consensus indicates a significant agreement among

officials and also practitioners. It was reached by eight officials and sixty headteachers, 68 out of 82 respondents. The male and female headteachers represent six separate focus groups and twelve who were involved in individual interviews, including officials.

Factor 19, p. 129, is well illustrated by the following quotations. One official states this:

*I meant about pupils' needs that they are newcomers to the school environment, and these pupils need to be encouraged to come to school by implementing interesting programmes for them. These pupils would soon miss their mothers, especially in the lower primary level. Therefore, the whole school should be prepared to offer suitable programmes to these youngsters in order to encourage them to come to school and create a suitable atmosphere to make it up to them for missing their homes. (Official 1.17)*

No doubt, primary school level requires more preparation in terms of creating suitable programmes to welcome very young children. The programmes should support their learning and, of course, should involve the youngsters in autonomous activities, e.g. clay modelling. Another official points out that:

*Headteachers in primary schools are urged to create suitable programmes for the youngsters in the first grades which are different from those designed for the pupils in the upper grades; this indicates the difference between primary and other school levels' leadership tasks. (Official 3.13)*

As stated above, such young children should be treated differently from pupils in higher grades, e.g. preparatory school level. This means that the primary school level has its own characteristics which the headteachers should be aware of. In addition, teachers of primary school level should also be aware of their pupils' distinctive needs. This helps them to serve their pupils properly. Thus, the headteachers also should encourage their teachers to do their best to set up suitable programmes which create enjoyment as well as encouraging pupils to stay at school without being bored. The following quotation urges the primary headteachers to be closer to their staff members in order to raise the standards of the programmes provided for the youngsters. One practitioner notes that:

*The headteacher should strengthen his/her relations with teaching members of staff in order to encourage them to carry out their responsibilities and should accept their advice. Also, he/she should be close to the youngsters and choose an easy way of communicating with them, e.g. speaking to them through a loudspeaker after the session of the Omani anthem or whenever he/she meets them. (Headteacher 4.12)*

Furthermore, the above quotation indicates some techniques which the headteacher can use in order to create rapport with the pupils, by directing them individually as well as in groups (e.g. while they are in the play ground). This is the way of communicating with and educating the youngsters in the present Omani primary schools and this is part of the headteacher's programme; for example, to welcome and provide ongoing advice for pupils.

The quotation below also widens the topic of Factor 19 and illustrates the school leaders'

needs if they are to create such programmes for the youngsters. One official comments that:

*There are many advantages, since primary school leaders should always be clear about the wide range of knowledge and the capacity of problem solving for the sake of the youngsters, the capacity of preparing the school environment for welcoming them and creating suitable programmes for them all; these are advantages in the primary school. (Official 1.19)*

The same official added that primary headteachers should build on their previous plans for school activities in order to allow them to evaluate previous projects and improve future ones. He/she states the following:

*... primary school leaders could arrange a performance plan for one or two years by involving teachers in the arrangement and doing their best to implement it. Also, they would evaluate and assess this plan and find a proper solution for the problems that could face them during the implementation. (Official 1.25)*

In conclusion, Factor 19, p. 129, indicates that primary school leaders are seen to play the role of organisers. They have to be very creative and imaginative in order to create enjoyable but educative programmes which meet pupils' needs.

***Factor 20 - Respondents thought that the practice at primary school level indicates that headteachers understand their school responsibilities, for example, administrative, monitoring and financial ones (Table 14, p. 128)***

The headteachers should be aware of the targeted goals for their school set by the Ministry of Education; they should understand each one in detail in order to be able to implement them and so to improve their leadership performance. If they are to co-operate with the Ministry, they should be well informed by officials about the pedagogical work (curriculum matters, e.g. developing a certain textbook), and the administrative and financial tasks, which are being developed or when they decide to conduct workshops, for example, in their own school buildings. In addition, staff members should let headteachers know about any new plans they have made, relevant to their duties, such as creating new teaching/learning aids. This allows the headteachers to provide them with adequate advice, because they all share in the responsibilities of the school (see above, Factor 18, p. 126). Thus, it is clear that the headteacher's role mainly consists of discharging administration, monitoring and financial responsibilities. For example, as a major administrative responsibility they should always seek to manage staff meetings effectively. Furthermore, according to the headteachers' responsibilities which are stated in the GES guide, it is believed that the headteachers are accountable for everything pertaining to their own schools. This means that they should select the most important tasks to deal with in each academic year in order to improve the school's performance, but not to try to solve all their professional problems at the same time. They have to be selective in implementing particular leadership tasks as set out in their annual plans. The discussion on the topic of Factor 20 indicates

significant agreement emerging from both groups of respondents, officials and practitioners (male and female headteachers).

This consisted of four officials out of twelve, and fifty-five headteachers out of seventy. The male and female headteachers represent six separate focus groups, as well as seven who were involved in individual interviews, including officials. Their conclusions are summed up the following quotations. One official states that:

*There are several areas of practice; as you know, the headteacher's performance is divided into three parts: monitoring [pedagogical awareness of his/her subject field], administrative and financial. For example, the administrative duties could be looking after the attendance and the hours of attendance in the school, managing transfers for pupils/teachers' folders, school records which give details of school duties and choosing the way in which these records should be arranged and managed. The other issue is the monitoring which is the most important issue and calls for the headteacher to supervise teachers' performance, supervises the implementation of the school curriculum and subject tasks and looks after the provision of teaching aids. In addition, he/she provides direct supervision for the laboratories and school library. All these become administrative practices for school leadership at the primary school level or at any school level. Furthermore, the headteacher is responsible for the financial issues and management of the school finances whether in the cafeteria or in the form of school budgets to be spent on school needs, such as stationery and other things to be bought for schoolwork. (Official 1.11)*

Another respondent considers his/her responsibilities from the beginning of the school day and says that:

*At the beginning of each school day we check who is absent among members of staff. If a teacher is absent we have to distribute his/her classes among the other teachers. Also, distributing extra periods to teachers should be balanced between them and we should give more extra periods to those who have fewer lessons. Moreover, at the beginning of the school day we also check the attendance of pupils; perhaps, also, a teacher is late for one reason or another and this work is shared among colleagues. In this case, each of us has a responsibility for a certain area of the school to deal with and if there is any difficulty then I have to be informed, such as a pupil's behaviour or a transportation problem. In this case, my colleagues and I come together to solve these problems. (Headteacher 4.19)*

This seems to be comparable to a normal school day anywhere else; however, this practitioner (response 4.19) has clear guidelines for running his/her school. This indicates that he/she has gained useful ideas from the routine of performing schoolwork, despite the fact that this participant is not a degree holder (for more information about practitioners' qualifications, see Chart 11, p. 196). What the researcher wants to say here is that the information which one gets from a programme or a course is not enough in itself. The practice and experience gained from everyday routines in the school contribute to the competence of the headteacher. For example, some of the characteristics which the participant mentioned, such as distributing the workload evenly between the teachers in the

school and working collaboratively with the school teachers to resolve daily problems, cannot be gained from theory in the university but from experience in the field (AlHinai, 2000).

Finally, on this topic of Factor 20 the respondents indicated issues which are relevant to the way in which they practise primary school leadership in Omani schools. Indeed, they provided examples so that we could examine their practice, whether purely managerial or including the leadership tasks which promote them to the level of primary school leaders. It should be noted that the discussion on this topic, Factor 20, concerns only one aspect of the leadership which the Omani headteachers exemplify in their own schools.

***Factor 21 - Respondents thought that the practice at primary school level indicates that headteachers play a parental role with children (Table 14, p. 128)***

At the beginning of each academic year, the headteacher's responsibility is to provide a high level of care for the pupils of six years old who are just starting school. Thus, the headteachers encourage their staff to create a useful induction programme of school activities, which involve the young children and create activities to offer relaxation and enjoyment for them in order to alleviate their feelings at being away from home (for more information about induction programmes, see also Factor 19, p. 129). Similarly, the respondents argued that this stage requires female leaders as well as female teachers to look after the young children. In this case, the young children are seen as relating more closely to their mothers than to their fathers; therefore, this supports the idea of involving female leaders at the early stages of primary school level (ages 6 to 8 years old, ME, 1998). However, male leaders could also play a parental role by standing in as the children's father in accordance with the current situation in Omani primary schools, which accommodates each gender separately and considering the Islamic concept which requires that boys should be supervised by male headteachers and girls by female headteachers.

The argument under this factor raised a very crucial educational point which indicates the necessity of 'creating a positive learning environment' suitable for the youngsters and serving their needs. This means that headteachers are responsible for creating and introducing suitable activities to meet the pupils' needs. Thus, they have to think creatively about activities to benefit their pupils by developing their motivation to learn, strengthening their skills in problem solving and improving their knowledge in subjects of the school curriculum. Furthermore, creating a positive learning environment is vital as a way of building bridges between school-targeted goals and the children's home background (the experience which they already have). In other words, 'creating a positive learning environment' is important for enhancing school and home relations, e.g. raising pupils' achievements requires a cooperative effort from both headteachers and parents.

As discussed above, Factor 21 raises an essential element in the practice of leadership at



primary school level in Oman. It is necessary to consider the pupils' needs in terms of providing 'parental care', because this will help the children to feel safe and make them want to stay longer in school. Also, this will help them to enjoy learning and so help them to achieve higher results. From this point of view, the respondents emphasised that the headteachers should be urged to make an effort to play a quasi-parental role in their schools. Here a strong link appears between Factor 19, p. 129, (headteachers seen as initiators and organisers of suitable programmes for the youngsters) and this factor (Factor 21, headteachers seen to play a parental role).

However, children at the primary school level are considered easy to lead and simple to manage, because the knowledge they acquire is basic and they are still young and have fewer behavioural problems than those, for example, at the secondary school level; yet at the same time this is a vital stage. As discussed earlier, the primary school is considered the basis for all other school levels.

The respondents represent the views of one focus group of nine practitioners and three who took part in individual interviews. Their views are well summed up by the following quotations. One official states that:

*Primary school headteachers should realise that they are dealing with young children who miss their homes, thus they should know how to treat them positively. Understanding pupils' needs requires headteachers to fill in the gaps if children miss their parents. Furthermore, the headteachers should be in the place of their parents in comforting and nurturing them during the school day. In other words, the headteachers should avoid any negative actions which would cause them to feel scared. (Official 63.7)*

This response indicates a concern for young children as newcomers to school. The primary school level is distinct from the other school levels in its need to welcome young children; it is important for them to have a good impression of the school environment as being pleasant and enjoyable. The main point is to create suitable activities for letting the children explore the things around them which involve them directly and learn from their exploration. As stated above, in response 63.7, the headteachers should build strong bridges connecting schools and homes. This requires the involvement of parents and they should be encouraged to come to school for different events, such as celebrating Mother's Day or rewarding gifted and talented pupils (for more information about uncooperative parents, see Factor 29, p. 157). However, the children's mothers are not allowed, traditionally, to participate in such celebrations in boys' schools if the staff are all male, and the advantage of involving female leaders as well as teachers at the early primary school level is that it allows the children's (both girls' and boys') mothers to participate in such events. Similarly, the children's fathers could come instead of the mothers to celebrate Mother's Day when the

events are held in the boys' school.

In addition, playing the parental role requires the headteachers to be good communicators with others in society. This is undertaken side by side with other school responsibilities and the balance between the internal and external duties of the school leader must always be considered. One practitioner draws guidelines from his/her own experience of the school routines and says:

*In addition, there are other things that we have to deal with, such as meeting parents .... (Headteacher 4.19a)*

The respondents, officials and practitioners, were agreed that this factor (the parental role played by male and female headteachers) is important for running a successful school and also can be used as a sign of the effectiveness of the school leadership. In other words, headteachers are considered effective if they can build good relationships with their pupils as well as with their pupils' parents and other members of the community. This is supported by a quotation taken from one official, who says that:

*There is an indication that primary school leadership is effective when it can be seen in the leaders' activation of the Parental Council. (Official 3.17)*

In conclusion, Factor 21, p. 133 (the headteachers' parental role) and, in the same connection, Factor 19, p. 129 (initiating suitable programmes for the youngsters), indicate the vital significance of 'creating a positive school environment for the teaching/learning process'. Thus, the successful school environment could lead to higher standards in all aspects of school achievements, for example, pupils', teachers' and leaders' accomplishments.

***Factor 22 - Respondents thought that the practice at primary school level indicates that headteachers use evaluation procedures for assessing their performance (Table 14, p. 128)***

Under this heading the respondents raised the question of using evaluation procedures<sup>5</sup>. This means that headteachers have to evaluate themselves by creating suitable questionnaires, which allow their colleagues in school to assess them in terms of good or bad school management and leadership, so as to evaluate different aspects of their performance. Thus, teachers consider their leaders' (headteachers') actions as displaying their school leadership. In order to collect colleagues' opinions, the headteachers should organise the evaluation form so as to avoid causing their colleagues any embarrassment. For example, they should not ask their colleagues to give their names when they fill in the evaluation form (questionnaire); this

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<sup>5</sup> The researcher asked to be provided with this evaluation form (a questionnaire organised by the headteacher), but unfortunately, he could not get a copy of it. Alternatively, he was provided with another evaluation form, known as the Evaluation Form for Headteacher's Performance (EFHP), which is used by officials to assess and evaluate the headteacher's work. The questionnaire which was prepared by the headteacher seems to consider the elements of the EFHP; hence, it is more important for the headteachers than the one which they have

allows the teachers to provide primary school leaders with confidential and valuable answers on each item listed in their evaluation form. Of course, the reason for creating this form is to allow the school leaders to assess themselves by considering what their staff consider to be their strengths and weaknesses. From this point of view, they can carry out further school improvements by introducing new programmes to develop their performance as school leaders, and by providing their staff members with appropriate and efficient support. This seems to show that the primary headteachers have some autonomy, for example, to create innovations and develop their school leadership.

In addition, the headteachers also distribute evaluation forms to their staff in order for them to list particular programmes or courses for their professional development which they wish to attend in the light of their interests and needs, to be conducted through seminars, workshops or lectures. For instance, they encourage their colleagues to undertake staff development activities, such as exchanging observational visits between teachers. This is, however, a sensitive point because a teacher chosen to observe another school tends to feel that he/she is a weak member of the team. In fact, this programme of exchanging observational classroom visits is, on the contrary, an attempt to encourage teachers to show their creativity in presenting model lessons, i.e. to share best practice.

The argument which ensued on this topic, Factor 22, ended in a consensus which is drawn from both officials' and practitioners' perspectives. This is illustrated by the following quotations. One practitioner points out that:

*In the beginning of the academic year we hold meetings with teaching staff members and we distribute a form which includes questions to assess the headteacher's performance. Therefore, teachers have an opportunity to give their opinions on their headteacher's behaviour and the characteristics which they like or dislike and this happens in our meetings regularly. In addition, we ask for teachers' opinions on programmes to raise their motivation. Also, we consider their opinions on previous programmes, to see whether they have been performed successfully. We consider their comments in order to provide better programmes in future. Their comments may be useful to combine with the headteacher's verdict, but it is important to have various opinions from staff members as well as introducing their ideas for the benefit of others. (Headteacher 4.11)*

According to the staff members' opinions, the headteachers seem to use the evaluation procedures for various purposes, for example, to accomplish targeted goals, to improve their leadership qualities and assess critically their leadership achievements through the pupils' results and the teachers' views.

Another use of the evaluation form is indicated in the following quotation taken from one official, who says:

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prepared for their own use in order to improve their own performance and to be reflected in the EFHP.

*Also, the evaluation plan is created according to school needs and not at random. If the headteacher finds that his/her school is short of teaching aids or during his/her class observation found a weakness in the verbal interaction or some teachers do not know how to make use of the blackboard/whiteboard, then he/she should arrange a workshop to get rid of these weaknesses. Thus, from actual observations conducted by school leaders, this becomes an evaluation plan for school performance. Probably, if the headteacher is not qualified to manage certain workshops, then he/she should invite external experts to help him/her in running them, for example, from the Directorate General in the region. (Official 1.39)*

Another reason for using the evaluation form is indicated in the following practitioner's statement (4.28):

*We distribute forms to teachers in order for them to list particular programmes that they wish to attend according to their interests, to be conducted through seminars, workshops or lectures [this is part of the staff development programme]. Thus, the feedback of this form is used for planning proper staff development programmes later on. We use an evaluation form, which also should be distributed to the teachers to fill in. However, this form includes items which are based on, for example, a headteacher's characteristics which in their opinion are acceptable and the managerial style they would like him/her to use. Furthermore, the evaluation form assesses whether the headteacher has obstructed or encouraged teachers in meeting their targeted goals. In addition, we try to elicit ideas from them in order to develop our performance and not to stick to one particular style. This to may help pupils and teachers to be served properly. (Headteacher 4.28)*

The above statement confirms that school leaders appreciate that they must always have it in mind to serve their colleagues effectively. In addition, the following quotation embodies major points which should be considered in the evaluation form. One official states that:

*Reading and exchanging ideas between one headteacher and another could encourage him/her to find ways of evaluating his/her own school performance. However, school leaders should have an evaluation plan made by the headteacher or his/her deputy to maintain the evaluation of his/her performance. This plan should include tasks that the headteacher thinks need to be evaluated and can be addressed in relevant seminars and workshops if applicable. Also in terms of staff development the headteacher should invite external experts as well as qualified staff members from the school itself to address needed tasks relevant to the teaching and learning processes. (Official 1.38)*

Finally, as discussed above, the headteachers use an evaluation form for various reasons, for example, to examine their efforts as reflected in the pupils' achievements and teachers' accomplishments. However, a major point in using evaluation procedures is that it allows them to evaluate their performance regularly. Also, they consider using these procedures from the beginning to the end of the academic year, mainly in order to keep in mind school weaknesses as well as school improvement issues. More explanation will be provided in the following factor which supports this topic of Factor 22 because it considers this kind of evaluation as a useful method since it attempts to take into account colleagues' opinions. The colleagues' opinions are helpful in improving the headteachers' leadership qualities because

they require the headteachers to provide useful staff development programmes for them.

***Factor 23 - Respondents thought that the practice at primary school level indicates that headteachers emphasise the importance of staff development programmes for their teachers (Table 14, p. 128)***

Professional Staff Development Programmes (PSDP) are planned in advance by the headteachers in the light of the Directorate General's directives. This is done annually for the following academic year: teachers are involved in workshops and seminars and the headteachers also can present papers after obtaining the agreement of the subject inspectors. Thus, before conducting these programmes the headteacher is encouraged to follow up teachers' needs and to plan how to address these needs by letting them benefit from such programmes in an effective way. For example, if a teacher is found to be having a problem after assessment, he/she should be offered help and support. The support should take the form of participation in workshops and seminars. In addition, as discussed above, staff development programmes should include exchanging observational visits between teachers.

The discussion held on this topic of Factor 23 reached a consensus which was drawn from both major groups of the targeted population of this research; officials and practitioners. This consisted of sixteen participants (eleven headteachers were involved in focus group discussions). Their views are summed up in the following quotations. One practitioner points out that:

*Professional Staff Development Programmes are planned in advance for the following academic year; teachers are involved in its workshops and seminars. (Headteacher 5.30)*

This is supported by the statement of one official, who observes:

*Each year we set a training plan and we nominate certain people from those who are creative and those who need to be supported professionally. Usually, those who are creative attend certain programmes run by lecturers from the Colleges of Education and by experts and inspectors from the Directorate. (Official 1.34)*

This means that the more creative teachers were involved in PSDP which prepare them to be field trainers. In other words, later on, those who were identified as creative teachers would be given the responsibility of sharing with other colleagues what they had learned from workshop sessions. This is equivalent to the Ministry's plan, a sort of "cascade" procedure for preparing potential school leaders, for example, senior teachers, to be members of "The Core Team for Training". The core team is a selected group which is divided into two main groups; subject and administrative inspectors. Both kinds of inspector are considered to be a core group of trainers. Subject *inspectors are responsible* for discussing subject-related matters with both senior teachers and teachers (ME, 1995). Similarly, the administrative inspectors are responsible for discussing administration-related issues with both headteachers and

deputy headteachers. Both kinds of inspector should be supported by school leaders (headteachers, deputy headteachers and senior teachers) in meeting their own school's needs. This idea is considered an educational innovation introduced during the current reform of the GES; in particular, it *focuses on enabling school leaders to implement the central reform in education* (ECS, 1995).

This is supported by the following quotation drawn from another practitioner, who points out that:

*... before conducting these programmes the headteacher is allowed to follow up teachers' needs and to plan how he/she should address their needs by letting them benefit from such programmes in an effective way. (Headteacher 4.6)*

One official also indicated that the headteachers are key persons in establishing the staff development programmes. He/she says that:

*Selected teachers are involved in staff development programmes and the headteachers and the inspectors should make the selection. (Official 3.24)*

As a requirement of staff development, both officials/inspectors and headteachers have to think of suitable programmes to serve teachers which will address specific teachers' needs.

It goes without saying that the headteachers seek to raise their schools' achievements by running the Staff Development Programmes. One practitioner states that:

*Headteachers' responsibilities are divergent; e.g. planning for staff development and seeking good progress by the pupils. (Headteacher 12.2)*

As clearly indicated in both the previous statement and those which follow, many activities related to staff development are conducted in schools. There is a movement to run such programmes independently in schools because most of these programmes are supervised by primary school leaders, whether headteachers or senior teachers. One practitioner indicates that:

*There are many things that we have to deal with, such as conducting classroom observations or arranging staff development programmes for nominated teachers and sending them on arranged sessions; and these programmes could be weekly or monthly. However, if we cannot finish all the items that we are scheduled to deal with on a certain day, we have to transfer them to another day, because there are many things to perform daily and we try to finish most of them. (Headteacher 4.19b)*

There are signs that schools are already overloaded with work and this is why the headteachers are not always able to implement plans which they are keen on (for more information about being overloaded with paperwork, see Factor 25, p. 143). This causes them to delay other plans indefinitely. Transferring the unfinished duties means that the headteachers cannot meet the deadlines for carrying out their leadership tasks, leading to disquiet in schools. The work is also put at risk by leaving things in such programmes to

chance; this is in every sense a failure of leadership.

The following quotation indicates some of the skills which are used in running staff development programmes. One official states that:

*... this brings up the idea of giving practical issues more time than theoretical issues in the workshops. For example, a lecture which lasts an hour might spend a quarter of an hour only on theoretical issues and the rest of the time practically. Also, in each workshop there should be group discussions to bring up more ideas and I think this would allow the respondents to express their opinions more freely. (Official 1.35)*

The previous statement indicates that the organisers of staff development programmes seek to stimulate new ideas in order to make the best possible impact. Also the following statement shows that the headteachers are heavily involved in supervising and organising staff development-related activities.

No doubt, the officials in the Directorate General in the region would monitor all the arranged programmes relevant to staff development. One official points out that:

*The Educational Supervision Division is responsible for monitoring the educational supervision in schools, which includes: teaching performance, staff development, curriculum textbooks, pupils' achievements, learning resources and a pedagogical advisory session linked to the curriculum. (Official 3.1)*

While part of the staff development programmes focuses on the development of the school leaders themselves, they are also targeted as key persons in running these programmes for others, and so they have to be provided with sufficient knowledge to enable them to run these programmes. One official indicates that:

*The administrative inspectors are responsible for creating a development programme for school leaders when it is needed. These administrative inspectors register educational weaknesses during their regular visits to schools and note whether they need attention. At the beginning of this academic year (99/2000), for this purpose; we arranged a workshop which addressed primary school leaders' needs; for example, this included some tasks relevant to school leaders' performance, such as asking them how they arrange their own staff development plan or how they deal with school records administratively and pedagogically. Also, there was a form suggested by the subject inspectors, to be sent to schools at the beginning of the academic year to show what each school needs in terms of staff development. In addition, school leaders' observations are used for developing a general staff development scheme for school leaders as well as for teachers. (Official 1.40)*

In conclusion, staff development programmes (PSDP) are arranged cooperatively between officials/inspectors with some participation from headteachers. From the above quotations we can see evidence of the sort of programmes that the headteachers are involved in. There is also the teachers' involvement in such programmes to consider. In fact, primary headteachers play an optional role in sponsoring and supervising these programmes, because

they are asked to provide only suggestions and not many of them are involved in running the sessions of these programmes. For instance, despite the wish for development programmes to be run independently by the schools, the headteachers find that they have no time to establish and run such programmes, no qualified staff members and too small a budget to carry out such a project. This will be explained further under the sub-theme of Conflicts (see Table 15, p. 145). However, the headteachers do their best to encourage their staff members to set their sights high and to carry out their commitments. The following factor (Factor 24) will highlight teachers' respect for their commitments.

***Factor 24 - Respondents thought that the practice at primary school level indicates that headteachers are urged to encourage staff members to respect their commitments to the school and the community (Table 14, p. 128)***

Factor 24 will highlight the importance of members of staffs keeping to their commitments, whether in connection with the school or in relation to the community. The headteachers are encouraged to strike a balance in their responsibilities between these two major areas, the school and the community, because their responsibility is to serve both the members of the school and the members of the community. By considering their commitments, *“they are obeying an essential precept of Islam which should be practised at all times as a major element of AlShura (the principles of Islam represent, for example, equity and justice). In other words, the headteachers as well as the teachers should be honest and trustworthy”* (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2002, p. 11).

Of course, considering their commitments means that both the headteachers and teachers practise what they believe is valuable and this would in turn raise their professional achievements. Similarly, this point also is claimed by the respondents as there is a close link between keeping one's commitments and the characteristics of primary school leader in terms of practising *AlShura* (see Factor 10, p. 105) and it is considered a major element (see also Factor 9, p. 103).

The discussion held on this topic (headteachers encouraging staff members to respect their commitments to the school and the community) reached a consensus which was drawn from both groups of the targeted population of this research, officials and practitioners (headteachers). This consisted of sixteen respondents. The following quotations make this clear. One practitioner points out that:

*For example, on administrative issues, how can the headteacher encourage his/her colleagues to be on time for work, leave at the end of office hours and not be absent? Certainly, all these practices could be represented as leadership practices. For example, if teachers do not arrive for work on time, or leave school too early [before the end of the school day] or are absent from work, these practices would lead to a loss of control by the leader and leaders would be neglecting their duties. Therefore, an uncontrolled school would lead to little progress in work and you can*



*apply what I have stated about the administrative issues to the equivalent issues related to school leadership style. (Official 1.13)*

Keeping school commitments requires the headteachers to encourage their staff members to respect their obligations to the school and to do their best to raise the standards of the educational activities, e.g. to encourage higher results from the pupils and higher achievements in teaching. In other words, headteachers need to act as ‘role models’ for the staff and the pupils. As one practitioner states,

*Most of the teachers in my school are aware of their responsibilities, apart from those who are newcomers. (Headteacher 5.31)*

In conclusion, there is a close link between the concept of keeping one’s commitments and the term. *“AlShura represents a group of Islamic principles. Being faithful to one’s commitments should be practised outside as well as inside the school building. In other words, the headteachers should bear in mind that they serve both the school and the community, according to the targeted goals of the Ministry of Education”* (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2002, p. 11).

By accomplishing the targeted goals of the Ministry, the headteachers fulfil their commitments in connection with serving the members of their school and their community.

## FINDINGS ABOUT CONFLICTS

*Unsuccessful school leaders can be recognised by their rigidity and if pupils and teachers feel unhappy in dealing with them. (Headteacher 2.18)*

### **Perspectives of conflicts**

The essential factors on this topic emerged from a discussion held on the first sub-theme, Conflicts, of the second theme, Practice. Respondents were eager to discuss it, both from the officials' and the practitioners' (headteachers') perspectives. Table 15, p. 145, summarises these factors, which exemplify the key elements in conflicts in primary schools within the General Education System (GES) in Oman. Furthermore, these factors also indicate particular problems from which can be identified decisions for minimising these problems in order to develop effective primary school leadership. Seven factors emerged from the data and these, it is believed, reflect the major problems which face the headteachers in their practice in Omani primary schools. However, every system produces conflicts and successes; the awareness of conflict may lead to success and planning for success may produce conflict. It could be said that the best practice of school leadership is the one which has the fewest conflicts. Each factor of Table 15 will be clarified in the following sections.

***Factor 25 - Conflicts which have been recognised in primary schools of the GES such as stressful schools because of an overload of administrative work and over-crowded classrooms which make it difficult for headteachers to delegate responsibilities to teachers who are already busy (Table 15, p. 145)***

The respondents agreed that the current situation of the primary headteachers is that they are overloaded with paperwork and administrative duties which distract them from their actual leadership responsibilities. Most primary headteachers are frustrated and face obstacles in running their schools. They are always busy and lead a stressful school life which is full of immediate and urgent problems. They are also bored with this daily routine, yet they have no time to perform the more creative leadership tasks while facing the hazards of day-to-day crises in school management. They cannot fit in their monitoring duties (subject-related inspections), but expend all their energy merely on the 'little stuff' of running their schools (i.e. on maintenance rather than on development).

The headteachers are burdened with heavy responsibilities because they are not supported by other school leaders or administrators (for more information about the shortage of administrative assistants, see Factor 26, p. 149).

Moreover, the headteachers tackle school difficulties, such as the transfer of teachers from one school to another. This fully occupies them and leaves timetables unsettled, which prevents the pupils from concentrating on the lessons at the beginning of the academic year and consequently their time is used inefficiently. Also, it is difficult for headteachers to

delegate the responsibilities of school management to teachers who are already under stress. For example, the teachers find it hard to teach first graders, because every classroom is overcrowded, there are youngsters who are difficult to deal with and some of them have special needs. These children are too young and hard to control in large groups - 45 per class is not unusual.

In addition, absences of women teachers on maternity leave cause the headteachers some difficulties in running their schools, especially when there are several absentees at once, with inadequate cover teachers being provided.

The discussion held on this topic indicates a very high consensus which was drawn from both major groups of the targeted population of this research. Seven different groups of practitioners representing sixty-three other colleagues were involved in focus group interviews. This consisted of 8 officials and sixty-seven practitioners, a total of seventy-five respondents. This is well illustrated by the following quotations. One practitioner points out that:

*Primary schools face a considerable problem in transferring teachers from our schools to the model schools of the current reform of the GES without getting any replacements for them. (Headteacher 5.27)*

As discussed in the above response, there is an indication of new obstacles which have accompanied the current reforms apparently focusing on the model schools of the current reform more than the GES schools (the existing schools). Thus, transferring the good teachers and even the good headteachers from schools under the old system to those under the new is considered a major task facing the Ministry. This is evidence that the Ministry of Education has tried to equip the new model schools of the GES, but at the same time there is an important point to consider, which is how to implement the reform in both kinds of school, the model schools of the current educational reform and the existing schools of the GES. Hence, the above statement is supported by the following quotation which is drawn from another practitioner, who argues that:

*At the beginning of the academic year we face many difficulties, such as teachers being transferred from one school to another. This is aggravated by the shortage of teaching staff. However, the shortage of teaching staff raises the number of lessons to be given by each teacher; for example, there are some teachers who teach 24 [out of 26] periods a week. This makes teachers extremely busy and, therefore, the headteachers cannot delegate responsibilities to busy teachers. (Headteacher 2.28)*

The above responses (5.27 and 2.28) make it clear that many obstacles face headteachers, such as: firstly, the transferring of teachers from one school to another more frequently and this reveals that the central office do not provide enough staff members to meet the schools' needs for each academic year. Also, the respondents claimed that teachers have been

transferred from their own schools to the schools which are modelled on the current reform of the GES without an immediate replacement. This indicates that some practical difficulties have been raised by the current reform. Also, as discussed above, this shows that the developmental process is focused, mostly, on the model schools of the current reform, whereas the respondents claim that the reform should go side by side in both kinds of school (the model schools and existing schools of the GES). Secondly, the number of vacant teaching posts which seem to exist exceeds the number of *qualified teachers* to fill them, according to the requirements of the current reform (TTA, 1998a). For example, the current reform requires teachers who are capable of teaching integrated subjects (field-subjects). That is to say, Islamic and Arabic are now considered a single subject which should be taught by one teacher (a Field Teacher), whereas in the old system (the GES) those two subjects could be taught separately.

**Table 15 - Issues of conflicts in Omani primary schools**

<b>SOURCES OF CONFLICT WHICH HAVE BEEN RECOGNISED IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF THE GES</b>
<b>Factor 25 - STRESSFUL SCHOOLS BECAUSE OF AN OVERLOAD OF ADMINISTRATIVE WORK AND OVER-CROWDED CLASSROOMS WHICH MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR HEADTEACHERS TO DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES TO TEACHERS WHO ARE ALREADY BUSY (SEE p. 143).</b>
<b>Factor 26 - SHORTAGES OF ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS (E.G. SCHOOL SECRETARIES), DEPUTY HEADTEACHERS, SENIOR TEACHERS, TEACHERS AND TEACHING RESOURCES (SEE p. 149).</b>
<b>Factor 27 - INADEQUATE SCHOOL BUDGETS LEADING TO A POOR SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT (SEE p. 153).</b>
<b>Factor 28 - ISOLATION OF HEADTEACHERS BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT ENOUGH PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NETWORKING (SEE p. 155).</b>
<b>Factor 29 - UNCOOPERATIVE PARENTS WHICH MAY RESULT IN PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENT BEING LESS THAN EXPECTED (SEE p. 157).</b>
<b>Factor 30 - NO CLEAR SYSTEM FOR EVALUATING THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE AND HEADTEACHERS' PERFORMANCE AS LEADERS (SEE p. 159).</b>

Table 15 summarises existing sources of conflict in primary schools within the GES. These

were drawn from responses to question 4 of the research methodological questions and include the perspectives of both officials and practitioners.

Thirdly, teachers' timetables are overloaded and, as result of this, it is not possible for the headteachers to delegate further work to teachers who are already doing more than they should. But the headteachers themselves need to be released from their excessive workload. Thus, the officials who are considered the policy makers for the current reform should consider these obstacles as a top priority if primary school leadership is to develop. One official supports the above argument, pointing out:

*... primary teachers should have reasonable timetables, for example, 20-22 periods a week. (Official 7.1)*

It is reasonable to expect teachers to teach between four and five periods per day, but sometimes they have more than five periods which does not leave much time for them to collect their energy (each period - lesson - lasts *40 minutes* in an unshared school building and *35 minutes* in a shared school building, ME, 1993). Indeed, the teachers expend all their energy in managing and moving round the classroom, helping, facilitating pupils' learning and providing them with needed support. Certainly, the use of teachers to take extra classes affects their performance in introducing good practice and at the same time hinders them from achieving their targets. However, the number of periods mentioned above (five periods per day) is stated in the GES guide to have a maximum of *26 periods a week* (ME, 1993) within the week's five working days (in Oman the weekend consists of Thursdays and Fridays, instead of Saturdays and Sundays). Twenty six periods a week works out as slightly higher than five periods per day. From this point of view, the GES guidance is in conflict with school experience. Also, the overloading of staff is evident in the following quotation, as one practitioner states:

*As a headteacher, I have many difficulties in running my school. They are: overloading of school paperwork, a large pupil population (908 pupils), overloaded teaching timetables (26 periods a week) and many recording folders which should be organised by myself because I have no assistance, e.g. no deputy headteacher. (Headteacher 5.32)*

In addition, the large size of both school and classroom populations affects the quality of the teaching and learning processes. Thus, the teacher does not have enough time to treat each pupil equally. Each lesson runs for only thirty-five minutes (according to the GES guide, the length of each lesson is 35 minutes if there are two school-shifts sharing the school building, otherwise the lesson should last for 40 minutes if the school has its own building). According to the statement of the GES guide, the maximum number of pupils should be 40 in each classroom; this number makes it impossible for the teacher to pay enough attention to each

pupil (ME, 1993, see also Factor 37, p. 182). This brings to mind that there is a developmental demand to integrate cooperative learning, in pairs and in groups, to encourage the pupils to work together on certain projects, encouraging them to talk about their projects by providing a few minutes for their presentations to the class. This would be suitable for second graders and above and permits many tasks to be done in a short period of time (time efficiency). However, the first grade class needs to be smaller, because each child requires more time from the teacher to direct and support them individually. Although a moderate view was shown by one official, who argues that sharing a school building rarely occurs, it is a major developmental concern by the Ministry of Education *to abolish the two shifts system* for school building (AlHamami, 1999). Despite the efficiency of retaining the two shifts system, there are many obstacles which makes it inconvenient to share the same school building between two schools and the practice must end in order to introduce other practices such as extending the school day. One official claims that:

*If there are any conflicts they would be trivial, such as having two schools in one school building (e.g. morning and evening shifts) or two school levels in one school building (e.g. primary and preparatory). This could happen only in rural areas, because the number of pupils is small at each level; therefore, we mix two levels in one school building, because it is not possible to open a separate primary school level for only twenty or thirty pupils. (Official 1.31)*

Repeatedly, the stress in primary schools is referred to at length by many respondents, especially the practitioners (the headteachers). One practitioner states the following:

*In addition, every teacher is overloaded. The teacher is only free for one period (35 minutes) during the school day. Therefore, when any of the teachers are absent we face a difficult situation in managing the school. (Headteacher 2.25)*

Considering the evidence of the above quotation that teachers are normally free for only one period during the school day, it would hardly be acceptable to offer them any extra work. Furthermore, if more than one teacher is absent, then the situation becomes much worse for the pupils, the teachers and the headteachers, and the school atmosphere is not pleasant for anybody. Consequently, this impairs the effectiveness of school leadership and contributes to keeping the headteachers overburdened and under stress, which eventually causes the school to be less productive.

Further evidence is stated below; one practitioner points out that:

*Busy headteachers in primary schools of the GES are given no help in performing the leaders' role nor in practising as resident advisers, because they are overloaded with routine administration. (Headteacher 20.7)*

As discussed above in Factor 13, p. 112, the proposal for headteachers to play the role of resident advisor/inspector is not, indeed, fully implemented according to response 20.7,

because logically the headteachers are always under stress and cannot add this to their long list of duties. From this point of view, developing primary school leadership requires greater freedom for the practitioners to act as school leaders (for more information about headteachers' needs, see Table 18, p. 192). Also, the following evidence indicates the stressful situation which occurs in the existing primary schools of the GES. This evidence is drawn from one practitioner, who argues:

*Sometimes I find that the system is not flexible, because when the headteachers would like to carry out some of the school leadership tasks they have to get permission from the officials, and this affects the work of the school. The headteacher's role would be more effective if the officials gave them more autonomy. (Headteacher 2.8)*

Indeed, the officials need to pay more attention to the headteachers' requirements if they are serious about transforming the existing practice of primary school management and leadership and implementing the current reform efficiently and effectively. In fact, each case requires time from the headteachers to resolve and this means that the current reform may fail if the current situation is not alleviated. Another obstacle is described by one practitioner, who argues that:

*If a teacher is absent for a long period of time, then his/her timetable should be shared among the other teachers. This can of course affect the school timetable as a whole and it may need to be fully rescheduled. (Headteacher 5.29)*

Also, another practitioner underlined the difficulty of sharing the absentees' classes among the teachers who are left. This practitioner presented his/her case as simply trying to do his/her best to control and keep the school running through the rest of the day. This also endorses the following response that headteachers deal with managerial issues more than leadership. One practitioner argues that:

*... we try to arrange things in order to carry out our school duties. We distribute the absentee's duties to the teachers who have lighter timetables rather than overloading those who have heavy timetables and here we try to be just in distributing extra work to teachers. Also, everybody should know that the distributed work belongs to absentees and we all have to take our share in order to keep the work balanced. (Headteacher 4.34)*

However, the following quotation indicates a sign of hope that the Ministry's goals include lightening the workload of the headteachers during the current reform by, for example, recruiting a complete set of administrative assistants who might help to reduce the headteachers' workload and enable them to concentrate on major issues of school leadership and thus, it is hoped, minimise the current stress of the primary schools. One official states the following:

*Headteachers of the GES used to be overloaded with paperwork which does not*

*leave them much time to deal with major leadership issues; however, this will be changed in the new developments of the GES, e.g. the current reform model schools, by appointing solely administrative staff members. (Headteacher 7.21)*

In conclusion, all the evidence which was discussed under the above heading indicates a sense of the current stress of the existing system at primary school level of the GES. This reflects the reality of the current situation and the excessive workload of headteachers. This, it is hoped, will be considered as top of the developmental priorities for change, as it is vital for implementing successful reform. The topic of this factor is complementary to the following factors of Table 15.

***Factor 26 - Conflicts which have been recognised in primary schools of the GES such as shortages of administrative assistants (e.g. school secretaries), deputy headteachers, senior teachers, teachers and teaching resources (Table 15, p. 145)***

The respondents agreed that the current situation of primary schools in the existing educational system, the GES, is that the schools have a shortage of administrative assistants; most of the primary schools in Oman have a big population of up to 1400 pupils, and many staff members. The problem is that the headteacher is alone in his/her school to deal with managerial issues and never has enough time to undertake the tasks of leadership. However, the shortage of administrative assistants might be put down to budget deficiencies. Hence, needed positions such as school secretaries, social workers and deputy headteachers have not been filled. Certainly it would help the headteacher to discharge his/her fundamental responsibilities of school leadership if these posts were filled. As discussed in the previous chapter (see also Factor 13, p. 112), few schools of the GES are equipped with both headteachers and deputy headteachers (only 8 percent); whereas 58 percent are left without deputies and do not even have administrative assistants such as school secretaries (see Chart 6, below).

Moreover, senior teachers' positions in primary schools are mostly unfilled. In addition, the respondents argued that the Ministry has offered inadequate criteria for selecting senior teachers and those who have recently taken these posts are over burdened with work. Furthermore, it is difficult to build up the position of an integrated-subject teacher (Field Teacher) while there is still a shortage of teachers in primary schools.

There are no teachers for some school activities, such as music. Also, there are no specialist rooms for any school activities, such as a room for art (see the third theme, Chapter 8, p. 181). Thus, as argued in Factor 25, p. 143, primary schools face a considerable problem in transferring teachers from the GES schools to the model schools of the current educational reform without any replacement being arranged for them.



**Chart 6 - The proportion of primary schools with only headteachers and with both headteachers and deputy headteachers**

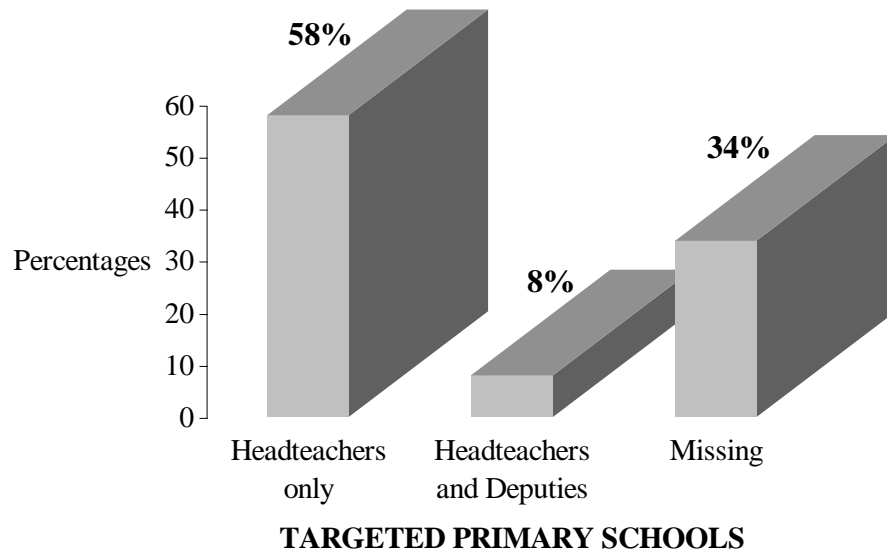


Chart 6 shows the discrepancy between schools which are equipped with both headteachers and deputy headteachers and those which are equipped only with headteachers. It should also be noted that those schools which are without deputies are not equipped with any kind of administrative assistants; hence, the headteachers are always under stress.

Also, there is a shortage of resources and workers, e.g. visual aids and technicians/maintenance workers. The officials do not reply to requests for school requirements within an acceptable period. Hence, officials rarely visit schools. It can be recognised that there are few links between officials and practitioners; each side feels that it is working in isolation, especially the headteachers. The headteachers do not, for example, feel that the officials make enough use of the school appraisals. Moreover, headteachers always ask for needed school requirements, but none of these are forthcoming.

Factor 26, p. 149, gained responses from nine officials and seventy practitioners. Eight different groups of practitioners represent sixty-six other interviewees since they were all involved in focus group interviews. This makes a total of seventy-nine respondents, including the officials. It is clear that the consensus of this heading is very high among the respondents, as we shall see in the following discussion; thus, the respondents represent 96 percent of the actual population of this research. This is well exemplified by the following quotations. One official points out the following:

*In fact, these positions have been included from the beginning of the educational renaissance, since 1970, but they have not been completed for one reason or another. These positions are, for example, school co-ordinators (secretaries), social workers and administrators and these positions would certainly help the*

*headteacher to discharge his fundamental responsibilities. (Official 1.45b)*

Response 1.45b indicates that the guide to the existing school system (the GES) includes most of the administrative positions, including those which were introduced by the current reform such as deputy headteachers, secretaries and social workers. This is evidence that the Ministry of Education has not been able to fill these positions over the past thirty years to 2000; however, they were suggested from the beginning of the national renaissance in 1970. Recently, similar administrative positions of the GES were revived again in the latest reform; hence, it seems that a lack of suitable applicants has caused the delay in their implementation. In addition, the respondents expressed their opinions about the shortage of administrative assistants in the existing primary schools of the GES, which has caused a serious problem in developing primary school leadership in Oman. One practitioner states the following:

*There are many difficulties facing the headteachers; for instance, each school has a big population, a great many staff members and no assistants for the headteacher. A shortage of administrative assistants affects most of the schools in the Sultanate. (Headteacher 2.24)*

Indeed, major administrative positions were promised in the guide of the GES, which indicates solid evidence that the existing system was built carefully in comparison with other educational systems founded in the 1970s, e.g. the Qur'anic system (the old system which was commonly used in Oman until 1970), although there were only *three schools* of the GES founded at that time (AlSalmi, 1994; MI, 1998). In addition, the following statement shows that the GES represents a solid foundation for the current reform of the educational system including its school leadership. One practitioner points out the following:

*These positions are deputy headteachers, social workers and school coordinators (school secretaries). All these positions are stated in the guide of the GES, but not fully implemented in schools. Yes, we still need to implement the senior teacher positions; thus, those who are promoted to fill senior teacher positions should be trained professionally. However, when they become capable of leading their colleagues, surely they will be supportive. Indeed, we need to fill those administrative positions in the GES in order to know what else we need to adapt. I believe these administrative positions are important in order to run schools. (Headteacher 4.40)*

The respondents realised the importance of bringing in administrative assistants, aware that it is difficult for the headteachers to deal alone with managerial and leadership tasks. As indicated in the above statement, the administrative assistants would support the headteachers to raise the quality of their school leadership and then the headteachers would have enough time to work out the fundamental issues relevant to school leadership. As discussed previously, most of these administrative positions are included in the guide of the GES; only the senior teachers' and the administrative assistants' positions are not clearly indicated in the

guide; therefore, the current reform requires them. However, the main aim is to recruit staff for these assistants' positions and not merely mention them in the guide. This has been a major problem throughout the process of Omani school leadership development since 1970. Furthermore, the respondents realised the inconsistency between the contents of the guide and its actual implementation in schools.

There is a hope that these administrative positions, including those of deputy headteacher, will be implemented during the current educational reform of the GES according to response 1.45c. One official points out that:

*These positions are included in the GES system, but have now been implemented in the model schools of the current educational reform. In my opinion these positions are enough to help the headteachers. (Official 1.45c)*

The official's response in 1.45c seems to be straightforward in understanding the requirement of developing Omani primary school leadership by filling the administrative positions which are stated in the guide of the GES. This, as stated earlier, has been recognised since 1970, but the current reform may at last fully implement them. The new positions which should be most urgently implemented are those of senior teachers and administrative assistants. However, these do not seem to have been fully implemented yet at primary school level according to response 4.42. One practitioner states the following:

*The position of senior teachers is implemented in secondary more than in primary schools of the GES. (Headteacher 4.42)*

Another topic which the respondents discussed is the shortage of specialist teachers, especially in teacher specialisms, such as art, physical education and music. One practitioner claims the following:

*School activities are important for young children; however, there are no teachers for school activities in our schools. In fact, classroom teachers at the lower stage of primary school level (grades 1-3) are expected to teach all school activities. I believe that children at this stage need extensive programmes of school activities in order to nurture them properly. For example, it is the first time that the young children have been in school; therefore, we have to provide them with the needed activities, e.g. music lessons. (Headteacher 78.5)*

Furthermore, because of the shortage of teachers in general, specialists cannot exercise their exceptional skills in their chosen activity. One practitioner adds:

*Moreover, there is no way for the headteacher to delegate responsibilities to someone else, because teachers are overloaded and at the same time the headteacher is responsible for supporting them in performing their managerial tasks for when they seek promotion to a leadership position later on. Also, in order to help them build their confidence, they need to be allowed to practise and perform these tasks under the supervision of the headteacher. (Headteacher 4.24b)*

The previous response (4.24b) indicates a logical sense of independent school

development, because schools need to think of promoting teachers to the level of school management and leadership as natural replacements. This is a good plan to encourage teachers to become a leader within their own sphere and with the prospect of promotion to future school leader.

In conclusion, Factor 26, p. 149, highlights the respondents' perspectives on the shortcomings of existing primary schools run under the GES. The point of view is shared by a high percentage of the interviewees if we include the implicit agreement of everyone in the focus groups. This means that this heading should be considered at the very top of the developmental priorities (see Factor 41, p. 189). As one of the most important elements in the sub-theme of Conflicts. Factor 27 highlights different aspects of primary school conflicts in the remaining schools of the old system, the GES, see below.

***Factor 27 - Conflicts which have been recognised in primary schools of the GES such as inadequate school budgets leading to a poor school environment (Table 15, p. 145)***

The respondents brought up the issue that primary headteachers are not allowed to spend their school budget without justifying it to the officials in the Directorate General. In any case, they have not enough funds to equip their schools suitably; thus, the respondents reported that the schools were left without enough equipment. This means that the headteachers have only a small budget for school expenditure on such things as office supplies. This small budget is, of course, not the full school budget; major school projects are funded centrally (directly through the Ministry of Education).

Furthermore, the respondents argued that primary headteachers waste many resources on relatively unimportant matters such as participating in the educational exhibitions which are organised regionally and nationally and which are also assumed to be relevant to school activities, whether for arts or sciences subjects. At these exhibitions teachers try to display evidence of their pupils' creativity. However, carrying out school projects by pupils requires a great deal of money whereas the best use of the schools' small budgets would be to purchase, for example, more relevant materials for teaching/learning purposes.

Moreover, the headteachers feel that it is a waste of their time to participate in these annual educational exhibitions as the respondents reported that the officials have no time to assess the schools' projects which are shown at the exhibition.

This discussion took place among eight officials and fifty-seven practitioners. Six different groups of the practitioners represent fifty-six other colleagues since they were involved in focus group interviews. This makes a total of sixty-five respondents including the officials. Their views are summarised in the following quotations. One practitioner states that:

*... what the headteachers are not allowed to do is to spend the school budget without informing the officials in the Directorate General in the regions and having*

*their signatures on money drafts. This process takes a long time, because the money drafts have to be signed by several officials in the Directorate. It would be an easy process if the officials allowed the headteachers to take responsibility for signing their own money orders under the supervision of the officials. (Headteacher 2.9)*

Indeed, response 2.9 includes crucial points which would pave the way for an easier routine in school finances, which in turn would also help the headteachers to run their schools more efficiently. The complexity of the present routine may, at times, lead to some confusion among headteachers, as well as delay. However, the officials have a suspicion that to provide the headteachers with more authority to spend their school's money in order to run their schools without so much red tape (see Factor 42, p. 191) would result in the money being misspent, which would delay school projects and inhibit the creativity of the pupils. Furthermore, the complexity of the existing primary school budget system indicates that the traditional centralised style of managing school finances is still far from making full use of the technological opportunities now available. Moreover, this does not help headteachers to become independent in managing and leading their schools, but indicates how little trust is extended from the officials to the headteachers. Another practitioner finds the following:

*The primary headteachers are treated as if they were not trustworthy, because if the headteacher would like to spend, for example, OR 20 [about £34] then he/she needs permission from the officials in the DG, even though he/she is using the money from the school budget. (Headteacher 73.9)*

The above statement indicates how strict the financial system is about allowing the headteachers to spend their own school budgets without having permission first from the officials. This should be changed, as one of the current educational reform requirements. However, the major concern is that the Ministry has not allocated enough money for filling needed posts (see Factor 26, p. 149); even though this is required under the current reform. Hence, the inadequate school budgets have every possibility of leading to poor school environments, for example, by producing a lower quality of teaching/learning, bringing to an end schools' participation in the annual exhibitions which in turn will inhibit pupils' creativity and may possibly lead to low achievement, equally from pupils, teachers and leaders. One official highlights evidence which indicates that the Ministry of Education does not itself have enough money for school budget requirements.

*The hierarchy of primary school includes, for example, the deputy headteachers and social workers, but the Ministry claims that there is not enough budget to fill the needed posts at primary school level of the GES, e.g. administrative assistants. (Official 65.1a)*

Indeed, this situation must be changed in the current reform of the educational system; thus, the Ministry of Education should make its reforms possible at least to the extent of providing sufficient school budgets. No doubt the Ministry of Education has calculated how

much is needed to support primary schools in order to implement effective reform and also effective primary school leadership, while the leadership attempts to implement the current reform (see Factor 4, p. 97). However, in the respondents' opinion, the existing schools of the GES do not yet have sufficient budgets to ensure effective primary school leadership. One official states that:

*The shortage of finance is always the problem; however, the current educational reform of the GES could not cover all educational areas within a day and a night. Thus, we should take it one step at a time. (Official 7.22a)*

According to response 7.22a, one official highlights that the current educational reform will be implemented in stages. Indeed, as discussed earlier, the Ministry of Education has been planning the current reform since 1998 by implementing Phase One of the model schools, which will replace the GES step by step.

In conclusion, Factor 27, p. 153, sums up the practitioners' opinion that the primary schools of the existing system, the GES, have sufficient budgets only for purchasing office supplies, while their budgets for major projects are only hypothetical, such as equipping schools with computer labs bring them up to date. The major projects are always managed centrally.

***Factor 28 - Conflicts which have been recognised in primary schools of the GES such as isolation of headteachers because they have not enough professional training and opportunities for networking (Table 15, p. 145)***

The respondents discussed the point that the headteachers suffer from being ignored by the Ministry of Education, because it does not provide them with enough refresher courses in school management and leadership. This means that there are no extended training courses for headteachers. They need practical more than theoretical training courses. Also, they have not enough opportunities to participate in relevant workshops or seminars, and are not being offered the opportunities to continue their education and thus be able to be promoted to higher positions; hence, they have long experience in school management as well in teaching - e.g. twenty years of experience - but nothing beyond that. Thus the headteachers come to believe that they cannot possibly hold a higher position unless they can raise their qualifications and for this they need the leave of the officials. In addition, the headteachers feel that they are being left behind through not having a degree (see Factor 44, p. 195).

Furthermore, according to the respondents' argument, the headteachers feel that the Ministry does not increase their salaries regularly. The respondents noted that the officials also do not visit primary schools frequently and, to some extent, there is too much distance between officials and practitioners. This leads to a feeling of working for no reward. The respondents also argued that the officials should consult headteachers in their decisions on

certain things related to school leadership, instead of advancing their own ideas only. The respondents claim that the headteachers are not consulted in the process of the development of the GES; only top-down policies and strategies are employed.

The discussion here involved five officials and sixty-six practitioners. Seven different groups of practitioners represent sixty-three other colleagues since they were involved in focus group interviews. This makes a total of seventy-one respondents, including the officials. Their points emerge from the following quotations. One practitioner states the following:

*Officials do not visit primary schools frequently. (Headteacher 2.22a)*

According to the above statement, it is easy for the officials not to be aware of the headteachers' needs since they are not close enough to them. The headteachers need their voices to be heard, their complaints to be listened to and help in solving their problems. In addition, the statement below indicates how much delay is caused by officials responding late to headteachers' requests. One practitioner indicates that:

*The officials in the Directorate General reply to some of our requests ... but sometimes they take ages before they reply and provide us with the school requirements that we need. However, we try to provide the school requirements by using what resources we have. (Headteacher 4.30)*

The following quotation supports the above argument. One practitioner states that:

*The thing which we would like to see is officials paying more attention to headteachers' opinions in making judgements on certain things related to school leadership; but they should not give orders to school leaders simply so as to implement their own ideas. The officials have to consult school leaders, because only they know about their own schools' circumstances. (Headteacher 2.19)*

Indeed, as discussed before (Factor 15, p. 116), the officials should consider the headteachers as their colleagues and share with them the responsibility of running and developing the educational system, including the current reform of primary school leadership. In this sense, the Omani proverb "the right hand supports the left" is appropriate. Anyone who performs his/her duties using only one hand is handicapped. The officials may be faced with a similar situation if they do not realise that the headteachers could free them from managing various tasks, whether connected to the current reform or to developmental leadership issues. The officials could consider the headteachers, for example, as their assistants in implementing the new leadership-related tasks<sup>6</sup> which have been introduced by the current reform. At the same time, the headteachers could become their colleagues in managing such responsibilities of primary school leadership. Indeed, the current reform actually calls for effective collaboration between the officials and the headteachers. Thus, the

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<sup>6</sup> The respondents here were encouraged to talk about the proposed new leadership tasks in order to make a connection between their existing leadership practice and the new issues of school leadership.

officials should bear in mind that it is important to listen to the headteachers' voices and accept their comments in order to provide them with appropriate feedback; in turn, their comments might raise the quality of the existing practice of primary school leadership as well as the implementation of the educational reform. One practitioner indicates the following:

*I think the officials do not take our appraisals of our teachers seriously. Also, teachers become worried last their appraisals are ignored, because the headteachers may suggest professional programmes for a group of staff members, but in the end there is no chance for any of them to be offered such programmes. (Headteacher 2.20)*

As discussed above, this makes the headteachers feel ignored when their voices are not listened to and their comments are treated as useless by the officials. As a result of this, the headteachers lose their ambition and have no hope of further promotion. The same practitioner felt that there was:

*... no way to hold a higher position unless qualified for a better degree and officials should have to decide on this. (Headteacher 2.23a)*

In conclusion, under Factor 28, p. 155, the respondents argued that the headteachers of primary schools which are run under the GES suffer from being isolated. For example, they have not been fully consulted in the current reform; their perspectives and comments are not considered. The major point is that the headteachers feel as if they are implementing other people's ideas, without being able to challenge them. From this point of view, the headteachers are considered the implementers, but not initiators, of the current educational reform, including developing primary school leadership (see Factor 15, p. 116 and Factor 16, p. 119).

***Factor 29 - Conflicts which have been recognised in primary schools of the GES such as uncooperative parents which may result in pupils' achievement being less than expected (Table 15, p. 145)***

Under this heading the respondents discussed the issue that some parents do not try to cooperate with the school staff and this leads pupils to achieve less than they should. Furthermore, the respondents argued that the parents do not cooperate with the school because they may be busy or they are ignorant about their role as parents in all aspects of the PTA's programmes. In addition, it is understood by parents that the primary headteachers are always asking for parents' support to raise money to carry out different school projects. Therefore parents who have a low income tend to hesitate to take an active part and this means that they *do not show up at the PTA meetings* (AlMa`mari, 2000). Thus the headteachers have reservations about inviting either parents or managers of other organisations in their community to participate or to sponsor some of the school projects, because this is a sensitive topic. Also, this area requires the headteachers to hold several



sessions in order to create rapport between the school and the other institutions, including the PTA members (parents). This also costs the headteachers much effort, since they have no assistants to release them from the work of the school in order to plan and preside over such sessions. These sessions are indeed important for creating rapport between the school and the outside world and for explaining the school's targets; in turn, these projects also serve the pupils and raise the quality of the teaching and learning processes.

The discussion here involved one official and thirty-five practitioners. Three different groups of practitioners represented thirty-four other colleagues because they were involved in focus group interviews. This makes a total of thirty-six respondents, including the officials of the Ministry of Education up to the Directors General in the regions of Oman.

As discussed above, the headteacher's duties are enough to keep him/her busy during the school day. However, the headteacher might spend much of this time in providing each parent with feedback on his/her child's achievement. The headteacher desperately needs to be supported by administrative assistants. However the following response also indicates that there is a need for primary headteachers to pay attention to serving both pupils and their parents, although they are overloaded with paperwork (see Factor 25, p. 143). Another practitioner supports the above mentioned ideas, as follows:

*... formal meetings are held with school members and informal ones with parents.  
(Headteacher 2.12)*

As discussed earlier, the Ministry of Education established the PTA's regulatory guide; thus, the headteachers and the staff members are also involved in running the PTA's programmes. This means that the headteacher always plays the role of facilitator in order to help the members who represent the parents. Nevertheless, it seems that the headteacher is alone in managing the PTA's activities. One practitioner claims that:

*A major obstacle is that the headteacher has no assistants to help him/her study the pupils' needs and to communicate with parents. Therefore, this obstacle might lead him/her not to be effective in managing the work of the school. (Headteacher 8.1)*

This brings to mind that the primary headteacher is surrounded by many difficulties, which are an obstacle to the effective running of the school; it is remarkable that the primary headteachers still survive. However, response 65.23a (see below) highlights the parents' passivity. One official states that:

*Many parents refuse to support primary headteachers and also some of them refrain from attending the PTA meetings. However, the Ministry of Education has established the PTA's regulatory guide, which helps them to organise their own activities. Also, the Ministry encourages the headteachers to create educational exhibitions to display the pupils' creativity. In turn, this might encourage their parents to come, in order to learn about their children's displayed work. (Official*

65.23a)

However, according to the previous statement (response 65.23a), the primary headteachers are frustrated by planning programmes of the PTA which are then poorly attended; whereas, one practitioner in the following statement (response 17.4) claims that some primary headteachers are not capable of activating relationships between schools and the social community. One practitioner states that:

*Some headteachers are not capable of creating good communication with other institutions of the society in order to improve their school environment, except to communicate with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). However, it seems that the headteachers cannot implement the PTA's role as it should be. (Headteacher 17.4)*

The opposite response is indicated in the following quotation, from another practitioner. He/she states that:

*The Omani primary school leader (headteacher) is capable of dealing with parents. Thus, the role of the Omani school leader has to be performed inside and outside the school. (Headteacher 2.7)*

Responses 17.4 and 2.7, offer valuable evidence, because the opposing ideas in these responses indicates the wide range of opinions about primary schools. In other words, although some headteachers have more obstacles than others. Response 2.7 indicates a full understanding of what the leader's role and responsibilities can entail.

In conclusion, under Factor 29, p. 157, the respondents discussed that the primary headteachers suffer in not being supported by parents when they want to activate the work of the PTA. Also, various obstacles occur at primary school level which cause primary school leadership to be less effective than it should.

***Factor 30 - Conflicts which have been recognised in primary schools of the GES such as no clear system for evaluating the school leadership performance and headteachers' performance as leaders (Table 15, p. 145)***

Under this heading, the respondents brought up the crucial point of how primary school leadership performance should be evaluated. The respondents claimed that there is no clear system to evaluate school leadership performance within the existing schools of the GES. Traditionally, the officials in both the Ministry of Education and the Directorates General use reports as assessment tools. These are processed by inspectors who concern themselves either with the headteacher's monitoring or with subject-related matters, but not specifically about leadership issues. The respondents discussed whether the headteachers need to be advised by experts who can exchange ideas with them effectively. These experts are assumed to have enough experience in school leadership to provide the practitioners with appropriate feedback. However, according to the respondents' argument, it has been found that the

Ministry employs teachers who have no experience in school leadership as holders of the new position of administrative assistants, whether as administrative inspectors or division managers in the Directorates General (the administrative inspector is a newly integrated post which has been introduced as part of the current educational reform). The administrative assistants, including administrative officials are supposed to provide appropriate feedback to the headteachers and other school leaders, e.g. deputy headteachers; however, this process may easily fail to provide the headteachers with appropriate feedback, since these administrative assistants themselves have no experience in school leadership. They still gain experience and learn from the headteachers, but of course the direction of learning should be reversed.

Alternatively, school leaders could also receive appropriate feedback from their own peers throughout networking partnerships, because they themselves should be capable, for example, of updating their own knowledge (see Factor 12, p. 110).

As the heading states (Factor 30, p. 159), the existing system for evaluating primary school leaders' performance is not clear enough. However, their performance is assessed by several administrative officials within the Directorate General in each region (i.e. the Manager of Planning and Educational Information (MPEI), Manager of Educational Supervision (MES), Manager of Administration and Finance (MAF), Manager of Building Maintenance and Refurbishment (MBMR), Manager of Monitoring and School Performance Evaluation (MMSPE) and finally the report should be approved by the Director General (DG) of the region). This evaluation report should be summarised in a form of four pages (see Appendix 9, p. 344).

The discussion here included five individual interviews with officials and two with practitioners. Five different focus groups represented forty-two practitioners (headteachers). This makes a total of forty-nine respondents, including the officials of the Ministry of Education up to the Directors General in the regions of Oman. This is well exemplified by the following quotations. One official considers that:

*There is no regular system to evaluate primary school leadership effectiveness. Primary school leadership performance is evaluated by considering inspectors' reports, which usually include the headteachers' feedback on the staff's teaching performance, so as to reflect the headteachers' interest in managing their schools effectively. Thus, these inspectors are only subject field specialists instead of being able to deal with school leadership. (Official 7.29)*

The above statement brings to mind that there is a need for experts who can assess the headteachers' leadership performance and make judgements on their positive and negative actions. Of course, this is something to be considered by both the officials in the Ministry of Education and the headteachers, in order to set up guidelines which can help them to assess

the effectiveness of primary school leadership adequately. According to response 7.29 (see above), this means that there is not yet a clear system which provides support for the headteachers to enable them to produce effective and efficient primary school leadership. In other words, the inspectors' reports are not sufficient to assess either the headteachers' performance or the effectiveness of primary school leadership as a whole.

Indeed, the officials' reports will not become effective while clear guidelines are still being awaited for assessing primary school leadership. According to the participants' responses, the indicated reports might include general comments to the effect that there are no clear guidelines (as in response 7.29) that there is no clear system to evaluate leaders' and leadership performance). This also possibly means that both the officials and the inspectors write their reports according to what they personally think that the headteachers should do. In this sense, as discussed earlier, the headteachers feel that they are implementing other peoples' ideas without being able to ask why. This is not what the respondents wanted. They would like to see a system which brings together the headteachers, the inspectors and the officials in networking and partnership systems for the sake of creating an effective collaboration between them. The respondents also reiterated that the headteachers' perspectives should not be ignored.

Furthermore, the following quotation includes a hope that the headteachers will be supported by similar ideas in integrating new trends during the current reform of education. One official indicates the following:

*According to the current reform, there is a group of administrative advisors who are always in touch with primary school leaders. In addition, there is a series of visits which are conducted by an administrative senior advisor (in the Directorate General in the region) in order to learn about leaders' performance in school administration and management. Therefore, through the continuous visits and from what can be reported on the performance of primary school leaders we could judge whether school leadership is effective or whether perhaps there are some weaknesses which should be dealt with. Thus, through workshops, seminars and training courses we could deal with these weaknesses. (Official 1.21)*

Regarding response 1.21, the current reform might introduce many of the respondents' ideas, creating some sort of a system to evaluate the performance of primary school leadership which will require the Ministry of Education to involve the headteachers and consult them in developing this system. Of course, this would also help the headteachers to evaluate their own performance collaboratively. However the headteachers use, for example, the pupils' results as a sign of their level of performance as primary school leaders. One practitioner states that:

*At the end of each academic year we try to evaluate our performance through pupils' results but this cannot be considered a hundred percent correct in*

*evaluating our success in school leadership. (Headteacher 4.26)*

The following response represents the practitioners' perspective on what school leaders should do in order to develop and improve their performance. First of all, headteachers could assess their own and their teachers' performance by considering, for example, the level of pupils' results and the need for in-service programmes for both school leaders and teachers. One practitioner indicates some ideas which could be considered as measures of the success of school leadership performance. These ideas are as follows:

*Of course, at the end of the academic year we evaluate our performance by considering the pupils' results as a sign of our success. Also, we evaluate pupils' achievements through a test which is different from the normal examinations and we evaluate teaching performance through professional programmes which we plan to conduct by asking ourselves whether these programmes were managed and implemented correctly or whether they served teachers' needs properly. (Headteacher 4.27)*

The Omani school leaders have to identify which are the major factors for assessing their performance in addition to pupils' results, in so far as there is still no clear and agreed system for evaluating their performance adequately. However, according to the research findings, the headteachers' performance, as well as the schools' effectiveness, should be assessed by considering the elements of the GES guide. In other words, the headteachers should consider the Ministry's guidance as equivalent to a command in performing school responsibilities.

Practitioners argued that the guide of the GES is not geared to evaluating and assessing the headteacher's performance as it only includes lists of school responsibilities and timetable matters, e.g. *six lessons a week of Islamic education* for the first grade of primary school level (ME, 1993). From this point of view, again, the officials' and inspectors' evaluative reports on school performance would seem to be personal rather than professional. One practitioner states the following:

*The GES guide cannot be used for evaluating the success of school leadership. (Headteacher 2.21a)*

In conclusion, Factor 30, p. 159, sums up the respondents' wish to create a system which gives an equal chance for both the headteachers' administrative performance and their effectiveness as school leaders to be assessed adequately. However, there is no clear system yet found in the existing schools of the GES to evaluate the effectiveness of primary school leadership. Hence, the findings under this heading indicate that initiating an agreed system to evaluate the primary school leadership within the current educational reform should be one of the earliest requirements.

## FINDINGS ABOUT SUCCESSES

*The best results of the examinations, the participation in educational exhibitions and the fostering of gifted and talented pupils can be considered as marks of success in primary school leadership. (Headteacher 5.21)*

### **Perspectives of successes**

The essential factors which emerged from a discussion held on the second sub-theme; Successes, of the second theme; Practice, shows that respondents were eager to discuss this from both the officials' and the headteachers' (practitioners') perspectives. Table 16, p. 166, summarises these factors, which exemplify the key elements of successes in primary schools within the General Education System (GES). Furthermore, the factors of Table 16 also indicate the respondents' perspectives on the successes which were experienced in the GES throughout their own practice in Omani primary schools. Also, this table highlights those elements, containing essential factors, which can be recognised as a sign of success according to the old system, the GES. Seven factors emerged from the data and each factor will be clarified in turn in the following sections.

### ***Factor 31 - Respondents thought that primary headteachers consider that the GES is to some extent successful (Table 16, p. 166)***

This heading highlights the respondents' views on whether the GES is successful and working well. The major point here is whether the practice of primary school leadership within the GES is still good enough, or whether it needs to be developed or even discarded and therefore in need of replacement by another approach. Thus, the respondents discussed the specific point of whether the GES is successful and if its guidelines are sufficient since they are still observed by many, despite the contradictions which occur in some cases, as discussed in connection with Table 15, p. 145).

The respondents expressed their opinions extensively on the topic of this heading, Factor 31. They believe that the GES is still successful; however, they claim that any educational system always needs to be reviewed. Thus, the principles of the GES are still practised in many countries in the world and it is considered also a good foundation for the current reform in Oman. The Ministry of Education, perhaps, meant to develop this system but it urgently needs to develop school leadership at the same time.

To some extent, the guidance of the GES is sufficient, though it is in need of developing because it needs to be able to transmit the educational philosophy of the Ministry of Education. Thus, one outcome of the GES is that its students graduate as Masters and PhDs, and this is evidence of its effectiveness. The performance of outstanding headteachers, in using the school buildings efficiently and building good relations with the community, is also considered as a sign of success.

Also, the respondents thought that the guidance of the GES is prepared for the sake of helping headteachers, and should direct them in organising the work of the school.

However, the respondents argued that to include all possible school events in the GES schools' guide would not be practicable; thus, headteachers should be flexible in dealing with unexpected events. They can make a better judgement in dealing with them, alternatively, by taking official advice. Also, it would make the headteachers more effective if they were provided with continuous training courses (see Factor 43, p. 193).

Moreover, ways of ensuring the success of the headteachers' role and performance are not easy to identify. The process of ensuring the success of school leadership may need the headteachers to focus only on major issues and concerns. In other words, the headteachers should identify clearly the goals which must be accomplished, particularly by themselves. In order to help the headteachers each goal should be elaborated according to a plan by nominated staff members or school leaders for moving toward the school's goals. The officials' view is that the GES is running in an acceptable manner but the current reform is meant to update the educational system in general, including the practice of primary school leadership. Another sign of the success of this system is that it enables the headteachers to carry out primary school management effectively.

The discussion here involved seven officials and sixty-one practitioners. Five different groups of practitioners represented fifty-eight colleagues because they were involved in focus group interviews. This makes a total of sixty-eight respondents, including the officials of the Ministry of Education up to the Directors General in the regions of Oman. Their opinions are illustrated by the following quotations. One practitioner states that:

*Everything is running smoothly in implementing primary school management tasks, as directed in the guide of the GES. (Headteacher 19.1)*

If we accept what is indicated in response 19.1, the existing schools of the GES seem to be running with few problems and do not face serious difficulties very often (perhaps only in some schools). But unfortunately this is not the case according to the argument of Table 15, p. 145). Furthermore, it can be said that the GES successful overall, even though there are problems and conflicts from time to time. In fact the problems stimulate the headteachers to even greater efforts of leadership. However, it is acceptable to say, to some extent, that:

*The guides are prepared as guidance for headteachers to be used at primary school level. (Official 1.23)*

Response 1.23 supports the above quotation that the primary schools of the GES are still functioning well and running without a hitch because of the guidelines from the Ministry of Education (but the need to update the guide is beyond dispute).

Similarly, more clarification about using the GES guide is provided by one practitioner; he/she adds that:

*... we use it as guidance. It is necessary in order to implement the targeted school goals, but we add some tasks in order to develop our performance. (Headteacher 4.31c)*

Regarding response 4.31c, the respondents expressed their opinions positively that the GES, to a certain extent, is still successful. Also, this respondent shows his/her capacity to extend the scope and use of the guide by adding useful tasks relevant to the requirements of school leadership. This indicates in addition that the headteachers at primary school level are capable of offering a high quality of management. Hence, according to the above statement, this practitioner indicates a sense of what an actual school leader needs to do.

According to the following response, the primary headteachers need to direct themselves by observing the elements of the guide. This will keep them always on the safe side in directing their schools.

The headteachers (practitioners) were satisfied with their ways of carrying out the work of their schools; however, as discussed earlier, they are all too aware of the problems and their developmental requirements (see Table 15, p. 145; Table 17, p. 183 and Table 18, p. 192). The headteachers have been using this guide extensively; however it is fairly old and urgently needs to be updated. One practitioner makes the following point:

*In the light of the General Education System (GES) guides we could manage our work - they are excellent - but some of them are full of matters of routine. (Headteacher 4.31d)*

Regarding response 4.31d, the respondent indicates that there are many things which could be considered as a mark of success for the GES, but it also has many weaknesses; e.g. the stress on routine matters and the lack of up-dating. Thus, the following response considers the GES guide<sup>7</sup> as an advantage and says that it includes many effective elements which help the headteachers to manage their schools prudently, despite the contradictions which can be found in it. However, the following response considers that the whole system, the GES, is still functioning effectively.

Moreover, the respondents brought up another aspect in which the GES is still useful, offering every possibility that the headteachers will be enabled to become effective school leaders. However, this system has been in force since 1914 in Oman; hence, it is a sign of the progress in the Omani educational system since it was first published, especially during the past three decades (1970 – 2000) (for more information about the GES, see Chapter 2, p. 13 -

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<sup>7</sup> The GES guide was published in 1993; it is supposed to provide full guidance for primary headteachers in managing their work effectively. The current reform also produces a new guide which was published in 1998.



Stage 1 to Stage 4). In addition, one practitioner points this out:

*... the GES is able to make the headteachers more effective if they could make use of its elements and develop them in order to meet the needs of the school. (Headteacher 4.17)*

**Table 16 - Perceptions of successes at Omani primary school level**

<b>RESPONDENTS THOUGHT THAT PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS ...</b>
<b>Factor 31 - CONSIDER THAT THE GES IS TO SOME EXTENT SUCCESSFUL (SEE p. 163).</b>
<b>Factor 32 - MAY BE CONSIDERED AS KEY PERSONS AND USEFUL HUMAN RESOURCES IN EXCHANGING IDEAS (PARTNERSHIPS) (SEE p. 168).</b>
<b>Factor 33 - ARE ABLE TO NOMINATE TEACHERS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES (SEE p. 172).</b>
<b>Factor 34 - ACCOMMODATE THEMSELVES TO THEIR SCHOOL'S RESOURCES AND MAKE USE OF THEM EFFICIENTLY (SEE p. 173).</b>
<b>Factor 35- BUILD CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY (SEE p. 175).</b>
<b>Factor 36 - ARE AMBITIOUS TO STUDY FOR A UNIVERSITY DEGREE AND TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATIONAL STUDIES TO QUALIFY THEM TO TRANSFORM THE EXISTING PRACTICE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS TO TACKLE THE OTHER CHALLENGES OF THE CURRENT REFORM OF THE GES (SEE p. 177).</b>

Table 16 answers question 5 of the research questions, raising points which are of great concern to the respondents, whether officials or practitioners. Also, the issues which are mentioned in this table indicate that primary headteachers are proud of their success, even though they are aware of plenty of school conflicts (for more information about conflicts, see Table 15, p. 145).

The above response highlights crucial points which are important for primary headteachers to consider. This is evidence that, specifically, the Omani primary headteachers are forward-looking and capable of becoming effective leaders; even though, like this

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However, both guides now are subject to evaluation.

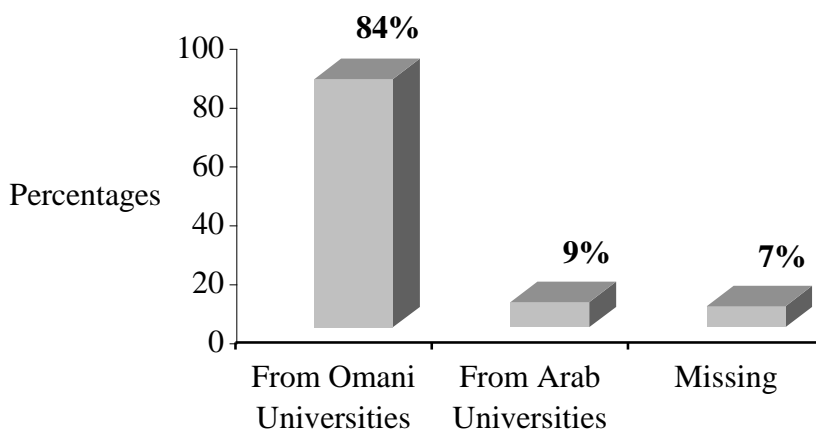
headteacher, they may hold only an intermediate diploma (for more information about the headteachers' qualifications, see Chart 11, p. 196). In short, the GES is found to be an adaptable, suitable system for running and managing the existing schools even for those without a degree. One practitioner finds that:

*The GES has introduced flexibility and conciseness in performing school responsibilities. (Headteacher 5.9)*

As discussed above, the GES includes many things which have up to now been seen as a sign of success. However, the arguments in this chapter include two separate ideas which indicate successes, as well as conflicts, of which there is sufficient evidence under the existing system, the GES.

In addition, the GES can be considered successful because many headteachers graduated from home universities and colleges. This is evidence that the whole system of the GES, in connection with the system of higher education, seems to be sufficient to serve the requirements of the country. To put it briefly, the headteachers who have graduated from home universities and colleges have become the foundation of the human educational resources in the whole of Oman; 84 percent graduated locally and only 9 percent qualified regionally (see Chart 7, below).

**Chart 7 - Headteachers' graduation institutions**



## **HEADTEACHER PRACTITIONERS**

Chart 7 shows the normal percentages of graduation; an overwhelmingly high percentage of headteachers who graduated from home universities and colleges, compared with a low percentage from Arab country universities and colleges.

In conclusion, under this heading (Factor 31, p. 163) the respondents expressed their opinions in some detail to clarify that the GES is still useful; however, at this point it needs to be developed and updated. A major issue under this heading, to which attention should be drawn, is whether this system can be developed as it stands or needs to be replaced altogether.

The discussion of Factor 31 concluded that the GES was successful, even though it needs to be developed, including the parts which concern the development of primary school leadership. Again, this means that the GES can be considered the foundation of the current reform. Hence, according to the Ministry of Education plan, the GES is targeted to be developed, redefined but ultimately to be replaced little by little by the model schools of the GES (the Basic Education Schools, see Figure 1, p. 5) of the current educational reform. In part, this supports the respondents' willingness to consider the GES as a foundation for the current reform; thus, their ideas to some extent conflict with the Ministry's plan of replacing the GES. A big debate can be raised here, because since 1998 the Ministry of Education has meant to develop the GES. Consequently, the system of the model schools of the current educational reform would be moving the state education system in a new direction and has been introduced to the public as a reform which will affect every member of the public. However, the model schools of the current educational reform are using the GES as a foundation, as are the present personnel, such as the school leaders, including the present primary headteachers.

***Factor 32 - Respondents thought that primary headteachers may be considered as key persons and useful human resources in exchanging ideas (partnerships) (Table 16, p. 166)***

Under this heading, the respondents articulated their opinion that Omani primary headteachers could act as key persons for any change or development in their schools. In general, Omani primary headteachers have the capacity to perform their work adequately. Also, it is clear that some headteachers perform outstandingly and this is related to the personal qualities and skills of that person. For instance, Omani headteachers set a good example in their attitude to school leadership. This is evident by the way in which they carry out the school duties which they are responsible for, whether external or internal school responsibilities.

Furthermore, the respondents stated that the role of the headteachers, as well as school leaders, should take into account the GES guidance which always draws connections which the traditions relevant to Omani society; for example, they have to integrate the Omani proverb 'learning in childhood is like engraving on stone and learning in age like writing on sand'. This indicates a major responsibility of the headteachers in nurturing the pupils and raising their achievements. Thus, regarding the Omani proverb, it is crucial to understand how delicate is the situation of the youngsters at this level of education; it indeed requires close attention by the headteachers as well as teachers and parents (also in providing quality, or else bad precedents would be engraved in the children's minds). From this point of view, the primary headteachers in Omani schools play an important role in transmitting the Omani traditions (e.g. proverbs) into practical actions which may also reflect genuinely the

theoretical framework of educational leadership in Omani schools (see Table 10 - Issues for primary school leadership in Oman, p. 94, see also the AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201).

In addition, the respondents argued that the Omani primary headteachers could be considered as key persons for implementing primary school leadership tasks; hence, they play the major role in running primary schools.

Furthermore, the headteachers should exchange experiences with other headteachers even at higher school levels, i.e., secondary headteachers. This is why they become a good human resource for other school members to turn to. Indeed, this is evidence that the population of this research project testifies to the fact that primary headteachers have a wealth of useful experience, even though most of them are only holders of intermediate diplomas (see Factor 44, p. 195).

As discussed earlier (Factor 30, p. 159), through continuous visits and from what can be reported on the performance of primary headteachers, the officials can judge whether their school leadership is effective or whether perhaps there are some weaknesses which should be dealt with. This means also that the headteachers should play a major role in evaluating their own schools' performance, since their input is useful human resource.

Of course, the respondents here reported that the headteachers should not be rigid and authoritarian. Nevertheless, they should persuade teachers to develop their skills and design programmes to support their career development, and also they should use their limited authority whenever it is needed to accomplish school goals (see Factor 42, p. 191), because they still have the discretion to encourage school members to accomplish the Ministry's teaching/learning goals.

Furthermore, the respondents also reported that the reason for the successes at primary school level is that the leadership and managerial levels in primary schools offer an easy regime and the schools are easy to lead, involving only young children and primary teachers. Therefore, the primary headteachers are more capable of leading their colleagues in every matter of school and pedagogic leadership, e.g. using e-learning in every aspect of the teaching and learning process (see more about e-learning in Factor 40, p. 185, see also, Appendix 10, Paper 3, p. 369).

The discussion here indicated a high level of consensus (99%), with a total of eighty-one out of eighty-two respondents of the actual population, including the officials in both the Ministry of Education and the Directorates General in the regions of Oman. Also, the discussion involved eleven officials and seventy practitioners. Eight different groups of practitioners represented sixty-six other practitioners, as they were involved in focus group interviews. Among the quotations, there is one by an official, who remarks:

*Usually it depends on the leader's skills, which affect individuals in school. Usually, the effectiveness of school management could be found to vary between one school and another, but in general it is effective school management which is evident by the carrying out of the school duties. (Official 1.2)*

The above response indicates crucial points which summarise the idea of considering the headteachers as key persons in the task of effective school management and leadership. A similar view is indicated in the following response. One official says that:

*The headteacher carries a managerial responsibility, which serves the school administration in addition to his/her other responsibilities. (Official 3.11)*

Another idea which was discussed under this heading is that the headteachers were considered as a good human resource on behalf of all the school members; this includes the other school leaders, such as deputy headteachers and senior teachers. Thus, the fruitful specialist areas among the headteachers would enable them to be among the best sources of expertise. Chart 8 (see below), indicates the subject fields among the school leaders, which indicates that they are able to enrich their workshops and link topics to their relevant subject fields, e.g. Arabic, English, physics and biology.

According to Chart 8, the headteachers have been selected from different subject fields; hence, this will enable them to study individual topics relevant to school needs, for example, topics relevant to the school curriculum. Logically, the headteacher who is experienced in a certain subject field is assumed to be able to provide expert comments relevant to his/her specialist area. Thus, the headteachers are urged to use their previous experience so as to be considered useful human resources for their own colleagues. The following quotation supports this argument. One official says:

**Chart 8 - Primary school headteachers' subject fields**

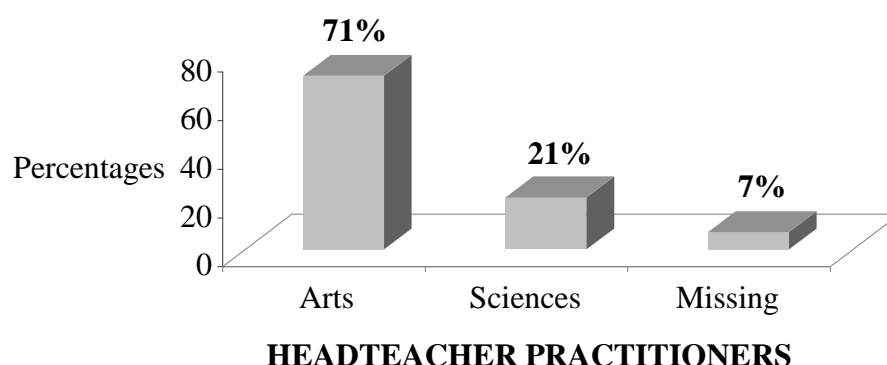


Chart 8 shows two major subject areas, Arts and Sciences; there are productive subject field areas in the Arts and the Sciences among primary headteachers. In this sense, the primary school leaders will be more productive if they make decisions as a group. However, the

indicated subject areas seem to show no particular attempt to balance the population of this research; hence, there is evidence that the headteachers selected were typical of the population of teachers as a whole, in which there is no reason to equalise contributions from the Arts or the Science.

*When we meet a distinctive leader in a certain school, we encourage other leaders to exchange visits with him/her. Also, we ask for feedback from the respondents who are involved in any workshops and seminars, because we believe it is important. (Official 3.18)*

It is a good idea for headteachers to exchange experiences; this will lead to an interactive atmosphere during their communication, whether through exchanging school visits or by conducting seminars and workshops. This idea also will encourage the headteachers to be more productive when they are involved in active participation, in workshops for instance. From this point of view, the headteachers become effective in leading their peers as well as their schools. Further evidence is found in the following quotation:

*Primary headteachers should exchange ideas with others in the community, for example, meeting managers of other institutions, companies, City Governors, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and even meeting secondary school headteachers. (Headteacher 2.17)*

Also from the officials' group some good ideas were contributed. One official states that:

*There has been some outstanding work from Omani primary headteachers who have submitted, for example, a paper to be discussed with their colleagues through a seminar or a workshop; this is known as exchanging experiences between school leaders at primary school level. (Official 1.32)*

Indeed, according to response 2.18a, the respondents indicate a sense of positive understanding of the school leader's role, especially at primary school level. One practitioner explains this:

*... the successful school leaders can be recognised because their work is in cooperation with that of the teachers and also if they encourage teachers to extend cooperative learning. (Headteacher 2.18a)*

Certainly, as was indicated above under this heading (Factor 32, p. 168), the respondents believed that the Omani primary headteachers have enough experience to become good leaders, even though the majority of them are non-degree holders (see Factor 44, p. 195).

*I would like to add that there is an indication of the existence in schools of effective Omani school leaders, especially among the headteachers. (Official 3.16)*

Thus, there are various valuable qualities among primary headteachers, according to their gifts.

In conclusion, the respondents discussed extensively the topic of considering the Omani primary headteachers as 'key persons' in running their schools. Despite the limited authority

conceded to primary school leaders by the Ministry of Education, they still seem to be empowered to some extent. The crucial point which is covered under this heading (Factor 32, p. 168) is that the Omani primary headteachers have the capacity to be effective primary school leaders; this is evident by the production of outstanding work and by their willingness to set a good example in their exchanging of experiences.

***Factor 33 - Respondents thought that primary headteachers are able to nominate teachers for staff development programmes (Table 16, p. 166)***

This heading highlights the capacity of Omani primary headteachers and is considered a sign of their success. By considering the respondents' opinion on such a topic, the researcher found that the primary headteachers themselves would like to prove that they were able to run their own schools effectively; even though, as noted above, the majority of these headteachers were qualified as non-degree holders, they still feel that they have enough experience to do their jobs well.

From this point of view, the experience is important in leading primary schools; thus, the non-degree holders among primary headteachers can be considered as a good human resource for implementing the current reform. However, if they were provided with the opportunity to take a degree, then they would be much more effective (see Chart 11, p. 196).

In the respondents' opinion, the primary headteacher has been given the responsibility to comment on school needs as well as to select nominees for the senior teaching positions. This indicates the level of trust in which the officials hold them. Also, this is evidence that primary headteachers are capable of carrying out the school responsibilities which they have been delegated.

In addition, the primary headteacher seems to be capable of identifying teachers' needs; this has been done in cooperation with the subject inspectors to support teachers to overcome weaknesses in their teaching performance. Consequently, the primary headteacher is also capable of nominating teachers to participate in staff development programmes.

The discussion here involved twenty-eight respondents out of eighty-two, including the officials of the Ministry of Education up to the Directors General in the regions of Oman. One of these officials comments that:

*From the officials' perspective, we realise that the primary school leaders are able to overcome their school difficulties and they could definitely solve them properly. (Official 64.11)*

As stated in the above response, the officials have placed much trust in the headteachers, which should give them the confidence to approach their school duties positively. In addition to this, response 4.23 adds crucial points about providing the primary headteachers with more authority in managing their responsibilities. One practitioner states that:

*The advantages in primary school are that the headteacher has been given the responsibility of commenting on school requirements, including headteachers' needs. (Headteacher 4.23)*

Regarding the above statement, there is thus a certain level of authority which the headteachers have, although other respondents have claimed that they should have even more, as argued in Factor 42, p. 191. Also, the following response can be considered a good reply to those who raised the point of unclear aims in the management of primary schools. One practitioner raises crucial points on the actual capacity of the headteachers, stating that:

*Professional staff development programmes indicate positive results, because we plan cooperatively with the subject inspector to raise the quality of the teaching skills. Our plan should serve specific practical needs of teachers, such as the way of using the black/white board, the style of correcting pupils' homework and providing teachers with advice on how they can deal with examinations. (Headteacher 5.4)*

In conclusion, under this heading (Factor 33) the respondents agreed that, despite the limitation placed on the effectiveness of Omani primary headteachers, it can still be the case that the GES is successful. But because the primary school leadership in Oman is not as good as it should be, it requires urgent development. Hence, the primary school leaders, especially the headteachers, require updating of their knowledge to be more effective in leading and managing their own schools. This will enable them to face the new challenges of the current reform in education, including the new tasks of primary school leadership.

***Factor 34 - Respondents thought that primary headteachers accommodate themselves to their school's resources and make use of them efficiently (Table 16, p. 166)***

As discussed above, the headteachers are not satisfied with the shortfall in school resources (see Factor 26, p. 149). The current situation of Omani primary schools indicates that they are poorly equipped with school resources; this has made the headteachers all too familiar with educational problems, but also made them capable of solving some of them (see Factor 32, p. 168). In addition, the respondents reported that many primary headteachers set the best example of overcoming their schools' current difficulties, e.g. stressful schools (see Factor 25, p. 143). The Omani primary headteachers have done valuable work in encouraging the community members, e.g. businessmen and companies, to participate effectively in supporting schools by contributing to their budgets; unfortunately, as discussed in Factor 27, p. 153, the primary schools are provided only with small budgets from the Ministry.

Furthermore, the primary headteachers, especially the Omanis, set the best example in communicating socially (see the following factor); therefore, they seem to have succeeded in encouraging many community members to participate in supporting their own schools effectively. This is evident, as discussed below, by the following finding: that the Omani primary headteachers are capable of building close ties between their schools and the



community as a whole.

Moreover, the headteachers have learnt that they have to cope with difficult circumstances. Thus, accommodating themselves to their school's resources and making use of them efficiently is considered a vital task, despite the shortage of school resources. From this point of view, the primary headteachers have trained themselves to be persevering in solving school problems.

The discussion here involved two officials and thirteen practitioners, eleven of whom were involved in a focus group interview. This makes a total of fifteen respondents, including the officials. The argument under this heading is well illustrated by the following quotations which illustrate both the perspectives of the officials (policy makers) and the practitioners (headteachers). Response 8.3 clarifies that the headteachers should develop their experience in problem solving by adapting ideas from others. This means that they need to learn more managerial skills to enable them to deal effectively with the most difficult circumstances in their schools. One practitioner states the following:

*Primary headteachers should accommodate themselves to the availability of their school resources, e.g. they should observe how others deal with various circumstances in school leadership. (Headteacher 8.3)*

Similarly, as discussed above, the headteachers can learn much from each other while they are on exchange visits. Thus, the idea of headteachers visiting other schools can help them to adapt leadership and managerial skills which they observe elsewhere. Consequently, adapting useful leadership and managerial skills may help them to use the available school resources more efficiently and effectively. From this point of view, the Omani primary headteachers do accommodate themselves positively to the available school resources. In other words, they would be capable of devising intelligent ways of using their small expense accounts for as many school activities as possible (efficiency). In addition, response 5.3 highlights further crucial points by considering the relation between the resources of the school and the requirements of its programme of responsibilities. Of course, it is difficult to perform school duties without providing minimum resources, such as teaching aids. One practitioner points out the following:

*Effective school performance can only be accomplished if things could be arranged from the beginning of the academic year; in this way, responsibilities could be undertaken according to the availability of school resources. (Headteacher 5.3)*

Indeed, if school resources were made available from the beginning of the academic year, then both teachers and school leaders would know what the position was in relation to their commitments. In other words, the unreliable and delayed provision of school resources prevents school members from performing as well as they could. For example, a shortage of

black/green board chalks certainly would prevent teachers from teaching well and also irritates headteachers when they cannot provide adequate support for their colleagues. However, some headteachers may ask the community to contribute at their school budgets in order to discharge their school responsibilities to an adequate level. One official states that:

*There are many headteachers who have raised thousands from donations in order to create their own school projects. (Official: 68.17a)*

In this case, the Omani primary headteachers seem to be more capable of communicating with the community members than the expatriates are. But it is evidence that primary schools are still in receipt of inadequate budgets, as discussed in Factor 27, p. 153. Further evidence may be found in the following response. One practitioner says that:

*We try to minimise the routine of our school by considering the situation of the youngsters who soon feel bored by sitting on a chair for a long time; therefore, sometimes we take them outside the school building, for example, to visit the nearest appropriate building in the community. You know, the youngsters like to move round and play games, thus, we try to entertain them through suitable activities. (Headteacher 2.16)*

According to the response above, there is a shortage of specialist rooms with pupils' needs, e.g. studios, which would encourage the children to develop their own creativity. Thus, the headteachers try to find a solution by allowing the children to visit a suitable building in the community.

In conclusion, the respondents reported that the primary headteachers would like to find easier ways to run their schools more smoothly. However, they are suffering from a shortage of school resources, even though they set the best possible example of coping with the stress of their position (see Conflicts, Table 15, p. 145). Under this heading, the researcher even found positive indications that the headteachers are resourceful in solving their school problems. In addition, they are always seeking to use the available school resources in more efficient and effective ways. Thus, they do not simply suffer from the problems of under-financing, but some of them are actually able to turn their problems to positive advantage for their schools and themselves. From this point of view, as discussed in Table 12, p. 106, Factor 12 to Factor 13; Table 14, p. 128, Factor 19 and Factor 20 and Table 16, p. 166, Factor 32, the present Omani primary headteachers, especially diploma-holders, have shown evidence of their capacity to set the best example as resourceful leaders. The following heading will add further evidence that the headteachers have achieved success in dealing with their leadership responsibilities, e.g. of connecting schools with the community.

***Factor 35 - Respondents thought that primary headteachers try hard to build close relations between schools and the community (Table 16, p. 166)***

The respondents raised the crucial point about primary headteachers that they try to turn

negative situations to positive ones. For example, the primary headteachers try to build a peaceful school environment and keep good relations with staff members by behaving in a friendly way. This is evidence that the headteachers try also to accommodate themselves (see Factor 34, p. 173) by not clashing with staff members: they do not seek confrontations, partly on account of their lack of authority (see Factor 42, p. 191). This indicates that the primary headteachers develop diplomatic skills for turning negative situations into positive ones (Table 12, p. 106).

Furthermore, a major target is borne in mind by headteachers and this is to build close ties between their schools and the community. Thus, this is evidence that the Omani headteachers show the best possible example in connecting their own schools to the community.

The discussion here involved a total of twenty-five respondents out of eighty-two.

The argument under this heading is well illustrated by the following quotations which are drawn from both the perspectives of the officials (policy makers) and the practitioners (headteachers). Response 22.2 clarifies that the headteachers should create close ties between the school and the community members, for instance, with teachers and pupils, as well as their parents. This means that they need to strengthen their relations in order to create a more favourable school environment for both the teaching and the learning processes. One practitioner states the following:

*Primary headteachers should be communicative, both with school members, e.g. pupils and teachers, and with parents. (Headteacher 22.2)*

As stated in both responses 22.2 and 7.26, the officials' and the practitioners' perspectives reveal the importance of connecting schools with the community; from this point of view, schools are built to serve and nurture the children to become better citizens of Omani society. One official argues that:

*The headteacher is considered as a leader when he/she can set a good example in planning school programmes, designing school policies and strengthening school relations, such as building close relations with the community and school members; e.g. pupils and teachers. (Official 7.26)*

In addition to the above discussion, response 22.2 adds further evidence for the view that the headteachers play the important role of connecting their schools with the community, but of course this is a part of their responsibilities.

In conclusion, under this heading, the respondents reported that the present primary headteachers, especially the Omanis, are capable of binding their schools strongly to the community. Thus, this is evidence that they have had some success in dealing with this matter, as shown in Factor 35, p. 175. This factor also shows success in many other aspects,

as discussed under the sub-theme, Successes (Table 16, p. 166).

***Factor 36 - Respondents thought that primary headteachers are ambitious to study for a university degree and to continue their educational studies to qualify them to transform the existing practice of primary school leadership as well as to tackle the other challenges of the current reform of the GES (Table 16, p. 166)***

Under this heading, the respondents discussed a sensitive topic; that is, providing the headteachers with an opportunity to continue their studies in order to have a degree. Among the population of this research project, it was found that there is a high percentage of headteachers who were qualified as diploma holders; however, these primary headteachers qualify by their experience to lead and manage primary schools (see Chart 11, p. 196 and Chart 14, p. 226).

Indeed, it is normal for the present primary headteachers to be ambitious and seek higher education; hence, their lack of a degree (71 percent of these headteachers hold Intermediate Diplomas, see Chart 11) becomes a major problem, because they consider themselves less well qualified than those who have a degree. It would be much worse for schools if the Ministry of Education replaced this diploma holders by newly qualified degree holders, because these new headteachers would not have adequate experience to carry out the new leadership tasks within the current reform. The present headteachers are concerned that if they only have diplomas they may be asked to take early retirement. But this is unlikely, because the Ministry would in that case lose a large number of its experienced staff.

However, the respondents reported that the Ministry has delayed the programme which should provide the diploma holders with degree opportunities. From this point of view, this programme should already have started to prepare a majority of primary headteachers to implement the new tasks of school leadership within the current reform. Indeed, the delay in upgrading the qualifications of diploma holders may become a major problem facing the Ministry during the implementation of the current reform of education in Oman.

Some level of agreement on the ambitions of the headteachers is, then, indicated (43%), with a total of thirty-five out of eighty-two respondents of the actual population, including the officials in both the Ministry of Education and the Directorates General in the regions of Oman. The trend of opinion is well illustrated by the following quotations. One official argues that:

*It is normal that headteachers have ambitions and this is evident by the promotion of many of them to higher positions in the Central Office or in the Directorate General in their educational region. Also, the Central Office uses some experienced primary headteachers, either in managerial or subject inspection matters. (Official 1.28)*

However, the headteachers' degree ambitions have not yet been fulfilled, whereas the

current reform requires not only for their qualifications to be upgraded but information about them to be regularly updated, especially any relating to the Ministry targets, in order to modernise the Omani educational system. Response 47.16 indicates that on the whole the officials do not yet realise the importance of upgrading the headteachers' qualifications. One practitioner explains his/her special case by stating the following:

*My ambition is to study for a university degree; therefore, I have applied for a scholarship to be provided by the Ministry of Education in order to achieve my goal. However, I have received an official negative response from the Directorate General on behalf the Ministry of Education; the response indicates that there is no need for a degree for such a position as primary headteacher. (Headteacher 47.16)*

No doubt, allowing the headteachers to continue their studies needs to be agreed with the Ministry of Education because the headteachers will require the Ministry's sponsorship. However, the respondents reported that the Ministry seems to be delaying the supply of scholarships. Yet, according to the responses, the headteachers seem to be keen to continue by studying on a degree course.

As discussed above, a high percentage of those who were qualified below degree level (three or fewer years of study indicates that they have a diploma only, see below Chart 9) wanted to gain a degree. According to Chart 11, p. 196, 71 percent of the present primary headteachers have an intermediate diploma (all of them are Omanis), while 26 percent have a degree (most of them are Omanis).

**Chart 9 - Duration of primaty headteachers' study**

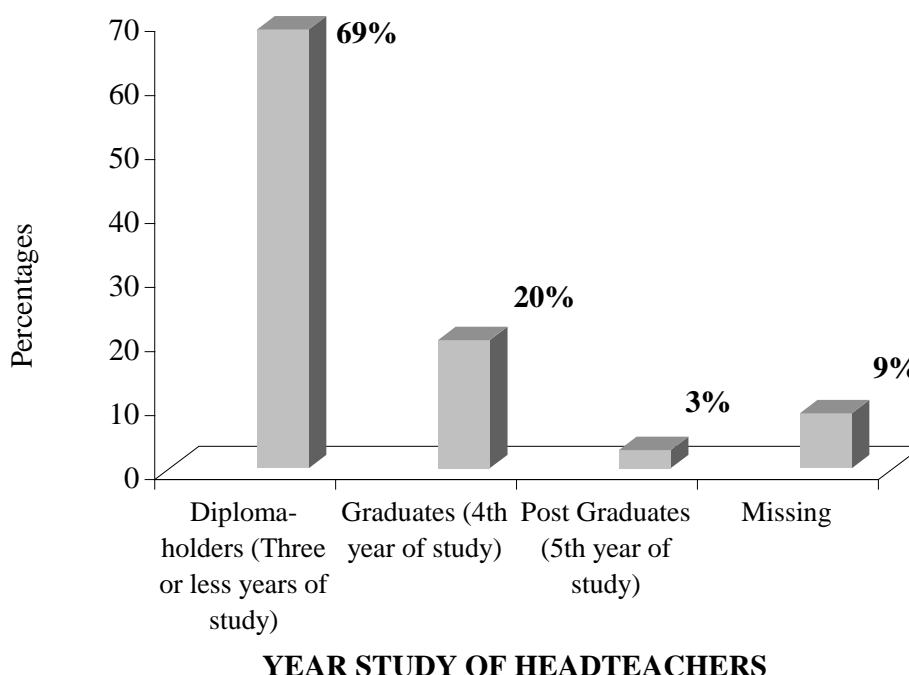


Chart 9 indicates the duration of school leaders' (headteachers') studies and also shows the levels of their study and types of qualifications held.

Regarding the findings of Chart 9, the Ministry of Education has no choice: if it wants to replace the majority of the headteachers who were qualified as diploma-holders it must do so gradually. It would be far better to give the present, experienced post-holders a “top-up” year of higher education in addition to the three years they spent in the past to gain their diplomas, than to give them early retirement and replace them with graduates who have no experience. It would be many years before the latter could reach the level of experience that would make them the equal of the present primary headteachers. As discussed earlier, these headteachers are therefore considered an important human resource for the Ministry in implementing the new leadership tasks within the current reform of education. We should bear in mind that these primary headteacher diploma holders can be considered experts in leading and managing Omani primary schools, including the model schools of the current reform, and only need to be provided with an adequate refresher courses and the chance to upgrade their qualifications to the status of a degree. Whether to do so or not is a major question facing the Ministry of Education.

In conclusion, a high percentage of primary headteachers indicate that they need to be involved, for example, in a partnership programme, which at the end would provide them with a degree opportunity (i.e., having a university first degree: BEd, BA, BSc ... etc., Rutherford and AlHinai, 2001). This partnership programme would link the headteachers and the university lecturers, who would together provide courses to upgrade the qualifications of the headteachers. The lecturers’ theoretical knowledge would be drawn upon and so would the experience of the practising headteachers. Thus, a partnership programme would keep in post the experienced school leaders, i.e. headteachers, and be an advantage to both sides.

Indeed, the present primary headteachers have ambitions to improve and develop their performance. From this point of view, the Ministry of Education should consider them an important human resource for implementing the new leadership tasks at primary school level (phase one of the model schools of the current educational reform), because they are experienced in leading and managing their schools; and they are also capable of learning further skills and developing their own capacity to direct their schools. In addition, according to Chart 9, p. 178, only 3 percent have a post graduate qualification (few of these are Omanis).

## **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SEVEN**

The second theme, Practice, includes two sub-themes; Conflicts and Successes. The discussion of the second theme covers Table 14 - Perceptions of practice at Omani primary school level, p. 128; Table 15 - Issues of conflicts in Omani primary school, p. 145 and Table 16 - Perceptions of successes at Omani primary school level, p. 166. Consequently, as

discussed earlier, every practice in school leadership, including the practice of primary school leadership, has to result in one of these two things, a conflict or a success. Conflicts are considered as school problems and also held to be a sign of school or system weakness. Successes are shown by the eradication of a school problem and, in addition, are judged a sign of school effectiveness.

Table 14 - Perceptions of practice at Omani primary school level, p. 128, concludes the perspectives of the respondents, whether officials (policy makers) or practitioners (headteachers) on the way in which they see their practice of primary school leadership developing within the existing system, the GES. Also, this table reflects their ideas on the actual practice of their day-to-day work; hence, the researcher has tried to report the respondents' opinions as he has received them, according to the indicated responses under each factor of every table.

Table 15 - Issues of conflicts in Omani primary school, p. 145, includes a number of factors reported as conflicts in the existing primary schools of the GES; thus, it includes the respondents' opinions about what they have been faced with in terms of school problems and difficulties. Of course, the respondents knew in advance that they would be asked to discuss their school problems (e.g. in the educational system and primary school leadership) in order to find ways of eradicating them through the current reform of the GES.

Table 16 - Perceptions of successes at Omani primary school level, p. 166, includes a number of factors reported as examples of school leaders' successes within their primary schools under the GES; thus it includes the respondents' perspectives on what they consider their successes, or sources of satisfaction. The respondents' opinions are drawn from a selection of relevant quotations by both the officials (policy makers) and the practitioners (headteachers).

It should not go unnoticed that the responses which are included in Table 15, p. 145 (Conflicts) are contradicted in many cases by the responses of Table 16, p. 166 (Successes). For example, Factor 25 to Factor 30 of Table 15 contradict Factor 31 of Table 16 in considering that the GES is successful. Perhaps, it might be only fair to say that the present headteachers have succeeded in coping with the current regulations of the GES under the centralised system of the Ministry of Education. The present primary headteachers should be considered capable of changing the present situation of their own schools; this is evident from the respondents' report on Factor 32 to Factor 35 of Table 16 (e.g. as key persons, able to nominate teachers for staff development and make use of modest school resources efficiently).

## **Chapter 8 - REDEFINING AND TRANSFORMING THE PRACTICE OF OMANI PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

### **ANALYSING THE THIRD THEME: DEVELOPING PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN**

*Our call, since the dawn of the renaissance is to develop our human resources and remove all barriers that impede the development of them. (OMDO, 2001, p. 1)*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This section focuses on the third theme, Developing Primary School Leadership. The respondents' opinions of their developmental requirements will be highlighted, whether in terms of developing the educational policy, the existing primary schools or the headteachers' needs. Table 17, p. 183 and Table 18, p. 192, indicate major factors which the researcher has extracted from what was said about "how primary school leadership can be developed" by regarding the developmental requirements of the current reform of the General Education System (GES). Both tables represent the officials' and practitioners' perspectives.

Taking in turn each table and its factors, the researcher will report on the respondents' ideas. Table 17 and Table 18 were created to address the two major areas of the current reform requirements in connection with the development of primary school leadership. These two major areas are: the development of the existing educational policy and the immediate needs of headteachers. Some quotations from the respondents will be reported to illustrate points made in Table 17 and Table 18 and will be followed by comments.

#### **FINDINGS ABOUT DEVELOPING PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN**

*Progress and prosperity can only be achieved through learning, experience, training and qualifications. (OMDO, 2001, p. 1)*

*We cannot say that the GES has failed, but it is a mode of life to develop, to reform or even to change our educational system in Oman. (Official: 63.11)*

#### **Perspectives of the current reform requirements**

Some essential factors emerged from a discussion held on the third theme, Developing Primary School Leadership in Oman. Respondents were eager to discuss this topic and they addressed it in terms of ways in which the existing primary school leadership can be developed by considering the vision and the mission of the current reform of the GES. As mentioned before, Table 17, p. 183 and Table 18, p. 192 summarise some factors which



exemplify the key elements in the effective development of primary schools of the General Education System (GES). Furthermore, these factors also list the most urgent matters in the current reform of Omani primary schools. Therefore, Table 17 indicates some factors relevant to the policy-making requirements whereas Table 18 concentrates on the schools' requirements, as separate from the headteachers' immediate needs, according to the vision and mission of the current reform (ME, 1997). As noted, the factors are given sequential numbers, which confine all the research factors within the three analytical chapters (Chapter 6, p. 91, Chapter 7, p. 125 and this chapter); altogether there are nine tables which conclude the findings of this research project.

The following sections will address two major areas: the policy making connected with the developmental requirements and urgent considerations of the headteachers' needs. The following table addresses the first major area of the current reform requirements.

### ***Policy-making requirements***

*I would think of a general system for assessing school leaders' performance from time to time. This system should assess the weaknesses and plan to eradicate them and support the strengths, because the educational work needs to be developed and to be modernised constantly. Thus, to have an assessment system would help in evaluating the educational leadership performance as well as strengthening the effectiveness of leadership in primary schools. (Official 1.10)*

### ***Factor 37 - The GES guide should be restructured and reorganised, for example, to specify headteachers' and deputy headteachers' responsibilities clearly (Table 17, p. 183)***

The respondents were aware of the weaknesses of the existing system; therefore, they made enthusiastic comments on the developmental requirements in considering their present situation, including their schools' situation. For example, they created a list of what should be put at the top of the current reform requirements which was also divided into two major areas of priority: the schools' requirements and the headteachers' needs. In other words, schools need to be well equipped and the headteachers need to be well prepared in order to face the new challenges of the current reform. These major priorities are included in Table 17, p. 183 and Table 18, p. 192. No doubt, the developmental requirements of the reform may prepare the primary schools and the headteachers for its effective implementation, which certainly requires the guide of the GES to be modified and extended. For one thing, the guide of the GES needs to be updated from time to time; hence, this is a highly suitable time to do it. In this connection, the Ministry of Education has published similar documents to provide adequate information about the current reform of the GES.

According to response 2.21c, there is a contradiction found between the reality and the stated elements in the GES guide. One practitioner finds the following:

*Some tasks in leadership or management are not included in the guide and when we*

*try to match its elements to the tasks of school leadership as practised (we cannot use it in order to enable us to know the extent of the success of our school leadership). (Headteacher 4.31b)*

The researcher has collated the respondents' opinions on the above stated topic of Factor 37. He found that the majority of them were agreed on the need to redefine the guide, although some of the respondents still saw it as an adequate tool for their guidance. One practitioner states the following:

**Table 17 - Policy-making requirements**

<p><b>Factor 37 - THE GES GUIDE SHOULD BE RESTRUCTURED AND REORGANISED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO SPECIFY HEADTEACHERS' AND DEPUTY HEADTEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES CLEARLY (SEE p. 182).</b></p>
<p><b>Factor 38 - PROPER CALCULATIONS FOR INCREASED SCHOOL FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND SCHOOL BUDGETS NEED TO BE MADE IN ORDER TO CREATE RICH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS FOR TEACHING/LEARNING PURPOSES (SEE p. 184).</b></p>
<p><b>Factor 39 - SCHOOL POPULATIONS SHOULD BE REDUCED, E.G. THE NUMBER OF PUPILS IN EACH CLASSROOM SHOULD BE BETWEEN 25 AND 30 PUPILS. ALSO, NO SCHOOL SHOULD EXCEED 1500 PUPILS (SEE p. 184).</b></p>
<p><b>Factor 40 - NEW VISIONS OF DEVELOPING PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ARE REQUIRED, MODIFIED BY THE GLOBAL TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION, FOR EXAMPLE, WHICH MAKES IT NECESSARY TO EQUIP SCHOOLS WITH LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRES (SEE p. 185).</b></p>

Table 17 indicates respondents' opinions on the policies and regulations of the Ministry of Education which all need to be restructured in the interests of the current reform of the GES, and the development of primary school leadership. Furthermore, the respondents think that new goals should be considered in implementing the requirements of primary school leadership development within the current reform of the GES.

*I think that the Ministry's guide for the GES at primary school level represents a good model of guidance. (Headteacher 2.21c)*

As discussed above, this guide was established in 1993; indeed, it is in some need of updating; thus, there are many things which need to be modernised according to the changes in the educational environment.

In conclusion, it must be said that the vast majority of the respondents were agreed on

updating the guide of the GES in the light of the requirements of the current reform. Thus, the topic of this factor is one of a series of factors which will be highlighted in policy-making for a more effective implementation of the reform; these factors were reported as they were suggested by the respondents. However, there was still evidence of satisfaction with the GES and its guide, in terms of still considering the GES as, to some extent, a successful system (Factor 31, p. 163). The following factor addresses another topic of the policy-making requirements.

***Factor 38 - Proper calculations for increased school financial support and school budgets need to be made in order to create rich school environments for teaching/learning purposes (Table 17, p. 184)***

Complementary to what was discussed in Table 15 - Issues of conflicts in Omani primary school, Factor 27, p. 153 - the respondents wished to express their opinions, as reported under this factor, by raising a major obstacle. This is that schools are given inadequate budgets, which simply prevent the headteachers from offering powerful school leadership. The researcher finds that not one of the interviewees was satisfied with the size of his/her school budget. Thus the officials should realise the obstacles which primary schools are struggling with. Therefore, in order to meet the minimum requirements of the current reform of the GES, the officials have to support the existing schools by providing adequate budgets. This topic is well illustrated in the above quotations of Factor 27, p. 153.

In conclusion, inadequate school budgets are considered major obstacles in the existing schools of the GES. In this regard, all the factors in Table 17, p. 183, are reported, to emphasise and to sum up certain developmental requirements, i.e. policy-making requirements and school and headteachers' needs (see Table 17, p. 183 and Table 18, p. 192). The following factor will address another major obstacle of policy -making that is, 'reducing school populations' and at the same time this topic is introduced as another immediate school developmental requirement.

***Factor 39 - School populations should be reduced, e.g. the number of pupils in each classroom should be between 25 and 30 pupils. Also, no school should exceed 1500 pupils (Table 17, p. 183)***

The topic of this factor can be considered as an example of feedback which was drawn from Factor 25, p. 143. The school population is what is addressed in Factor 25. The large school population is also recognised as one of the major causes of schools being more stressful for the headteachers to deal with. Thus, in order to develop leadership practice, it is important to reduce the school population to an acceptable level (fewer than 1500 pupils per school). This would allow the headteachers to raise the quality of teaching and learning; for example, it is at present difficult for any teacher to give sufficient attention to all the individuals if there are over 30 pupils in his/her classroom. However, the respondents agreed

that it is possible for the headteachers to initiate an improvement in education if the size of classes is reduced, say, to 25 in each classroom.

Responses 2.28 and 5.32 (see Factor 25, p. 143) indicate that the teachers in the existing schools of the GES have overloaded timetables, as well as teaching in overcrowded classrooms. Therefore, this topic becomes important enough to be put at the top of the developmental requirements. Indeed, this is a crucial point; in this regard, officials of the Ministry of Education should take it seriously in terms of meeting the competences of the national educational standards which are *required for the schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, e.g. to prepare the pupils in order to face the challenges of the labour market as well the growth of globalisation (Secretary of State for Education and Employment, 1998). In addition, the following factor will highlight the respondents' vision of the future in connection with their school leadership development and also will contribute to modernising their schools, for instance, by equipping them with much needed computers and also by taking advantage of the latest Information Communications Technologies (ICT).

***Factor 40 - New visions of developing primary school leadership are required, modified by the global technological revolution, for example, which makes it necessary to equip schools with learning resource centres (Table 17, p. 183)***

The focus of this factor is on the officials' and the school leaders' intentions, for instance, to equip schools with Learning Resource Centres (LRC) and so enable them to use Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to modernise their primary schools.

Furthermore, it is essential for Omani primary school leaders, especially headteachers, to be confident in their own use of ICT to enable them to manage their schools more efficiently. From this point of view, *they have to be knowledgeable about these new technological opportunities and their relevance to school management and leadership*, in order to be able to guide their own schools through the ICT revolution. In so doing, they will become more effective and more efficient leaders and so more able to meet the challenges of the current reform of primary schools in Oman (Rutherford and AlHinai, 2001).

The researcher's concern is to explore what were the respondents' views on e-learning, whether as currently implemented or as a future intention which it is hoped will be implemented within the current reform programme of education in Oman. The respondents' views will be illustrated in a selection of quotations which the researcher will interpret and comment on. In addition, a wide range of references will be cited in order to build up a body of evidence to support the arguments found in the quotations.

The development of the GES is required to accept the results of the global technological revolution. The school map needs to be redesigned, e.g. to equip schools with LRCs and to extend the *school day* and *school year* if applicable (ME, 1997). However, these two terms

should not be taken for granted without examining their contradictions at primary school level (e.g. considering the climate of Oman and the availability of school equipment such as air conditioning for the gymnasiums). It is understood by the respondents that the GES will be replaced gradually. Also, the model schools of the current reform of the GES are considered developmental model schools. Thus, the development should at the same time serve both sorts of school, the existing and the model schools. In addition, in the end, it is hoped, there will be only one kind of school, which should be the model schools of the current reform (the BES Schools). Some of the new leadership tasks are implemented in the GES schools to prepare them to be model schools in the future. Again, the development must continue in both kinds of school at the same time. The development needs to enhance the new leadership tasks in both the existing schools of the GES and the model ones. Consequently, the Ministry of Education faces developmental challenges, e.g. evaluating and assessing the new leadership tasks to see whether they are effective in developing post-holders.

Finally, in this section, the researcher will illustrate some of his findings which relate to e-learning in Omani primary schools. These findings are drawn from both the officials' and the practitioners' comments. It was expected that all the respondents, officials and practitioners, would think of both major aspects of the challenge of e-learning: first, to develop the use of what schools already have in terms of technological equipment and its applications; second, to identify new initiatives which would aid the development of ICT and which are desperately needed as part of the current reform agenda. The Ministry of Education is already working on some ICT initiatives, such as equipping the reformed schools (model schools of the current reform of the GES) with LRCs, but these are still in the process of development. This means that the respondents in this research can either put these initiatives at the top of their list of priorities or they may suggest other initiatives which they feel are more important for their schools.

As is clear from the following statement, one practitioner expresses his/her opinion on the need for the current reform in Oman and says that Oman should play its part in taking advantage of globalisation in the use of ICT. He/she states:

*No doubt, we need to develop our educational system; hence, the reasons for the current Omani educational development are to meet the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, e.g. scientific advances and the ICT revolution. (Headteacher 75.4)*

Furthermore, response 75.4 brought to mind that the Omani government, represented by the Ministry of Education, has studied school needs in order to make appropriate changes, either major or minor, to the Omani educational system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The above argument is supported by one official's point of view; he/she says:

*As you know, the third millennium has witnessed a technological revolution which requires the Ministry of Education to develop its curriculum for schools. Thus, the Ministry seeks to benefit from the global revolution of ICT. (Official 70.8)*

In supporting the above statement, one practitioner sees the role of the LRC teachers as necessarily limited. He/she states that:

*One of the new posts is that of the Learning Resource Centre Teacher (LRC Teacher), which to some extent, would support and raise the quality of school management. (Headteacher 23.4)*

Regarding the above response, the LRC teachers and technicians may help the headteacher to organise appropriate courses for school leaders, including the headteachers, as well as other members of the school staff. This might fulfil the school staff's requirement of using ICT effectively, if adequate courses could be provided. However, this would not include the headteachers of the existing schools of the old system, the GES. In this case, the Ministry should provide or encourage the present headteachers of the existing system, the GES, to attend computer courses in order to prepare them to carry out the new leadership tasks of the current reform, whether these new tasks are connected to the management and leadership of the school or connected to leadership in e-learning (leadership and school curriculum).

One official explains some new trends which accompany the current reform. He/she says:

*Self-learning is the new trend of the current reform in education. Thus, the pupils should be trained to search for relevant information by using the available facilities of the Learning Resource Centre, such as computer applications or even using the Internet. (Official 7.20a)*

Most countries of the world, including those which are designated developing countries, have taken advantage of ICT by integrating e-learning into their school curriculum. The Ministry of Education (2001) states the following:

*Educational technologies do not stand apart by themselves; rather, they are embedded in the context of learning and teaching strategies and methods. (p. 13)*

Thus the Ministry of Education is willing to integrate effective E-learning skills (which should be provided to pupils) so long as the teachers can themselves use the new educational technologies and this will require the headteachers to be fully understand, for example, how to select computer software which will be useful for their own school curriculum and their pupils' needs. The headteachers must, in this case, play a positive role in leading their school staff to make effective use of e-learning and ICT facilities. One headteacher points out that:

*As far as I know, there are many primary schools which have computers and perhaps they are used effectively. However, in our school we only have one computer which is used for a managerial purpose; hence, we still need a person to support us in order to activate its functions as much as possible. (Headteacher*

72.15a)

The above response makes it clear that the present Omani primary headteachers of the GES are evidently taking part in the ICT revolution and have aspirations to use it as effectively as possible, limited by the resources of their own school. Furthermore, the following response indicates more details of experience in an Omani primary school. One practitioner make the following request:

*I think we need to have a new position for a person who should be responsible for school data which relates to both records of pupils, staff and financial transactions. (Headteacher 72.15)*

The above response indicates a genuine plea for help from a typical headteacher who seems to be overloaded with the work of the school; present Omani headteachers do not have time to solve all their school problems, whether administratively or pedagogically. The response also indicates that the typical primary headteacher has a lack of ICT skills; hence, he/she requires, for instance, extensive training in ICT. Regarding the request which is indicated in response 72.15 to create a new post in order to deal with the data of the school, to some extent, this might be acceptable if, for example, the person appointed could deal with timetabling data. However, only the headteacher should use the computer for the purpose of keeping confidential records and financial information. Thus, the headteacher may need to deal with confidential information related to teachers, pupils and even parents; hence, they have to be able to use the computer professionally. Indeed, it is a good sign that the present Omani primary headteachers can afford to buy a few computers for their own schools without having extra funding from the Ministry of Education. However, equipping their own schools with LRCs is quite beyond them.

In addition, the following response raises crucial points that the present Omani primary headteachers apply to themselves: whether they are competent in the use of ICT and aware of the possibilities or, as we discussed earlier, whether they might require certain training and support to enable them to face the new challenges of the current reform. One practitioner has already registered him/herself to attend a computer course. He/she states the following:

*I personally have registered to attend a computer course with a view to managing my school records more easily. This course should be provided by the Directorate General; however, I shall have to make my own arrangements [This practitioner made the last remark because no word had so far been received from the authorities]. (Headteacher 73.15)*

The above response indicates three crucial points: firstly, that the primary headteacher has the ambition to update his/her knowledge of ICT for use in the management of the school. Actually, considering the routine day-to-day schoolwork, the *computer has become very useful and important for everyone* - the headteacher, the teachers and the pupils (Dimmock,

2000).

Secondly, the respondent gives the impression of being a far-sighted school leader trying to prepare him/herself to face the new challenges of the new reform. This also reflects a good understanding that his/her leadership effectiveness can be raised by acting independently, and not waiting until the last minute in order to perform the new leadership tasks which are connected to the use of ICT and which also require urgent integration into the school curriculum, e.g. in leading both pupils and teachers to use ICT effectively. It is evidence that the present Omani primary headteacher is capable of updating his/her knowledge independently. Moreover, it indicates that the Omani primary headteacher does not always wait to be spoon-fed in gaining experience and knowledge.

Thirdly, response 73.15 (see above) indicates a basic step in using ICT, which is vital in academic life as well as in a headteacher's professional life. Thus, the respondent has already taken action to develop his/her leadership and managerial performance by seeing the computer as a tool for various purposes; for example, to be used for word processing, spread sheets and for communication, whether nationally or internationally, through the internet and e-mail.

### ***Headteachers' needs***

*The Ministry will soon complete the main training centres, which will be based in Muscat; besides that, the Ministry is now planning [to establish] a number of subsidiary training centres in certain regional general directorates. (ME, 1997, p. 27)*

***Factor 41 - In addition to the administrative positions which are stated in the GES guide, there are also some positions required for leadership development, for example, senior teachers, administrative assistants, counsellors, timetable designers and computer coordinators (Table 18, p. 192)***

There is already some idea among primary headteachers that the Ministry of Education hopes to implement the first two new positions, administrative assistant and senior teacher, in all schools. The respondents welcomed both positions and supported the Ministry in its implementing of them.

Some of the primary schools of the GES, including model schools have received administrative supervision, despite the non-existence so far of the position of 'administrative assistant' in the existing schools. Nevertheless, one official comments that the position of administrative assistant is implemented in the GES primary schools (response 3.27). In fact, the position of the administrative assistant has not yet been implemented, but the Ministry of Education has provided administrative supervision for most primary schools. The administrative supervision might be that of supporting headteachers *in managing the work of*



the school. This indicates that the process of the current reform is only concentrated in the model schools; however, the respondents recommended that this reform should keep pace in both kinds of school. It is believed that the implementers of the current reform would gain more experience if they decided to fill the posts in both kinds of school. One official states that:

*The administrative assistant's position has recently been introduced in the current reform of the GES. This position deals with administrative and financial duties. Indeed, this position will support the headteachers in raising their performance by giving them time to discharge their major responsibilities. (Official 3.27)*

Another perspective taken from one practitioner indicates that the development of primary school leadership must take practical steps to implement the administrative positions which are urgently needed in order to perform the new leadership tasks effectively. In this regard, the Ministry of Education should *implement those positions which are included in the old guide* of the GES, such as deputy headteacher, before implementing the new suggested positions such as those of administrative assistant and senior teacher (AlHinai, 2000). One practitioner comments as follows:

*Before we think of new posts we have to recruit for those which are stated in the guide of the GES and these positions are important in supporting the school leadership. (Headteacher 4.39)*

Finally, the development of school leadership should consider implementing, for instance, the most important administrative positions such as those of deputy headteachers, before those which are assumed to provide support for headteachers, e.g. the new position of administrative assistant. In other words, schools might need deputy headteachers more than administrative assistants at this transitional stage of the current reform. However, both positions should be considered important for the reformation, if possible.

The above topic of Factor 41, p. 189 is aired in the following quotations. One official states the following:

*According to the guide of the GES, wholly administrative staff members should be employed in primary schools; headteachers, deputy headteachers, school coordinators (secretaries) and social workers. (Official 7.3)*

Indeed, this should all have been happening since the first year of the renaissance, 1970; but the Ministry of Education could not employ administrative assistants during the past three decades (1970 – 2000); before 1970, there were only three schools of the GES to be found (MI, 1998). However, the rest of Omani schools before 1970 were run under the Qur'anic system. Thus, it must be said that officials have been aware of the importance of employing administrative assistants for the past thirty years. However, it seems to have been the case that there was a shortage of finance (for more information about the shortage of finance, see

Factor 27, official response 7.22a, p. 155).

Furthermore, the following statement supports the content of this factor. One practitioner claims that:

*Recruiting assistants to primary schools might help headteachers to concentrate on major issues in their school responsibilities. Therefore, it is important to employ deputy headteachers and other administrative workers, as stated in the guide of the GES. (Headteacher 5.34)*

Also, another practitioner raises the point that more posts are needed to meet the school requirements for the current reformation. He/she says:

*We need to employ new staff, such as psychologists, social workers and counsellors. Thus, the work of the school will be distributed among these staff; for instance, the counsellor can deal with pupils' situations, or their family's situation. All these positions can be linked to school leadership, allowing time for school leaders to deal with their own major responsibilities. (Headteacher 2.30)*

Moreover, further consideration in terms of developing the existing primary school leadership is indicated in the following statement. One practitioner states that:

*School leadership should be developed by providing more administrative assistants to support headteachers in managing their own schools. For example, in this school there are 1400 pupils and there is only one headteacher to deal with the work of the school. (Headteacher 2.11)*

The above statement describes two major points: calling for assistants to support the primary headteachers, because the existing school is carrying a large population of pupils, which in turn is recognised as a major problem to eradicate, under the terms of the reformation. This task was addressed in Factor 39 (for more information see Factor 39, p. 184). Under this factor (Factor 41), almost all of the respondents agreed that the filling of the assistant posts is vital to the current reformation of leadership; hence, no one showed any objection to discussing this topic. Moreover, in order to stimulate the headteachers' aspirations, encouragement and creativity, they should be rewarded by providing them with adequate authority to run their own schools smoothly and effectively. More about the need for the adequate authority is given in the following factor.

***Factor 42 - leadership development requires giving the headteachers more authority, because it is important to give them the needed authority for carrying out their responsibilities properly to raise the effectiveness of school leadership performance (Table 18, p. 192)***

According to the findings of this research discussed in Factor 15, p. 116, the respondents considered that some, if not all, Omani primary headteachers are seen only as administrators and implementers of the central reform. This is evident by their current situation of being not fully involved in creating the reform itself. Also, in Factor 16, p. 119, the respondents reported that the headteachers are not yet authorised to initiate or lead school-based reform;

this is evident from the fact that the current reform of the GES is being run by the Central Office (the Ministry of Education) alone. Thus, the respondents strongly recommended that Omani primary headteachers need to be supported by investing them with authority in order to allow them to act as genuine leaders and not mere administrators and implementers of centrally imposed change. Indeed, the reformation requirements may lead them to act as actual school leaders in thinking out and implementing their new tasks as required for Omani primary school leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This means that the present primary headteachers should be promoted to the level of actual school leaders, because in most cases of leadership implementation they will have to act independently in the near future.

**Table 18 - Headteachers' needs**

<p><b>Factor 41 - IN ADDITION TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS WHICH ARE STATED IN THE GES GUIDE, THERE ARE ALSO SOME POSITIONS REQUIRED FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, SENIOR TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS, COUNSELLORS, TIMETABLE DESIGNERS AND COMPUTER COORDINATORS (SEE p. 189).</b></p>
<p><b>Factor 42- LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES GIVING THE HEADTEACHERS MORE AUTHORITY, BECAUSE IT IS IMPORTANT TO GIVE THEM THE NEEDED AUTHORITY FOR CARRYING OUT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES PROPERLY TO RAISE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE (SEE p. 191).</b></p>
<p><b>Factor 43 - THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION DIPLOMA IS REQUIRED FOR HEADTEACHERS AND THEY NEED CONTINUOUS TRAINING AND MONITORING. ALSO THEY SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO HOLD SEMINARS AND PRESENT PAPERS RELEVANT TO PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP (SEE p. 193).</b></p>
<p><b>Factor 44 - IT IS HOPED THAT HEADTEACHERS WHO ARE QUALIFIED WITH INTERMEDIATE DIPLOMAS WOULD CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION TO DEGREE LEVEL (SEE p. 195).</b></p>

Table 18 shows the developmental requirements of primary school headteachers and their leadership which need to be considered by the Ministry of Education in order to prepare the headteachers to be leaders and to face the challenges ahead through the current reform.

The topic of this factor is well illustrated by the following quotations. One practitioner points out:

*I would like to add that headteachers should be given more authority in order to develop their skills and to accomplish school targeted goals effectively. (Headteacher 4.25)*

As noted in the above statement, the headteachers should be enabled to extend their authority, in practising their leadership more freely, for example, without asking for official permission to hold a certain seminar or workshop. However, this is not only in the practitioners' perspective; hence, the officials themselves have realised that the present primary headteachers need to be supported by delegating adequate authority. One official suggests the following:

*It is important to give school leaders authority for carrying out their responsibilities as they should be and this will raise the effectiveness of school leadership. For example, they should be given the authority to decide suitable punishments, decide on the free days, award teachers and decide on teachers' promotions, i.e. to promote a teacher to leadership position. Also, this will need to create a system for promoting teachers in which professional courses can be laid on for headteachers to make them aware of the promotion system. (Official 1.20)*

Indeed, providing the headteachers with adequate authority should help them to practise the actual school leadership role, going beyond school administration or school management. It seems to be the case that since the 1980s or perhaps before this date, many researchers called for the term 'leadership' to be used to imply a powerful voice in the control of the schools. Thus this term (leadership) is the most suitable term to distinguish traditional headteachers from the needed school leaders for the educational reform *who can carry out the change when it occurs* (Rinehart et al. 1998).

***Factor 43 - The School Administration Diploma is required for headteachers and they need continuous training and monitoring. Also they should be encouraged to hold seminars and present papers relevant to primary school leadership (Table 18, p. 192)***

Almost all the respondents indicated their agreement about the need for headteachers to have sufficient training programmes. No doubt, this factor indicates the importance of this requirement which may also enable them to update their skills in leadership, their understanding of the school curriculum and the whole process of the current reform of the GES. Providing the headteachers with adequate training programmes is, of course, a vital point, especially by giving them a chance to gain the Diploma of School Administration. This diploma should be required for headteachers before they are promoted to this position. Chart 10 indicates that there is a considerable percentage (31%, see below) of headteachers who have not yet been given the chance to attend the course in school administration. This indicates a desperate need for this kind of training among headteachers.

Furthermore, the respondents also recommended that the headteachers should be enabled to hold seminars and workshops, in which to clarify their colleagues' responsibilities and

support them in gaining the needed skills. This means that the headteachers themselves have to take the initiative in providing their peers with relevant information regarding, for instance, the new challenges of the current reform which may be facing them.

**Chart 10 - School Administration Course attendance**

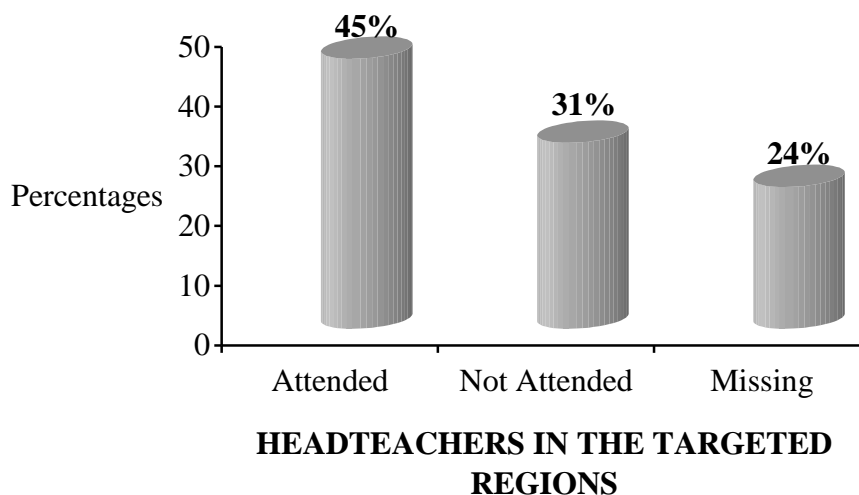


Chart 10 indicates school leaders' attendance of School Administration Course (SAC). The percentages show that the Ministry of Education should pay close attention to providing primary headteachers with professional training programmes.

The respondents also claimed that it is not enough for the headteachers to be observers; hence, they should think of themselves as useful and influential human resources who, in turn, will enable their teacher colleagues to be well equipped with teaching skills. In this regard, leadership qualities are also required for effective reform; this is why adequate training programmes are vital for them.

This is well explained by the following quotations. One official points out that the:

*'School Administration Diploma' is required for primary headteachers or deputy headteachers who implement the new developmental tasks of primary school leadership. Before, it used to be called the 'School Administration Course' which was established by the Ministry in 1977 and ended in 1995/1996; this course developed in various stages through the 70s until the 90s. (Official 66.1b)*

Again, according to Chart 10, the present primary headteachers should be provided with both a means to upgrade their qualifications and then a chance of gaining the School Administration Diploma (SAD) which is already provided at the University of Sultan Qaboos. As discussed earlier, it is urgently required that primary headteachers should be holders of the SAD in order to be ready for the requirements of the reform. One practitioner points this out:

*Raising primary school leaders' (headteachers') performance can be accomplished by involving them in administrative courses (workshops) and also by providing*

*them with feedback on similar courses if they have not been able to attend them before. (Headteacher 5.7)*

Also, the following statement supports the above comments. Another practitioner suggests the following:

*The best way for upgrading primary school leaders' (headteachers') performance is to provide workshops, courses and professional programmes. (Headteacher 2.23)*

According to the above comments, both major groups of the research population, the officials and headteachers, were strongly agreed about the necessity of training for the headteachers and that it should be continuous. Thus, officials raised crucial points too. One official states that:

*The lasting success of school leadership performance would be provided by a continuum of evaluation from officials in the Central Office, dependent on the officials' roles. (Official 3.22)*

Furthermore, another official exhibits a considerable understanding of headteachers' needs. He/she notes:

*In fact, possible upgrading of the leadership performance can be carried out by understanding the tasks which need to be developed and this can be done by establishing workshops and seminars which could support and contribute new ideas to the leadership and school administration. (Official 1.4)*

In conclusion, everyone agrees that training the present primary headteachers adequately is beyond doubt important. Also, they should be provided with a chance of attending the School Administration Course (this course should be named the Leadership Course because it should deal with school leadership issues, not only with school administration). Training programmes should include the need for preparatory training, for headteachers to gain experience in a number of schools, for induction training for newly appointed headteachers and for on-going training for experienced headteachers.

Similarly, the following factor will address another headteachers' need; that is to be rewarded with a degree, which a consensus also considered an urgent need of headteachers.

***Factor 44 - It is hoped that headteachers who are qualified with intermediate diplomas would continue their education to degree level (Table 18, p. 192)***

This factor argues that most of the present Omani primary headteachers need to be qualified graduates (i.e., having a university first degree: BEd, BA, BSc etc.); thus, the opportunity to study for a university degree or higher degree is essential for them. They have to become more effective leaders if they are to carry out the new leadership tasks within the current reform of the GES in Oman and so those who hold intermediate diplomas need to upgrade their qualifications to degree level (see Chart 11, below).

**Chart 11 - Primary headteachers' qualifications**

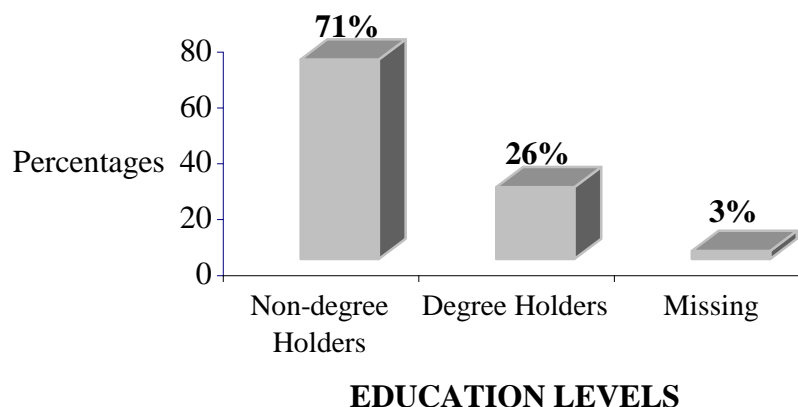


Chart 11 indicates the levels of education of primary headteachers according to their qualifications. This chart also shows the higher percentage of those who have no degree qualifications, e.g. diploma holders; thus, the need of more primary headteachers to be qualified as degree holders is clearly indicated in this chart (the first group has a long experience in school management). This chart is adapted and modified from the researcher's paper, which was contributed to the Muscat International Conference 2001 (see Appendix 10, Paper 2, p. 363).

Nevertheless, officials in the Ministry of Education must also recognise that the present primary headteachers' practical experience in school leadership (management) is as important as academic study. Furthermore, this research also raises some important ideas for supporting primary headteachers and preparing them for the new challenges of the current reform, e.g. integrating new educational and leadership tasks with their present duties.

Hence, further qualification - giving headteachers degree status - is proposed. It should aim to develop primary management and leadership qualities, skills and approaches to enable headteachers to meet the challenges of the future. In other words, headteachers should be supported in order to build their confidence and competence to meet new challenges and changes within the current educational reform in Oman. One practitioner suggests the following:

*Primary school leadership needs to be developed, especially to upgrade headteachers' qualifications. (Headteacher 2.10)*

Indeed, the research findings indicate that almost three quarters of the present headteachers have no degree, as clearly indicated in Chart 11 (see above). The present headteachers are in desperate need of upgrading their qualifications.

Thus, the indicated percentages on Chart 11 show two major groups among practitioners: headteachers who have no degree (intermediate diploma holders) and those with a degree

qualification. The qualifications of the former group were based on the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) and successful candidates were awarded the Intermediate Certificate of the Intermediate Teacher Training College (ITTC) and the degree qualifications were based on degrees obtained from the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Oman, or other universities in the Arab world. A comparison between those two categories is indicated in Chart 11, p. 196. Also, Chart 12, below, indicates that the headteachers gained their certificates after several different kinds of study, for example, full time, part time and distance learning (see Chart 12).

**Chart 12 - Headteachers' conditions of study**

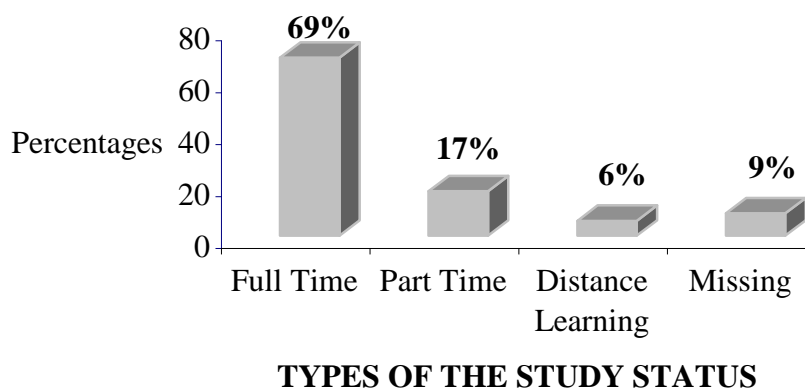


Chart 12 indicates the percentages of different kinds of study for primary headteachers.

Also, to revert to Chart 11, p. 196 it indicates a much higher percentage of practitioners who still lack a degree (i.e. who are only intermediate diploma holders). This makes primary headteachers feel vulnerable. Hence, one official realised that all that was necessary to upgrade all school leaders' qualifications, including primary headteachers, to the level of a degree:

*I would like to add, relevant to professionalism, that we hope that school leaders would all be awarded a university qualification. This means a higher degree than the current qualifications for primary headteachers, as there is a link between a higher qualification and the person's thinking at leadership level in primary schools. I believe that there is a necessity for employing people like these qualified people at primary school level. (Official 1.5)*

The primary headteachers were becoming frustrated at the delay in up-grading their intermediate qualifications; indeed, some of them believed that, as things stood, they had no chance to move forward to higher positions. One practitioner believes that:

*There is no way to hold a higher position except by being better qualified and officials should have to decide on this. (Headteacher 2.23a)*

This headteacher (response 2.23a) emphasises a crucial point which is logical and justified concerning promotion to a more prestigious position. Moreover, this indicates a mature understanding among the present primary headteachers, since they realise their need



to move from their present position to a higher one. This may show the relative level of power between the headteachers and the officials, who are not at the moment of equal status or in partnership, as we argue should be the case. One official indicates the following:

*The development process should involve Omani experience (e.g. primary headteachers' experience) and up-to-date knowledge in education, but not be the result of accident. Also, its themes should be studied carefully and according to clear principles. (Official 68.35)*

According to the above statement, Omani primary headteachers could be the ideal human resources to carry out the new tasks of the current educational reform. This statement also calls for experienced Omanis to be involved in redefining and remodelling the nature of primary school leadership, by considering the vision and mission of the current reform of the GES.

### **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER EIGHT**

In this chapter, some perspectives contributed by the officials (policy makers) and headteachers (practitioners) who, because they were assumed to represent the views of Omani primary school leaders in general, participated in the fieldwork for this research project. Both major groups are considered to have been selected as generally representative of the whole population of educational leaders and, as the headteachers represent the higher percentage (85%, see Chart 2, p. 86) of this research population, they also represent the primary school leaders in Oman as a whole.

This chapter also relies on the previous two chapters of data analysis (Chapter 6, p. 91 and Chapter 7, p. 125), as well as its own, in terms of reporting on the respondents' perspectives on the reform of primary school leadership. This chapter has highlighted the developmental requirements, whether policy-making requirements or headteachers' needs. Altogether, policy-making requirements and headteachers' needs are considered vital for the effective and efficient implementation of the educational reform, including the development of primary school leadership in Oman.

## **PHASE FIVE: RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS**

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- **Chapter 10 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** p. 258

## **Chapter 9 - DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Research findings will be discussed in this chapter, which will address the three themes of this research project (see AlHinai Model, Figure 2, below) in association with their sub-themes, i.e. the first theme: exploring primary school leadership, with values and cultural issues considered as its sub-themes. This means the discussion will cover the same territory as Chapter 6, p. 91. The second theme is presenting the practice of primary school leadership in Omani schools, with its two sub-themes: conflicts and successes, which is based on the findings of Chapter 7, p. 125. The third theme is redefining and transforming - improving and developing the practices of primary school leadership in Oman; therefore, in this section the discussion will cover the findings of Chapter 8, p. 181. As discussed below, other researchers' studies, whether equivalent, similar or carried out in different ways from this research will be highlighted; however, to some extent, areas in the literature are cited in connection with the findings of this research project in the appropriate places.

The AlHinai Model referred to above emerged from the arrangements and rearrangements for the 'Key Research Questions' (see Table 5, p. 67) and the 'Methodological Questions' (see Table 6, p. 68). These arrangements and the rearrangements occurred after conducting a pilot study and before as well as after conducting the fieldwork. As discussed earlier, conducting the pilot study tested the methodological questions; hence, the researcher had discussed the feedback thoroughly with his academic supervisor so that the pilot study yielded guidance for making the needed rearrangements. In this regard, the methodological questions were rearranged in order to introduce an example of the structure which is shown in the AlHinai Model (see Figure 2, below). In addition, this model can be considered one of several contributions of this research project; for example, by introducing as a framework a unique model of primary school leadership in Oman, the focus of this research (see also, in the following chapter, Figure 3, p. 271).

In other words, the discussion of this chapter will be based on the components of the AlHinai Model, which represents these three themes and their sub-themes. In addition, the limitations of this research project and some topics for further study will be addressed.

**Figure 2 - AlHinai Model of primary school leadership in Oman within the General Education System (GES)**

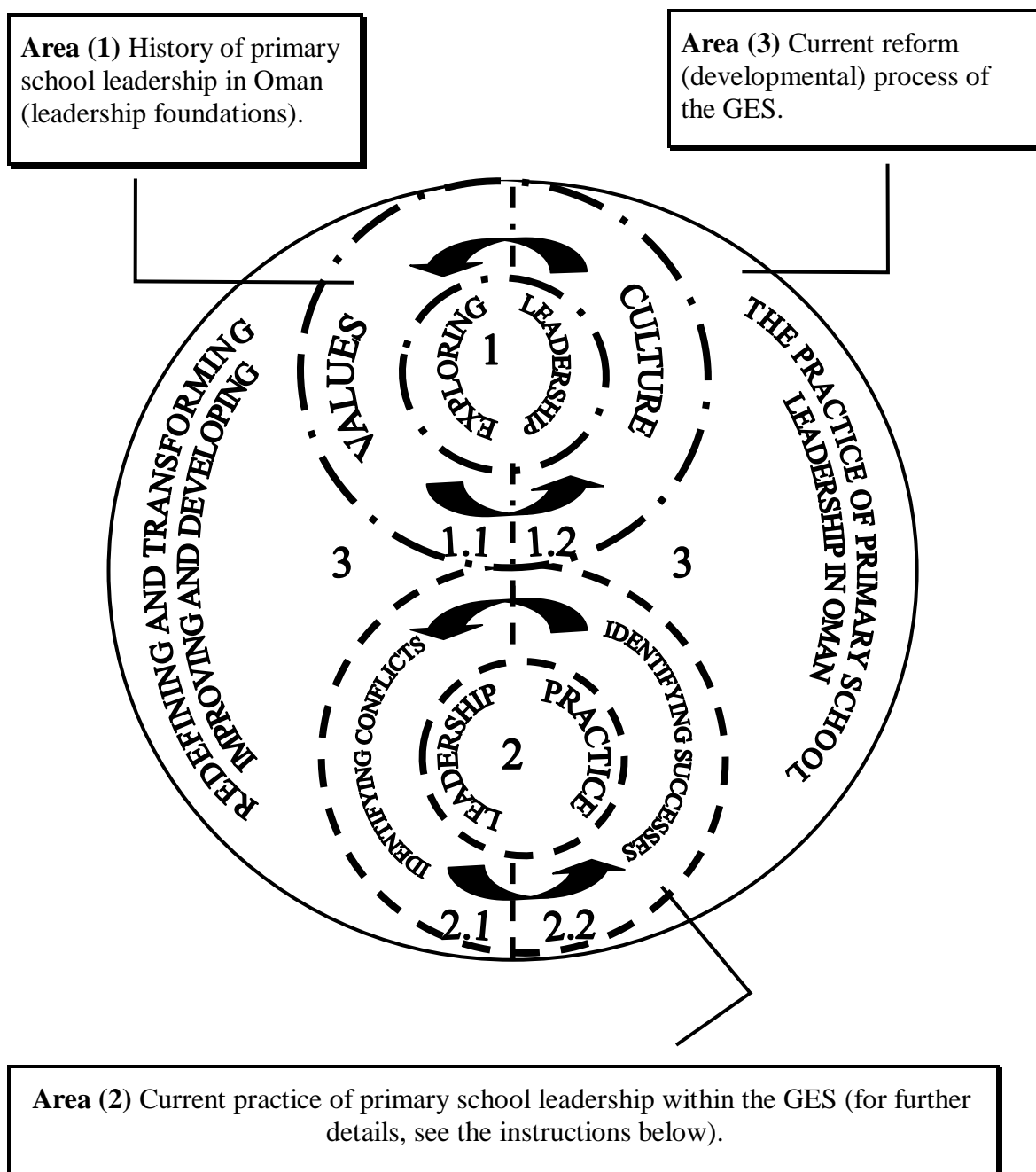


Figure 2 (the AlHinai Model) draws a possible framework to clarify primary school leadership in Oman, which is practised in the existing educational system, the GES. Furthermore, it describes the foundations and the background of primary school leadership (the 1<sup>st</sup> theme and its two sub-themes, which are introduced in circle 1 and half circles 1.1 and 1.2), the current leadership practice (the 2<sup>nd</sup> theme and its two sub-themes, which are introduced in circle 2 and half circles 2.1 and 2.2) and the current reform (development)

process of the GES (the 3<sup>rd</sup> theme, which is introduced in circle 3, the vision and mission of the developmental process). The circles of this Figure 2 are based on the most recent information available; hence, 'this model draws a general picture of the school leadership in Oman, including leadership at primary school level', as it is practised at the present time.

As discussed above, Figure 2 is drawn from the findings of the pilot study and the fieldwork; it represents in equal proportion the three themes of this research. Moreover, it was developed throughout various sessions of discussion, e.g. by considering the audience's comments when the paper was presented at the BELMAS Conference 2000. Thus, this updated model looks completely different from what was presented then, because it has been adapted and modified since the paper was presented (see Appendix 10, Paper 1, p. 352).

The circles of the AlHinai Model reflect a strong inter-relationship between them which also indicates that these circles represent the school leadership framework as found in Omani primary schools. The image of this model takes us from the early years of school leadership foundations in Oman to the recent transformation and development of the current educational reform.

The connection between this model and the theoretical framework model (T&T Model) of this research project can be explained according to the themes of this research which are, at the same time, the components of the AlHinai Model. In other words, the first theme can be connected with the theoretical framework of school leadership in Oman (e.g. ethics and traditions – leadership foundations) which should also be a major concern of the theoretical framework model. The second theme is connected with the practice of school leadership at Omani primary school level which is also a major concern of both the T&T Model in terms of school management and leadership qualities. The third theme is connected with the vision and mission of the current reform of the GES in Oman, which is certainly a major concern of transformational leadership in particular. In addition, both models (the AlHinai Model and the T&T Model) are urgently required for the current reform. They are needed in order to form a desirable approach to school leadership for the current development in education as well as to redefine the current practice of primary school leadership in Oman (for further information about the proposed school leadership model, see Chapter 10, Figure 3, p. 271).

The AlHinai Model is supported by several models of school leadership, specifically, the instructional, transactional, transformational, moral, ethical, participative, managerial and contingent school leadership theories, see circles 1 and 2 and their half circles 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2 of Figure 2 (Northouse, 2001, pp. 75-81, 131-149, 161-179 & 249-266; Leithwood et

al., 1999, pp. 91, 100-113, 134-148 & 205-209; Southworth, 1998, pp. 119-143) and also supported by models of culture (Law and Glover, 2000, pp. 115-124; Southworth, 2000, pp. 79-82) and, of course, the *AlShura* school leadership model, also (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2002, See Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

### **IDENTIFYING PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMANI SCHOOLS**

In this section, conclusions will be drawn from the respondents' reaction to Key Research Question 1 (see Table 5, p. 67) and Methodological Questions 1 and 2 (see Table 6, p. 68), including their prompts, which were included in the first theme, with its two sub-themes; values and culture. According to the findings which were introduced in Chapter 6, p. 91, there are four tables, which occupy four major areas in connection with this first theme: (a) issues for primary school leadership (see Table 10, p. 94), (b) educational values (see Table 11, p. 100); (c) cultural issues in connection with the headteachers' personal and professional characteristics (see Table 12, p. 106; hence, these three tables incorporate the features and foundations of primary school leadership); and finally (d) issues for primary school management (see Table 13, p. 117). Thus, in this section (circle 1 and half circles 1.1 and 1.2 of the AlHinai Model, see p. 201), the discussion in this section will tackle only the findings of the first theme (exploring primary school leadership in Oman), including its two sub-themes (values and culture) and, in addition a complementary component to school leadership, that is, school management.

#### **1. DISCUSSING THE EXISTING ISSUES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN**

Under Table 10, p. 94, the respondents supplied facts from their experience as well as knowledge from their reading about the current situation which they experienced at work (e.g. managing stress, Gunter, 2000), motivated by their desire to exchange appropriate up-to-date information about school leadership (e.g. *technology for school management as well as teaching/learning processes*, Dimmock, 2000). Under the factors of Table 10, the respondents 'showed their awareness and deep understanding of the informal existing style of primary school leadership' practised in Omani schools (for more information about their traditional school leadership style, see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380). This style embodies distinct features considered by the Omani primary headteachers, such as features connected with Omani society and culture (e.g. various ways of accommodating each gender of pupils such as seating boys and girls in different rows within the classroom or even accommodating them in different school buildings, to exemplify a traditional respect). Also, they showed particular concern in connection with their own practice of primary school management and leadership (e.g. ensuring academic success for pupils).

Southworth (1998) finds that teachers are appreciative of the significance of their headteachers' leadership quality; he adds that:

*... the value of leadership is appreciated inside and outside schools. (p.7)*

In terms of clear guidance, the Omani primary school headteachers indicated their educational values and goals, as shown in their own school management and leadership, and as connected with the Ministry of Education's guidelines. In addition, the headteachers' role *responsibilities were identified*; they indicated a certain framework for their school management and also figured among their school leadership concerns (ME, 1993).

In addition, the headteachers' understanding about the issues of school management/leadership was recognised by their realising the importance of academic success; thus, many of the headteachers put in outstanding efforts to achieve such success, despite facing a lack of resources (the topic of shortage of resources is discussed under the sub-theme of conflicts; see also the half circle 2.1 of the AlHinai Model, see above). The lack of resources, in this case, did not prevent them from being ambitious to achieve some success and in fact showed their outstanding achievement in what they had so far done. This is a good sign of understanding which prepares the headteachers to adapt new educational concepts introduced by the current educational reform (e.g. individualised support and intellectual stimulation, see Table 4, p. 55, row 1, column 2). Without exaggeration, the lack of school resources, whether in staffing or materials, is likely to restrict their success to the limit.

As advantage, leadership qualities were clearly expressed in the headteachers' seriousness, sense of equity and justice at work, respect for their commitments, attitudes towards people and cooperation in carrying out their school responsibilities. Indeed, this indicates how strongly they respect their colleagues' human qualities, which links closely to their social, cultural and educational background.

The respondents believed that school leadership is a powerful force for directing education as a whole along the right path. This belief represents the respondents' recognition of the potential of the headteacher's role; headteachers should be selected on the basis of their personal and professional characteristics, provided with adequate training, skilled in networking and urged to produce their maximum effort, since schools are differentiated *in terms of the quality of their leadership* (Northouse, 2001; Moos, 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999; Southworth, 1999; Southworth, 1998).

All this, however, requires the close attention of the policy makers in the Central Office of the Ministry of Education in Oman.

Under the findings of the first theme, the respondents confirmed that a major feature of primary school leadership was to encourage independence in arranging school leaders'

activities (e.g. seminars and conferences) for male and female staff separately. This, however, is influenced by Omani social regulations conforming to Omani traditions in accommodating and treating separately the school leaders of each sex (this should be the character of the *AlShura* model; see the researcher's conference paper, Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380). This also complies with cultural traditions in terms of respect for others (see the following section, section 1.2, dealing with culture). In addition, the respondents recognised the social influences which form the different leadership strengths of Omani male and female primary headteachers.

Moreover, a major target of primary school leadership in Oman was to implement a close relationship between the home and the school. However, as this target had not been met at the time opinions were sought to the satisfaction of either the officials of the Ministry of Education or the primary headteachers. This task required efforts from both officials and headteachers to work cooperatively with the PTA members and lighten their task by persuading more parents to cooperate (these efforts can be seen as forming an area of conflict; further details about the PTA will be provided in section 2.1 below on conflicts). Specifically, AlMa`mari (2000) studied this situation in Oman in order to encourage parents to cooperate with headteachers in the research title of "*Parents' Councils in Oman: How they can be made more effective*". In addition, AlHamami (1999) finds that:

*More authority [is] to be give[n] to the Parents' Councils in the regions. (p. 262)*

This means that parents are needed to play a more powerful role, which is important for encouraging pupils to achieve better results. In addition, as regards the respondents' perspectives, according to traditional and social concepts, it is widely believed that pupils work better with headteachers and teachers of the same sex as themselves.

In conclusion, on their appointment Omani primary school headteachers face a typical traditional concept of school leadership; hence, from what has been discussed some points can be identified:

- The practice of school leadership seems to be hidden; however, according to the collected data, it is unique to Omani schools and also infused with ethical and cultural issues. It can be described as participative.
- The present primary school headteachers have not yet been identified as leaders; hence, headteachers behave transitionally in implementing their responsibilities. However, they have produced some good thinking and understanding which may enable them to be promoted to the level of transformational leaders in practice.
- The respondents showed a high standard of leadership qualities which raises the possibility of adapting their own traditional school leadership to ensure effective



implementation of the current educational reform in Oman (see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

This section also highlights the cooperative teamwork through the PTA activities, which to some extent suffers from the lack of an effective role in such activities.

### **1.1 Educational values**

Under Table 11, p. 100, the respondents identified that integrating pupils into the school community as an important leadership task (this is obviously connected to a sense of patriotism and loyalty). This requires teachers to provide pupils with adequate information to enable them to play their part in improving the community (whether that of the school or in a wider sense), as well as providing them with an opportunity of expressing their affiliation through pupil leadership activities. This finding is supported by Law and Glover (2000), citing Rutter and his associates, 1979, who find that:

*... when a sense of shared purpose and organizational loyalty existed, organizational effectiveness was increased. (p. 120)*

Another valuable topic which the respondents raised was the practice of *AlShura* (Omani traditional school leadership), which is linked to Omani social traditions and is also a societal and cultural concern. Indeed,

*AlShura emerges as a hereditary concept in Omani society and also has cultural implications including educational, social, religious and political ones. However, the officials did not seem to be eager to share power and consult with the school leaders (sharing responsibility with headteachers would lead to AlShura being practised at the level of policy makers). This would account for the fact that the Omani primary headteachers did not feel they themselves were obliged to practise AlShura but did so only as a voluntary and ethical matter. (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2002, p. 13)*

Another topic worth consideration is that the respondents recognised the need for communication as a vital task of primary school leaders at the levels of both internal and external school relationships (locally, nationally and internationally).

Creating a helpful teaching/learning atmosphere in Omani primary schools was considered an important task by school leaders because this in turn would help the pupils to achieve higher results. For example, friendly relationships allow even the most junior voice to be heard and also can be considered the most important factor in creating a peaceful school environment; hence, the value of achieving a higher standard in this area in the teaching and learning process is that it leads to higher school results in general and specifically is reflected in pupils' results. Again, raising the educational standards and *the quality of the leaders' leadership will lead to a higher school achievement* in general (Southworth, 1999). Also the respondents indicated that moving towards quality has to be one of the headteachers'

commitments because, for one thing, it creates good relationships between the headteachers and their colleagues, leads to cooperative team working, encourages teachers to embrace reform in certain school activities and also indicates headteachers' readiness to accept the new challenges of the educational reform. It was said that the headteachers' acceptance of responsibility for setting an example of the best and most desirable behaviour to the staff is certainly reflected in the school and also in its social community.

### **1.2 The culture of Omani primary schools**

Primary headteachers expressed their willingness to practise the *AlShura* school leadership model. However, it seems that they are not yet practising a full version of it at primary school level. This means that the headteachers are only so far willing to implement this model of school leadership and/or seeking to do so, but are not yet sure that it can be grafted on to traditional model (*AlShura*); thus, this model also may require modifications when it is introduced within a modernised framework which, as discussed earlier, will suit also the requirements of the current reform and *those of the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (Rinehart et al. 1998). For example, they could adapt, if applicable, transactional and transformational concepts for raising standards and efficiency, in addition to effective school leadership. But it is believed that this kind of combination would indeed have the best features of the Omani cultural school leadership model (*AlShura*) and Westernised ones (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2002).

Furthermore, the headteachers' personal and professional qualities and skills assured the researcher that they were willing to practise effective school leadership and also understood what it entailed. No doubt, the Omani culture and their own background of educational and social knowledge imparted qualities which the headteachers needed for their own traditional style of school leadership (see the AlHinai Model, p. 201, circle 1 and half circles 1.1 and 1.2).

Indeed, Omani primary headteachers have the ability to influence their colleagues' performance; this is how they were able to persuade them to do their best at work. However, they have provided them with a certain amount of needed authority, e.g. delegating responsibilities to them as soon as they ceased to be overburdened with teaching duties (see section 2.2 dealing with conflicts, below, Bush and Coleman, 2000).

Furthermore, Omani primary headteachers' experience enabled them to solve problems and make decisions, providing an example of such things as planning well, organising, understanding the school curriculum and achieving their targeted goals according to the Ministry of Education's short and long term plans. They said that they were capable of creating an interactive atmosphere for the teaching/learning process in cooperation with

teachers. It will be recalled that most of the present Omani primary headteachers had strengthened their position by their very substantial experience in post (see Chart 14, p. 226); however, the majority were non-degree holders (see Chart 11, p. 196). As part of their experience, the primary headteachers found that they could respect their colleagues' opinions, which allowed their colleagues to feel free in negotiation and decision-making whenever it was necessary to discuss any topic with them, such as managing classrooms properly. In this regard, they gained job skills to offset the inflexibility of the work.

Regarding actual facts which emerged from this study, the Omani primary headteachers have to strike a balance between internal and external school responsibilities, because they have a high profile in both the school and the community; hence, they must consider themselves as resident advisors and/or inspectors, since they can provide their colleagues with adequate administrative support as well as the substantial advice and other feedback which they require to perform at their best.

In conclusion, the culture of Omani primary schools seems to be very dependent on traditional values and beliefs. Hence, this sub-theme would certainly be different in nature from the Western school culture. In this sense, it is distinct in terms of both pupils' and staffs' behaviour; however, the possibility of similarities does exist.

#### **Identifying the existing issues of primary school management in Oman**

According to the factors of Table 13, p. 117, the respondents indicated their perspectives when describing their existing practice at the level of school management, whether effective or ineffective. Under the factors of this table (Table 13), the respondents (officials and primary headteachers) indicated that the headteachers were not yet in a position to play a full part in the process of the current reform as actual leaders and initiators of change. Both groups felt there was a lack of qualifications, the officials and the headteachers themselves; however, the headteachers claimed that it was not their fault, and that the delay in gaining qualifications was caused by the Ministry of Education. The non-degree holders had served their schools for a long time and they had been asking to upgrade their qualifications for the past two decades; hence, they expressed their readiness to continue their formal education as soon as the Ministry made it possible.

Furthermore, the headteachers believed that the delay in upgrading their qualifications stemmed from official unwillingness to see them as equals and share decision-making with them.

Indeed, the formal practice of *AlShura* did not exist; if it did, the position of the headteachers could be elevated in respect of their leadership, as we can consider *AlShura* as a traditional style of school leadership in Oman (see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

Again, considering the headteachers' role in the current educational reform, Day et al. (1998), remark that "*It is as well to remember that apparently 'difficult' colleagues may not be simply 'pig-headed' in their resistance to change*" (p. 89) had this can apply just as well to colleagues in the Ministry as to colleagues in the school.

The respondents also said that the headteachers were seen only as implementers of the central directives and initiatives. In other words, the officials of the Ministry of Education did not pay enough attention to the 'importance of the headteachers' role'; this is evident by their not fully involving the headteachers in designing the current project of the educational reform or even involving them in the improvement of existing practice. The respondents argued that 'the headteachers had to be fully involved' in designing as well as implementing the current project of the reform; however, all they could do was to follow official guidelines (strategies) to implement other peoples' decisions. Unfortunately, this induces a demoralising sense of powerlessness and over-centralisation. Also, Omani primary headteachers should be empowered in order to provide *strategic direction* (Rutherford, 2002) for the education system.

Furthermore, the respondents also commented on the present headteachers' position which was described as not paying enough attention to pedagogic strengths which would distinguish them from other school administrators who merely deal with paperwork (e.g. school secretaries - the headteachers were very busy with school paperwork).

In conclusion, if the current reform continued on the basis of ideas from the officials alone it would leave gaps which could have been filled from the perspectives of the headteachers; for example, there is much specific knowledge which can only be supplied by headteachers. However, to the present time, the headteachers are not yet fully involved in the process of the current educational reform; no doubt they wanted to be recognised as stakeholders, supported and empowered in order to implement confidentially the new tasks of school leadership.

### **DISCUSSING THE EXISTING PRACTICE OF HEADTEACHERS IN OMANI PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

In this section, conclusions will be drawn from the respondents' reaction to Key Research Questions 2 and 3 (see Table 5, p. 67) and Methodological Questions 3, 4 and 5 (see Table 6, p. 68), including its prompts, which in turn were included in the second theme and its two sub-themes; conflicts and successes. According to the data which were introduced in Chapter 7, p. 125, there are three tables, which are classified as three major areas in connection with the second theme: perceptions of practice at primary school level in Oman (Table 14, p. 128), issues of conflict at primary school level in Oman (Table 15, p. 145) and perceptions of

success at primary school level in Oman (Table 16, p. 166). Primarily, the above-mentioned tables incorporate the existing features of practice among primary school management and leadership within the General Education System, including conflicts and successes found at this school level. Under this section (circle 2 and the half circles 2.1 and 2.2 of the AlHina Model), the discussion will tackle only the findings of the second theme, including its two sub-themes (conflicts and successes).

## **2. EXISTING PRACTICE**

Under the factors of Table 14, p. 128, the respondents spoke of their experience in managing their own primary schools according to the guidance of the General Education System (GES) which exemplifies the philosophy of the Ministry of Education. Also, to learn more about headteachers' practice, as presented in Chapter 7, p. 125, the researcher will turn to what the headteachers actually said. Both specific terms (among Omani headteachers) and general terms (among headteachers everywhere) terms count as educational facts. The specific ones may be identified only in Omani society or in the societies which exhibit similarities to it, whereas, general educational facts may be considered to apply to societies all over the world.

Specifically, the respondents reported that the headteachers share responsibilities with school members and consult their colleagues (according to *AlShura*; however, this indication reveals only *AlShura* at an informal level). Also, considering headteachers' commitments means that they obeyed an essential precept of Omani traditions (keeping one's commitments is considered an element of *AlShura* – or, for its treatment as a cultural issue, see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380). The respondents believed that being faithful to one's commitments applied to those outside as well as inside the school community.

The headteachers distribute questionnaires to allow their teacher colleagues to assess their performance by evaluating its different aspects in the respondent's judgment. This kind of evaluation was found to be useful. At the same time, the headteachers' performance was evaluated by several administrative officials who reported on their achievement twice a year (five reports were made by five different division managers). In addition, the annual appraisal of the headteachers was based mainly on these five reports, by using them as a genuine feedback to reflect on their performance (put note that a contradiction was found on this aspect of evaluating the practice of school leadership, see the following section of conflict).

It was found that the teachers were encouraged to exchange observational visits as a part of staff development programmes (this is addressed under Factor 23, p. 138). In fact, the primary headteachers were considered only as observers, since they had not designed and supervised these programmes.

However, as regards general educational facts, the researcher found that the deputy headteacher's role responsibilities were complementary to those of headteachers; however, the deputy headteachers do less in connection with school leadership than the headteachers. This is supported by the discussion of Southworth (1998), who states that:

*... notions of shared leadership, partnership and assistant headship rely on both parties – heads and deputies – developing a dialogue about the role .... (p. 112)*

Moreover, the respondents realised that the headteacher's responsibility was to provide 'care for the pupils', encourage their staff to create a useful induction programme to school activities, create activities to alleviate any negative reaction to starting school, to prepare the school environment to welcome the youngsters (creating a positive learning environment). Also, the respondents agreed that the primary school headteachers are responsible for creating and introducing suitable activities to meet the pupils' needs in cooperation with their staff. Furthermore, the headteachers had to carry out their daily responsibilities according to an arranged strategic plan, which entailed considerable care of the pupils. In this regard, the headteachers described themselves as organisers in providing useful advice for their colleagues; for instance, for teachers to create their own visual aids which in turn might help to create a pleasant teaching/learning environment. More importantly, they were accountable for their own schools physically as well as academically (ME, 1993).

The following section will address a major factor in connection with the current practice (the second theme of this research) of primary school leadership in Oman, that is, school conflicts within the GES.

### **2.1 Existing conflicts for Omani primary schools within the GES**

Under the factors of Table 15, p. 145, the respondents experienced stress in their own schools which made it difficult for them to delegate anything to their busy teachers (most of the targeted schools of this research were found have no deputy headteachers; therefore, there were only the teachers to target for delegated duties). Thus there are shortages among both academic (i.e. teachers) and administrative staff (58% of the targeted schools of this research were found to be run by headteachers alone, see Chart 6, p. 150). In addition, according to the respondents' arguments under Factor 26, p. 149, the headteachers were overloaded with paperwork and administrative duties, frustrated, always busy and dealing with a stressful school life. Bored with the daily routine, they yet have crises in school management, burdened with heavy responsibilities and with every classroom over-crowded. Unlike the boys' schools, the girls' schools were found to suffer particularly from teacher absences through maternity leave, which caused disruption to the school timetable. Moreover, all schools had been subject to the obstacles which accompanied the initiation of the model

schools of the current reform (the Basic Education Schools) because teachers and even headteachers were transferred from the existing schools of the General Education System (GES) to the model ones. Their schools were so seriously affected by the shortage of staff that they had to delay developmental plans and to transfer unfinished school duties; hence, a failure of school leadership was recognised when things in such programmes had to be left to chance.

Furthermore, a shortage specialist teachers was complained of, especially in teaching curriculum areas, such as art, physical education and music, which was also accompanied by a shortage of specialist rooms for these activities. At the same time, all kinds of school resources were in short supply (e.g. visual teaching aids) and technicians/maintenance workers. These are the conditions for the existing primary schools of the GES; however, recently the Oman online newspaper (OMNP, 2002) reported that the shortage of school requirements also exists in the model schools (e.g. while additional rooms are still being built). This brings to mind that the Ministry of Education faces a problem of reforming even the reformed schools; this indicates very serious problems which are still occurring in the process of the current reform. They are as follows:

- ❑ Headteachers' perspectives in both types of schools (the existing and model schools) should be considered as a form of comment and review for frequent evaluation reports on the implementation of the reform.
- ❑ The evaluation reports for the implementation of the reform should be made by Omani experts, who should also consider the views of the school staff, including the headteachers.
- ❑ The Ministry of Education should consider the model schools only as a sample in order to lead the reform in the right direction in the light of their experience of implementing it; however, it is important to implement the new ideas of the reform side by side with providing for the existing schools (see Figure 1, p. 5). For example, the Ministry of Education should prepare all schools and their staff to deal with the new educational concepts whether in connection with the school curriculum or with the tasks of school leadership, as two examples.
- ❑ The Ministry of Education should evaluate the model schools of the current educational reform of the GES accurately and consistently. In fact, according to Oman Newspaper (2002) these model schools require supplementary divisions and rooms. This means that they are not yet settled completed to the Ministry's plans in terms of equipping school buildings (many shortcomings are found). Thus, they should only be considered as a model in order to be evaluated before the system which they exemplify is formulated.

However, this is evidence that the reform should be spread to all Omani primary schools step by step without ignoring any schools at this level, but again, it should only implement one task at a time.

Furthermore, the respondents, in particular the headteachers, emphasised that the administrative officials of the Directorates General did not use the schools' appraisals effectively.

According to the items of the GES guide, the respondents also realised that there was serious inconsistency between the contents of the guide and the reality of carrying out the responsibilities of primary school management/leadership. Thus, some overlap was found between the responsibilities of headteachers and those of the deputy headteachers. For example, when a deputy headteacher conducted classroom observation it was considered *informal* in nature (ME, 1993). Therefore, the headteacher had to duplicate every visit made by the deputy<sup>8</sup> (this makes the deputy lose the respect of the teachers and wastes the time of both school leaders). Hence, the headteacher also had to offer every teacher a standard number of classroom visits during the academic year and he/she had to report formally on their work, both in connection with their academic and administrative responsibilities. In this kind of situation, the role of the deputy headteacher is undervalued, he/she is seen as nothing more than an administrator because he/she is not empowered officially since the GES guide gives an *incomplete list* of responsibilities for the position (ME, 1993). Likewise, it is argued by Southworth (1998) that:

*Deputizing infers that the role largely involves waiting for the head to be absent and then standing-in for them while they are away. (p. 111)*

Indeed, this point raises the ineffectiveness of the present role of deputy headteachers (perhaps they would be better as assistants).

The respondents also confirmed that there was an overlap of managerial responsibilities for schools conducted by administrative officials in the Directorates General. This caused a duplication of tasks by headteachers who had to provide the same information for different divisions, as is evident from the overlapping items of the Evaluation Form for Headteacher's Performance (EFHP); for example, according to the EFHP there are five divisions in the Directorate which can ask a headteacher to submit certain work. These divisions are: the Planning and Educational Information Division (PEID), Educational Supervision Division (ESD), Administration and Finance Division (AFD), Building Maintenance and Refurbishment Division (BMRD) and Monitoring and School Performance Evaluation

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<sup>8</sup> The researcher had experience as a primary as well as a secondary school deputy headteacher between the academic years 1985 to 1991; however, since then, it seems nothing has changed in terms of empowering deputy headteachers.



Division (MSPED). However, the overlap between items of the EFHP is clearly noted; for instance, item 1 of PEID overlaps (page 1 of the EFHP) with items 2 and 3 of MSPED (page 3 of the EFHP), item 5 of ESD (page 2 of the EFHP) with item 3 of MSPED and item 6 of ESD with item 4 of MSPED (for further information, see Appendix 9, p. 344). Moreover, the items of the Evaluation Form for Headteacher's Performance (EFHP) seem not to fit accurately within certain divisions' responsibilities (e.g. items 6, 7 and 8 of PEID can be shifted to the responsibilities of AFD because the latter division seems to deal with administrative responsibilities, whereas the former deals with planning and information). This certainly indicates vagueness and misunderstanding of each division's responsibilities, ignoring the major responsibilities of certain divisions which urgently need to be addressed in connection with the support which ought to be provided to schools. Item 5 of PEID indicates that the headteacher should set up school records by using computer applications; whereas, according to the interviewees' responses, the headteachers had not been provided with any kind of training to give them experience in using the computer, Indeed, the headteachers were found to be not computer literate (for further information, see Appendix 10, Paper 3, p. 369). All the items of the EFHP must be conducted by the headteachers' administrative assistants; however, the present situation of the headteacher indicates that they are responsible for satisfying all items by themselves, while they feel that they should only have to supervise their assistants in carrying out the terms of the EFHP. It is not their responsibility to do every single school duty. Assuming that the Omani primary schools are provided with the required administrative and academic assistants, headteachers should be provided with adequate authority to help them to gain respect from their teams as they carry out their responsibilities and duties: this should be all the action they need to take to get things done (the lack of authority will be addressed in this chapter later, see also Recommendation 4, p. 267).

Considering the items of the EFHP, there is still no clear system to evaluate school leadership performance within the existing schools of the GES; yet headteachers required adequate feedback and advice by experts to do their job effectively. However, as explained under Factor 30, p. 159, the respondents said that the Ministry has employed teachers who have no experience in school management and leadership as holders of administrative inspection posts as well as administrative managers for the Educational Supervision Division (ESD) and Monitoring and School Performance Evaluation Division (MSPED). This may easily create difficulties in providing the headteachers with appropriate feedback. It has to be said that there was not and there still is not a clear enough system for evaluating headteachers' performance in order to help them to deal with school management and leadership effectively and efficiently (for more detail, see Factor 30, p. 159).

In connection with school responsibilities, each of these five divisions of the Directorate should have its own guide which identifies its particular responsibilities among all the responsibilities covered by the Directorate and their responsibilities should also be available to the headteachers. In this regard, guides to the divisions should be provided to schools (according to the researcher's experience as primary teacher and as a secondary headteacher in Omani schools, between 1982 and 1996, there was never sufficient information provided to the headteachers to acquaint them with the responsibilities of each division).

Thus, the headteachers felt that they were isolated, they were not offered frequent and updated information relevant to primary school leadership, in particular, relevant to the current educational reform and by not being provided with enough training courses preparing them to face the challenges of the reform, they also felt as if the officials were ignoring their views and comments which they wished to be taken seriously for the sake of school improvement.

The respondents brought up the complaint that primary headteachers were not allowed to spend their school budget without justifying it to the division managers in the Directorates General; moreover, schools were left without enough equipment and only had a small budget for necessary materials.

The headteachers had not enough professional training and opportunities for networking, were not provided with enough refresher courses in school management and leadership and were not offered opportunities to continue their education, the majority of them feeling left behind through not having a degree. They complained that the Ministry does not increase their salaries regularly (they worked harder for no extra reward), and that they were not consulted in the process of the development of the GES (only top-down policies are employed).

The respondents also recognised that parents do not cooperate with them; even though the headteachers were exhausted by planning programmes for the PTA which were inadequately attended by parents. This is completely opposed to the findings of Dimmock (2000) citing Steveson and Stigler (1992), who find that parents give a high level of support and involvement in China and Japan, even though, Oman is also considered an Asian country. Thus, the Ministry of Education and primary headteachers should study the differences between the parental role in these countries and in Oman. In addition, AlMa`mari (2000) finds some lessons for Omani school leaders; he claims that:

- *Parents should be attracted to schools [by creating enjoyable activities which serve their interests].*
- *[Primary school headteachers] should increase parents' awareness [and*

*understanding of their role obligations].*

- *[Primary school headteachers] should encourage parents to become seriously involved in the educational process.*
- *[PTA] regulations should be amended, especially in relation to membership conditions, [authority], responsibilities, meetings attendance and accountability. (pp. 65-66)*

According to Table 15, p. 145, almost all the respondents are aware of the stress affects primary school headteachers, such as the burden of paperwork and most schools seem not to be equipped with deputy headteachers; hence, the headteachers work alone (for further details about staffing the present primary schools of the GES, see Chart 6, p. 150). Bush and Coleman (2000) cited results of a study conducted by Fullan (1991) which indicates similar results to this research: their findings were also of busy primary headteachers being involved in managerial tasks such as meeting parents, solving pupils difficulties and overwhelming numbers of daily duties.

In conclusion, it is not easy for the present Omani primary headteachers of the existing schools of the GES to play the role of a resident advisor/inspector in such a stressful situation; however, as discussed in Factor 13, p. 112, they were also urged to be realistic in their expectations of their colleagues. In order for Omani school leaders to resolve their difficulties and as a requirement for the current reform, they have to consider the following strategies, which may be helpful. Law and Glover (2000) cite Handy (1993), who advocates four strategies for resolving conflicts:

- *Shared leadership – offering open discussion;*
- *Confidence and trust in others – letting them express their views;*
- *Challenging tasks – involving interpersonal activity;*
- *The full use of group member resources. (p. 99)*

The above-mentioned strategies are considered for any kind of school activities as well as projects in order to enhance cooperative team work (ibid.).

The following section will address a major factor in connection with the current practice (the second theme of this research) of primary school leadership, that is, school leadership successes within the GES.

## **2.2 Successes in Omani primary schools within the GES**

To some extent, the respondents believed that the General Education System (GES) is still successful, including the tasks of primary school management and leadership; however, they claimed that any educational system always needs to be reviewed, redefined and transformed according to the rapid changes brought by the 21<sup>st</sup> century revolutions such as

the scientific and technological ones. In addition, the GES has produced its own experts; hence, it is also considered a good foundation for the current reform in Oman – its guide is sufficient, though it is in need of updating to cover the new concepts of the desired school leadership in order to implement the new tasks of leadership effectively (for further information see the respondents' argument in Factor 31, p. 163 (see also the discussion under the following section of policy making requirements, section 3, below).

The respondents agreed that the present Omani primary headteachers could act as key persons for any change or development in their schools; however, they required the Ministry of Education to strengthen their position by providing them with opportunities to upgrade their qualifications, as well as providing them with adequate training (see section 2.1 of conflicts, above).

The headteachers were eager to exchange experiences with other headteachers and some of the respondents mentioned that they hoped to be allowed to visit model schools in other countries round the world (e.g. the UK) in order to enrich the experience of other school staff. Certainly, this idea will help the headteachers to adopt useful ideas for their schools while they can report on what they have gained from such tours. Equally, the headteachers would feel that this had restored the Ministry's trust in them and it would be considered a reward for them, showing respect and appreciation for their experience. This also would release the headteachers from the routine of their schools; this kind of opportunity must involve at least a majority of primary headteachers and the tours should be made in pairs or groups to reduce the expense. This also would refresh their minds and encourage them to be more productive (for more details about the respondents' perspectives, see Factor 32, p. 168).

Primary headteachers have been given the responsibility to comment on school needs as well as to select nominees for senior teaching positions. They set the best example of overcoming their schools' current difficulties; they have succeeded in encouraging members of the community to take part in supporting their schools, accommodating themselves to their few school resources and making efficient use of them and they set the best example of mentally active school leaders. Furthermore, some of the headteachers have created a peaceful school environment and developed diplomatic skills for turning negative cases into positive ones (see Factor 34, p. 173). The present Omani primary headteachers have tried hard to build strong relations between schools and the community, despite uncooperative parents (see Factor 35, p. 175).

Overall, they are ambitious to study for a university degree and to continue their higher education in order to reform the existing practice of primary school leadership and to be able to tackle the challenges of the current reform of the GES.

In conclusion, the present primary headteachers seem to be ready to face the challenges which are expected to result from the current development of the GES. However, they also expect the Ministry of Education to be generous with them in providing them urgent with opportunities both to enable them to tackle the reform and to provide their schools with the expected development. In other words, they expect that the current development to be implemented in their schools side by side with the model schools of the current reform. This will persuade them that they have not been left behind.

### **3. REFORMING THE EXISTING PRACTICE AND INTEGRATING THE NEW LEADERSHIP TASKS**

In this section, conclusions will be drawn from the respondents' reaction to Key Research Questions 4 and 5 (see Table 5, p. 67) and Methodological Question 6 (see Table 6, p. 68), including its prompts, which is itself part of the third theme. According to the findings which were introduced in Chapter 8, p. 181, there are two tables, which cover two major areas in connection with the third theme: the first area being to redefine the existing primary school policy (Table 17, p. 183) and the second area, to empower and support primary school headteachers (Table 18, p. 192). Hence, according to the factors of Table 17, the elements of the first area are summed up as follows:

- ❑ To revise the GES guide.
- ❑ To support primary schools with adequate school budgets.
- ❑ To reduce school as well as classroom populations.
- ❑ To enable the headteachers to be open-minded about such things as adapting useful technological applications in order to improve their performance in school management. This is seen as opening up the vision of school leaders to a wider world.

However, also according to the factors of Table 18, the headteachers' needs are summed up as follows:

- ❑ To fill new posts in addition to those which are stated in the GES guide such as senior teachers, counsellors, computer coordinators and timetable designers.
- ❑ To provide the headteachers with more authority.
- ❑ To give the headteachers continuous training.
- ❑ To provide the headteachers who are non-degree holders with an opportunity to continue their education to degree level.

Moreover, the above-mentioned tables (Table 17 and Table 18) incorporate the features effectively redefining and improving, transforming and developing the existing practice as well as enabling the headteachers to implement the new tasks of primary school leadership which are introduced in the educational reform of the GES. In this regard, the discussion in

this section will tackle only the findings of the third theme (see circle 3 of the AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201).

### **Revising the existing primary school policy**

According to the discussion of conflict held in section 2.1 (see this chapter, above), in fact, the guide of the GES is not comprehensive enough and does not include specific a detailed list of headteacher's responsibilities (see Appendix 11, p. 392). Therefore, in connection with Factor 37, p. 182, the respondents recommended that it must be updated for the sake of the current educational reform. In this regard, the updating of the GES guide must cover the present situation of the existing schools and should also include ideas for reform. Considering the present situation of primary schools would enable the evaluators to see what might be included in updating the items of the guide; this would certainly take into account the previous experience of primary headteachers in connection with evaluating the contents of the guide. This point is vital to consider, because the contents of the guide need to be revised in order to suit the new developments in education. However, most of the items of the GES guide can be practised in the model schools (Basic Education Schools). This is evident by contrasting the items of the 'General Education System Guide' (GESG) and the newly published ones, the 'Model School Guide' (MSG) of the current reform of the GES. It is found that the GESG includes items which are similar to, if not more adequate than those of the MSG. However, the GES still needs to be updated. Unexpectedly, the researcher also finds that the former guide (GESG) is more comprehensive than the latter one (MSG). A comparison between items in these two guides<sup>9</sup> is provided in the following:

#### ***Items from the GESG (old school guide)***

- The headteacher's responsibilities are divided into two sections: academic and administrative, 14 items under each section, in total 28 items over four pages in 1.5 spacing (each page 24 cm in length and 16 cm in width). Thus, the two distinct sections might be helpful for headteachers in arranging their school plan.
- There are only three items (items 26, 27 and 28) addressing relevant specific details (ME, 1993, see Table 19, p. 223).
- The structure of some items transmits good experience in schools.

#### ***Items from the MSG (new school guide)***

- The headteacher's responsibilities are mixed up, the academic and the administrative responsibilities are introduced as a single list of items; in total 22 items, over two pages in 1.5 spacing (each page 24 cm in length and 17 cm in width). Thus, it is not easy for the headteacher to pick out the academic from the administrative responsibilities.

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<sup>9</sup> In this case, the researcher focuses only on the headteacher's responsibilities in both school guides.

- ❑ Only one item has two sub-items; unfortunately, these two sub-items would be better presented in detail (ME, 1998).
- ❑ The structure of some items transmits a lack of experience of school management and leadership.
- ❑ Indicates simple repetition of what had been stated in the GESG.

***The GESG and the MSG: general comments***

- ❑ Both show vagueness in the structure of each item and need to include specific details.
- ❑ Individual items in the MSG cover more than one area of school responsibility; each area needs to be separated.
- ❑ Some items need to be associated with a separate guide in order to be performed according to the standard requirements of the Ministry of Education (e.g. creating, managing and distributing the school timetable). For this responsibility, an administrative assistant should be employed; however, the headteacher could provide supervisory support. In this regard, previous experience of the present primary headteachers should be considered in developing detailed guides.
- ❑ Should be something more than a list of academic and administrative school responsibilities.

As discussed above, both guides need to be presented in more detailed and specific terms (e.g. each item must include only one area and should be identified according to specific instructions) to raise the quality of school management/leadership, concisely and precisely. This raises the possibility that the existence of primary school management deficiencies (discussed under the section of conflict, see above, section 2.1 in this chapter) could be connected with the inadequate instructions provided (for more details on contrasting items in the GESG and MSG, see Table 19, below).

Factor 38, p. 184, extends the discussion held under Factor 27, p. 153 about school budgets in the present primary schools, which are in any case considered not sufficient. The budget which is meant here is the amount of money at the headteachers' disposal which would allow them to create some small projects for their own schools independently. It should be said that the budget in these schools is not meant for running big school projects, but only for purchasing stationery materials for schoolwork; thus, the headteachers are not provided with a great amount to play with.

Furthermore, unfortunately, the administrative officials in the Directorates General (DGs) ask the headteachers to create big projects for their own schools and they are evaluated as capable headteachers accordingly. The administrative officials expect the headteachers to raise money from public donations; for example, to invite companies, parents and other

community members to participate in adding to their school budgets. But it is embarrassing for many headteachers to do this; it damages the headteachers' reputation (Southworth, 1998).

The discussion which was held in previous sections under Factor 38, p. 184, reveal that the Ministry of Education should think seriously about the present school budgets in terms of adequacy. This is needed to allow the headteachers to create school programmes to attract both pupils and their parents.

Thus, school budgets need to be increased in order to enhance the school environment for teaching/learning purposes. Hence, the inadequate school budgets will simply prevent the headteachers from offering powerful school leadership; this task is considered a major obstacle for the existing schools of the GES. AlLawati (1992) also supports this research finding; insufficient primary school budgets still exist at the date of the present research.

Reducing school as well as classroom population is a major concern for primary school headteachers, because, of course, it affects the quality of their school leadership. The discussion under Factor 39, p. 184, which also has drawn on feedback from Factor 25, p. 143, highlights the topic of even large school populations. It seems that there is no limit to the size of schools; however, it is also claimed by AlHammami (1999) that the Ministry of Education considers this topic a major obstacle which should be resolved within the current development by building more schools. Moreover, the size of most school populations is also recognised as one of the major causes of stress in schools which headteachers have to deal with. If this problem were solved, it would allow the headteachers to raise the quality of teaching and learning; but the existing schools of the GES have overloaded timetables and the Ministry of Education should take it seriously in terms of meeting the demands of the national educational standards.

Finally, as the last issue in this section of redefining the school policy, the Ministry of Education is urged to give the headteachers more authority to show their leadership qualities. It should not be forgotten that the present Omani primary school headteachers manage their schools alone, without administrative or academic assistants; this issue also should be resolved for the same purpose with more authority and more administrative, the headteachers would be freed develop their initiative and leadership.

In conclusion, according to the findings of this research, the school policy requires close consideration from both the policy-makers of the Ministry of Education and the practitioners at primary schools (school leaders, including the headteachers).



### **Empowering and supporting primary school headteachers**

Factor 41, p. 189, addresses the discussion on the topic of supporting the headteachers with academic and administrative posts (senior teachers, administrative assistants, counsellors, timetable designers and computer coordinators<sup>10</sup>), which should provide helpful support for the headteachers and leave them free to deal with major leadership matters. However, these posts are required for big and small primary schools in which each position will provide support in the administration and management of the school. Hence, this idea brings considerable concern over school efficiency. For example, it is a good idea, to consider one post, as complementary to another; for instance, the computer coordinators can easily deal with timetabling if the post of timetable specialist vacant. This is a practice in many Omani school routines; hence, it is officially identified that the deputy headteacher's responsibilities are complementary to those of the headteacher (ME, 1993, see also Appendix 11, p. 392). In addition, one official response commented on this point that he/she was worried last too many academic and administrative school posts should be created. As discussed above, to merge responsibilities and to consider school populations should meet what exactly schools need and how they can be supported. Over all, headteachers require sufficient support in order to able to run their schools smoothly and effectively.

Factor 42, p. 191, includes a discussion that the headteachers require adequate authority to enable them to perform their duties. This topic is essential for the present primary headteachers and it must be a major requirement for the current development. Providing the headteachers with adequate authority will certainly help them to raise the quality of their school leadership.

Furthermore, it is reported by the respondents that the present Omani primary school headteachers need continuous training in order to refresh their ideas gained from their own practical experience and improve them according to the newly adapted concepts of school management and leadership. Thus, they require a kind of partnership training programme which will allow them to express their opinions and be partner in organising as well as running these programmes. Adequate training programmes are vital for them; it is the best way to upgrade their performance, as discussed in Factor 43, p. 193. Induction training is needed for newly appointed headteachers, and on-going training for experienced headteachers.

The last factor in the findings of this research project is about raising headteachers'

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<sup>10</sup> These posts are suggested by the respondents; however, the post of senior teacher and administrative assistant are introduced in the current reform (Ministry of Education, 1998). The old GES guide includes the positions of deputy headteachers and social worker (counsellors); however, they were not fully adopted (Ministry of Education, 1993).

qualifications to degree level, that is, providing the headteachers who are non-degree holders with an opportunity to continue their education at least to first degree level (Factor 44, p. 195). AlHammami (1999) hints at this:

**Table 19 - Contrasts between the old and the new responsibilities of Omani primary school headteachers**

<b>ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HEADTEACHERS</b>			
<b>Rows</b>	<b>OLD AND NEW MATCHING ITEMS</b>		<b>COMMENTS ON ITEMS IN THE GESG WHICH ARE OMITTED FROM THE MSG</b>
	<b>GESG's ITEMS</b>	<b>MSG's ITEMS</b>	
1.	1.	2	
2.	2.	9	
3.	3.	16	
4.	4.		Curriculum distribution by teachers.
5.	5.		Curriculum implementation and suggestions for further development.
6.	6.	10	
7.	7.	18	
8.	8.	18	
9.	9.	15	
10.	10.	17	
11.	11.	14	
12.	12.	12	
13.	13.	19	
14.	14.	3	
15.	15.		School preparation at the beginning of the academic year.
16.	16.	4 & 22	Two items merged in one.
17.	17.	7	
18.	18.		Observation of school attendance.
19.	19.	1	
20.	20.		School record of arrangements.
21.	21.	6	
22.	22.		School record of registration.
23.	23.	11	
24.	24.		School cafeteria.
25.	25.		School appraisals.
26.	26.		Annual school feedback to the DG.
27.	27.		Feedback every three months.
28.	28.		School building refurbishment.
<b>Columns</b>	1.	2.	3.

Table 19 indicates the contrast between the items which are included in both the General Education System Guide (GESG), the old guide, and the Model School Guide (MSG), the new guide. As a matter of fact, the GESG covers more areas, as is seen by comparing its

contents with those of the new guide to the model schools of the current reform of the GES. As indicated in this table, the items which are not matched in the GESG by items in the Model School Guide (MSG) reflect that some of them have been omitted or moved elsewhere; for example, to the responsibilities of the Administrative Assistant (this post is newly established in the Omani school system), For example, item 28 (see row 28, column 3). In conclusion, the items of the GESG refer to school responsibilities, in addition to those which were not indicated in the old guide and included in the new ones, specifically, about integrating technology in school management and in connection with Learning Resource Centre services (item 8 and in partially item 18 of the MSG, see also Appendix 11, p. 392). Also items 13, 20 and 21 of the MSG are not new ones; although, they are not indicated in exact phrases in the GESG, they were undoubtedly covered by the present headteachers in particular; for example, school/home relationships, in particular, items 20 and 21 of the MSG. These items are included in the PTA guide and are fully addressed by the primary headteachers who took part of this research.

*[The present Omani primary school] headteachers should be well trained and equipped with knowledge to help them manage their schools effectively. (AlHammami, 1999, p. 306)*

Hence, upgrading their qualification can be seen as an adequate reward for such headteachers, who gained experience in school management for many years without being given a chance to continue their education (for more information about the headteachers' experience, see Chart 14, p. 226). The non-degree headteachers feel that they need to be enrolled in a university programme which should be designed to serve their needs and provide them with equivalent qualifications to a university degree, to reassure them that they have the skills and confidence to do their jobs more effectively and to prepare them for the challenges ahead. They feel keen to continue their education and they should be provided with the opportunity of doing so, not least for the sake of the current reformation.

Most primary headteachers are still young; their ages range between 25 and 40 years, because they graduated in the 1980s and 1990s (see Chart 13, p. 225) and they have many years of service ahead of them. Hence, providing primary headteachers with the opportunity of upgrading their qualifications to degree status may help the Ministry of Education to secure its goals, whether by redefining the existing practices or by integrating new leadership tasks. This will ensure and increase the quality of the headteachers' performance in their duties and responsibilities.

In relation to the indicated percentages on Chart 13, by considering the weight of the present headteachers' experience, it is vital that the headteachers' qualifications be upgraded

to degree level in order for them to gain better understanding of school leadership. Chart 11, p. 196 and Chart 13, p. 225, make it clear that those who hold intermediate diplomas have had longer experience than the degree holders (Chart 11, on p. 196, indicates that 71 percent of the headteachers are intermediate diploma holders. Moreover, as indicated in Chart 13, p. 225, those who graduated with diplomas in the 1980s are a high percentage (63%) of the total and have longer experience than those who graduated with degrees in the 1990s (30% with less experience). Therefore, the present primary headteachers need little further training as they already have enough experience in the school leadership role.

**Chart 13 - Primary headteachers' qualifying years**

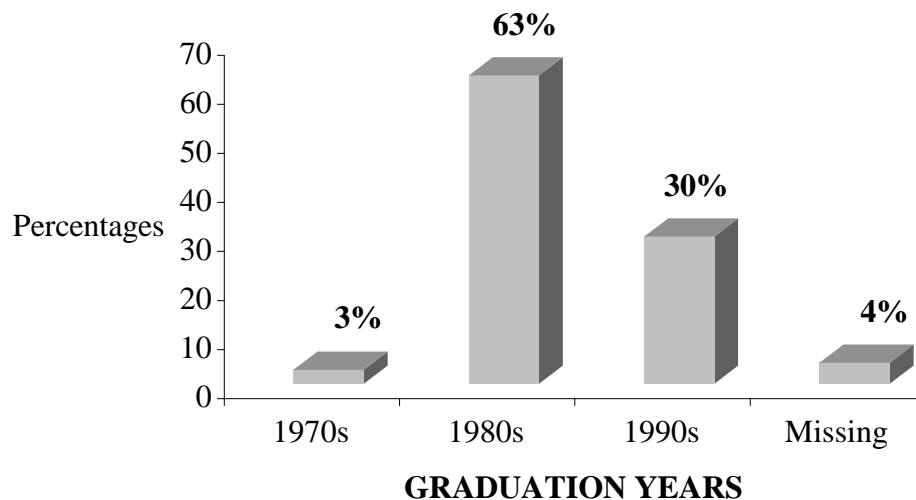


Chart 13 indicates the years of qualifying which range between the 1970s and the 1990s. This shows that the majority of primary headteachers graduated in the 1980s and this implies their approximate ages at present (generally between 25 and 40 years old) and the groups' long or short experience in schooling (this chart was adapted from the researcher's paper which was presented to the Muscat International Conference 2001, see Appendix 10, Paper 2, p. 363, Rutherford and AlHinai, 2001, p. 7).

According to Chart 13, p. 225 and Chart 14, p. 226, most primary headteachers have fairly extensive experience of dealing with the tasks of primary school management and leadership, especially those who are non-degree holders (diploma holders), because they have spent considerable time in running schools. Even so, they would appreciate a formal opportunity to reflect on their experience and practice, and to learn new theories about leading and managing schools by starting to study their own traditional style of schools leadership (i.e. *AlShura*, see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

Indeed, there are close links between the qualifications of the headteacher, their experience and the length of time between the different stages of promotion (to be promoted

from being a teacher to deputy headteacher and then to headteacher (see below Chart 14). Thus, the three charts (Chart 13, p. 225, Chart 14 (see below) and Chart 15, p. 226) provide useful evidence for comparing different school leaders.

By comparing Chart 14 with Chart 15, p. 226, we see a contradiction between the years of experience as headteacher and the stages in their promotion to a headship. This also indicates more years of experience (80 percent, see Chart 14) and a less gradual promotion to the headship position (46 percent, see Chart 15, below). From this point of view, as discussed previously, maintaining a balance between these three areas (qualifications, experience and the stages of their promotion to a headship position) is vital in the headteachers' career.

**Chart 14 - Primary headteachers' experience**

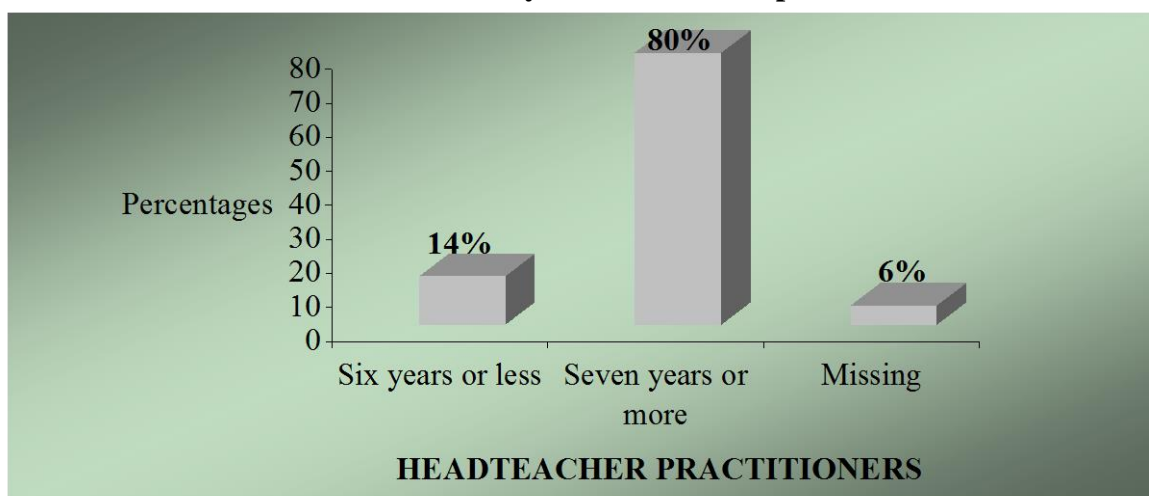


Chart 14 indicates primary headteachers' experience in post. Also, it indicates that the majority of headteachers have seven years or more of experience and the minority have six years or less.

Moreover, the link between a mature headteacher (experienced) and an adequate qualification should reflect the quality of the headteacher's thinking in terms of his/her creativeness.

**Chart 15 - Stages in the promotion of primary headteachers**

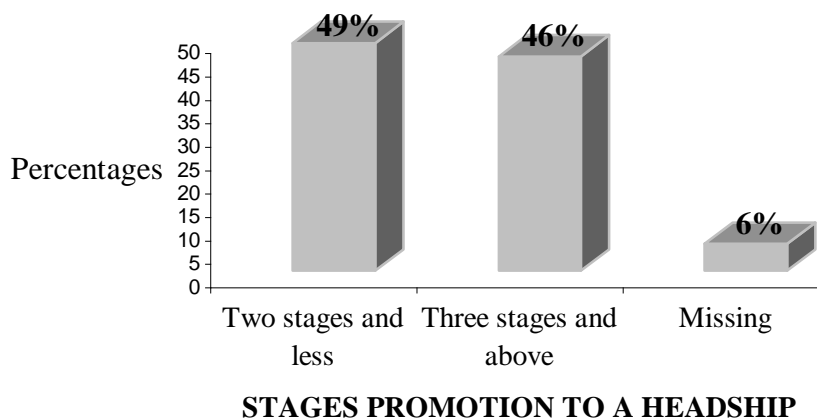


Chart 15 indicates two routes to promotion to a headship position, according to the number of stages that the primary headteachers went through. Unfortunately, those who underwent an adequate number of stages are fewer in number; whereas the high percentage<sup>11</sup> indicates that the majority were put on the fast track in their promotion.

Again, these three areas (qualifications, experience and stages in promotion to a headship position) represent concrete evidence for the primary headteachers' curriculum vitae (CV) by indicating their knowledge, understanding, skills in problem solving and self-confidence in making decisions as well as in building their competence and in delegating responsibilities to others.

### **ASSESSING THE FACTORS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS BY CONSIDERING THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ASSESSMENT SCALE OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT (THE T&T MODEL)**

#### **Introduction**

The following sections will provide an assessment of the findings of this research by considering the proposed assessment scale factors (from the theoretical framework) which is based on two complementary school leadership models, the transactional and the transformational (the T&T Model). The research findings have been presented in the three previous chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8), which contain nine tables (Table 10 to Table 18), under 44 different factors. In addition to these tables and the 44 factors, there are three charts (Chart 16, p. 235, Chart 17, p. 242 and Chart 18, p. 248) which will be considered in the assessment. These findings will be assessed on the basis of their presentation and that of the discussion held earlier in this chapter. They are also will be assessed in a similar form of their discussion (see above, pp. 200 to 222), according to the research themes (these themes are those of the AlHinai Model, see Figure 2, p. 201).

At the same time, the assessment and the findings will suggest certain conclusions in the light of the three themes of this research (theoretical, practical and developmental), as well as the facts which were discussed earlier in this chapter (for further information about the analytical framework of this research, see Chapter 4, Table 4, p. 55).

#### **Assessment criteria of the analytical framework**

This section describes the criteria of the assessment which will be used to evaluate the practice of primary school leadership in Oman (considering the 44 factors of these research findings). There are two score levels of assessment:

- a. Highly acceptable (**HA**).

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<sup>11</sup> According to the research findings, some headteachers entered their schools not as teachers but as 'acting headteachers'; that is, while they formally held the rank of teacher, they were doing the work of a headteacher from the very beginning.

b. Acceptable (**A**).

Both score levels are used to locate the factors of the research findings at the appropriate level. This also indicates that each score level represents the respondents' understanding in terms of their assessment of their own practice of school leadership in primary school, as interpreted from their own words. Thus, what they say about themselves is evaluated according to the assessment scale factors of Table 4, p. 55. In addition, these score levels will locate all factors of the research findings by using the score levels, **HA** and **A** (see Appendix 7, p. 323, Resources Tables 1 to 3).

Furthermore, **HA** means that the research factor scores at a higher level, under either the standards of the transactional or the transformational school leadership models (the T&T Model). **HA** means, too, that the factors of the research findings are of an excellent standard. Similarly, **A** indicates an acceptable level under either the former or the latter models of the scale; however, in this sense **A** indicates a lower rating given to the research factors (Table 20, below), meaning also that they are lower in leadership qualities. To give another example, if the factor of the research findings gets a score of **HA** it means that it is located in the top sector of the transactional school leadership model, whereas the **A** score level locates it in the bottom sector of this model (this is also true in terms of the transformational model). In other words, as regards the qualities of management (complementary to school leadership – the transactional) or the qualities of productive school leadership (the transformational) the factors of research findings are judged simultaneously. These scores are explained in the following table:

**Table 20 – Assessing the factors of the research findings**

<b>EXAMPLES POSITIONING THE FACTORS OF THE RESEARCH ACCORDING TO THE SCORES ON THE SCALE USING THE T&amp;T MODEL</b>			
<b>Rows</b>	<b>Nature of Leadership</b>	<b>Highly Acceptable Score</b>	<b>Acceptable Score</b>
		<b>HA</b>	<b>A</b>
1.	<b>Transactional</b>	Short term goals	Optional task (e.g. a parental role to be played by the headteachers)
2.	<b>Transformational</b>	Long term goals	Short term goals
<b>Columns</b>	1.	2.	3.

Table 20 indicates the scores (**HA** and **A**) which will be used in the assessment in order to locate the factors of the research findings according to their value against the factors of Table 4, p. 55. Table 20 gives examples to show how each factor scores against the standards of the

T&T Model, either the transactional or the transformational school leadership models. For example, a task which can gain the **HA** score in the transactional model (see row 1, column 2), can gain only an **A** score against the standards of the transformational model (see row 2, column 3). In other words, the highest concern of the transactional model becomes the lowest concern in the transformational model.

As noted earlier, there are two levels in the assessment scale: **HA** and **A**. These scale levels are used against the constructed model of the T&T Model in order to assess the research findings according to 17 factors which emerged from the findings of the first theme (the theoretical issues): 19 factors which emerged from the findings of the second theme and 8 factors which emerged from the findings of the third theme. This makes 44 factors in total.

In addition, these scale levels are also indicated in Appendix 7, p. 323 which includes three Resource Tables. The criteria for the assessment at each level mean something different each time and similarly must be different in their logical interpretation. For instance, **HA** and **A** are used against each factor of the research findings to locate it at a certain position according to these scale levels. Thus, each factor is given only one position under a certain scale model, either the transactional or the transformational, where applicable (see Appendix 7, p. 323, Resource Tables 1 to 3). Hence, there are two different ways of assessment: (1) the **HA** and **A** score levels which were created for the purpose of presenting the assessment in a simple way through the above mentioned charts by using the constructed scale factors of Table 4, p. 55 and (2) assessing the research findings according to certain evidence which is drawn upon in connection with the 44 factors of the research findings and those of the constructed scale factors of Table 4.

Moreover, each factor of the research findings can be linked with one or more factors of the assessment scale (16 factors of Table 4), which may concern one or more areas in its implementation at primary school level in Oman. Consequently, this allows the researcher to connect some research factors with more than one factor of either the transactional or the transformational model by locating them in only one model scale at a time. The researcher has sought to provide an adequate assessment under the above mentioned models (the T&T Model) by considering the present situation of primary school management and leadership according to the findings of the three themes of this research. These themes are mainly focused on three major areas: the theoretical (1<sup>st</sup> theme), practical (2<sup>nd</sup> theme) and developmental (3<sup>rd</sup> theme) issues of leadership at primary school level in Oman. In considering the discussion under the above mentioned tables and charts, the points of assessment will be highlighted.

In conclusion, the assessment focuses on three major areas in connection with the



existing practice of school leadership in Oman; these areas also come from the findings of the research themes, which are in turn the components of the AlHinai Model (see Figure 2, p. 201). Again, the assessment will be divided into three areas: theoretical, practical and developmental issues arising from the existing practice of primary school leadership in Oman. They are as follows:

### **ASSESSING THE THEORETICAL ISSUES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN BY CONSIDERING THE T&T MODEL**

Under this heading, the researcher will draw some conclusions about the assessment of the relevant factors to the theoretical issues of the practice of primary school leadership in Oman, as concisely as possible. The assessed findings are collected in the form of tables and factors as well as being illustrated in a chart (see Chart 16, below). Each table includes many factors which cover areas of their own in relation to the existing understanding of school leadership at primary level in Omani schools. Thus, Table 10, p. 94, Table 11, p. 100, Table 12, p. 106 and Table 13, p. 117 and their 17 factors suggest conclusions in terms of differences and similarities, in contrast with the assessment scale factors of the analytical framework of this research which are based on Table 4, p. 55 (see also Appendix 7, Resource Table 1, p. 323).

Thus, the theoretical issues are those which can in general be interpreted, investigated and analysed in relation; for example, to the leader's behaviour and characteristics (see Table 12, p. 106). These issues were uppermost in the respondents' minds; hence, there was an opportunity of talking them through in individual and focus group interviews which encouraged the participants to discuss their theoretical concerns. Therefore, the respondents' remarks which were investigated and then connected to appropriate larger issues (e.g. Omani traditions connected to societal and cultural matters) become a unique feature of this research. However, these theoretical modes might be also put voluntarily into practice by some school leaders. This means that the Ministry of Education should be concerned with what has been raised and discussed, commented on and concluded by the respondents, which represents genuinely Omani perspectives. The following sections summarise points which form a final judgement on the theoretical issues of primary school leadership in Oman, according to Table 10 to Table 13:

#### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 10 - issues for primary school leadership in Oman**

Looking at Table 10, Factors 1 to 4 and the factors of the assessment scale of Table 4, p. 55, there are three factors out of four which score **HA** in the transformational school leadership model (factors 1, 2 and 4), they are positioned in the top sector of this model as factors 1 and 2 of Table 10 connecting with factors 1, 4, 8 and 9 of Table 4 (see column 2).

This means that factor 1 of Table 10 focuses on Omani school leaders' values and their targeted goals and encourages them to exemplify best practice. Factor 2 focuses on the high expectations of their school colleagues, as well as of their pupils, as a sign of their success. Similarly, Factor 4 focuses on building a healthy school culture which serves their vision and mission according to their educational and leadership targeted goals which in turn also exemplify Omani school leaders' best practice. Only one factor (3) of Table 10 which is connected with the transactional model scores **A**. Despite Factor 3 of Table 10, this indication locates the theoretical issues for primary school leadership in Oman in an excellent position. However, this also indicates how little consideration it receives in practice; thus, Factor 3 of this table was connected with the transactional scale model for the same purpose (see the connections which were made between the factors of Table 10 and the assessment scale factors, Appendix 7, p. 323, Resource Table 1). In this regard, a typical traditional school leadership style is explored, according to the factors of Table 10, which entails, for example, ethical, cultural and moral issues of school leadership. This leadership style, however, may already be part of the chosen practice of Omani school leaders. Its rooted background is clearly recognised as relevant to the *AlShura* leadership model (for more information about *AlShura*, see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380 and the proposed school leadership model, Recommendation 9, p. 270). In general, the *AlShura* school leadership model embodies useful elements which can be considered complementary to those of the T&T Model (see Table 4, p. 55, Table 10, p. 94 and Figure 3, p. 271).

#### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 11 - educational values and beliefs**

Looking at Table 11, p. 100, Factors 5 to 9 and the factors of the assessment scale of Table 4, p. 55, there are two factors connected with the transactional scale model and three connected with the transformational; simultaneously. Two factors score **HA** (one for each scale model) and three score **A** (one is connected with the transactional model and two with the transformational scale model). Furthermore, factors 5 and 6 of Table 11 are also connected with factors 5 and 6 in the transactional scale model. This means that factor 5 of Table 11 focuses on both scale factors, 5 and 6, of Table 4 (see column 1, rows 5 and 6), which include the school leaders' attention to immediate school leadership tasks and their respect for the regulations of the Ministry of Education. Thus, these two factors of the research findings are considered practically rather than theoretically, because they are closely linked to the school leaders' priority tasks as well as being seen as close to their traditions. Furthermore, certain educational values are distinguished, which are clearly relevant to the existing school leadership model (*AlShura*) which is unique to Oman. In this regard, according to the factors of Table 11, this model seems to be successful in terms of building a

solid foundation for productive school leadership.

### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 12 - headteachers' personal and professional characteristics**

Table 12, p. 106 includes five factors (10 to 14) of the research findings which embody headteachers' personal and professional characteristics. Four of them are connected with the transformational model and only one factor is connected with the transactional model. All of these factors score **HA** except one factor which scores **A** under the transformational model. At the same time, Factor 10 is interpreted as transactional more than transformational since it deals with the capacity of the school leader to enhance the principles of Islam. Thus, it should be seen as something straightforwardly connecting with school management, accomplishing immediate tasks and duties in relation to day-to-day routine. Also, this factor can be interpreted as denoting respect for the regulations of the Ministry of Education since its educational philosophy is based on the traditions of Oman.

Other theoretical factors of Table 12 which score **HA** under the transformational model are: 11, 12 and 14, whereas Factor 13 scores **A** under the same model. The factors which score **HA** are connected with the scale factors 2 – 5 and 8; whereas Factor 13 of the research findings is connected with scale factors 5-7 and 9 (see Table 4, p. 55, column 2).

In more detail, Factor 11 shows how much the present Omani school leaders use their own experience and understand the current situation of primary school leadership. In addition, they see themselves as being capable of solving their school problems in a very acceptable way considering their short supplies; for example, of school resources and school budget. Thus, this factor is connected with scale factors 2 and 5 which support Omani school leaders in using cultural solutions; in addition, this factor (Factor 11) which stimulates their thinking as good problem solvers because it can encourage them to involve their colleagues when they are in difficulties. According to the current Omani situation for primary schools, this factor challenges the present Omani primary headteachers and brings out the quality of leadership, since they must indeed be persuasive and patient in coping with the inadequacies of their present situation (for more detail about conflicts, see Table 15, p. 145).

Factor 12 of Table 12 implies visionary issues as well as inviting the school leaders to be adaptable to useful leadership elements, concepts and tasks in order to improve their own traditional school leadership style (i.e. *AlShura*). This factor is needed urgently to implement the current reform of the General Education System (GES); hence, this research proposes three school leadership models (the *AlShura*, the transactional and the transformational models) to be combined for one single purpose (for more detail about the proposed school leadership model, see Recommendation 9, p. 270). Therefore, Factor 12 is connected with factors 2 and 3 of the transformational scale factors because Omani school leaders (present

primary headteachers) should insist on creating a productive school culture which serves their developmental vision.

Factor 13 of Table 12 implies something different from the previous factor which, in fact, refers to an intellectual stimulation, individual support and motivations in order to achieve the high expectations of both teachers and pupils (see Appendix 7, Resource Table 1, p. 323, row 13).

Furthermore, Factor 14 indicates that the current school leaders have the *capacity to introduce innovations* (Hall, 1997); however, they require urgent preparation as is discussed under Table 18, p. 192 and also highlighted under Recommendation 1, p. 263 and Recommendation 3, p. 265. This concern to prepare the current school leaders (primary headteachers) is likely to lead to the best practice of primary school leadership. In this regard, this factor is seen to exist more theoretically than practically, being connected with four factors of the assessment scale (see Appendix 7, Resource Table 1, p. 323, column 8, row 14, see also Table 4, p. 55, column 2, rows 2-4 and 8).

According to the factors which are stated in Table 12, p. 106, Omani school leaders are capable of implementing innovations, despite the following factors which are stated in Table 13. There is a close relationship between the assessment scale factors which are stated in Table 4 and the factors of Table 12, which indicate the possibility of promoting the Omani school leaders' characteristics to a high level on the scale of the assessment factors. However, such characteristics are not found in every Omani primary school.

In conclusion, theoretically, the Omani school leader is capable of leading his/her school successfully. Hence, the leader's characteristics which are indicated in Table 12 are approximated to those of the T&T Model (for more detail see the transformational factors from p. 56 to p. 61).

#### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 13 - issues for primary school management in Oman**

Looking at Table 13, three factors of the research findings are included in this table, all of which score **A** under the transactional scale model; these are 15, 16 and 17. In connection with the scale factors of the transactional scale model in Table 4, p. 55, column 1, Factors 15, 16 and 17 are connected to different scale factors (factors 3, 5 and 6); however, Factors 16 and 17 share a connection with scale factor 6 as they concern respect for the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Education.

Moreover, Factor 15 of the research findings reflects transactional matters in Omani school routine, for the immediate concerns of the present school leaders (primary headteachers) are seen as dealing with school administration more than leadership. In addition, according to Factor 15, they are also considered only as implementers of central

reforms. Indeed, this factor represents an actual practical issue in the current practice of primary school leadership in Oman. However, it provides solid evidence of the need for urgent change in the current situation of Omani school leaders which they would certainly like to change according to the current reform in education. In this regard, this factor also seems like a call for more theoretical back-up, since they have more experience than knowledge, for best practice, they should have enough of both.

As discussed earlier, Factors 16 and 17 indicate too much respect for unproductive routine which certainly would not help the school leaders to raise their leadership quality. However, the school leaders need to be seen, for example, as agents for change or exercising charisma which seems to be required for the current situation in Oman. In addition, Factor 17 also implies a passive school management which should be urgently made more dynamic for the sake of effective implementation of the current reform.

Furthermore, Omani leaders' characteristics, classifiable as leaders' and managers' characteristics (see Table 3 - Features of managers and leaders, p. 43). Table 12, p. 106, focuses on leaders' characteristics, whereas Table 13, p. 117 indicates complementary characteristics which may be considered suitable for managers or even the ranks below theirs. Both kinds of characteristic are applicable to Omani school leaders in the present situation. The following section will provide a conclusion to the theoretical issues which have been addressed, according to the factors of the research findings of Table 10, Table 11, Table 12 and Table 13.

#### **Assessment conclusion of the theoretical issues**

In connection with the above assessment of the research findings, Chart 16 indicates that the Omani primary school leaders are thoughtful and capable of understanding their own style of school leadership which entails their traditions, values and beliefs. Thus, according to Chart 16, the Omani primary school headteachers have reached an adequate theoretical standard in their school leadership. This is evident from the high scores (59%) under the transformational school leadership heading; however, the transactional school leadership model scores 41% in the Omani situation, in terms of the theoretical issues which need urgent action for improvement. However, the 59% scored under the transformational school model indicates much hope for the practice of primary school leadership.

In this judgment the researcher has linked 7 factors at **HA** level and 3 at **A** level against the scale factors of the transformational model, 10 factors of the research findings in total (see Resource Table 1, p. 323, columns 6 and 7). In addition, the rest of the factors are scored in the transactional scale model (7 factors of the research findings): 2 factors are scored as **HA** and 5 as **A** (see Resource Table 1, columns 3 and 4).

Again, however, according to Chart 16, the lower percentage under the transactional model heading indicates that the Omani primary school leaders have less adequate theoretical concepts for their day-to-day school management routine; this is found where there is a contradiction between the theoretical thinking which they bring to primary school leadership and the actual practice. For further information, see Chart 16, below.

**Chart 16 - Assessing research findings of the first theme (theoretical issues) of this research, by considering the assessment scale factors of Table 4.**

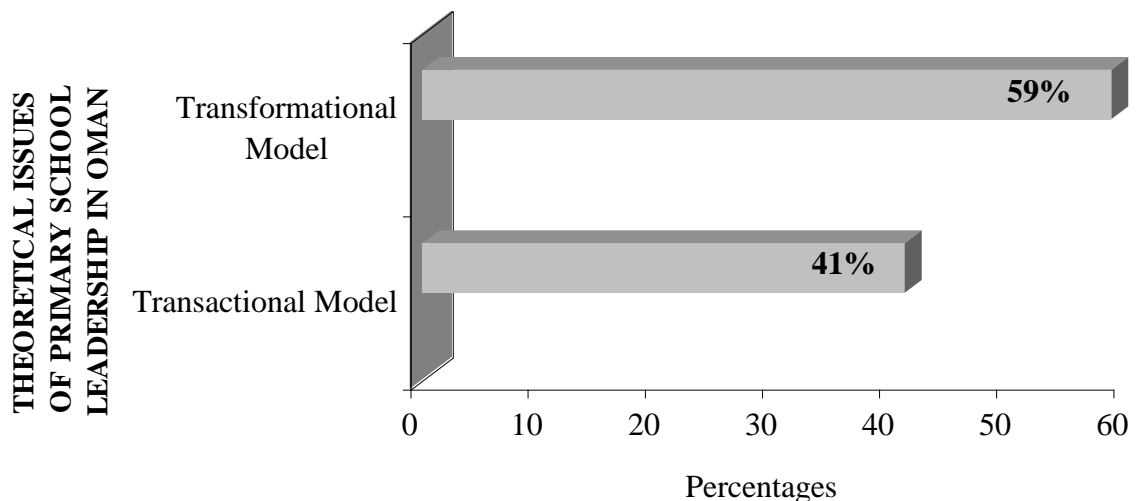


Chart 16 indicates the results of the first theme of this research (findings of Chapter 6: 17 factors of the research findings). These results are connected with the theoretical issues of primary school leadership in Oman. The results of this chart include the findings of four tables which are supplemented in Chapter 6 (this chart is connected with Table 10, p. 94, Table 11, p. 100, Table 12, p. 106 and Table 13, p. 117, see also the AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201, circle 1 and the half circles 1.1 and 1.2).

In conclusion, the researcher here reports that the term 'school leadership' needs to be fully understood by Omani school leaders, in order to develop a productive school leadership model taking *AlShura* as its major basis. This clearly provides; for example, ethical and cultural issues as major concerns in the current development of education in Oman. At the same time, *AlShura* is also to be considered as complementary to the T&T Model, which would certainly refresh and modernise the *AlShura* model.

## **ASSESSING THE PRACTICAL ISSUES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN BY CONSIDERING THE T&T MODEL**

This section will assess 19 further factors from the research findings. These factors are distributed into three tables (7 factors to do with perceptions of practice in Table 14, p. 128; 6 factors to do with issues of conflicts in Table 15, p. 145 and another 6 factors to do with perceived successes in Table 16, p. 166). These factors will be assessed according to the findings of the second theme of this research (practice in primary schools) and its two sub-themes (conflicts and successes) (Chapter 7). Furthermore, these tables of the second theme show a fruitful distribution according to the score levels in the scale factors of the T&T Model. For example, there are 3 factors scoring **HA** in the transactional model, whereas 6 factors in the transformational model score the same. Similarly, 8 factors score **A** in the transactional model and only 2 factors in the transformational model (factors 18 to 36 of the above tables of the second theme of this research project, see also Appendix 7, Resource Table 2, p. 324).

Thus, practical issues such as the headteacher's responsibilities are those which can be easily found in schools and are stated in the GES guide, both academic and administrative (see above, the sections assessing on the old and new school guides, pp. 219-220, see also a discussion on the newly reformed responsibilities of the school leaders shown in Appendix 11, p. 392). Another practical issue which supports this assessment is raised by the evaluation form used by officials to assess headteachers' performance (see the discussion on pp. 213-214, see also Appendix 9, p. 344). Mainly, however, the respondents' quotations are considered a major source of data for this assessment of practical issues. Altogether, these sources (interviewees' responses and documents relevant to school leadership practice) allow the researcher to make an extensive assessment, in particular, on any headteacher's performance as a school leader or in a complementary way as a manager or even administrator. The following sections highlight the assessment according to the scale factors of the T&T Model which is based on the constructed factors of Table 4, p. 55.

The following sections also summarise final judgements on the practical issues of primary school leadership in Oman. In this section the researcher will focus on making judgements on the factors of the findings, in terms of looking at their adequacy as well as comparing them to the factors of the T&T Model. The following considerations should be noted:

### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 14 - perceptions of practice at Omani primary schools**

Looking at Table 14, seven factors of the research findings are included in this table. Under the transactional scale model, 2 factors score **HA** and another 3 factors under the transformational scale model score the same. Similarly, one factor scores **A** under the transactional scale model and another scores the same in the transformational scale model (factors 18 to 24 of Table 14).

Factor 18 is connected to factor 10 of the transformational scale model (scores **HA**), because the respondents claim that they share their school responsibilities with their colleagues, so that Factor 18 indicates a sense of the good quality of school leadership. Also, sharing responsibility seems to be implemented independently by the current school leaders (primary headteachers). It also indicates their awareness of the need to involve their colleagues in carrying out school responsibilities enthusiastically, which are genuinely considered as practical school leadership issues, despite the weight of administrative and academic responsibilities. However, this factor seems to be strongly supported by the transformational school leadership model. Thus, in this regard it can be said that the quality of the existing school leadership in Omani primary schools is recognised as complementary to the transformational school leadership concerns.

Factors 19 and 20 score also **HA**, whereas Factor 21 scores **A** under the transactional model. Factors 19 is connected to Factor 4 of its scale; in this case a relationship is drawn between Factor 19 and Factor 4 of the scale which indicates an awareness of what it means to run Omani primary schools smoothly. This because the transactional school leadership model concerns contingent issues such as welcoming pupils at the beginning of the academic year to make a good showing to both parents and officials, who always show up at the beginning of the academic year and virtually disappear thereafter (it is reported by the respondents that parents were not in favour of active participation in the PTA). However, Omani school leaders may have a chance to show their efforts in organising school activities to give a good start to the academic year, before things get harder to deal with as day-to-day matters. Factor 20 of the research findings is also connected to Factor 4 as well as to Factor 5 of the transactional scale. Thus, in addition to self-presentation of the school at the beginning of the academic year, this factor (Factor 20) extends the organisational activities in order to cover most school responsibilities administratively as well as academically. Under the same scale model, Factor 21 is connected to the lower concerns of the transactional school leadership model where there is more stress, since it implies an optional role; for instance, school leaders' playing a parental role (this role may suit teachers more than school leaders because school leaders are not necessary extensively involved with children).



The remaining factors of Table 14 are connected to the transformational scale model (Factors 22 to 24). Factor 22 scores **A**, whereas the latter two factors score **HA**. Factor 22 is connected to three factors of the scale: 4, 5 and 10. Factor 23 is connected to two factors, 5 and 6, of the scale; Factor 24 is connected to five factors of the scale model: 1, 2, 5, 7 and 9. This points to the valuable knowledge accumulated by primary headteachers which is included in these factors of the research findings, by which in turn they can enrich the field of primary schooling in Oman. In fact, Factor 22 enhances an important issues of school leadership by considering colleagues' opinions in directing and assessing the quality of school leadership from time to time, using an evaluation procedure. Simultaneously, Factors 23 and 24 indicate the quality and the adequacy which can advance the existing practice of primary school leadership according to the requirements of the current reform, since both of these factors encourage school leaders to emphasise staff development and encourage their staff to respect their commitments.

In conclusion, the existing primary school leadership in Oman is recognised as managerial as well as participative in reality; this is interpreted from the respondents' perspectives, despite the information from the Ministry of Education which provides only basic administrative and academic guidance to do with school management. However, a sense of worthwhile effort on the part of leaders is recognised in Table 14, p. 128. As discussed above, some factors of this table are scored at **HA** level, because the respondents showed adequate evidence of their practice as semi-leaders; thus, factors 1, 6 and 7 are positioned at **HA** level of the transformational scale and factors 2 and 3 scored **HA** in the transactional scale. This means that the present Omani primary headteachers have in this regard a high standard of school leadership, such as sharing responsibilities with others and encouraging their colleagues to respect their commitments to the school and the community. Thus, those factors which are located at **HA** in both scales should promote them into a good position as far as leadership qualities are concerned, despite the conflicts which are reported in Table 15, p. 145.

Indeed, the factors of Table 14 embody excellent examples of the existing practice of primary school leadership. Three factors out of seven were judged according to the transactional scale factors and the rest are judged according to the transformational scale factors. All these seven factors indicate the good standard of primary school leadership as it is practised in the existing primary schools of the General Education System (GES). Again, the factors of the research findings which score **HA** indicate a good understanding of school leadership which is recognised informally. However, Factors 18, 21 and 24 are connected to the Omani traditional school leadership model (*AlShura*); whereas the rest of these factors can

be seen as complementary to the *AlShura* model since it can be transformed into a participative school leadership model. Overall, the factors of Table 14 (from 18 to 24) represent the actual practice of existing primary school leaders. In contrast, according to the above-mentioned assessment, the scale factors of the T&T Model support the existing practice of primary school leadership in Oman in greater detail and this which can be developed logically. This also means that the background of the Omani primary school leaders is adequate; however, they need to develop their informal school leadership model into a formal model by taking for granted the productive tasks of school leadership which are associated with the proposed theoretical (analytical) framework of this research project (for further information about the research theoretical framework see Chapter 4, specifically Table 4, p. 55 and similarly see the proposed school leadership model needed to ensure the current reform of the GES, Recommendation 9, p. 270).

#### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 15 - issues of conflicts in Omani primary schools**

Table 15, p. 145 includes six factors (25 to 30) of the research findings which embody issues of conflict in Omani primary schools. All of these factors are connected with the transactional model with a score of **A**, they are also only connected with three factors of this scale model (factors 4 to 6). This means that the Omani primary school leaders try to keep their schools running smoothly by considering their immediate targets according to the regulation of the Ministry of Education. In this regard, the primary schools of the General Education System (GES) are run according to the guides of the Ministry of Education which were reviewed in the light of interviews as useful or not for school leaders to follow; these guides have always dealt only with administrative and academic items. They are not yet ready to provide helpful guidelines for school management and leadership. From this point of view, the school leadership in Omani primary schools needs to be clarified in more detail in order to remedy the current stressful situation and turn these factors of Table 15 into positive situations. Indeed, factors 25 to 30 cover many examples of unacceptable situations for primary headteachers which will certainly lead to resistance among school leaders if they have to continue to achieve their best in such situations. Thus, these factors are judged at **A** level of the transactional model as lower concerns in terms of transactional and contingency issues. Also they score **A** level because they lead to stress and are unproductive in terms of school performance. Again, factors 25 to 30 of this table are considered part of the reality of day-to-day crisis in Omani primary schools of the GES (see Table 4, p. 55, see also Appendix 7, Resource Table 2, p. 324, column 4, rows 8 to 13).

In conclusion, the factors of Table 15 represent unacceptable situations in primary schools, they are certainly unhelpful for integrating new school leadership tasks and will

never support school development in any sense. These factors require urgent actions from the policy makers, including the administrative officials and primary school leaders, to overcome the obstacles stated in factors 25 to 30 of the above mentioned table. In contrast with the scale factors of the T&T Model, the actual current practice of primary school leadership of the GES can be described as indeed disabled. Thus, it needs urgent solutions to meet the standards of a productive school leadership model. This requires four major steps to be taken, as follows:

- (1) To choose a certain school leadership model to ensure the effective implementation of the current reform of the GES (e.g. the proposed school leadership model, Recommendation 9, p. 270).
- (2) To involve the present school leaders (primary headteachers) in a partnership programme in order to accomplish their targeted goals both in redefining and transforming the existing practice of school leadership and in implementing the new tasks of school leadership which were introduced by the current reform of the GES in 1998.
- (3) To train and prepare Omani school leaders in implementing the favourable school leadership model effectively and efficiently.
- (4) To offer ongoing advice to school leaders (primary headteachers) in order to help them follow their chosen school leadership model.

#### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 16 - perceptions of successes in Omani primary schools**

Table 16 includes six factors (31 to 36) of the research findings which embody some perspectives on the successes in Omani primary schools. Two of them are connected with the transactional scale model: Factor 31 has a score of **HA** and Factor 34 has a score of **A**. The rest of the factors of this table are connected with the transformational scale model (i.e. Factors 32, 33 and 36 score **HA** and Factor 35 scores **A** in this scale model; see Appendix 7, Resource Table 2, p. 324, rows 14 to 19). Thus, most the factors of this table score **HA**, either under the transactional or the transformational school leadership models. This indicates that the present practice of primary school leadership at primary school level of the GES produced some successes which can be taken for granted as a forecast of future school successes, especially these factors which show the headteachers' enthusiastic efforts (e.g. Factors 32, 34 and 36, see Table 16, p. 166).

Furthermore, according to the respondents' opinions in Factor 31, the GES is considered successful in terms of:

- (1) its continuation through a long period of time in Omani history (between 1914 and the present, see Chapter 2- the historical context of school leadership, p. 13);
- (2) creating the crucial human resources of experienced headteachers (see Chart 14,

- p. 226);
- (3) practising a unique traditional (*AlShura*) school leadership model which, it is hoped, will be advanced and modernised to suit the requirements of the current reform of the GES;
  - (4) using the GES as the foundation of the current educational and primary school leadership reforms.

Thus, Factor 31, because it scores **HA** under the transactional school leadership model, indeed, requires the close attention of both the policy makers in the Ministry of Education and that of the primary school leaders in order to pursue the current reform and secure its implementation, this factor is connected with three factors of the scale: 1, 5 and 6. This is because the current situation of the GES is fully centralised. Thus, it requires the policy makers to clarify these immediate goals for the sake of the current development of primary school leadership in particular; they should also focus on immediate school leadership tasks as this also serves the Ministry's immediate plans in the current reform (see Table 4, p. 55, column 1, factors 1, 5 & 6; see also Appendix 7, Resource Table 2, p. 324, row 14).

Factor 32 embodies information which describes the present school leaders as experienced; therefore, they may be considered as crucial human resources in terms of being aware of the developmental requirements for their own primary schools. They should be the cornerstone in understanding the school leadership model since they have revealed an adequate understanding of their own traditional (informal - *AlShura*) school leadership model. This is the most important finding in terms of developing a suitable school leadership model, but it is not yet clearly acknowledged by the Ministry of Education. Thus, Factor 32 is crucial in terms of updating both the school leaders' knowledge and the existing school leadership model. In this regard, Factor 32 is connected to the scale Factors 3, 5 and 9 of the transformational model (see Table 4, p. 55, column 2, factors 3, 5 & 9; see also Appendix 7, Resource Table 2, p. 324, row 15). Thus, in contrast with the indicated scale factors, Factor 32 stimulates the school leaders' thinking in connection with the requirements of the current reform (e.g. using the present primary headteachers' experience), which in turn would help the whole developmental process in terms of encouraging colleagues and pupils to meet their high expectations in accomplishing the educational goals.

Factor 33 encourages the present school leaders to use their experience in involving their staff in adequate professional programmes; hence, this factor is connected with Factors 5 and 7 of the transformational scale model. However, Factor 34 is connected to Factors 2 and 4 of the transactional scale model, which attains a relatively low score in the transactional scale, because this factor (Factor 34) includes that though the school leaders try hard to achieve

success, their school situation is hardly any help to them. Still, some of the present headteachers can manage to accommodate themselves to the difficult situation of their schools, for example, in running their schools without sufficient resources and school budgets. Factor 34, however, is considered a sign of the present school leaders' (primary headteachers') success, but, in fact, the situation needs to change in terms of making primary schools easy to lead and manage by giving them equal provision.

Factor 35 also scores **A**, but it is connected to the transformational scale model (Factor 2 of the scale) since it seems to be very rarely found in practice; however, it is a crucial factor as a theoretical shop-window of school leadership quality. According to this, the present school leaders should put more effort into implementing this factor which brings schools and the community together for better results and higher school achievements. Finally, Factor 36 of Table 16, p. 166 indicates the interest of the present school leaders in upgrading their present qualifications for gaining updated knowledge and having the status of degree holders. This also attempts to encourage them to use their existing experience and adequate knowledge of modern concepts of school leadership. In contrast with the scale factors of the transformational school leadership model, this factor is connected with three factors: 6, 7 and 9. These three factors support Factor 36 in terms of providing the school leaders with sufficient individual support, helping them to work towards their ambitions and vision and encouraging them to meet their own expectations, which in turn would enable them to set a good example of high standards of professionalism.

In conclusion, the factors of Table 16 indicate a sense of considerable effort which the present school leaders (primary headteachers) have put in. As a matter of fact, they did outstanding work to keep their schools running. In contrast with the scale factors of the T&T Model, Factors 31 to 36 of the research findings existed at present in Omani primary schools; however, they need to be theoretically clarified and presented in more detail for best practice.

#### **Assessment conclusion of the practical issues**

In connection with the above assessment of the three tables and 19 factors of the research findings, Chart 17 indicates that Omani primary headteachers practise a kind of school leadership which complements the T&T Model. However, according to Chart 17, the Omani primary school leaders have practised 58% of the transactional and contingency components of school leadership compared with 42% of the components which are transformational. Most of the factors in the research findings which are connected to the transformational scale model embody few practical aspects; however, they are highly scored under this scale model because each factor includes a high quality and adequacy of developmental elements which are strongly supported by the transformational model.

In this judgment the researcher has linked 3 research factors at the **HA** level and 8 at the **A** level of the scale factors of the transactional model, 11 factors in total (see Appendix 7, Resource Table 2, p. 324, columns 3 and 4). In addition, the rest of the factors score under the transformational scale model (8 factors): 6 factors score as **HA** and 2 score **A** (see Appendix 7, Resource Table 2, columns 6 and 7).

**Chart 17 - Assessing the research findings of the second theme (practical issues) of this research, by considering the assessment scale factors of Table 4**

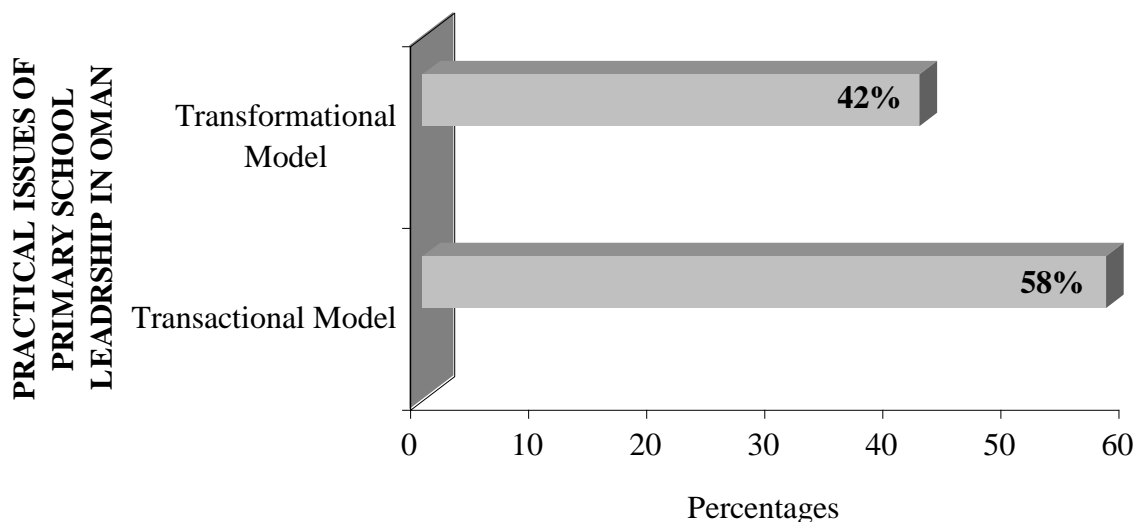


Chart 17 indicates the results according to the second theme of this research project (findings of Chapter 7.); its results are connected with the practical issues of primary school leadership in Oman. This chart also indicates the results of three tables (Table 14, p. 128, Table 15, p. 145 and Table 16, p. 166) which are included in Chapter 7 (this is connected with the AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201, circle 2 and the half circles 2.1 and 2.2).

However, according to the indicated percentages in Chart 17, the lower percentage is under the transformational model heading which indicates that as far as the latter model is concerned Omani primary headteachers need to build up their school leadership concepts. Yet a higher percentage is indicated under the heading of the transactional school leadership model, and this certainly represents the present reality of Omani primary schools which run under the GES; see Chart 17.

In conclusion, the assessment on the practical issues of primary school leadership in Oman covers three distinctive areas: issues from practice, issues from school conflicts and issues drawn from successes. These three areas emerge in one major area concerning the existing practice of primary school leadership in Oman. Looking at the three tables

(mentioned above) and their factors (19) in the second theme of this research, the contrast between the two parts of the scale of the T&T Model is shown as a recognisable distinction (see Chart 17, above). This distinction positions the practice of Omani school leaders against the scale models of the T&T Model. Indeed, the two percentages of this chart indicate that the practical issues (58%) need to be supported by the new concepts of school leadership (e.g. some useful elements of the T&T Model). However, the lower percentage (42%) can provide adequate information for understanding what productive school leadership involves if it is practised formally within the current developments of the GES in Oman.

### **ASSESSING DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN BY CONSIDERING THE T&T MODEL**

Under this heading, the researcher will assess the factors relevant to the developmental issues of the existing practice of primary school leadership in Oman. It uses the same style of assessment as is used in the previous headings (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> themes of this research, see above). The assessed findings are collected in the form of tables and factors as well as being illustrated in a chart (see Chart 18, p. 248). There are two tables covering 6 factors of the research findings. Each factor includes a distinctive area of its own issues in relation to the developmental requirements of school leadership at primary level in Omani schools. Thus, Table 17, p. 183 and Table 18, p. 192 include developmental factors which will be judged against the assessment scale factors of the T&T Model which are based on Table 4, p. 55 (see also Appendix 7, Resource Table 3, p. 325).

Thus, the developmental issues are those which can in general be raised as immediate and urgent requirements for redefining and transforming, improving and thus developing the existing practice of primary school leadership as well as leading to an effective implementation of the new tasks of school leadership which have been introduced by the current reform of the GES. This means that the Ministry of Education should be concerned with what has been raised by the respondents, through the third theme of this research (Chapter 8) and discussed and assessed in this chapter, in order to include the respondents' views on how their schools should be transformed by higher standards of school leadership practice which need to be modernised during the process of the current educational reform. The following sections summarise points which form a final judgement on the developmental issues of primary school leadership in Oman, according to Table 17 and Table 18.

#### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 17 - policy-making requirements**

Table 17, p. 183 includes four factors (37 to 40) of the research findings which embody issues of policy-making requirements as developmental issues of primary school leadership in Oman. Three factors are connected to the **HA** score level (1 factor under the transactional and

2 factors under the transformational scale model). Simultaneously, one of these factors is connected to the **A** score level under the transformational scale model. This means that the Omani primary headteachers make great efforts to raise their schools' developmental standards. Moreover, indeed, these factors are crucial to the current educational developments, including the concept of school leadership which must be considered as a priority of the reform. Thus, the high standards of school leadership are positioned in the high scores indicated in Chart 18, p. 248, because most of the factors of this table score **HA** under both scale models of the transactional and transformational school leadership models; however, the transformational scale shows a higher percentage than the transactional scale model which implies the significance (3 out of 4) of the factors in this table (see also Appendix 7, Resource Table 3, p. 325, rows 1 to 4). The following sections will trace the assessment according to each factor of Table 17 against the scale factors of Table 4, p. 55.

Factor 37 scores **A**, which is connected to the transformational scale model (Factor 3 of the scale) since it invites both the policy makers of the Ministry of Education and the Omani primary headteachers urgently to redefine the school guide. This factor also raises a significant requirement for appropriate policy-making to serve the current development effectively. This is a major element which can include a full description of the proposed style of school leadership which must ensure the effective and efficient implementation of all the developments. It also can provide clear guidance for the school leaders as to their school responsibilities (existing practice) and mission and the government's vision of the current reform. This is why it is connected to Factor 3 of the scale model. However, the score of **A** positions this factor as a lower priority of the transformational model, since its priorities must be greater than redefining the school guide. In this regard, a transformational leader should be capable of using all possible theoretical knowledge in order to lead his/her school effectively and efficiently. The researcher believes that it is not yet clearly identified whether the Omani school leaders can do this.

Factor 38 should be considered as a major priority of the transformational leader since this factor invites the Ministry of Education to provide a proper calculation for its primary schools' budgets in order to implement the reform effectively (without money they can do little). This factor scores **HA** of the transformational scale model and is connected to Factors 3 and 4, whereas, Factor 39 scores **HA** under the transactional scale model and is connected to Factors 4 and 6, it encourages the present school leaders to offer an acceptable style of school management which goes in line with the Ministry's philosophy and its regulations (see Appendix 7, Resource Table 3, p. 325, rows 2 and 3).

Factor 40 is connected to five factors of the transformational scale model, because it



covers various aspects of its own area. It is about new visions of developing primary school leadership which requires the policy makers of the Ministry of Education and the primary school leaders, including the headteachers; first, to modernise Omani primary schools by integrating useful technologies which serve both the educational and school leadership requirements. This factor scores **HA** under this scale model, as it includes several concerns based on the factors of this model (see Table 4, p. 55, column 2, rows 1 to 4 and 8).

In conclusion, the factors of Table 17 invite both the policy-makers and primary school leaders, including headteachers to take urgent action to redefine and improve the school leadership standards in Omani primary schools. To tell the truth, all the factors of this table indicate crucial topics for transforming and redefining the existing practice and implementing the new tasks of school leadership for the sake of modernising the existing primary schools in Oman.

#### **Assessing the factors of the research findings of Table 18 - headteachers' needs**

In Table 18 four factors of the research findings are included. Under the transactional scale model, 1 factor scores **HA** and of the other 3 factors under the transformational scale model, 2 score **HA** and 1 scores **A**. This table includes factors 41 to 44 of the research findings.

As mentioned above, Factor 41 scores **HA** under the transactional scale model which is positioned at the top of this scale model because it highlights an important issue, providing the present Omani primary school leaders with required administrative and academic assistants in order to allow them to focus on the most important concerns of school leadership. As discussed under this factor, in Chapter 8, p. 189, providing school assistants would help to raise the quality of school leadership. Indeed, the Ministry of Education should take advantage all the possibilities of *raising the standards of school leadership performance and school leaders' capabilities* (TTA, 2000). This also, as it is supported by the 4<sup>th</sup> factor of the transactional scale model, would help primary schools to run without a hitch.

However, Factor 42 is connected to Factor 9 of the transformational scale model among the top concerns of this model since this Factor 42 strongly encourages the policy-makers of the Ministry of Education to provide adequate authority for the present school leaders (primary headteachers) so as to enable them to become actual leaders. Providing them with adequate authority even in a centralised system is very important at the present stage of the reform. This is needed to carry out two major tasks at the same time: to redefine and transform their existing practice of school leadership and to integrate and implement the new tasks which were introduced by the current reform of the General Education System (GES). Thus, the proposed analytical (theoretical ) framework is chosen for the purpose of helping

the Omani school leaders to run their schools under the supervision of the Ministry. In other words, the Omani school leaders should be aware of the chance for charismatic leadership which is embodied in the T&T Model and in the *AlShura* school leadership model, in order to provide a powerful developmental drive, since this also is urgently needed to help primary schools pursue the current reform.

Factor 43 is connected to five factors of the transformational scale model (Factors 5-7, 9 and 10). This indicates its importance, since it is supported by many factors of the scale, because this factor (Factor 43) covers leaders' involvement in adequate professional courses such as the School Administration Diploma (SAD) which is provided by Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) for newly promoted school leaders. This is where they can be stimulated, supported, motivated and encouraged in practising school leadership as well as possible. In addition to this, Factor 43 invites the officials of the Ministry of Education to support school leaders in making proper and effective decisions for their own schools.

Finally, Factor 44 is the last factor of the research findings which is connected to four factors (Factors 5, 6, 8 and 9) of the transformational scale model scoring **HA**. According to this factor, the respondents repeatedly ask for a chance to upgrade their qualifications from Intermediate Diplomas to degree status, which would certainly stimulate them to accept the developmental challenges with enthusiasm. Thus, by upgrading their qualifications they will escape from being treated as of lower status than degree holders. Thus, upgrading their qualifications will be reflected in the quality of their school performance. Overall, they are expected to accomplish their best in the implementation of the current developments. Indeed, as discussed under this factor (see p. 195), the opportunity to study for a university degree or higher degree is essential for the present primary school leaders. They have to realise that they can benefit from the current reform, by being given this opportunity. This will also help them to build their confidence and competence as the first school leaders who have taken up the challenge of redefining the existing practice of primary school leadership and implementing the requirements of the reform.

In conclusion, Table 18, p. 192 includes factors of the research findings which invite the officials of the Ministry of Education to pay attention on the present headteachers' needs. Addressing their needs will certainly help them to perform their responsibilities in effective and efficient ways, which is the best way of making progress in the current developments of both educational and school leadership performance.

#### **Assessment conclusion of the developmental issues**

In connection, Chart 18, p. 248, indicates that the Omani primary school leaders are thoughtful and capable of recognising their developmental requirements as well as their

needs. Thus, according to Chart 18, the Omani primary school leaders would like to reach higher standards in their school leadership practice. This is evident from the high scores (75%) under the transformational school leadership heading; however, the transactional school leadership model scores 25% in terms of their awareness and by considering the requirements of the reform and their professional needs. However, the 75% scored under the transformational school model indicates their high and enthusiastic awareness of the urgent need to improve their current practice (for more information about the respondents' opinions, see Chapter 8, p. 181).

In this judgment the researcher has linked only 2 factors of the third theme under the transactional scale model (Factors 39 and 41), which score **HA** (see Appendix 7, Resource Table 3, p. 325, columns 3). The rest of the factors of the research findings, however, are connected to the transformational scale model, 4 factors at **HA** level and 2 at **A** level, 6 out of 8 factors in total of this theme (see Appendix 7, Resource Table 3, columns 6 and 7).

Again, however, according to Chart 18, the lower percentage under the transactional model heading indicates that the Omani primary headteachers are aware of their weaknesses which in turn are included in the transformational percentage which higher than the transactional. In fact, the higher percentage of the transformational scale model also reflects the respondents' understanding of the up-to-date knowledge and educational and leadership requirements for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as well as for the current reform in Oman. For further information, see Chart 18, below.

**Chart 18 - Assessing research findings of the third theme (developmental issues) of this research, by considering the assessment scale factors of Table 4**

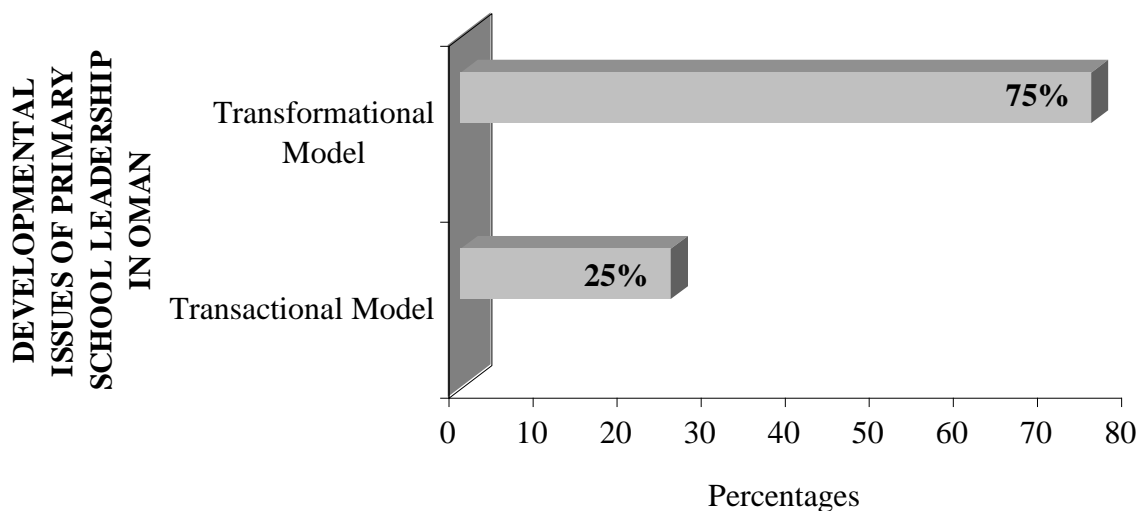


Chart 18 indicates the results of the third theme of this research (findings of Chapter 8.).

These results are connected with the developmental issues of primary school leadership in Oman. This chart also indicates the results of two tables: Table 17, p. 183 and Table 18, p. 192 (for further detail see the AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201, circle 3).

In conclusion, the researcher here reports that the developmental issues of the practice of primary school leadership in Oman need to be fully addressed for effective and efficient results. This includes the policy-making and the school leaders' (primary headteachers') needs. This assessment addressed the major concerns which were expressed by the respondents in this research project on the subject of the current developments in the educational system of Oman.

### **ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW**

This section will provide final judgements on the basis of the above assessment. These judgements are drawn according to the findings of the previous three chapters of data presentation and analysis (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) and according to the discussion and assessment held in this chapter. The final judgements are extended in order to take into account Chapter 4 of the analytical (theoretical) framework which is exemplified in Table 4, p. 55 and which is also derived from the transactional and the transformational school leadership models (the T&T Model). In this case, for the purpose of accurate assessment, the T&T Model is considered as a single model in order to draw a conclusion on both the practical and the theoretical issues of the research findings (evidence from the literature suggests that the transactional model should be complementary to the transformational ones). To put it simply, the overview of the assessment is divided into two major parts in which the adequacies and inadequacies of these factors (44 factors) are listed; however, each factor is assessed separately in its own table (see above, pp. 227 to 247). Indeed, categorising the factors of the research findings may help the reader to make easy distinctions between the two categories (parts).

In fact, the adequacy of the practice of primary school leadership in Oman is judged according to the qualities of the factors of the research findings. Again, these final judgements include practical and theoretical issues, in order to see, in general terms, whether the standard of current primary school leadership in Oman is effective and efficient. The following sections include final judgements.

#### **Adequacy assessment of the research findings**

As discussed above, some factors of the research findings reveal that some practical and theoretical issues of the existing practice of primary school leadership in Omani schools can be considered adequate; however, it should be said that the adequacy is found more often theoretically than practically. Final judgements are as follows:

Looking at the findings of the first theme (Chapter 6), it can be said that the existing practice of primary school leadership in Oman is to some extent adequate, in particular in terms of the theoretical issues which are presented in Table 10, p. 94; Table 11, p. 100 and Table 12, p. 106. The main points are summed up in turn.

- The information in the three tables (mentioned above) represents the adequate factors in contrast with the scale factors of the T&T Model, which can be easily improved to raise the existing standards of primary school leadership, since they will be presented in more detail for better understanding and action. Thus, the factors of these tables (Table 10, Table 11 and Table 12) embody valuable issues which exemplify a highly acceptable theoretical framework of school leadership which currently exist in the primary schools of Oman.

The findings of the second theme (Chapter 7), Table 14, p. 128 reflect the high standards of the actual practice of the existing school leadership model at primary school level. As a result, Table 16, p. 166 reflects a good impression of school successes; thus, both tables include acceptable standards in terms of the T&T Model's scale factors. To sum up:

- The information in Table 14 and Table 16 represents the factors which are displayed in the existing practice of primary school leadership. However, their implications need to be extensively addressed in terms of raising the standards of their strong points which are needed to set clear targeted goals for the effective implementation of primary school leadership, whether to redefine the existing practice or to integrate the new tasks which are required for the current reform.

The findings of the third theme (Chapter 8), Table 17, p. 183 and Table 18, p. 192) embody some elements which should encourage both the policy makers of the Ministry of Education and primary school leaders to take urgent steps towards change and developments. The findings in these tables seek to lay down topics for genuinely crucial action. Also, they have clear implications for both the policy-making requirements, including school development requirements, and present headteachers' needs when they try to respond to the challenges of the change.

- The information in Table 17 and Table 18 includes developmental factors, which lead into logical developments for the existing practice of primary school leadership. Their issues highlight essential ways of resolving conflicts in both areas: the policy-making (adequate school guidance) and the present headteachers' needs, for these might jeopardise the whole reform if they are not met. In contrast with the scale factors of the T&T Model, the issues which are included in both tables are judged as ripe for change and in need for urgent solutions.

In conclusion, according to the indications of the selected tables under each theme, an adequate many theoretical and rather fewer practical issues have been identified. Thus, in contrast with the T&T Model, the practice of primary school leadership in Oman is still in need of some support as assessed by the scale model. Therefore, it should be said that the link between the themes of the research project and the T&T Model is that both deal with change and developments which are urgently needed to meet the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (for further information about the developmental components of the current reform of the GES, see the AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201).

### **Inadequacy assessment of the research findings**

Similarly, some factors of the research findings also reveal, in particular, inadequate practical skills. Thus, the findings of the first theme (Chapter 6) indicate that the existing practice of primary school management and leadership at primary school level in Oman is, to some extent, inadequate. This is evidenced by the practical issues which are presented in Table 13, p. 117. A final judgement is made below:

- The information in Table 13 represents an inadequate level of school leadership in some respects. The factors of this table must be improved. Thus, in contrast with the scale factors of the T&T Model, the factors of this table show unhelpful qualities for headteachers to foster, a restricted routine, unproductive activities and cannot be included among the required tasks for implementing the current reform. Thus, these factors should be dealt with immediately in order to raise the existing model to an adequate standard for productive school leadership (e.g. the T&T Model). In this regard, Omani school leaders must not be implementers alone; if they are, it will jeopardise the current developments of school leadership. Thus, the Ministry of Education is urged to provide adequate support for primary schools in order to enable school leaders to lead their schools effectively. The Ministry is also urged to consider useful elements of the T&T Model, which is discussed comprehensively in Chapter 4, p. 47.

The findings of the second theme (Chapter 7) reveal that the existing practice of primary school management and leadership has met some critical obstacles, which are presented in Table 15, p. 145. This table embodies issues of inadequacy which will certainly disable the current developments in education and school leadership at this level. According to the findings of this table:

- The factors leading to inadequate school leadership must be tackled straightaway. Thus, in contrast with the scale factors of the T&T Model, these factors can cause major problems unless they are considered by the Ministry of Education and its Directorates

General in the Omani educational regions. Both officials and primary headteachers must discuss these issues urgently if chaos in Omani primary schools is to be avoided.

Fortunately, the findings of the third theme (Chapter 8) reveal no inadequate issues in terms of considering all the factors under this theme as invitations for change, as they all include developmental implications which appear to be connected with the philosophy of the Ministry of Education. Hence, they are on the same lines as its mission and vision of redefining and transforming, improving and thus developing the primary schools within the current reform of the GES. A conclusion of the above assessment in the following section.

### **FINAL REMARKS OF THE ASSESSMENT**

In general, the school leadership model in the present primary schools in Oman is unofficially operating while the tasks of school administration are carried out. But the model needs to be supported in practical terms as well as being approved officially by the Ministry. In other words, a practical school leadership model is now needed to be identified and adopted clearly and understandably. The following points sum this up:

- It should be said that the present primary schools of the GES are managed by experts (headteachers); however, they lack sufficient guidance in leading their schools. In this regard, the school leaders need to use their experience, guided by a recognised school leadership model from the Ministry of Education which should ensure the effective implementation of the current school leadership developments (e.g. the proposed school leadership model, see Figure 3, p. 271). In other words, according to the research findings, the present Omani primary headteachers have been practising a kind of traditional school model which is not found in the guidance of the Ministry of Education (this model – *AlShura* - is introduced in Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380). Thus, primary headteachers have been able unofficially to exemplify their own traditional (*AlShura*) school leadership model.
- Omani headteachers talk about *AlShura* with confidence. *AlShura*, a unique finding of this research, is introduced as the school leadership model (it is also considered a contribution of this research (see Recommendation 9, p. 270) as well as a major topic for further research studies). Furthermore, there is evidence that this hereditary model is drawn from three resources: (1) the speeches of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, (2) the Ministry's philosophy which is based on Islamic traditions and (3) the interviewees' responses.
- There are good personal and professional leadership characteristics which originate in the *AlShura* school leadership model; however, school leaders are discouraged from practising them effectively and openly by the current centralised system. Instead, most

primary school leaders would describe themselves as implementers and not yet innovators.

- The present Omani headteachers have a comprehensive knowledge about how they should run their schools; however, this is not what is stated in the Ministry of Education's guides. From this point of view, their theoretical knowledge is linked to their background, which is based on cultural and societal issues concerning their work.
- *AlShura* should include ethical, cultural, moral and societal matters which might be difficult for any other school leadership model to include in connection with Omani school traditions. From this point of view, it is vital to Omani schools. According to the audience's reaction to the presented paper at the BELMAS 2002 Annual Conference, the researcher found that this school leadership model can make perceptible progress in Omani primary schools, so long as it is modernised according to the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the current educational reform in Oman.
- Omani school leaders are able to adopt useful elements of school leadership from the new models (e.g. the T&T Model), combined with traditional elements, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the current school leadership developmental requirements. This must be ensured by providing them with adequate partnership programmes as well as with sufficient information.
- The guidelines to certain school leadership models are absent. In other words, the Ministry of Education has not yet clearly identified its preferred school model for the headteachers to follow. Thus, the contribution of this research is to identify the existing school leadership model which is described as a traditional (*AlShura*); and which is unique to Omani schools.
- According to the current situation of Omani primary schools, the headteachers have tried to raise their efficiency; however, they were far from being effective as school leaders. This is evident from the school crises which they have experienced; on this basis, they are considered closer to management practice than to leadership. This is evident also from their overload of administrative and bureaucratic tasks. In this sense, the headteachers can judge themselves as to whether they practise school management or leadership throughout their responsibilities and their achievements, according to the targeted goals of their own schools.

Finally, it should be said that the existing primary school leaders and leadership would enthusiastically welcome this urgent change which would secure the current developments of the continuing reform of the GES. However, this is a challenge facing the Ministry of Education as a major component of the current reform in education.



## LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

Each research project cannot help having its own limitation of scope. This research was conducted within four large educational regions out of ten regions in Oman; therefore, it covered 59% of the total number of primary schools in all the Omani regions (for further information, see Chart 4, p. 87).

Overall, this research also is limited in its scope as far the areas studied are concerned. Of course, there are sub-topics which were studied in brief in connection with the main topic of this research, such as the need to integrate technology in school management. Despite the limitations of this research, it is hoped that the study will be fruitful for educationalists in Oman, above all.

The interviews which were used were semi-structured; this was expected to fulfil the needs of the research. However, it is still limited if it is need as a single method for both targeted groups of the research population (officials and headteachers). The limitation of the semi-structured interview can be summarised in the following points:

- It works differently from a questionnaire in agreeing on a limited time for each interview, whether individual or focus group. However, the researcher tried to be flexible in terms of managing time for answering questions and their prompts.
- The interviewees had to answer the assigned questions (handed over in advance to them) and prompts which were asked by the researcher. However, there were some open questions as well as prompts, such as question 1 of the methodological questions and its prompts (see Table 6, p. 68).
- Semi-structured interviews try to combine two styles in one, open-ended (unstructured) and structured questions; however, this may seem like forcing the interviewees to provide information only within these two ways, which maybe was inconvenient for them.

There were supplementary limitations in conducting both the individual and focus group interviews from using the semi-structured style method of interviewing, as follows:

- The interviews were conducted with only two kind of population (officials and primary school headteachers as stakeholders). Although they were considered to cover the required areas of information as policy makers and administrative officials and as practitioners (headteachers), there were still important groups who might have been included, had it been possible, in this research, such as deputy headteachers and senior teachers.
- Focus group interviews provided a relaxed atmosphere for the interviewees and excellent interactive discussion, but still some interviewees did not have enough time to

say what they wanted because of the limited time available for each session. There was no limit on the number of the participants in each session, because it was up to the interviewees if they wished to attend or not. This meant that an unpredictable number attended the interview in each session.

In conclusion, every method has its weaknesses; however, by choosing a semi-structured interview approach for conducting this research it was planned to reduce the weaknesses of the methods selected for this particular research. Although there were weaknesses, the strengths can also be recognised.

The limitation of this research are considered the normal ones which any research faces. There is always one the main research topic, though many topics need to be studied as complementary to this one. These topics were raised despite the limited size of this research (it is impossible to cover everything) and in addition these topics are unique to this research; thus, logically they need to be researched in depth in further studies. It has to be said that this kind of research calls also for a case study technique; this is needed to study the practice of primary school headteachers in more detail. The following section includes topics for further study.

#### **TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

The following topics should be considered as major parts of the requirements of the current reform which need to be studied as well, because they are important topics for Omani primary headteachers in particular, and for the future of primary school leadership in general. These topics are introduced in order of their importance, as follows:

- In addition to the presented paper which addressed developing primary school leadership in Oman (see Appendix 10, Paper 1, p. 352, Diagram 2, p. 356), it is vital to study the AlHinai Model's themes (this model was drawn from the BELMAS Conference audience's feedback at the presentation of Paper 1, see Figure 2, p. 201) in order to improve the practice of primary school leadership in Omani schools. Indeed, this is an urgent requirement for Oman's current reform in education. In fact, running the current educational reform in Oman without knowing exactly what leadership model is required to implement the reform is certainly jeopardising it. Thus, the AlHinai Model introduces an initial framework of school leadership in Oman (this model is introduced a unique finding of this research). Therefore, each theme in it may require further in-depth study in order to explore the practice of leadership in Omani primary schools.
- In addition to the presented paper on the *AlShura* School Leadership Model, it is vital for Omani primary schools that this model should be explored in depth in order to

implement the reform. AlHinai and Rutherford (2002) point this out:

*... the model which we are introducing in this paper (AlShura) seems to fit naturally into the Omani school environment; hence, an extensive study to clarify and identify this model is required for making it go accessibly and sensibly side by side with the Ministry's vision of the current educational reform in Oman. (p. 12)*

The *AlShura* model can be considered ideal for Omani educationalists; it is fortunate that this is considered one of the reform requirements and hence requires urgent study by policy makers and headteachers to be in place in time for the current educational reform in Oman. This model, of course, needs to be adapted to the primary school level; hence, no doubt it can also be used for subsequent school levels, particularly if it can be discussed thoroughly in Conferences, as the researcher has already done at the BELMAS 2002 Annual Conference, held in Birmingham. However, Omani school leaders are able to discuss this issue in the events of such Conferences; for example, the researcher presented his second paper at the Muscat 2001 International Conference (for further details see Appendix 10, Paper 2, p. 363, see also Recommendation 9, p. 270 and Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

- As a further study on the same topic as the presented paper which addressed the use of ICT, it would be very valuable for the present generation of headteachers and teachers in Oman at all levels to be able to read in some depth about successful experience of integrating ICT into a semi-traditional curriculum elsewhere in the world. They might also find it enlightening to consider the theoretical, psychological and cognitive implications of such integration. Furthermore, up-to-date knowledge of ways to use technology effectively is needed for Omani primary headteachers (e.g. using appropriate computer packages of school management, see Appendix 10, Paper 3, p. 369).

In conclusion, the above mentioned topics are considered complementary to each other; thus, there is feedback relationship between them in terms of ensuring the effective implementation of Oman's current educational development of the General Education System (GES). Thus, it is hoped that the Ministry of Education will consider such crucial topics in order to redefine the current practice of primary school leadership.

## **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER NINE**

In connection with the previous three chapters 6, p. 91, 7, p. 125 and 8, p. 181), the researcher discussed the research findings according to the collected data from the respondents. The research findings were presented in 9 tables (4 tables in Chapter 6; 3 tables in Chapter 7 and 2 tables in Chapter 8, which all these tables include 44 factors of the research findings). In addition, three documents were presented. They are: first, an Arabic version of the Evaluation Form for Headteacher's Performance (EFHP) (see Appendix 9,

p. 344 General Education System (GES) (see ME, 1993) and, third, the new guide of the model schools (ME, 1998, see also Appendix 11, p. 392), both guides also in their Arabic versions. These guides are evaluated in terms of the logic of their items, including the EFHP which is focused on the headteacher's responsibilities in particular. The respondents have shown their contributions for the sake of the current educational development, in particular, for making adequate policy which would serve primary schools properly and would satisfy headteachers' needs in the same way.

Major concern was also spent on assessing the research findings (presented in the above mentioned chapters). The assessment covers those 44 factors of these research findings, by considering the assessment scale of the T&T Model which is constructed in Table 4. The assessment is also took another form: assessing the research findings against the factors of the scale by using three separate Resource Tables which are associated with Appendix 7, p. 323. The assessment was given according to the findings of the research themes, by assessing each theme's factors separately as well as drawing a relationship between them.

Also, some respondents gave details of their existing practice of primary school leadership in the light of the requirements of the current educational development. Omani primary headteachers expressed their views comprehensively and have thus enriched the educational field.

## **Chapter 10 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS**

*Research is a never-ending activity, and the results of one study often lead to new research problems and projects. (Wiersma, 1995, p. 458)*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this section, conclusions are drawn on the focus of the thesis, its methodology and methods, findings and finally its unique contributions. At the end of this section a summary will be more at the previous chapters with some comments.

#### **THE FOCUS OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT**

As stated earlier, this research focuses on ‘An Evaluation of the Existing Practice of Primary School Leadership in Oman’. Fortunately, this study was recommended by officials of the Ministry of Education; they were represented by a Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD), who provided the researcher with an official letter to initiate his research (see Letter 5, p. 287). Again, this research was requested by the Ministry of Education in order to gain feedback on the current developments of the educational reform of the General Education System (GES).

Furthermore, it mainly serves the current developments in education in Oman, including redefining and transforming the existing practice of school leadership so as to update it in line with 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements (AlHammami, 1999; ME, 1997). Indeed, the findings as well as the contributions of this research provide genuinely Omani perspectives which reflect the current situation of Omani primary schools, including professional insights about the present primary headteachers.

The focus of this research entailed a study of three major areas:

1. The historical background which underlies primary school leadership in Oman, focusing on the foundation sources of primary school leadership (see the AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201, circle 1 and the half circles 1.1 and 1.2 and see also the presentation of the collected data (research findings) relevant to this area in Chapter 6, p. 91).
2. The current practice of primary school leadership which provides an insight into current day-to-day school leadership performance (see also AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201, circle 2 and the half circles 2.1 and 2.2 and see also the presentation of the collected

data (research findings) relevant to this area in Chapter 7, p. 125).

3. The choice of a proposed school leadership approach which in turn will develop effective primary school leadership and ensure the success of the current developments of the GES in Oman (see the AlHinai Model, Figure 2, p. 201, circle 3 and see also the presentation of the collected data (research findings) relevant to this area in Chapter 8, p. 181.

These areas were evaluated by using a constructed assessment scale which is based on the transactional and the transformational models of school leadership. In fact, this has been chosen to ensure the successful transformation of the existing practice of school leadership and, at the same time, to enable the researcher to suggest useful recommendations. Hence, this assessment scale also provides clear guidelines to define the contrast between the existing practice of the school leadership model of Omani primary schools and the proposed school leadership models of the assessment scale (see more information about the research framework in Chapter 4, p. 47 and also Table 4, p. 55).

In other words, the researcher has tried to study and clarify the focus of this research project by drawing connections between the three areas focused on in the research; hence, these three areas (the explored research themes) are exemplified in the AlHinai Model of school leadership (see Figure 2, p. 201).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS USED FOR CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH PROJECT**

As discussed in Chapter 5, p. 63, the methodology of this research focuses on analysing the hypotheses (based on the three major areas mentioned above) related to the nature of the current practice of primary school leadership in Oman. These hypotheses were formulated in questions (Key Research Questions), where each question has tackled a different problem in a distinctive area (see above). These questions are as follows:

1. What is the history and what are the values which underpin primary school leadership in Oman?
2. What is the practice of primary school leadership which is currently employed in Omani schools that are implementing the General Education System (GES)?
3. Does the practice of primary school leadership within the GES place enough emphasis on both achieving tasks and supporting staff who are implementing the GES?
4. What practice (model) of school leadership is needed to transform the existing practice and to implement the new leadership tasks which are introduced by the current reform of the GES in Oman?
5. What is the relevance of Transactional and Transformational leadership theories and

other approaches to developing more effective primary school leadership and ensuring the success of the current development of the GES in Oman?

Furthermore, the targeted educational regions for this study which were used as a sample were the four Omani regions of Muscat, AlBatinah North, AlBatinah South and AlDakhiliah. The methodology was that of a survey and the methods which were used in this research project were individual and focus group interviews as well as the evaluation of relevant documents (see Appendix 9, p. 344 and Appendix 11, p. 392).

The researcher conducted individual interviews mainly with officials (90 minutes for each interview) with primary school headteachers were involved in focus group interviews (at least 120 minutes for each session).

### **UNIQUE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The findings of this research project are presented in Chapters 6, p. 91, 7, p. 125 and 8, p. 181. The findings are introduced in nine tables and forty-four factors which are also presented in the previous chapters mentioned above. In addition, as discussed above, these findings are also presented in the form of research themes and sub-themes and are also presented under the same headings in the Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Also, these themes are exemplified in the AlHinai Model (see Figure 2, p. 201). Thus, the AlHinai Model in itself represents the framework of the research findings and, at the same time, it should be considered a unique contribution of this research project, because in many ways it describes and clarifies the existing style of primary school leadership in Omani schools. It introduces for the first time the existing school leadership model and its framework in Oman. These findings are indeed the contribution to the Omani government, Omani educational researchers and leaders as well as to the field of research in general, as it is indebted to the University of Birmingham.

Overall, it is hoped that the results of this research will be considered by the Omani Ministry of Education as well as the Omani primary school leaders, in particular, the primary school headteachers. The results of this research project draw from 59 percent of primary schools in the whole of Oman, which at the same time, attempts to represent the total population of primary school headteachers. Again, this research has focused on four large educational regions out of ten regions in Oman (see Chart 4, p. 87), which include urban and rural schools. This was meant to exemplify the majority of both the primary schools as well as the primary school headteachers.

### **UNIQUE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS**

As discussed in Chapter 9 and 10, the research contributions have emerged from the findings. There are major and complementary contributions which can be linked to the focus

of this research; they are as follows:

#### **Major contributions of research findings**

- The AlHinai Model of primary school leadership in Oman (Figure 2, p. 201) identifies fundamental elements relevant to school leadership which exist in Omani primary schools. This means that it forms a complete framework for school leadership in Oman. At the same time, it describes the process of conducting this research by drawing a complete picture of the explored research themes and sub-themes which also emerged from addressing the methodological questions of the research.
- Nine recommendations represent the major contributions of this research project (Recommendation 1, p. 263 to Recommendation 9, p. 270), which provide unique explorations and identifications as major concerns in developing primary school leadership in Oman within the current reform;
- This includes the proposed school leadership model (a combined model with *AlShura*, see Figure 3, p. 271) to ensure the effective transformation of the existing practice of primary school leadership and also to implement the new leadership tasks effectively. This is the first time that this proposed model has been introduced in Oman and also, to the best knowledge of the researcher, this model is not yet practised in primary schools elsewhere (for further information about the *AlShura* school leadership model, see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

#### **Complementary contributions of research findings**

- The complementary contributions are mainly summed up in seven recommendations of this research (Recommendation 10, p. 272 to Recommendation 16, p. 275), including the integrating of useful technology in the existing primary schools of the General Education System (GES) (for further information about the present situation of the GES schools in using technology or e-learning, see Appendix 10, Paper 3, p. 369).



## RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

*The acquisition of knowledge is not a luxury, but “a commitment and a contribution”. It is a commitment to all the decent, enlightened values. At the same time, it constitutes a serious, untiring contribution to the building of this country. (MI, 1995, p. 220)*

### **Introduction**

Some recommendations from the research will be provided in this section. They are divided into two areas: major and complementary recommendations. Major recommendations include three different parts, namely:

1. Headteachers' urgent needs.
2. Official support for raising primary school leadership standards.
3. Requirements to ensure the effective implementation of the current educational reform.

However, the complementary recommendations imply many sub-topics in connection with the findings of this research project. At the end of this chapter some conclusions will be drawn as a kind of summary of the previous chapters in order to encapsulate the focus, discussions, findings and, finally, the unique contributions of this research. According to the statement of H.M. Sultan Qaboos, the Omani people, including researchers, are to be encouraged to keep to their commitments and to contribute their best efforts in order to share the responsibility (as a leadership concept) for building a brighter future for the Omani people. Hence, the discussion of this chapter will include a proposed research model (see Figure 3, p. 271), involving ideas which, it is hoped, will be considered by the Omani officials as well as school leaders to transform the existing practice of primary school leadership, on the one hand, and to ensure effective implementation of the new tasks which have been introduced by the current educational reform, on the other. Consequently, the researcher hopes that this research will contribute significantly to the development of leadership as a concept in Omani education.

## MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

This section includes some recommendations which are identified as urgent tasks in connection with headteachers' needs. The Ministry of Education is urged to consider them as heading the list of developmental requirements. This section includes three major recommendations which will serve headteachers' needs, namely:

### **Headteachers' urgent needs**

#### ***Recommendation 1 - Upgrading the qualifications of the non-degree holders among the headteachers***

The present headteachers need to be more highly qualified, just as they need to be experienced in working in schools, for effective school management and leadership. The findings of this research indicate that all the present Omani primary headteachers lack either qualifications or experience. The majority have experience but need qualifications, according to the Ministry's reform requirements (AlHammami, 1999). However, both groups (the unqualified and the inexperienced headteachers) are willing to obtain further qualifications and to be provided with opportunities for gaining experience in order not to feel vulnerable. There is a wide contrast between the degree and the non-degree holders. The non-degree holders form the majority (71%) of the headteachers (see Chart 11, p. 196). This topic is fully addressed in a paper presented at the Muscat International Conference (see Appendix 10, Paper 2, p. 363). It would be a catastrophic loss if the Ministry of Education cannot urgently find some way of keeping its experienced staff in their primary school posts. It is hoped, as AlHammami (1999) claimed, that the Ministry's plan will materialise:

*Academically, it decided to upgrade all the Omani Intermediate Diploma holders to a university level (AlHammami, 1999, p. 304).*

As discussed earlier, there are four major factors which have made the present school leaders worried about their position. These are that the present headteachers (1) have been ignored for a long time by not being given any chance to upgrade their qualifications; (2) the University of Sultan Qaboos does not accept intermediate diploma holders on the School Administration Diploma course (only degree holders are accepted, SQU, 1999). So those who are already official or even acting headteachers, but not yet awarded this diploma, are in a difficult position; (3) the Ministry of Education has already decided to replace male by female headteachers in the new mixed schools (for boys and girls) at primary school level. Hence, replacing the male headteachers seems to have created a crisis in the current reform. Therefore, male school leaders, including headteachers, are worried about sooner or later losing their job opportunities for this reason; and (4) all headteachers without degrees are worried that they may be forced to take early retirement, giving way to new graduates who

lack experience. If experience is to be discounted in favour of a degree, then these experienced headteachers are at great risk.

All the above mentioned reasons brought a feeling that the present headmasters were in a serious situation. This is supported by the following statement:

*The Ministry of Education has decided not to recruit any intermediate diploma holders from January 1999 and warned parents not to send their sons/daughters to study for only a diploma. (AlHammami, 1999, p. 193)*

The above mentioned crisis is a sign of, at least, two major possibilities that the Ministry will perhaps provide an opportunity for its school leaders to upgrade their qualifications (this is not approved yet) and it is also a sign that the next generation will all be degree-holders, as is claimed by officials of the Ministry of Education, as a requirement of the current reform.

An important consideration for the officials of the Ministry of Education is that if the present school leaders are awarded degrees, it may help the Ministry by lessening the need for the formal inspection of teachers. It would be more effective for the headteachers to inspect the teachers in their own special field as a school leadership-related task. The other crucial point is that the headteachers will thus be brought to the stage of being qualified professionals. This means that they would be capable of making their own judgments, leading discussions and even conducting research as needed, whether for their own schools or even to serve the Ministry when necessary. Further, qualifying the present headteachers is something which would save the Ministry from needing to look for new experts in school management and leadership. They already have enough experience, which should enable them to redefine and transform their own practice according to the requirements of the current reform. The majority of them (80%) have seven years experience or more (see Chart 14, p. 226), which is surely sufficient. Rutherford and AlHinai (2001) make this clear:

*In addition, the programme for upgrading non-degree qualifications to degree level must include not only input from academic lecturers but also a major contribution from experienced headteachers who would play the role of mentor and share their own good practice. Also, these experienced headteachers should be involved in the planning team together with academic lecturers in a new partnership to develop the effectiveness of primary headteachers in Oman. (pp. 9-10)*

This means that these experienced headteachers are already qualified by virtue of their experience and have repeatedly asked the Ministry of Education to give them the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications to degree level. This, they feel, is needed in order to keep pace with the new concepts of school leadership, as well as to refresh their knowledge in order for them to be able to work out their own school leadership model on the lines of the proposed model of *AlShura* (see Recommendation 9, p. 270 and see also Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

In conclusion, the present school leaders are in the position of experts in dealing with

school management and leadership; however, they need only to upgrade their intermediate qualifications to first-degree level. This will enable them to be truly professionals and will prepare them to continue their post-graduate education (e.g. to PhD level).

***Recommendation 2 – Experts are required to evaluate school leadership performance***

As discussed in Chapter 9, p. 200, the respondents argued that there were unqualified inspectors and advisors involved in inspecting levels of leadership (school administration). These inspectors and advisors are responsible for writing reports on the school's performance as well as on the headteacher's work. Some of these inspectors nominated as administrative inspectors have no experience in school management and leadership; hence, they are less experienced in dealing with school activities than the headteachers themselves. As a matter of fact, the headteachers realised that these inspectors were providing them with insufficient advice and feedback. In this regard, the headteachers claim that they should be provided with more adequate advice than they can get at present by somebody who could share their decisions with them effectively. Furthermore, some division managers are also unable to provide accurate guidance for primary headteachers and in addition were asking for duties to be done twice over by headteachers, ignoring the shortage of school assistants in primary schools (for further information see Appendix 9, p. 344). Thus, it is a major requirement of the current education reform to improve the school evaluation performance by employing people who have experience in schooling, especially in school management and leadership. AlHammami (1999) puts it like this:

*[The reform deals] not only [with] job descriptions and job appointments, but also eradicates the clashes of responsibility between departments. (p. 214)*

In conclusion, officials and school leaders should together come to a round-table discussion in order to sort out what exactly would serve their primary schools best. From this point of view, the researcher would like to say here that school leaders should be consulted and should share in every concern belonging primarily to their own schools to ensure better results in the current implementation of the educational reform. This is also an indication which was found to be a major requirement of *AlShura* (see Appendix 10, Paper 4, p. 380).

***Recommendation 3 – Pre-service and in-service training for headteachers***

Something is needed in addition to the School Administration Diploma (SAD) which is provided in the Sultan Qaboos University for degree holders only among the present primary headteachers (SQU, 1999). Omani educationalists need to check the effectiveness of this programme. According to the findings of this research, it is clear that Omani headteachers need to be well prepared before becoming involved in headship (some for the first time). Even those who are already in post or who have experience of headship need to be supported

with adequate programmes to update their knowledge and refresh their creativeness. AlHammami (1999) finds that the primary headteachers are in desperate need of adequate training, because indeed there is a “... *lack of professional training for ... administrators [headteachers]*. (p. 143)

Furthermore, there is a need to identify national standards for Omani headteachers. In addition to the Omani studies in this area, there are useful programmes found in the UK which, to some extent, can be considered as initial guidelines or, perhaps, may be usefully adapted in terms of creating relevant (or similar) programmes for Omani primary school headteachers. These programmes (e.g. NPQH<sup>12</sup>, HEADLAMP<sup>13</sup> and LPSH<sup>14</sup>) should deal with raising the quality of the headteachers’ leadership; for instance, whether in the position of official or acting headteachers in Omani schools (see Chart 5, p. 88). Moreover, NPQH and HEADLAMP are followed by the LPSH in order to train the headteachers in post.

The above description indicates crucial points for the present Omani primary school leaders who can be located within these three levels of headship. For example, the headteachers should receive adequate training to enable them to be good communicators, and to be aware of ICT applications, whether for managerial or teaching purposes.

The Omani primary school headteachers should be urged to be expert in their own school leadership; however, they should always think of horizontal connections; for example, what can they gain from other school leaders’ experience and how can they prove to them that they too are on the same pathway in terms of transforming the practice of their own school leadership and also in terms of updating their knowledge.

### **Official support for raising primary school leadership standards**

This section also includes three major recommendations which are considered vital to Omani educators, especially the policy-makers and primary school headteachers. These recommendations bring to mind two boundaries that the Ministry of Education should remember: the previous experience of Omani school leaders, including the present headteachers, and the up-to-date knowledge which is relevant to school leadership. These

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<sup>12</sup> The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) is designed to provide a comprehensive body of knowledge for teachers who aspire to be headteachers. The NPQH prepares them with confidence and competence to take a successful forward step in their first headship. This programme covers important areas in school leadership and management which are required for preparing headteachers (e.g. school improvement and leading-edge ICT) (Cabillo and Smith, 1999, pp. 3-9; National College for School Leadership, undated, pp. 4-12).

<sup>13</sup> The headteachers Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) is designed to support newly appointed headteachers in raising the effectiveness of their leadership (Gunter, 2001, pp. 27-28; Law and Glover, 2000, pp. 15 & 241; Gunraj, 2000, pp. 8 & 102-135; Gunraj and Rutherford, 1999, pp. 143-153).

<sup>14</sup> The Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) is the third programme in the headteacher preparation programme. The Omani Ministry of Education should arrange similar programmes to the above for effective school leadership as well as to ensure the implementation of the current reform; in addition, they should upgrade the headteachers’ qualifications for those who are non-degree holders, but experienced in post.

major recommendations are as follows:

***Recommendation 4 - Using the present headteachers' previous experience***

As discussed in the above recommendations, the experienced Omani primary school headteachers are in a good position to take major decisions about school management and leadership in Oman, especially at primary school level. In other words, they can be considered the backbone of any transformation of existing practice and they could improve school leadership to meet the needs of the current educational reform in Oman. However, they must first be given adequate professional development (e.g. partnership workshops and seminars). According to AlHamami (1999), officials in the Ministry of Education seem to have realised that they have to build on the previous experience of their personnel. AlHamami (1999) studied the need to initiate this educational reform in order to develop the existing educational system, the General Education System (GES). This of course includes the need to 'redefine and transform the existing practice of primary school leadership' which is the concern of the present research.

This brings up the point that each Directorate General (DG) in the Omani educational regions should take the important step of creating computerised records for all school leaders in order to trace their careers (e.g. headteacher's outstanding work such as conference participations, whether locally, nationally or internationally) and keep a database, continually updated, about each school and all their headteachers, including the other school leaders. Taking part in conferences will require extensive support from the Ministry (DGs) to enable all these school leaders to participate at this level. However, according to their experience, the Ministry as well as the Directorates General should make more use of headteachers; for example, in decision-making, by considering their views for further school leadership improvements. Again, AlHamami (1999) states that:

*... the experience which the participants [primary school leaders] bring with them should not be neglected. The programme should use effective techniques such as group discussion and demonstrations to trigger and utilise their experiences. (p. 306)*

In conclusion, the present Omani primary school headteachers, in particular, those who are non-degree holders represent a very crucial human resource for education in Oman. Not only can the school leader who is experienced in a certain subject field provide expert comments relevant to his/her specialist area, but his or her general expertise can contribute to raise the level for everyone, and the system need not depend, with every new generation, on 're-inventing the wheel'.

### ***Recommendation 5 - Increasing headteachers' authority***

According to AlHammami (1999), the Ministry of Education has made plans for decentralisation by providing a sort of independence for the Directorates General of the educational regions, which is a step towards flexibility. Thus, as AlHammami claims, the headteachers will in turn be empowered within the current educational reform; however, at present the headteachers' current authority<sup>15</sup> covers only very limited and routine responsibilities within their schools.

The power which the present headteachers have can be considered only that of a school administrator who can also solve school problems in an equitable way. However, the authority which is recommended here is that of an actual school leader who can lead his/her school to crystal clear values and goals through *effective and legitimate commands* (Northouse, 2001; Law and Glover, 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999). In other words, the researcher recommends authority now for Omani headteachers in order to redefine their existing practice and to enable them to lead their school in a kind of independence.

In this regard, the present Omani headteachers should be empowered further for better school performance. In addition, this would support the creation of a useful and pleasant school environment, in which their colleagues and school leaders cooperated for a common goal.

In conclusion, Omani primary school headteachers should be enabled to think of themselves as actual school leaders by granting them sufficient authority to redefine their own school leadership practice.

### ***Recommendation 6 - Involving and consulting the headteachers directly in the reformation activities***

Unquestionably, being involved with and sharing or consulting with school leaders, including the present primary school headteachers, in the development process is important (AlHammami, 1999). From the respondents' perspective, it is required that the headteachers understand all the requirements of the developmental process so that they can support their colleagues effectively. Consulting the headteachers and involving them would stimulate their ambitions and intelligence. Also, this would allow them to take over the developmental process as if they were in charge; however, the Ministry of Education should work out every developmental task carefully before implementing it, so as to avoid the chaos which might result from any misunderstanding of their implementation. Indeed, this could easily happen in such a large-scale reform in education. Being involved and sharing with the headteachers will

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<sup>15</sup> The present headteachers undoubtedly have too little authority; this is evident by the list of their responsibilities which are stated in the old GES guide (GESG) (Ministry of Education, 1993). This list of responsibilities is more or less repeated in the new model school guide (MSG).

also encourage them to support their staff members in every possible way.

### **Requirements to ensure the effective implementation of the redefined practice of primary school leadership in Oman**

The current educational development requires structural elements which would ensure the effective carrying out of school leadership tasks, whether by redefining or transforming the existing practice of primary school leadership or by implementing the new tasks of school leadership which have been introduced by the current reform of the General Education System (GES). This section also includes four recommendations which are vital for the current development in education. The policy-makers and primary school headteachers should join round-table discussions in order to formulate further essential recommendations and put them into action. These recommendations are as follows:

#### ***Recommendation 7 – To support the headteacher with administrative and academic posts and, at the same time, to familiarise them with useful technologies in connection with school management***

As discussed earlier (see Factor 26, p. 149 and Factor 41, p. 189), the guide of the GES indicates a number of posts which are required for running Omani primary schools (ME, 1993). Hitherto, the Ministry of Education was not able to fill all the posts listed in this guide, such as that of deputy headteacher (for further information about staffing in the targeted schools of this research, see Chart 6, p. 150).

However, in addition to the posts stated in the GES guide (e.g. deputy headteacher and social worker) and the newly recommended ones which were introduced in the new model school guide (e.g. senior teacher and administrative assistant), there are more which the researcher would like to recommend. These recommended new posts are as follows:

- Timetable designers (TD): This post can be considered a specialist post in designing the school timetable, of course, under the supervision of the headteacher. This employee should be enabled to use technology in designing school timetables for effective school management and a trouble-free daily structure. It depends on the school population; if large, then a school requires such a post to deal with all its timetabling problems; if the school is small, as discussed above, this post's responsibilities can be combined with those of the following recommended post.
- Computer coordinator (CC): this post will support headteachers in integrating new technologies relevant to primary school management. Its responsibilities should be managerial, in connection also with spreading useful technology to support teaching and classroom management. This could help the headteachers to improve their professionalism. Similarly, there are two posts which are introduced as part of the current reform: Technician for the Learning Resource Centre (TLRC) and Learning



Resource Teacher (LRT) (ME, 1998). Hence, the computer coordinator's responsibilities can be also complementary to one of these posts if necessary. In addition, all the four posts (i.e. TD, CC, TLRC and LRT) can be arranged to be complementary to each other so as to use the school finances most efficiently by shifting or merging responsibilities from one to another.

***Recommendation 8 – Integrating new tasks of school leadership in the existing schools one step at a time***

This integration is needed as soon as possible for the existing primary schools of the GES; however, new leadership tasks should be integrated one at a time in order to complete the process with full understanding. This procedure is required throughout the educational reform; it also requires school leaders to be patient in performing each task accurately, such as adapting technology in organising school timetables (numbers of seminars and workshops may be required).

Again, as discussed above (see Chapter 9, p. 200, section 2.2), the reform should be integrated (step by step) in both the existing and the model schools of the current reform of the GES. This will prevent the existing schools from being left behind. For logical reasons, also, the reform should be integrated in all Omani schools together in order to keep education provision equitable. This also will require transforming the existing leadership practices 'one step at a time' as well as the integration of the new leadership tasks of the current reform.

***Recommendation 9 – A proposed school leadership model to ensure effective development for the current reform of the GES***

As the research findings indicate (see Chapter 6, p. 91; 7, p. 125 and 8, p. 181), the respondents called urgently for a productive as well as a desired school leadership model to guide the transformation and implementation of leadership within the current educational reform in Oman. This request is put forward strongly by all respondents in this research project; hence, the current school management can no longer be satisfied with the developmental vision and mission of the GES. Again, the existing school management is also considered too administrative in character (AlAdawi, 2002). Therefore, a school leadership model (see Figure 3, below) is certainly needed to ensure the effective transformation of the existing practice of primary school management and leadership and to implement the new adaptive school leadership tasks.

This proposed model requires an underlying Omani traditional school leadership model (*AlShura*) as well as the use of helpful and productive school leadership models such as the transactional and transformational. The first recommended model implies ethical, cultural and moral issues relevant to Omani society, while the last two school leadership models are the best and most up-to-date in dealing with reforms and educational change in order to meet the

requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (for further information, see Figure 3, below).

**Figure 3 - School leadership adaptation requirements to modernise primary schools in Oman**

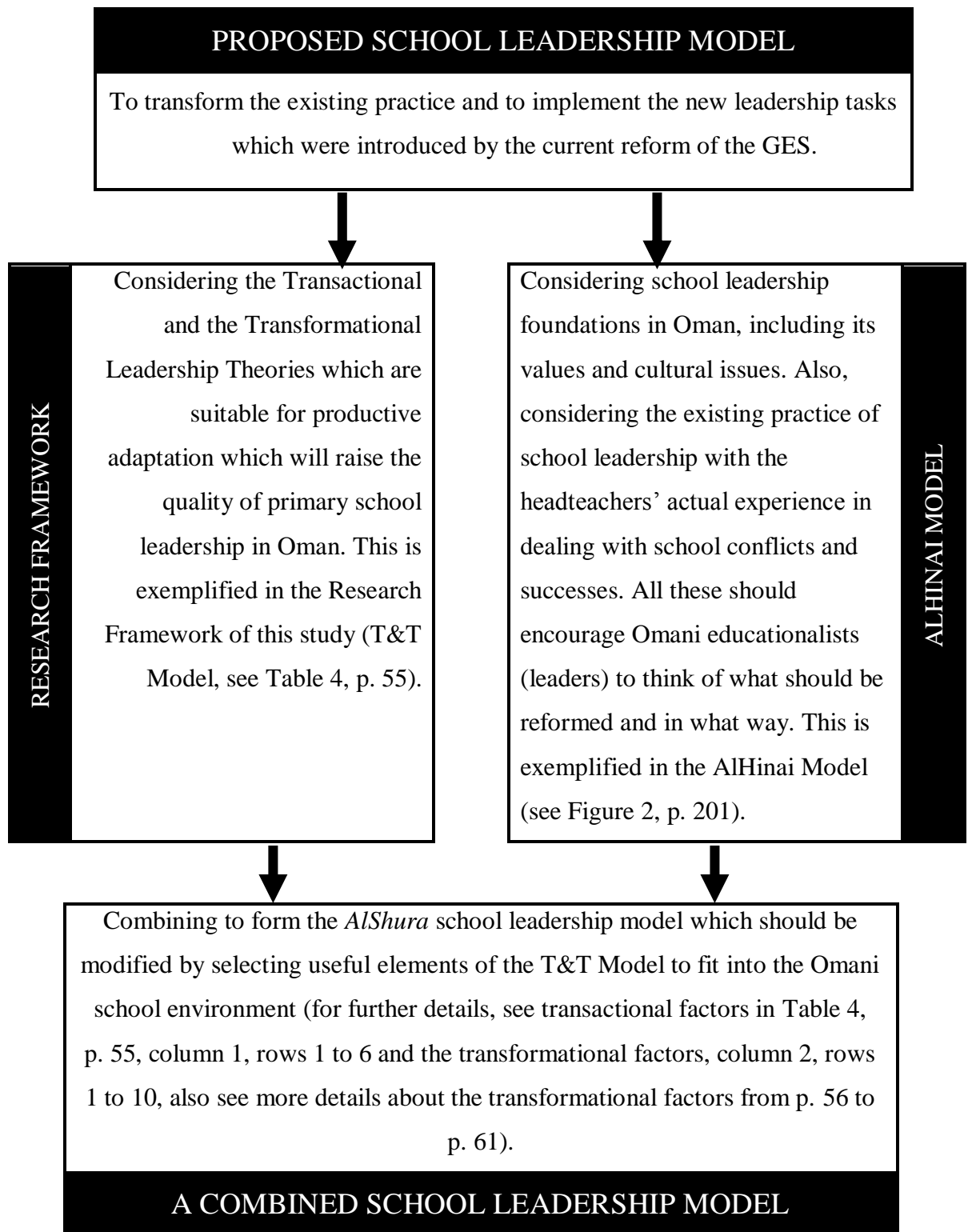


Figure 3 is based on three major components of the research: the first characteristic is based on the best productive theories in terms of school transformation introduced by this research framework and summed up by two major theories; the transactional and the transformational.

The second characteristic of this figure is that the whole of the research findings are encapsulated in the AlHinai Model. The third characteristic is the combination of the *AlShura* school leadership model and the transactional and transformational leadership models. This proposed combined model should be considered by the Omani educational leaders, in particular, those who are in charge of running the current reform of the GES, including the policy makers at the Ministry of Education and the practitioners (primary headteachers). As stated above, the proposed model is based on both sources: the findings of this research, which are introduced in the three themes of the research findings; and the contributions, including *AlShura*, from the traditions of Omani society, together exemplified in the AlHinai Model, as well as other researchers' findings on the transactional and transformational leadership models (e.g. Northouse, 2001; Leithwood et al., 1999).

The reason that the traditional model (*AlShura*), good though it is, has become inadequate, in the researcher's opinion, is that it does not contain within itself any mechanism for handling innovation. It is by nature traditional and inward looking. But at the present juncture, there are too many new educational ideas and too much pressure to keep up with the rapid developments of science and technology for a traditional model to be successful. What is needed is a model which adapts to new elements to replace or at least modify it. This is the value of the transformational model in this context.

### **COMPLEMENTARY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THIS RESEARCH PROJECT**

In this section, some essential recommendations are drawn from the findings of this research project; they are considered complementary to the main topics. These recommendations are as follows:

#### ***Recommendation 10 – Reducing school population***

Reducing school and classroom sizes is considered a major element in raising teaching/learning standards. Thus, according to the findings of this research, the existing primary schools are overcrowded (between 1200 and 1500 pupils in each school). Therefore, the researcher recommends that the size of each school population should be reduced to an average size of a thousand children or fewer, in turn, each classroom should contain 30 pupils or fewer (see Factor 25, p. 143).

#### ***Recommendation 11 – Involving PTA members effectively***

Activating the role of the PTA members seems to be essential in supporting school leaders and enabling them to perform their responsibilities cooperatively. The PTA should be *actively involved*; hence, they should also be given the proper *authority* in cooperation with headteachers to plan for a better school environment (AlMa`mari, 2000).

***Recommendation 12 - Considering the public's views about the way in which schools should be led as well as managed according to the current developments in education***

Flexible leadership is required to manage the current reform in all its phases. This should be considered by both the officials and headteachers (remembering that schools are created to serve people). Both parties cannot ignore people's views about what and how they would like in the education service; hence, it is essential to consider what the public think. The respondents' opinions fully supported giving the public consideration in planning school development. Thus, this is an area where the quality of school leadership should be very clearly presented, since the public voice is represented by parents' involvement (PTA members, see Recommendation 11, above). This is supported by AlHammami (1999), who comments:

*People should be consulted about the right education system for the country. The education policymaking should not only be confined to a small group at the Ministry of Education. (p. 174)*

For example, one of the sensitive topics which emerged from this research is whether to teach boys and girls in the same room or even in the same school building. The respondents strongly recommended that the Ministry of Education should not take the risk of ignoring public opinion (since the public's voice should be heard), but should separate boys from girls at school even at a very early age, because to teach them together is considered to damage their beliefs and faith. As regards the Ministry's wish to have female staff in control of mixed primary schools, the respondents recommended the following:

- Boys' schools should be run separately from girls' schools; however, the staff for both kinds of school could be female; or staff of each sex should run schools for children of the same sex as theirs. However, while there was strong agreement that females could teach boys there was almost equally strong agreement that males should not be in charge of girls' schools.
- In views of the Islamic requirement that boys should be looked after by male headteachers and girls by female headteachers, the Ministry of Education should avoid forcing people to send their children to mixed schools<sup>16</sup>. This would open the door for people to choose the kind of schools that they wanted to send their children to, whether public or private schools.

***Recommendation 13 – Requirements for school building extensions***

Suitable rooms, labs and locations are required for different school activities; hence, the shortage of specialist rooms in the existing schools, e.g. art studios and computer labs, makes

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<sup>16</sup> Mixed schools are not commonly recognised among the GES schools; however, it is considered an adaptive task of the current educational reform and, perhaps, it may be implemented only at primary school level.

it difficult for headteachers to develop pupils' creative thinking, although this is strongly held to part of school leadership. The deficiencies of schools extend to having no well-prepared playgrounds and there were no gymnasiums for exercise at all, though they are urgently needed in such a warm country as Oman (see Factor 19, p. 129). This is because it is dangerous for children, especially young children, to play in the open sun after 10 a.m., because it is too hot. Thus, equipping schools with gymnasiums should solve the problem by letting all classes (pupils) be involved in physical education activities at all points in the school timetable.

According to the findings of this research, there are no computer labs in these schools, apart from a few computers in individual schools which may be used for limited purposes of school management (ME, 1997). Unfortunately, so far, there is no E-learning practised in these schools, although the GES has been developing within the current reform and will ultimately equip all the Omani primary schools with computers. This is a sign of the Ministry's commitment to integrating E-learning and ICT applications (see Factor 40, p. 185) (AlHinai and Rutherford, 2001).

Indeed, Learning Resource Centres are urgently required for all the existing primary schools<sup>17</sup>, because a suitable teaching/learning environment is vital in achieving higher standards in every subject for both teaching performance and pupils' achievements.

Equipping the existing primary schools with both the required staff and adequate school buildings is important to balance the process of the current educational reform. This is needed to provide all the eligible pupils in Oman with the same opportunities to benefit from the current reform; however, the present situation for the pupils in the existing primary schools indicates inequalities in the way that the reform has been implemented in the existing and the model schools of the current reform. These model schools are considered to be different from the ones running under the GES. In this regard, the Ministry will face new challenges; for example, it will arouse public indignation if the existing primary schools continue to be ignored by not equipping them as well as the model schools (some pupils, for instance, learning about technology and others not). Since 1998 when the Ministry of Education started the current reform, the researcher has closely observed the progress of its development. It seems that the majority of existing primary schools still run under the old system (the GES) are receiving less benefit than those which are considered the model schools of the GES (Basic Education Schools).

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<sup>17</sup> This research finding indicates that the Ministry of Education should provide LRCs for all pupils at once, but the developmental tasks must be integrated in all schools, one at a time.

#### ***Recommendation 14 – Rewarding outstanding headteachers***

The findings of this research indicate that the headteachers in the existing primary schools of the General Education System (GES) are ignored and paid less attention by the officials. Thus, they feel vulnerable and unappreciated, despite their efforts. Hence, the researcher strongly recommends a form of reward for headteachers who contribute outstanding work. This is also needed to encourage those headteachers who feel overwhelmed and see no prospect of reward from the Ministry.

#### ***Recommendation 15 – School resources are considered a major requirement for effective implementation of the current development in education***

More school resources are required to build a positive teaching/learning environment. The findings of this research indicate that the present headteachers have no solutions to the problem of providing teaching aids for their staff. No doubt, this must affect the process of teaching and learning as well as the quality of the school management and leadership. The present headteachers suffer from the lack of school resources (see Factor 26, p. 149). This is endorsed by the following statement:

*... sometimes reform fails because of insufficient resources or a sudden resource crisis. (AlHammami, 1999, p. 288)*

Indeed, this could be a major crisis leading to a failure of the current reform if the Ministry of Education cannot train and prepare teachers, for example, to create their own permanent teaching aids which can serve several purposes in the teaching/learning process.

#### ***Recommendation 16 – The availability of specialist teaching staff is essential to school development***

Sadly, the targeted schools of this research project have suffered from a shortage of teachers of creative subjects (see Factor 26, p. 149). However, the new concepts of staffing the primary schools in particular may allow the Ministry to think seriously of creating more field teachers, so as to equip schools more efficiently. For example, creating field teachers would remedy the shortage of creative activity teachers at primary school level, because it would be easy for a single teacher to teach young children music and art, to take one example, since there is interdisciplinary connection between at least these kinds of subject<sup>18</sup>.

### **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TEN**

Reviewing this chapter as well as earlier ones reveal some general implications which can be summed up for the Ministry of Education to consider in terms of ways of supporting the current developments of the General Education System (GES), they are as follows:

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<sup>18</sup> Creating field teachers has been introduced by the current reform in three major fields of primary education: first, Islamic and Arabic; second, Mathematics and Science; third, linguistic (e.g. English) (Ministry of Education, 1998). The fourth field could be represented by creative activities as recommended above.

### **About the present primary school headteachers**

- The present primary headteachers could represent the core of the Omani experts if they were valued on the basis of their experience, because the majority have enough experience in school leadership (see Chart 14, p. 226). However, most of them need more attention to be spent on preparing them to be school leaders, especially in the current situation. They need to be supported by investing them with adequate and efficient (competent) authority in order to allow them to act as genuine school leaders.
- The primary school headteachers will require on-going support for their efforts to integrate E-learning and ICT applications according to the current reform of the Omani education system.
- In line with the current requirements of educational development, Omani primary school headteachers who are non-degree holders require to have their qualifications upgraded in order to meet the challenge of changes in schools now and in the future.
- Omani primary school headteachers should be distinctively known as the ‘first-school-leaders’, because they are only ones who must be in charge; for example, in carrying out effective reforms.
- It has to be said that the quality of school leadership can be represented by the ability of the leader to choose appropriate words<sup>19</sup> in his/her conversations and communications, as well as in bearing them out in meanings, actions and behaviours. For instance, keeping school commitments requires the leader to explain what, how and when they should be performed. Furthermore, the school leader should realise the importance of consulting his/her colleagues in such tasks, because no one knows everything. Hence, it is crucial that educational leaders, whether officials or practitioners (headteachers) should think of themselves as capable of being right or wrong; for example, in making decisions; this will lead to effective teamwork.
- The present primary school headteachers should be prepared for the E-learning crisis as well as for the optimal use of technology before turning their schools towards the new leadership and educational trends.

### **About the existing primary schools of the GES**

- The existing primary schools of the GES should urgently be improved to the level of the model schools of the current Omani reform in education; hence, the existing schools should have to be refurbished, redefined and reequipped with modern technology such

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<sup>19</sup> The researcher has learnt that ‘words’ have both positive and negative effects; therefore, the school leaders should think of using powerful, but positive words among their colleagues, e.g. if the headteachers cannot provide objective rewards; then they must express their gratitude instead. In fact, this is less individuals than rewarding some and not others.

as Learning Resource Centres (LRCs). In this regard, it is important to transform the existing schools into modern ones according to the requirements of the current educational reform. However, as discussed above, all the new tasks of the reform, including the tasks of school leadership should be integrated, one task at a time, in all the existing schools of the GES.

- Reforming and developing the practice of primary school leadership in Oman can be as effective as the Ministry and the headteachers want it to be, so long as they do not attempt too much (e.g. targets need to be precisely measured). For example, constructing a productive school leadership model (see Figure 3, p. 271) which serves the country's requirements requires educationalists to think realistically of adapting useful leadership tasks. At the same time, both parties should take action according to previous planned preparations; this also needs them to be aware of conditions in the existing schools (e.g. get a sense of school conflicts). In such a situation, the lack of good planning may cause disasters (e.g. every action requires sufficient time for planning).

#### **About the direction of the current reform of the GES**

- The Ministry should equip all teachers with enough training in ICT to use the computers and computer applications in connection with their specialist subject, whatever it is.
- The reasons which may delay the transforming and redefining the existing practice of primary school leadership, as well as the reform in general, can be divided into three major areas: (a) insufficient involvement of primary school headteachers in the current developments; (b) too few fully empowered headteachers; (c) a shortage of school and human resources.
- It is essential for the Ministry of Education to think about empowering the school governing bodies: the PTA should play a major role by offering them the needed authority and of course, the empowerment should be a partnership between the PTA members and school leaders. In this regard, schools should be allowed to work independently in areas acceptable to the Ministry of Education (e.g. this might need to be tested by using model schools).

Considering the findings as well as the contributions of this research project seems to have opened the door for further research relevant to the primary school leadership in Oman; hence, 'in point of fact, yesterday's Omani students could become today's researchers' because of their valuable experiences as headteachers.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 - Fieldwork materials

#### Letter 1 - From the researcher to Omani educational leaders



School of Education  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
U.K.

**Dear/** Omani educational leaders

**Date:** 10 / 01/2000

**Sponsor:** Ministry of Higher Education, The  
Sultanate of Oman.

**Researcher:** Harith N. S. AlHinai

**University:** The University of Birmingham,  
U. K.

Reference:

Ph.D. research project on a topic under the title: AN EVALUATION OF THE EXISTING PRACTICE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN: Ensuring the Effective Implementation of the Current Reform of the General Education System.

The researcher believes that the interviewees in this research could play an important role in providing information and would thus have the privilege of seeing themselves as partners in their contribution to this research. They should know that this research is probably be one of the earliest to be conducted to study the implementation of the Primary School Leadership in General Education System (GES) in Omani schools.

From this research, therefore, the researcher would be able to tell if the primary school leadership which is practised in Omani schools is effective or functions ineffectively. Whichever it is, maybe we can say that the primary school leadership in Oman needs to be redefined and improved, transformed and developed on the lines of the Ministry of Education's plans of raising the standards of teaching and learning in the schools of the Sultanate. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that the educational leaders in Oman and elsewhere may find this research a good resource in studying the current practice of primary school leadership within the GES. In this research a selective, purposeful sample of the population will be used, representing Omani leaders, whether policy makers in the central office, the Ministry of Education; administrative officials in Directorates General in the regions, or practitioners (headteachers) in primary schools.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership Theories will be used as a framework and from this a scale will be developed to assess the possible efficiency and effectiveness of the current practice of primary school leadership in Omani schools.

The selected regions which are used as a sample are four regions out of ten: AlBatinah North, AlBatinah South, Muscat and AlDakhiliah. The researcher will conduct individual interviews with Directors General and their Deputies at the Central Office of the Ministry of Education (i.e. the Headquarters of Curriculum and Training and Headquarters of Planning

and Educational Information); Directors General and Educational Supervision Managers in educational regions; and primary school headteachers in schools following the GES.

Each individual interview is planned to take about 90 minutes, while senior teachers will be invited to focus group interviews which should take about 120 minutes. The primary school headteachers will be involved in focus group sessions. Arrangements will be discussed and agreed with all interviewees for conducting interviews and all will be informed about the date, time and location of meetings. The interviews will be used for both a pilot study and actual fieldwork, and the whole process of conducting both will take about six months. A short period of time will be needed for analysing data and refining the interview schedules and so forth in between the pilot study and the actual fieldwork. The pilot study will be credited as part of the actual fieldwork which will be used for testing research methodological questions (3<sup>rd</sup> April to 19<sup>th</sup> May 2000). The researcher might pay a second visit to the interviewees who were involved in the pilot study, in order to complete any tasks left unfinished during the pilot study.

The questions of the interviews are semi-structured in order to allow the interviewees to comment, explain and express their opinions freely in relation to each point or question (for more information on research methodological questions, see the attached). The researcher will play the role of the facilitator in presenting questions and points.

The responses of the interviewees will be considered as essential information to the research. Also, responses will be dealt with confidentially for the purposes of this research.

Finally, the researcher would like to thank the officials in both the Ministry of Higher Education for sponsoring the research project and in the Ministry of Education for their support in providing an official letter to inform the interviewees in the educational fields. Last but not least, thanks are extended to all the interviewees who will give their time to develop, discuss and provide fundamental data for this research.

Harith N.S. AlHinai  
The Researcher

Dr. Desmond Rutherford  
The Academic Supervisor

Letter 1 provides an introduction to Methodological Questions for Omani officials and primary school headteachers (the targeted population of this research project, see also the Arabic version of Letter 2, below). This introduction also was translated into Arabic (see Letter 2 below).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

المختمين

إلى الأفاضل/ القادة التربويين العمانيين

الكفيل: وزارة التعليم العالي-سلطنة عمان

التاريخ: ٢٠٠٠/٠٥/٢٠

الجامعة: جامعة بيرمنجهام بالملكة المتحدة

الباحث: حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي

الموضوع: برنامج رسالة الدكتوراه في موضوعها:

**ممارسة القيادة التربوية في المدارس العمانية: دراسة حول تطوير القيادة المدرسية الابتدائية بنظام التعليم العام.**

يعتقد الباحث أن المشاركين سوف يكون لهم دورا هاما في توفير معلومات هامة، ولذا فمن حقهم أن يعتبروا أنفسهم شركاء، لمساهمتهم في هذا البحث. ولعلمهم أن هذا البحث يمكن أن يكون من أوائل البحوث التي تدرس طرق ممارسة القيادة التربوية في نظام التعليم العام بالمدارس العمانية.

فمن خلال هذا البحث، وبناء عليه، سوف يستطيع الباحث الحكم على أن القيادة التربوية في نظام التعليم العام فاعلة أو إذا ما كانت تعمل بشكل غير فاعل، وربما يمكن القول أن ممارسة القيادة (الإدارة) بهذا النوع من التعليم يحتاج إلى تطوير فيما يتناسب مع خطط وزارة التربية والتعليم لرفع مستوى التدريس والتعليم بمدارس السلطنة. زيادة على ذلك، يأمل الباحث من القادة التربويين في عمان وفي أي مكان آخر أن يجدوا من هذا البحث المصدر الجيد لدراسة الوضع الراهن لممارسات أعمال القيادة المدرسية بالمرحلة الابتدائية في نظام التعليم العام. وستقوم الدراسة بهذا البحث على عينة مختارة كشرحية يقاس عليها، وتمثل عامة القيادات التربوية العمانية، إذا ما كانت كقيادات مركزية ممثلة عن وزارة التربية والتعليم ومديريات المناطق التعليمية، أو حقلية كقيادات مدرسية.

**نظريتا القيادة التحويلية/التحويلية Transactional/Transformational Leadership Theories**

سوف تستعمل كإطار عمل، ومنها سوف يطور مقياس لإمكانية التحقق من فاعلية واقتصادية التطبيق الحالي للقيادة المدرسية بالمرحلة الابتدائية بنظام التعليم العام للمدارس العمانية.

المناطق التعليمية المختارة كعينة للتطبيق هي أربع مناطق من عشر: الباطنة شمال، الباطنة جنوب، مسقط، والمدخلية. سيقوم الباحث بمقابلات شخصية وجماعية. فالمقابلات الشخصية سوف تكون مع مدراء عموم ونوابهم بديوان عام وزارة التربية والتعليم، كمديرية المناهج والتدريب ومديرية التخطيط والمعلومات التربوية، ومع مدراء عموم ومديرو دوائر الإشراف التربوي بمديريات المناطق التعليمية المختارة.

ستكون مدة كل مقابلة شخصية حوالي ٩٠ دقيقة، في حين ستكون دعوة مدراء/مديرات المدارس الابتدائية للمقابلات الجماعية لمدة ١٢٠ دقيقة. سوف تدرس الإجراءات التنظيمية لجميع المقابلات مع المشاركين أنفسهم (أو الجهات الرسمية التابعين لها)، وسيلغون عن تاريخ، ووقت، ومكان عقد تلك اللقاءات. سوف تنظم المقابلات للتطبيق الفعلي الحالي للعمل الميداني. وقد سبق أن قام الباحث بإجراء للتطبيق الجزئي خلال فترة سابقة، تخللت الأشهر من يناير وحتى مارس، ٢٠٠٠. كلا الحالتين، التطبيق الجزئي والتطبيق الفعلي خطط لهما بأن ينفذان في مدة ستة أشهر تقريبا. وقد تخللت فترة قصيرة (٣ إبريل-١٩ مايو، ٢٠٠٠) فيما بين التطبيق الجزئي والتطبيق

## Letter 2 (continued)

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الفعلية خصصت لفحص المعلومات وتحليلها، وإعادة النظر في جدول المقابلات. والتطبيق الجزئي (الذي استخدم لفحص أسئلة طرق البحث) سوف يكون محسوبا من ضمن أعمال التطبيق الفعلي. لذا فالباحث يمكن أن يقوم بزيارة ثانية للمشاركين الذين شاركوا في التطبيق الجزئي، لاستكمال موضوعات لم تشمل خلال التطبيق الجزئي، وذلك عند الضرورة.

من أجل إتاحة فرصة للمشاركين في حرية التعبير والتعليق والشرح المستفيض عن آرائهم حول كل نقطة أو سؤال، فإن أسئلة المقابلات ستكون شبه-مبنية Semi-Structured ولزيد من المعلومات حول أسئلة البحث، أنظر المرفق. فالباحث سيقوم بدور المنسق والمنظم لتقديم الأسئلة وموضوعات المناقشة. إن إجابات المشاركين ستعتبر كمعلومات أساسية للبحث. كما أن جميع الإجابات ستعامل بسرية تامة ولأغراض هذا البحث.

أخيرا، يود الباحث أن يشكر الجهات الرسمية بالوزارتين الموقرتين وزارة التعليم العالي لرعايتها على التكفل في دعم هذا البحث، ووزارة التربية والتعليم لمساندتها في استخراج رسائل رسمية لإخطار المشاركين بالحقل التربوي. آخرها وليس بأخير، فإن الشكر موصول إلى جميع المشاركين الذين سيتفضلون بوقتهم في تطوير ومناقشة وتوفير معلومات أساسية لهذا البحث.

حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي

الباحث



د. دسموند رذرفورد

المشرف الأكاديمي

Letter 2 provides an introduction to the Arabic version of the Methodological Questions (see also the English version, Letter 1, above). This introduction was also associated with questions; this means that everything which should be introduced, clarified and addressed was provided for the respondents in both individual and focus group interviews. The researcher distributed the methodological questions himself, and he double-checked to see if they had been received by the targeted population. However, many of them were given out by hand, especially to those who were involved in the individual interviews.

## List 1 - Arabic version of the Methodological Questions

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### جدول لأسئلة شبه-مبنية للمقابلات الفردية والجماعية

{ المقابلات الفردية ستكون مع مدراء عموم ونوابهم بديوان عام وزارة التربية والتعليم، ومدراء عموم ومديرو الإشراف التربوي بمديريات المناطق التعليمية المختارة & أما المقابلات الجماعية فستكون مع مدراء/مديرات المدارس الابتدائية }

### بنظام التعليم العام بسلطنة عمان

للباحث: حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي

(٩٠ دقيقة للمقابلة الفردية & ١٢٠ دقيقة للمقابلة الجماعية)

(٢٠/١٥ دقيقة)

### ١. كيف يتم تطبيق الإدارة/القيادة المدرسية الابتدائية بنظام التعليم العام؟

• يرجى من فضلك التوضيح حول:

- أ. ما القيم التي تنبئ عليها القيادة المدرسية الابتدائية في عمان؟
- ب. صف/صفي تطبيق الإدارة/القيادة بالمرحلة الابتدائية لنظام التعليم العام.
- ت. كيف تطبق الإدارة/القيادة المدرسية بمدارسك/بمدارسك الابتدائية؟
- ث. من هم المسؤولون عن تطبيق القيادة المدرسية الابتدائية؟ ولماذا؟
- ج. القيادة الرجالية/النسوية بمدارس التعليم العام للمرحلة الابتدائية.
- ح. موضوعات أخرى تود/تودين إضافتها لها علاقة بالسؤال الأول (خلاصة الحديث).

(٢٠/١٥ دقيقة)

### ٢. ما هي الأفكار الإدارية/القيادية المدرسية الابتدائية التي قدمها نظام التعليم العام؟

• يرجى من فضلك التوضيح حول:

- أ. مفهوم القيادة المدرسية عند القادة التربويين العمانيين.
- ب. صف/صفي السمات التي ينبغي أن تكون في قادة المدرسة العمانية بالمرحلة الابتدائية لنظام التعليم العام.
- ت. صف/صفي القيادة المدرسية التي تطبق بالمرحلة الابتدائية لنظام التعليم العام.
- ث. ماذا تعني لك كلمة مدير مدرسة؟ كيف ومتى تعتبر/تعتبرين مدير/مديرة المدرسة كقائدة تربوية؟
- ج. ما هو الدور القيادي الذي تقوم/تقومين به بالعلاقة للقيادة المدرسية الابتدائية؟
- ح. موضوعات أخرى تود/تودين إضافتها لها علاقة بالسؤال الثاني (خلاصة الحديث).

(٢٠/١٥ دقيقة)

### ٣. ما هي الممارسات التي قدمها نظام التعليم العام والتي لها صلة بالقيادة المدرسية الابتدائية؟

• يرجى من فضلك التوضيح حول:

- أ. مسؤوليات مدراء/مديرات المدارس الابتدائية.
- ب. مسؤوليات مساعدي مدراء/مديرات المدارس الابتدائية.
- ت. ممارسات مميزة بالمرحلة الابتدائية عن بقية المراحل التعليمية بنظام التعليم العام.
- ث. هل يمكنك أن تحدثني/تحدثيني عن الوقت الذي تحتاجه/تحتاجينه لتنفيذ جميع الأعمال الموكلة إليك بكل يوم مدرسي؟
- ج. موضوعات أخرى تود/تودين إضافتها لها علاقة بالسؤال الثالث (خلاصة الحديث).

## List 1 (continued)

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### ٤. هل واجهتكم عقبات ومخارقات منذ أن تم العمل بنظام التعليم العام بمدارسك/بمدارسك

(بالمدراس العمانية) والتي لها صلة بالقيادة المدرسية الابتدائية؟ (٢٠/١٥ دقيقة)

- يرجى من فضلك التوضيح حول:
  - أ. ما العقبات أو المخارقات في إدارة أعمال المدرسة يوماً بيوم؟
  - ب. ما السلبيات التي برزت خلال الممارسات القيادية بنظام التعليم العام وعلى وجه التحديد بالمرحلة الابتدائية؟
  - ت. كيف يمكنك إدارة أعمال المدرسة عند غياب معلمين؟
  - ث. الجانب الغير فاعل في إدارة الأنشطة المدرسية (التطبيق الغير فاعل).
  - ج. عدم إدراك قادة المدرسة (أعضاء الهيئة التدريسية) بمسؤولياتهم.
  - ح. هل تظن/تظنين أن نظام التعليم العام سوف يجعل القيادات المدرسية أقل فاعلية؟ كيف؟
  - خ. عدم فاعلية دليل القيادة المدرسية (لائحة التعليم العام الصادرة عن وزارة التربية والتعليم) والمنبذة بالمرحلة الابتدائية.
  - د. موضوعات أخرى تود/تودين إضافتها لها علاقة بالسؤال الرابع (خلاصة الحديث).

### ٥. كيف يمكن التحقق من نجاح القيادة المدرسية بالمرحلة الابتدائية لنظام التعليم العام؟ (٢٠/١٥ دقيقة)

- يرجى من فضلك التوضيح حول:
  - أ. التطبيق الفاعل للقيادة/الإدارة المدرسية بالمرحلة الابتدائية.
  - ب. التغذية الراجعة من الحقل إلى وزارة التربية والتعليم (كجهاز مركزي) وبالعكس.
  - ت. فاعلية دليل القيادة المدرسية (لائحة التعليم العام الصادرة عن وزارة التربية والتعليم) والمنبذة بالمرحلة الابتدائية.
  - ث. تطلعات مدراء/مديرات المدارس ليصبحون قادة تربويين مستقبلاً.
  - ج. أعمال متميزة يقدمها القيادات المدرسية (مثل: إدارة مشاغل، حلقات نقاش، أو تقديم أوراق عمل بما لها علاقة بالعمل المدرسي).
  - ح. فاعلية القادة التربويين بالجهاز المركزي وبالمناطق التعليمية.
  - خ. هل تظن/تظنين أن نظام التعليم العام سوف يجعل القيادات المدرسية أكثر فاعلية؟ كيف؟
  - د. ما الإيجابيات التي برزت خلال الممارسات القيادية بنظام التعليم العام وعلى وجه التحديد بالمرحلة الابتدائية؟
  - ذ. إدراك القيادات المدرسية (أعضاء الهيئة التدريسية) بمسؤولياتهم.
  - ر. موضوعات أخرى تود/تودين إضافتها لها علاقة بالسؤال الخامس (خلاصة الحديث).

### ٦. كيف يمكن تطوير القيادة المدرسية بالمرحلة الابتدائية لنظام التعليم العام؟ (٢٠/١٥ دقيقة)

- يرجى من فضلك التوضيح حول:
  - أ. الارتقاء بالمستوى القيادي (الإداري) بالمرحلة الابتدائية.
  - ب. برامج تدريبية وتأهيلية لمساعدى المدراء/المديرات بالمرحلة الابتدائية.
  - ت. ما الأمور التي تحتاجها/تحتاجينها من أجل تنفيذ أعمالك بشكل أكثر فاعلية؟
  - ث. كيف يمكنك أن تحسن من قدرتك في الأداء بشكل فاعل؟
  - ج. بالنسبة لتطويرك مهنيًا، ماذا تحتاج/تحتاجين من أجل تطوير أدائك/لنقف/لنقفي على آخر معلومة جديدة لها علاقة بوظيفتك؟
  - ح. ما هي أهم الطرق التي ينبغي اتخاذها لمساندة زملاء العمل بقصد تحقيق فاعلية في الأداء؟
  - خ. برامج تنمية للقيادات المدرسية وأعضاء هيئة التدريس من أجل الارتقاء بأدائهم.
  - د. هل تود/تودين استحداث وظائف جديدة لها علاقة بتطوير القيادة المدرسية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، كيف تستطيع/تستطيعي ربطها بتحسين القيادة المدرسية؟
  - ذ. موضوعات أخرى تود/تودين إضافتها لها علاقة بالسؤال السادس (خلاصة الحديث).

List 1 provides a translation of the Methodological Questions. Professor Khalid AlTawarah, Dean of the College of Education – Sohar City, revised the Arabic phonetics and grammar and translation which the researcher provided (see Letter 3, p. 285 and also the English version of the Methodological Questions, Table 6, p. 68).

### Questionnaire 2 - Respondent's Professional Information (Arabic version)

Questionnaire 2 was distributed to the respondents during the sessions of the interviews, whether individual or focus group. This single sheet questionnaire was used to provide further evidence by collecting supplementary information which would be associated with the aims of the methodological and key research questions (for more information see, Table 5, p. 67, Table 6 and Questionnaire 1, p. 71).

**استمارة معلومات عن المشارك # ( )**

الوظيفة الكلف أو بها	سنوات الخبرة في الوظيفة الحالية	الوظيفة الحالية	الدرجة (اختياري)

الدرجة الوطني السادس	الدرجة الوطني الخامس	الدرجة الوطني الرابع	الدرجة الوطني الثالث	الدرجة الوطني الثاني	الدرجة الوطني الأول

نوع الدراسة	مدة الدراسة	بلد التخرج	سنة التخرج	التخصص بآخر مراحل	الدرجة (اختياري)

**Letter 3 – A Letter to Prof. Khalid AlTawarah, the Dean of the College of Education in  
the city of Sohar**



School of Education  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
U.K.

**Date:** 13/01/2000

College of Education  
Ministry of Higher Education  
Sohar City  
The Sultanate of Oman

**From:** Harith AlHinai – Researcher

**To:** Prof. Khalid AlTawarah – The Dean of College of Education - Sohar

**Ref.:** A revision of an Arabic Translation for the Method Research Questions on a topic for a research project under the title: AN EVALUATION OF THE EXISTING PRACTICE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMAN: Ensuring the Effective Implementation of the Current Reform of the General Education System.

Dear Prof. Khalid AlTawarah

The researcher would be very grateful if you would agree to provide him with a revision of an Arabic translation which has been made by the researcher of his research questions. These research questions were written in English, and will be asked in both a pilot study and actual fieldwork for collecting data for the research project mentioned above. The Arabic translation will be needed for both individual and focus group interviews. Both types of interviews will be conducted with Omani educational leaders, officials (policy makers and administrative officials) and primary school headteachers. The researcher would like to be in touch with you for further changes if necessary to be made after conducting the pilot study to be approved for the actual fieldwork.

He would like to thank you in advance, for giving your time and contributing to this research project.

Yours sincerely,

*Harith AlHinai*

Harith AlHinai (Researcher)

CC: Dr. Desmond Rutherford, Supervisor, School of Education.



Appendix 2 - Documents concerning the Ministry of Education (Central Office)

Letter 4 – From the MHE to the COTOSD



شهادة لمن يهمه الأمر

تشهد دائرة الدراسات العليا بوزارة التعليم العالي بأن الفاضل/  
حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي يواصل دراسته العليا للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في  
مجال اقتصاديات التعليم بجامعة بيرمنجهام بالمملكة المتحدة ويقوم حالياً بإعداد بحث  
بعنوان ( تطبيق القيادة التربوية في المدارس العمانية نظرة تقييمية لإداء القيادة لضمان فعالية  
تطبيق نظام التعليم الأساسي) .

نرجو التكرم بمساعدة المذكور في الحصول على المعلومات والبيانات قدر الإمكان.

شاكرين ومقدرين كل جهد ومساعدة تقدم للمذكور لتسهيل مهمته.

سعيده بنت عبدالله الصبحي

١٤٤٠  
مديرة الدراسات العليا



Letter 4 issued on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2000, by the Manager of Higher Education (MHE) in the Ministry of Higher Education (the researcher's sponsor) to the officials in the Ministry of Education, Chief Officer of Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD). This was the first letter that the researcher had to start with in terms of formal conversations between the researcher's sponsor and the Ministry of Education which would host the research project. This letter also provides brief information about the researcher's name, the level of his research (as a PhD research student) and the name of the University of Birmingham. Moreover, it includes the researcher's subject field and his proposed research

topic. Furthermore, the MHE is enquiring, whether the researcher needs the officials' support in order to have access into the required information for the research. The focus of the study at first was to evaluate the practice of primary school leadership within the 'model schools' of the GES; however, the officials of the Ministry of Education redirected the research focus. Instead of studying the model schools, the researcher was persuaded to study the existing practice of primary schools of the GES (see their response in Letter 5, below).

### **Letter 5 – From the COTOSD to the MHE**

Letter 5 issued on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2000 by a Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) at the Ministry of Education which is included among the references as a response to Letter 4 (see above) and addressed to the Manager of Higher Education (MHE) in the Ministry of Higher Education. Also, it indicates that the researcher has received permission from the Ministry of Education to study the practice of primary school leadership within the GES. In this letter, the COTOSD emphasised that this research is desperately needed in order to contribute developmental feedback for the current reform of the GES. Regarding the date of Letter 4 (24<sup>th</sup> January 2000) and the date of this letter, it is noticeable that the officials in the Ministry of Education took a considerable time to come to a decision about giving the researcher permission to conduct his research in the Ministry's primary schools.

Letter 5 (continued) Arabic version

الرقم .....  
التاريخ: ١٤٤٥ / ١٢ / ١٥



سلطنة عمان  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير

المحترمة الفاضلة / سعيدة بنت عبد الله الصبحي

مدير الدراسات العليا

وزارة التعليم العالي

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته... وبعد ...

بالإشارة إلى رسالتكم رقم د . د . د . ع / ٨٨ / ٢٠٠٠ بتاريخ ٢٤ / ١ / ٢٠٠٠م والمتعلق  
بطلب تسهيل مهمة الباحث حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي في تطبيق بحثه للحصول على  
درجة الدكتوراه .

أود إقائتكم بأنه لن يستطيع تطبيق بحثه على مدارس التعليم الأساسي ذلك أن هذا النظام  
ما زال في مرحلة التطبيق ولكن يمكن تطبيق هذه الدراسة على مدارس التعليم العام حيث أن  
معظم المدارس ما زالت تطبق التعليم العام ومن الأفضل التركيز على التعليم العام في هذه الفترة  
للاستفادة من الدراسة في تطوير التعليم العام .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير،،،



د. سناء بنت سبيل الهنائي  
مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير

Letter 6 – From the COTOSD to the DGCPH

الرقم: .....  
التاريخ: .....



سلطنة عمان  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير

المحترم

✓ الفاضل / مدير عام المديرية العامة للمناهج والتدريب

المحترم

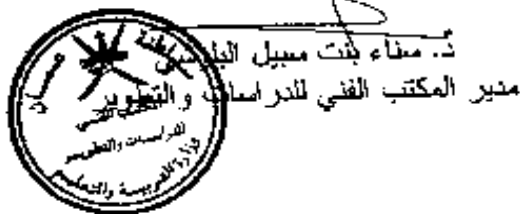
الفاضل / مدير عام المديرية العامة للتخطيط والمعلومات التربوية

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،،، وبعد ...

أود إفادتكم بأن الفاضل حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي يقوم حالياً بإجراء دراسة حول " ممارسة القيادة التربوية في المدارس العمانية " وذلك بهدف الحصول على درجة الدكتوراه من جامعة بيرمنجهام بالمملكة المتحدة .

عليه نغتنم شاكرين لكم تكرمكم بالإجابة على الأسئلة المرفقة المرتبطة بعملكم وسوف يقوم الباحث بزيارتكم لجمع المعلومات.

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير،،،



م. منة بنت مسيل النحاس  
مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير

Letter 6 was from a Chief Officer of the Technical Office at the Ministry of Education which was addressed to the Director General at the Curriculum and Professional Training Headquarters (DGCPH) (issued: 19/02/00). At this headquarters were two officials assigned for individual interviews; thus, two visits were required. The first visit was to hand in a list of the methodological questions, including a brief on the purpose of the research (see Table 6,

p. 68 and Letter 1, p. 278) and to fix a date for the interview. The second visit was, of course, to conduct the interview (see Table 7, p. 83, rows 1 – 12, column 1 and Table 8, p. 84, row 1, column 1). These headquarters are responsible for supporting the headteachers in their professions.

### **Letter 7 – From the COTOSD to the DGPEIH**

Letter 7 issued by a Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) at the Ministry of Education which was addressed to the Director General at the Planning and Educational Information Headquarters (DGPEIH) (issued on 19/02/00). This letter recommends that the researcher should have a chance to meet the targeted people and introduces him to them. The DGPEIH intended to provide the researcher with crucial information, whether through the interview or as documents (e.g. the GES guides); in this position, the DGPEIH is responsible for assessing the headteachers' performance (see Letter 7, below).

الرقم : .....  
التاريخ : .....



سلطنة عمان  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير

المحترم

الفاضل / مدير عام المديرية العامة للمناهج والتدريب

المحترم

الفاضل / مدير عام المديرية العامة للتخطيط والمعلومات التربوية

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ،،، وبعد ...

أود إقادتكم بأن الفاضل حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي يقوم حاليا بإجراء دراسة حول ' ممارسة القيادة التربوية في المدارس العمانية ' وذلك بهدف الحصول على درجة الدكتوراه من جامعة بيرمنجهام بالمملكة المتحدة .

عليه نغتنو شاكرين لكم تكرمكم بالإجابة على الأسئلة المرفقة المرتبطة بعملكم وسوف يقوم الباحث بزيارتكم لجمع المعلومات .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير ،،،

د. سناء بنت سبيل  
مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير  
المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير

Letter 8 - From the COTOSD to the DG of Muscat - Arabic version



الفاضل / مدير عام المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم بمحافظة مسقط المحترم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .

تجدون مرفقاً فيه دراسة حول « ممارسة القيادة التربوية في المدارس » للفاضل  
حازت بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي بهدف الحصول على درجة الدكتوراة من جامعة بير  
منجهام / المملكة المتحدة .

يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحث المذكور وذلك من خلال الاجابة على  
الاستمارتين المرفقتين حيث أن الاستمارة الأولى موجهة للأفاضل المدراء العاصون  
ومساعدتهم ومدراء ومديرات المدارس في مدارس التعليم العام والثانية موجهة  
لمدراء المدارس / المقابلة اجماعية ومساعدتي المدراء والمعلمين الأوائل في مدارس  
التعليم العام . وسوف يقوم الباحث بالتنسيق معكم حول الموضوع .

شاكرة لكم كريمة تعاونكم .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام .

د . سناء بنت سليل البلوشي

مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير



استقبلت كرسيل  
عبدالله  
19/02/00

Letter 8 was from a Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) at the Ministry of Education which was addressed to the Director General of the Muscat region (issued on 19/02/00). This letter is different from the previous ones (i.e. Letter 6 and Letter 7) because it indicates the researcher's targeted population, including deputy

headteachers and senior teachers; however, these two groups were not included later on in the population of this research project, because the researcher found insufficient numbers in both groups for this study. However, the researcher decided to focus only on the major groups of the population, the primary headteachers. Thus, there were minor adjustments to the methodological questions as a result of conducting the pilot study (see the Arabic version of Letter 8, below and also Chart 1, p. 82).

### **Letter 9 – From the COTOSD to the DG of AlBatinah North**

**Letter 9** dated 19<sup>th</sup> February 2000 and issued by a Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) at the Ministry of Education which was addressed to the Director General (DG) of AlBatinah North region (one of the biggest regions in Oman). It indicates the purpose of the research and provides similar information to Letter 8 (see above); each letter was sent to the personnel of the DG in the respective region (see Letter 9 - Arabic version, below).



Letter 9 (continued) - Arabic version



الفاضل / مدير عام المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة الباطنة شمال بالوكالة المحترم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ،،

تجدون مرفقاً ضمه دراسة حول « ممارسة القيادة التربوية في المدارس » للفاضل  
حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي بهدف الحصول على درجة الدكتوراة من جامعة بير  
منجهم / المملكة المتحدة .

يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحث المذكور وذلك من خلال الاجابة على  
الاستمارتين المرفقتين حيث أن لاستمارة الأولى موجهة للأفاضل المدراء العموم  
ومساعدتهم ومدراء ومديرات المدارس في مدارس التعليم لعام والثانية موجهة  
لمدراء المدارس / المقابلة الجماعية ومساعدتي المدراء والمعلمين الأوائل في مدارس  
التعليم العام . وسوف يقوّم الباحث بالتنسيق معكم حول الموضوع .

شاكرة لكم كريم تعاونكم .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام ،،،

د - سناء بنت سبيل البلوشي  
مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات و التطوير



Letter 10 - From the COTOSD to the DG of AlBatinah South (Arabic version)



الفاضل / مدير عام المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة الباطنة جنوب بالوكالة المحترم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .،

مجدون مرفقاً طيه دراسة حول « ممارسة القيادة التربوية في المدارس » للفاضل  
حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي بهدف الحصول على درجة الدكتوراة من جامعة بير  
منجهام / المملكة المتحدة .

يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحث المذكور وذلك من خلال الاجابة عنى  
الاستمورتين المرفقتين حيث أن الاستمارة الأولى موجهة للأفاضل المُدرّء العامون  
ومساعدتهم ومدراء ومديرات المدارس في مدارس التعليم العام والثانية موجهة  
لمدرء المدرس / انقابلة الجماعية ومساعدى المدرء وانعلمين الأوانل في مدارس  
التعليم العام - وسوف يقوم الباحث بالتنسيق معكم حول الموضوع -

شاكراً لكم كريم تعاونكم .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام .،،،

د . سناء بنت سبيل البلوشي  
مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والنظويء



استقبلت بلوشى  
الكبير

Letter 10 issued on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2000 by a Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) at the Ministry of Education addressed to the Director General (DG) of AlBatinah South region. It indicates similar information to that of Letter 8, p. 292 and Letter 9, p. 293, which inform the DGs about the researcher's interest in conducting his research in their primary schools.

### **Letter 11 – From the COTOSD to the DG of AlDakhiliah**

Letter 11 addressed to the Director General of AlDakhiliah region and issued on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2000 by a Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) of the Ministry of Education. It indicates the same information that was included in the above three letters (Letter 8, p. 292, **Letter 9**, p. 293 and Letter 10, p. 295). These were key letters for gaining access to Omani primary schools, including this letter (in the four targeted regions). Of course, as discussed above, these key letters were carried from the Central Office (the Ministry of Education) to the DGs of the targeted regions (see Letter 11 - Arabic version, below).



## Letter 12 - From the researcher to the DGPEI (Arabic version)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الفاضل/ مدير عام المديرية العامة للتخطيط والمعلومات التربوية المحترم.  
بديوان عام وزارة التربية والتعليم  
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

الموضوع: طلب معلومات تهم بحثي لرسالة الدكتوراه.

بناء على رسالة الفاضلة/ مدير الدراسات العليا والمسجلة تحت رقم: د.د.ع/2000/88 والصادرة بتاريخ: 2000/01/24م. أرجو من جنابكم التكرم بتزويدي ببعض المعلومات والوثائق المتوفرة لديكم أو بدوائر مديريتكم الموقرة.

ومن ضمن هذه الوثائق هي اللوائح التنظيمية لمدارس التعليم العام (بما يخص التعليم الابتدائي). وكذلك بيانات عن مدرسة الزهراء كأول مدرسة للبنات أسست على نظام التعليم العام، ومعلومات تخص المدرسة السعيدية للبنين بمسقط، ومعلومات ذات علاقة بتطوير أعمال الهيئات الإدارية بمدارس التعليم العام، بالمرحلة الابتدائية.

كما أود الإطلاع على التقارير النهائية عن سير ومتابعة العمل الإداري بالمدارس الابتدائية، لمدارس محافظة مسقط، منطقة شمال الباطنة، منطقة جنوب الباطنة، والمنطقة الداخلية، وأرجو تفضلكم بتزويدي بقوائم أسماء المدارس الابتدائية البحتة والتي تعمل بنظام التعليم العام بالمناطق سالفة الذكر، وذلك للعام الدراسي 2000/99م. كما وأرجو تكريمكم بتزويدي بكتيبات إحصائية للكوادر الإدارية للجنسين، وذلك لفترة ما بين 1970 وحتى 2000 ميلادية.

وتقبلوا منا وأخبر التقدير والاحترام.

حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي

(باحث)

حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي

حرر في: 2000/07/31

المرفقات: نسخة من رسالة الفاضلة/ مدير الدراسات العليا.

Letter 12 written on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2000 by the researcher and handed to the Director General of Planning and Educational Information (DGPEI). In this letter, the researcher provided needed details in connection with the official letter from the Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) to the DGPEI (see Letter 7, p. 290, which also addressed the purpose of the research project). The purpose of Letter 12 was to provide the researcher with the required information; this detailed information was not included in the

formal letter issued by the COTOSD. For example, in Letter 12 the researcher requests certain information, such as the number of primary schools in the targeted regions (Muscat, AlBatinah north, AlBatinah South and AlDakhilah). This allowed the researcher to focus on the correct and certain number of merely targeted primary schools in order to make his pattern of distribution of interviews even (questions) of interviewing evenly. In this regard, he took his next action only when he had a clear map of his targeted schools (124 primary schools, see List 2, p. 301). This letter also includes a request for important documents such as the Primary School Guide run under the GES; however, the researcher was only provided with access to some of the requested documents, while other documents were regarded as confidential (e.g. assessment reports on primary school headteachers' performance).

### **Letter 13 – From the MSID to the MHE**

Letter 13 was issued on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2000 by the Manager of the Statistics and Information Division (MSID) of the Ministry of Education and addressed to the Manager of Higher Education (MHE) of the Ministry of Higher Education. It is in answer to the formal letter from the MHE (see Letter 4, p. 286) and also takes appropriate action on the follow up letter received from the researcher (see Letter 12, p. 298) which was addressed to the Director General of Planning and Educational Information (DGPEI, see Letter 12) and referred by him to the MSID for further action. This letter indicates that the five pages of primary schools of the targeted regions of this research would be associated with Letter 13, according to the statistical records of 1999/2000 (see List 2 below).

الرقم: ٢٠٤ / ٢٦١  
التاريخ: ١٤٤٤/٥/٩ هـ الموافق: ٢٠٢٢/٨/٩



سَلْطَنَةُ عُمان  
وَزَارَةُ التَّحْقِيقِ وَالتَّعْلِيمِ

المحترمة

الفاضلة/ مدير دائرة الدراسات العليا

وزارة التعليم العالي

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ... وبعد ،،،

إشارة إلى رسالتكم رقم ٢٠٠٠/٨٨ بتاريخ ٢٠٠٠/١/٢٤م بشأن تسهيل مهمة الفاضل/ حارث بن ناصر الهنائي الذي يواصل دراسته العليا للحصول على درجة الدكتوراة في مجال اقتصاديات التعليم.

نرفق لكم بالفي توزيع المدارس الإبتدائية البحتة ( في ٥ صفحات) في السلطنة حسب المناطق التعليمية للعام الدراسي ٢٠٠٠/٩٩م.

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام ،،،

نييلة بنت عبد الله الغساني  
المكلف بأعمال مدير دائرة الإحصاء والمعلومات  
وزارة التربية والتعليم

**List 2 - Primary schools in the targeted regions: Muscat, AlBatinah North, AlBatinah South and AlDakhiliah (schools 1 to 23) - Arabic version**

اعداد : دائرة الإحصاء والمعلومات

**المدارس الإبتدائية البحتة في مناطق مسقط، الباطنة (شمال)، الباطنة (جنوب) والداخلية  
للعام الدراسي 2000/1999م**

اسم المدرسة *	رمز المدرسة
<b>محافظة مسقط</b>	
السعيدية /ب/ذ/م	1102
راشد بن النظر /ب/ذ	1104
زبيدة ام الامين /ب/ا/م	1110
شمساء الخليلي /ب/ا	1111
حسان بن ثابت /ب/ذ/م	1206
سلطان بن احمد /ب/ذ	1209
اسماء بنت ابي بكر /ب/ا/م	1218
نجية بنت عامر الحجري /ب/ا/م	1222
هند بنت عتبة /ب/ا	1225
هند بنت عتبة /ب/ا/م	1226
روي /ب/ا	1227
وادي عدي /ب/ا	1231
وادي عدي /ب/ذ/م	1232
الحضارة /ب/ذ	1240
الصهباء بنت ربيعته /ب/ا	1315
سيح الظبي /ب/ذ/م	1316
بوشـر /ب/ا	1413
بوشـر /ب/ذ/م	1414
الفتـح /ب/ح/ا	1415
شمس المعـارف /ب/ا	1417
الصاروج /ب/ذ	1419
فيض المعرفة /ب/ذ	1422
فيض المعرفة /ب/ا/م	1431



List 2 (continued): schools 24 to 49

اعداد : دائرة الإحصاء والمعلومات

اسم المدرسة *	رمز المدرسة
انس بن النظر/ر/ب/ذ	1508
حيل العوامر/ر/ب/ا/م	1510
السيب/ب/ب/ذ	1511
نسيبة بنت كعب/ب/ا	1518
عائشة بنت مسعود العامرية/ب/ا/م	1524
الخواض/ب/ا	1525
الخواض/ب/ذ/م	1526
خريس الحبوس/ب/ا	1529
خريس الحبوس/ب/ذ	1530
مصعب بن الزبير/ر/ب/ذ	1531
احمد بن النعمان الكعبي/ب/ذ/م	1532
زهرة قريش/ب/ا	1533
خريس الحبوس /ب/ذ/م	1535
حيل العوامر/ب/ذ	1540
انس بن النظر/ب/ذ/م	1560
البيان/ب/ا	1562
ام ورقة/ب/ا	1620
النعمان بن عدي/ب/ذ	1625
<b>الباطننة (شمال)</b>	
مسعود بن رمضان/ب/ذ	2116
ابوحزمة الشاري/ب/ذ/م	2118
الاشراق/ب/ا/م	2124
ابومالك الصلاتي/ب/ذ	2127
الطريف/ب/ذ	2152
المقداد بن الاسود/ب/ذ/م	2204
الارقم بن ابي الارقم/ب/ذ/م	2206
هلال بن عطية/ب/ذ/م	2212

List 2 (continued): schools 50 to 75

اعداد : دائرة الإحصاء والمعلومات

اسم المدرسة *	رمز المدرسة
خديجة الكبرى/ب/ا/م	2218
الضياء/ب/ا	2222
اروى ب/ا/م	2224
المصباح ب/ا/م	2237
الوارث بن كعب/ب/ذ/م	2302
الاهيف بن حمام الهنائي/ب/ذ	2306
السويق/ب/ا/م	2316
قباء/ب/ا/م	2324
ام معبد الخزاعية/ب/ا	2326
ابن دريد/ب/ذ	2336
الحواري بن مالك/ب/ذ/م	2404
ابن سيناب/ب/ذ	2409
بدر الكبرى/ب/ا/م	2416
حافظ بن سيف/ب/ذ/م	2501
العقدة/ب/ذ/م	2505
مشارق الانوار/ب/ا	2509
مشارق الانوار/ب/ذ/م	2510
سعيد بن المسيب/ب/م/ذ	2609
البليدة/ب/ذ	2617
البليدة/ب/ا/م	2618
سعد بن معاذ/ب/ذ	2619
<b>الباطنة (جنوب)</b>	
الرساق/ب/ذ/م	3106
عثمان بن مظعون/ب/ذ/م	3118
اروى بنت الحارث/ب/ا	3124
النوار بنت مالك/ب/مخ	3149
البراء بن مالك/ب/ذ	3151

List 2 (continued): schools 76 to 101

اعداد : دائرة الإحصاء و المعلومات

اسم المدرسة *	رمز المدرسة
الامام الصلت بن مالك/ب/ذ/م	3209
ابوعبالي الساحل/ب/ذ	3211
ابوعبالي الساحل/ب/ا/م	3212
الشعيبة/ب/ذ	3213
الشعيبة/ب/ا/م	3214
ودام الساحل /ب/مخ	3225
الامام خنيش بن محمد /ب/ذ	3227
ودام الغاف /ب/ا/م	3228
المـــــراغ/ب/ذ/م	3306
خولة بنت ثعلبة /ب/ مخ / م	3312
النعمان/ب/ا/م	3314
الامل/ب/ا/م	3320
الرميس/ب/ذ/م	3321
مشاعل المعرفة /ب / ا	3322
الهدى /ب/ذ	3402
نخل/ب/ا/م	3411
وادي المعاول /ب/ذ	3507
<b>الداخلية</b>	
سلطان بن سيف/ب/ذ/م	4108
نـــــزوى/ب/ا/م	4116
الشعناء بنت جابر/ب/ا	4120
مرفع دارس/ب/مخ/م	4122
الامام محمد بن اسماعيل/ب/ذ/م	4128
الجبل الاخضر/ب/ا	4129
مازن بن غضويبه/ب/ذ/م	4202
ام هاتـــــي/ب/ا/م	4204
سمائل الجديدة/ب/ذ	4221



## List 2 (continued): schools 102 to 124

اعداد : دائرة الإحصاء و المعلومات

رمز المدرسة	اسم المدرسة *
4223	الفيحاء/ب/ذ
4302	بلعرب بن سلطـان/ب/ذ
4318	بهـــلاء/ب/ا/م
4322	عائشة بنت طلحة/ب/ا
4324	المعمورة/ب/ذ/م
4404	صفية ام المؤمنين/ب/ا
4406	اسامة بن زيد/ب/ذ
4411	قرن العلم/ب/مخ
4412	المجازة/ب/مخ
4504	ابي سعيد الكدسي/ب/ذ/م
4507	الحمراء/ب/ا/م
4508	الشيخ ابراهيم بن سعيد العبري/ب
4511	مسفاة العبريين/ب/مخ
4606	مالك بن فهم/ب/ذ/م
4607	منح/ب/ا/م
4714	ام ايمن/ب/ا/م
4716	الفضل بن الحواري/ب/ذ/م
4717	ليد بن ربيعه/ب/ذ
4718	القلعة/ب/ا
4719	مدرعات سلطان عمان/ب/مخ
4802	الخليل بن عبدالله/ب/ذ/م
4806	الشيـــم/ب/ا
4808	زينب بنت قيس/ب/ا/م

\* هذه المدارس هي ذات الصفوف الابتدائية فقط ولا تشمل أي صف من أي مرحلة أخرى .

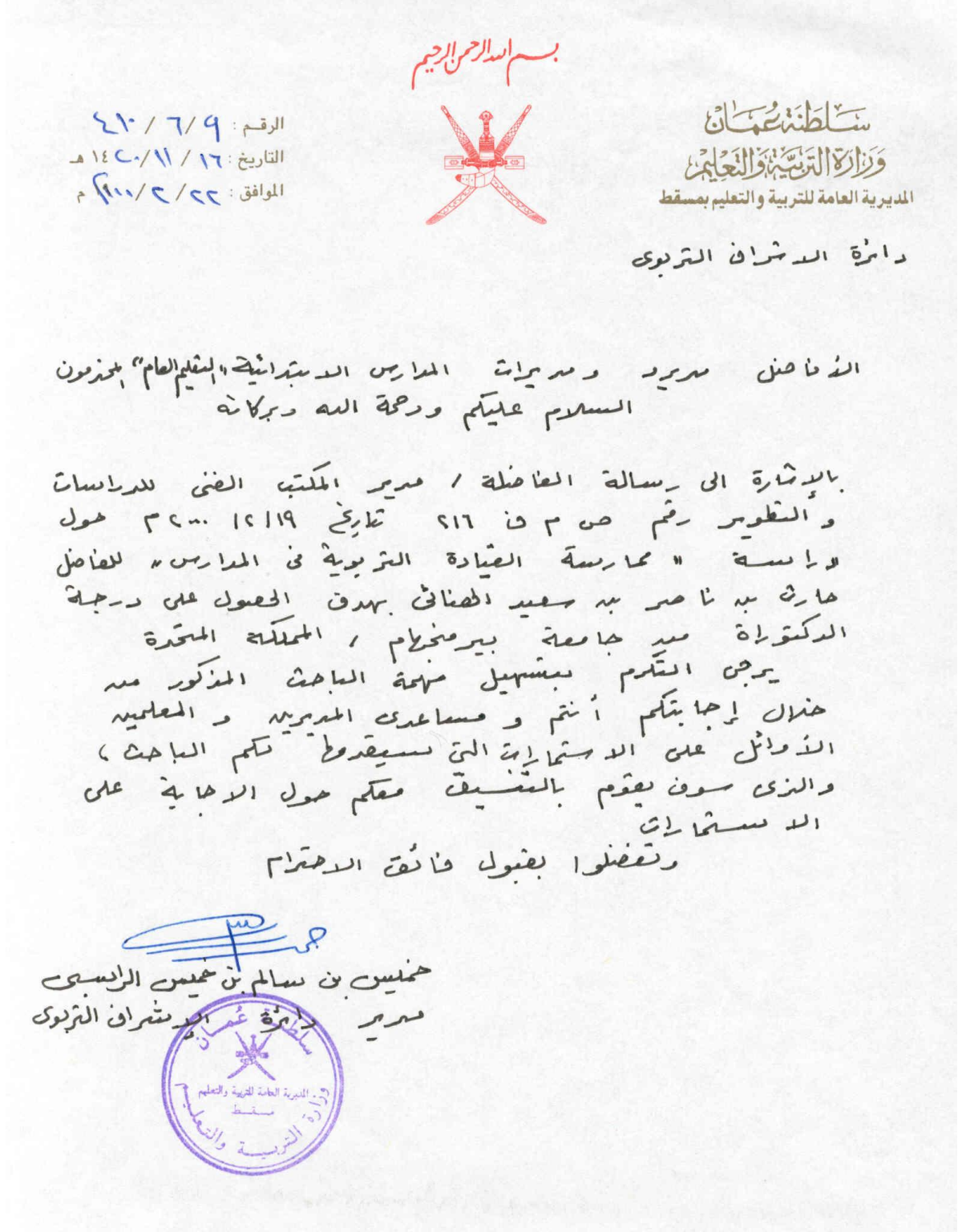
صفحة 5 من 5

List 2 indicates the targeted primary schools of this research project within the four selected regions of Oman (Muscat, AlBatinah North, AlBatinah South and AlDakhiliah). One hundred and twenty four primary schools were picked out by official administrators of the Statistics

and Information Division at the Ministry of Education; this list of primary schools was also provided to the researcher as a formal agreement for him to conduct his research at Omani primary schools run under the General Education System (GES). List 2 indicates the serial number of each school on the right hand side (as recorded in the Ministry) and indicates the names of the schools in each region. This list was established according to the statistical records of 1999/2000 (see the cover letter, pp. 299-301). The researcher required further information; however, he had to approach the administrative staff for it when he visited each region; for example, school locations, their telephone numbers and road maps (key directions leading to schools) from each Directorate General to be visited.

Appendix 3 - Documents concerning Muscat region

Letter 14 - From the MESD to the school headteachers in Muscat (Arabic version)



Letter 14 was issued on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2000 by the Manager of the Educational Supervision Division (MESD) and was sent to the primary school headteachers in the Muscat region in order to allow the researcher to visit and ensure their cooperation. Some information which

was stated in this letter was changed later, such as not including deputy headteachers and senior teachers, because insufficient numbers of both groups were available for this study.

### Letter 15 – From the researcher to the DG of Muscat

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الفاضل/ مدير عام المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم عسقط  
المختتم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

**الموضوع: طلب دعوة الأفاضل مدراء ومديرات المدارس الابتدائية للمقابلات الجماعية، وتكرمكم بتحديد موقع لإجراء المقابلات في إحدى مدارس مديريتكم الموقرة.**

بناء على رسالة الفاضلة/ مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير رقم: ص م.ف.٢١٦ والمؤرخ في: ١٣ ذو القعدة ١٤٢٠ للهجرة، الموافق: ٢٠٠٠/٢/١٩ للميلاد. وعلى غرار التعميم الصادر من مديريتكم الموقرة تحت رقم: ٤١٠/٦/٩ والمؤرخ في: ١٤٢٠/١١/١٦ للهجرة، والموافق: ٢٠٠٠/٢/٢٢ للميلاد. أرجو من جنابكم التكرم بإخطار مدراء ومديرات المدارس الابتدائية لحضور المقابلات الجماعية، وذلك حسب الجدول المبين أدناه (أو حسبما ترونه مناسباً).

الجنس	اليوم	التاريخ	الموقع
الفضلاء مدراء المدارس الابتدائية	السبت	٢٠٠٠/٦/١٧	
الفاضلات مديرات المدارس الابتدائية	الأحد	٢٠٠٠/٦/١٨	

حيث أن هذا البرنامج ضمن التطبيق الفعلي للعمل الميداني ولمتطلبات رسالة الدكتوراه.

وتقبلوا منا وافر التقدير والاحترام.

حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي  
(باحث)



حرر في: ٢٠٠٠/٦/٣

ملاحظة: المقابلات يمكن أن تزيد على يومين لكلا الجنسين وذلك حسب أعداد المشاركين.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2000, the researcher issued Letter 15 in order to make clear what he wanted to discuss with the administrative officials of the Directorate General of Education, Muscat, in terms of suggesting a proposed schedule for conducting the focus group interviews. He included optional dates for meeting male and female headteachers; 17<sup>th</sup> June 2000 was selected as the headmasters' session and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2000 for the headmistresses'. Also, this letter hints that the researcher would like the administrative officials to send another circular to invite the headteachers to attend the focus group interviews; the first circular (see Letter 14 above) did not include particular dates for such sessions. Unfortunately, the headteachers were very busy in June because it was the end of the academic year 1999/2000. Therefore, these dates again had to be changed and were postponed to the beginning of the new



Letter 16 - From the researcher to the DG of Muscat (Arabic version)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الفاضل/ مدير عام المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم بمسقط المحترم.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

**الموضوع: ردفا للطلب الذي تقدمت به إلى جنابكم والمؤرخ في: ٣٠٠٠/٦/٣، بشأن دعوة الأفاضل مدراء ومديرات المدارس الابتدائية للمقابلات الجماعية، و تكرمكم بتحديد موعد لإجراء المقابلات في إحدى مدارس مديريتكم الموقرة، أو بأي موقع ترونه مناسباً لهذا الطلب.**

بناء على رسالة الفاضلة/ مدير الدراسات العليا والمسجلة تحت رقم: د.د.ع/٨٨/٢٠٠٠ والصادرة بتاريخ: ٢٤/٠١/٢٠٠٠م، وبناء على رسالة الفاضلة/ مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير رقم: ص.م.٢١٦ والمؤرخ في: ١٣ ذو القعدة ١٤٢٠ للهجرة، الموافق: ١٩/٢/٢٠٠٠ للميلاد. وعلى غرار التعميم الصادر من مديريتكم الموقرة تحت رقم: ٩/٦/٤١٠ والمؤرخ في: ١٦/١١/١٤٢٠ للهجرة، والموافق: ٢٢/٢/٢٠٠٠ للميلاد. أرجو من جنابكم التكرم بإخطار مدراء ومديرات المدارس الابتدائية لحضور المقابلات الجماعية، وذلك حسب الجدول المبين أدناه (أو حسبما ترونه مناسباً).

المشاركون	اليوم	التاريخ
الفضلاء مدراء المدارس الابتدائية	الاثنين	٢٠٠٠/٩/٤
الفاضلات مديرات المدارس الابتدائية	الثلاثاء	٢٠٠٠/٩/٥

حيث أن هذا البرنامج ضمن التطبيق الفعلي للعمل الميداني ولتطلبات رسالة الدكتوراه.

ونشكر لكم حسن تعاونكم معنا، وتقبلوا منا وافر التقدير والاحترام.

حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي  
(باحث)



حرر في: ٢٦/٨/٢٠٠٠

المرفقات: نسخ من الرسائل المذكورة بعاليه.

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2000, the researcher wrote Letter 16 to offer alternative dates instead of those which were indicated in the previous letter (Letter 15). Again, the researcher suggested new dates for the focus group interviews in Muscat region, 4<sup>th</sup> September for the headmasters and 5<sup>th</sup> September 2000 for the headmistresses. Unfortunately, the headmasters missed the rescheduled date for their session on 4<sup>th</sup> September and it had to be shifted once more (see Table 7, p. 83, row 4, column 3). The researcher decided to move the session to the following day, and finally held both sessions on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2000, in order to make best use of the time available (see Table 7, row 5, column 3).



Letter 17 - From the MESD of Muscat Directorate General to the primary school headteachers in this region



Letter 17 of 26<sup>th</sup> August 2000 issued by the Manager of the Educational Supervision Division (MESD) of Muscat Directorate General. This letter indicates the rescheduled dates for the focus group interviews with primary school headteachers; thus, it had to be circulated to all of them. As discussed in the previous letter, the sessions were rescheduled according to the agreed dates (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> September 2000) with the administrative officials and as stated in the researcher's letter (see Letter 16, above).

Appendix 4 - Documents concerning AlBatinah North region  
Letter 18 - From the DG of AlBatinah North to primary school  
headteachers of the region (Arabic version)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الرقم : ٤٤٤ / ٣ / ١  
التاريخ : ١٢ / ١١ / ٢٠٠٠  
الموافق : ١ / ٣ / ٢٠٠٠

سلطنة عمان  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة الباطنة شمال  
مكتب المدير العام

الإفاضل / مديرو ومديرات مدارس المرحلة الابتدائية المحترمون

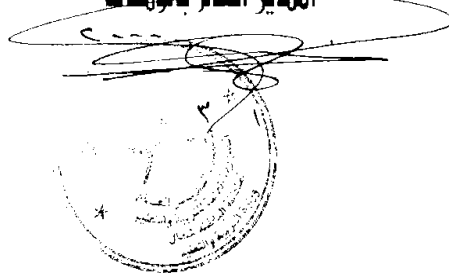
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .. وبعد ...

الموضوع : الباحث / جاريث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي دراسات عليا (دكتوراه)

نفيدكم بان الباحث المذكور أعلاه يقوم بالتحضير لرسالة الدكتوراه حول موضوع " ممارسة القيادة التربوية في المدارس " وسيقوم بتوزيع استمارات بذلك على مدراء ومديرات المدارس ومساعدتهم إضافة إلى المعلمين الأوائل في المرحلة الابتدائية لاستطلاع آرائهم حول بعض الأمور .  
لذا يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمته .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام ...

خلفان بن محمد بن راشد الغيثي  
المدير العام بالوكالة



نسخه الى :

مكتب المدير العام

مكتب المتابعة

ملف الرقم

٥٠٤ م

Letter 18 was issued on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2000 (at the beginning of conducting the pilot study); thus, the first letters included the researcher's starting plan of conducting the research by including, in addition to the headteachers, two further groups of the population, the deputy headteachers and the senior teachers. However, as discussed earlier (see Letter 14, p. 307), these two groups were omitted later because there were too few of them; hence, the numbers became

inadequate for this study. For example, the position of senior teacher was not yet established in all the primary schools of the targeted regions.

This letter was issued by the Director General (DG) of AlBatinah North and circulated to all primary school headteachers in this region to inform them about the researcher's interest.

### Letter 19 - From the researcher to the DG of AlBatinah North

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الفاضل/ مدير عام المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة شمال الباطنة  
المختص من

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

**الموضوع: طلب دعوة الأفاضل مدراء ومديرات المدارس الابتدائية للمقابلات الجماعية، وتكرمكم بتحديد موقع لإجراء المقابلات في إحدى مدارس مديرينكم الموقرة.**

بناء على رسالة الفاضلة/ مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير رقم: ص م.ف.٢١٦ والمؤرخ في: ١٣ ذو القعدة ١٤٢٠ للهجرة، الموافق: ٢٠٠٠/٢/١٩ للميلاد. وعلى غرار التعميم الصادر من مديريتكم الموقرة تحت رقم: ٤٤٤/٣/١ والمؤرخ في: ١٤٢٠/١١/٢٤ للهجرة، والموافق: ٢٠٠٠/٣/١ للميلاد. أرجو من جنابكم التكرم بإخطار مدراء ومديرات المدارس الابتدائية لحضور المقابلات الجماعية، وذلك حسب الجدول المبين أدناه (أو حسبما ترونه مناسباً).

الجنس	اليوم	التاريخ	الموقع
الفضلاء مدراء المدارس الابتدائية	الثلاثاء	٢٠٠٠/٦/١٣	
الفاضلات مديرات المدارس الابتدائية	الأربعاء	٢٠٠٠/٦/١٤	

حيث أن هذا البرنامج ضمن التطبيق الفعلي للعمل الميداني ولمتطلبات رسالة الدكتوراه.

وتقبلوا منا وافر التقدير والاحترام.

حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي  
(باحث)

حرر في: ٢٠٠٠/٥/٣١

Letter 19 was issued on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2000 by the researcher to the Director General of AlBatinah North region, and may also be considered the sort of follow-up that the researcher always carried out in order to remind the administrative officials of the purpose of his contact. Normally, a follow-up letter should indicate the previous issued letters by each directorate, such as this one, which recalled two major official letters issued in sequence before this letter. They were an official letter received from the Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) which was addressed to the DG (see Letter 8, p. 292) and a letter issued by this directorate previously (see above, Letter 18). Letter 19 also suggested two possible dates for focus group interviews with primary headteachers; it was hoped that the administrative official would approve this (see the following letter).

Letter 20 - From the DG of AlBatinah North to primary school headteachers (Arabic version)



Letter 20 was issued by the Director General of AlBatinah North on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2000 informing the primary school headteachers about when they should attend the focus group interviews, as stated in the researcher's letter (see above, Letter 19). This was the second letter from the Director General sent to primary school headteachers. Unfortunately, again this schedule had to be changed slightly; see the following letters (Letter 21 and Letter 22).

Letter 21 - From the researcher to the DG of AlBatinah North

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الفاضل/ مدير عام المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة شمال الباطنة المحترم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

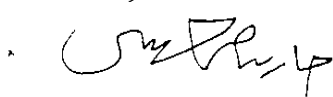
الموضوع: إخطار الفاضلات مديرات المدارس الابتدائية بتغيير موعد المقابلة الجماعية.

بناء على التعميم الصادر من مديريتكم الموقرة تحت رقم: ١٣٤١/٣/١ والمؤرخ في: ١٤٢١/٣/٢ للهجرة، والموافق: ٢٠٠٠/٦/٥ للميلاد. أرجو من جنابكم التكرم بإخطار الفاضلات مديرات المدارس الابتدائية بتغيير موعد اللقاء للمقابلة الجماعية معهن من الموعد السابق: ٢٠٠٠/٦/١٤، إلى يوم الأربعاء، الموافق: ٢٠٠٠/٦/٢١، وذلك لوقوع إجازة المولد النبوي الشريف بالموعد السابق.

وتقبلوا منا وافر التقدير والاحترام.

حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهناني

(باحث)



حرر في: ٢٠٠٠/٦/١٣

The researcher wrote Letter 21 to the Director General (DG) of AlBatinah North region. This was the researcher's second letter. As discussed in Letter 20 (see above), the date (14<sup>th</sup> June 2000) was assigned for a session with the headmistresses; however, this was changed because it was a holiday. The researcher issued Letter 21 on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2000 (this was the date for conducting a focus group interview with the headmasters, see Letter 20) in order to circulate another letter to inform the headmistresses about the change of the session schedule. The DG rescheduled this session as suggested by the researcher - 21<sup>st</sup> instead of 14<sup>th</sup> June 2000 (see also the following letter from the DG, Letter 22).



Letter 22 - From the DG of AlBatinah North to the primary school headteachers in his region (Arabic version)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الرقم : ١٤١٣ / ٣ / ١  
التاريخ : ١٤٤١ / ٣ / ١٤  
الموافق : ٢٠٠٠ / ٦ / ١٧

سلطنة عمان  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة الباطنة شمال  
مكتب المدير العام

الفاضلات / مديرات المدارس الابتدائية المحترمات

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد ...

الموضوع : تعديل موعد المقابلة الجماعية مع الفاضل / حارث بن ناصر الهنائي .

إحاقاً إلى كتابنا تحت رقم ١٣٤١/٣/١ هـ الموافق ٢٠٠٠/٦/٥ م والمتضمن تحديد موعد المقابلة الجماعية مع الفاضل / حارث بن ناصر الهنائي يوم ٢٠٠٠/٦/١٤ م. ونظراً لوقوع هذا اليوم إجازة المولد النبوي الشريف فقد تحدد أن يكون اللقاء المذكور يوم الأربعاء الموافق ٢٠٠٠/٦/٢١ م بمسرح ديوان عام المديرية الساعة التاسعة صباحاً .  
وللأهمية نرجو الحضور في الزمان والمكان المحددين .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام ...

خلفان بن محمد بن راشد الخيثي  
المدير العام

نسخه الى :  
مكتب المدير العام  
مكتب المتابعة  
ملف الرقم  
٢٠٤

سلطنة عمان  
مكتب المدير العام  
مديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم  
منطقة الباطنة شمال  
وزارة التربية والتعليم

rushed to primary school headteachers, because they had to be informed about the rescheduled date for attending the focus group interview (a single session was held for each sex in each region). The researcher in fact wrote Letter 21 on 13<sup>th</sup> June; however, the busy schedule of the DG caused a delay in issuing Letter 22. In this case, the researcher had requested the officials themselves to inform some schools by telephone because it was expected that they would not be able to collect from their pigeon holes. This was the third letter from the Director General which was sent to the schools in this connection. It should be said that the procedure for conducting interviews in each directorate, whether individual or focus group, had its own unique sequence. The following appendix also will indicate its individual character, which emerged from conducting the pilot study of this research project.

Appendix 5 - Documents concerning AlBatinah South region  
Letter 23 - From the DG of AlBatinah South to primary school headteachers

سلطنة عمان  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة الباطنة جنوب  
مكتب المدير العام

الرقم لرون  
التاريخ ١١ / ١٨ / ١٤٢٠ هـ  
الموافق ٢٢ / ٢ / ٢٠٠٠ م



المحترمون  
المحترمات

الفضلاء/ مديرو المدارس الابتدائية  
الفضليات / مديرات المدارس الابتدائية

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد :

بناءً على رسالة المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير رقم ٢١٦ بتاريخ  
٢٠٠٠/٢/١٩م بشأن تسهيل مهمة الباحث الفاضل/ حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد  
الهنائي ليتمكن من عمل دراسته حول ( ممارسة القيادة التربوية في  
المدارس ) يرجى تسهيل مهمة الباحث المذكور وذلك من خلال الاجابة  
على الاستبانة المرفقه ، علماً بأن البحث سيتم في مجال التعليم العام وليس  
الأساسي .

شاكرين لكم تعاونكم .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام ،

حبيب بن محمد الريامي  
مدير عام التربية والتعليم  
لمنطقة الباطنة جنوب بالوكالة



هاتف : ٨٧٦٢٠٦ / ٨٧٦٢٠٧ - فاكس : ٨٧٥٠٨٣ - ص. ب : ٣ - الرمز البريدي ٣٢٩ - الرستاق

Letter 23 was the one of the first letters by which the researcher made a formal approach to the implementation of his pilot study. This letter was issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2000 by the Director General (DG) of AlBatinah South to the primary school headteachers of this region (the whole region was targeted to be used for the pilot study, because it is close to where researcher lives and also it was fairly small in population, in contrast with the rest of the



targeted regions). Letter 23 was the first circular from the DG to inform the primary school headteachers about the researcher's interest in conducting his research project. It urged the headteachers to cooperate by answering his questions in the interviews. Further details about the schedule of conducting the interviews were offered in the following circular (see Letter 24 below).

**Letter 24 - From the DG of AlBatinah South to the primary school headteachers in his region**

الرقم ١٢٧٤/١٠/١٠  
التاريخ ١٤/١٤/٢٠١٤ هـ  
الموافق ٣/٢/٢٠١٤ م



سلطنة عمان  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة الباطنة جنوب  
مكتب المدير العام  
قسم العلاقات العامة والإعلام التربوي

الأفاضل / مديرو ومديرات المدارس الإبتدائية المحترمون

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .. وبعد :

بمشيئة الله وتوفيقه سيقوم الباحث / حارث بن ناصر الهنائي بإجراء بحث حول ( ممارسة القيادة التربوية في المدارس ) ، عليه فإن متطلبات البحث تستدعي حضوركم ومساعدتكم لمناقشة بنود الإستمارة المعدة وفق البيان التالي :

اليوم والتاريخ	المستهدفون
الاثنين ٢٧/٣/٢٠٠٠ م	كافة مديري المدارس والمكلفين والمساعدين المكلفين بإدارة مدرسة .
الثلاثاء ٢٨/٣/٢٠٠٠ م	كافة مديرات المدارس والمكلفات والمساعدات المكلفات بإدارة مدرسة .
الأربعاء ٢٩/٣/٢٠٠٠ م	كافة المساعدين والمساعدات غير المكلفين بإدارة مدرسة ( مدرسة ذات مدير ) .

علماً بأن مكان عقد اللقاءات سيكون بقاعة الإجتماعات بمدرسة الشعبية الإبتدائية بنون بولاية المصنعة في تمام الساعة التاسعة صباحاً وفق التواريخ المشار إليها أعلاه .  
نرجوا التكرم بالحضور في الموعد المحدد .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الإحترام ،،،

حبيب بن محمد الريامي  
مدير عام التربية والتعليم  
لمنطقة الباطنة جنوب بالوكالة

Letter 24 was issued on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2000 as a second circular sent by the Director General of AlBatinah South to primary school headteachers, including deputy headteachers. In fact, this letter includes a schedule for three different groups to attend the focus group interviews on three days in succession, Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2000 (a session with headmasters); Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2000 (a session with the headmistresses); and Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2000 (a session with deputy headteachers). The session with the deputy headteachers was subsequently cancelled. According to the list of school staff which the researcher had received from the Statistics and Information Division at the Ministry of Education, there were insufficient numbers of both groups, deputy headteachers and senior teachers, in all the targeted regions. As a result of the experience that the researcher gained in conducting the pilot study in AlBatinah South, the interviews in AlDakhiliah region went ahead without complications (see the following appendix).

Appendix 6 - Documents concerning AlDakhiliah region  
Letter 25 - From the researcher to the DG of AlDakhiliah (Arabic version)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الفاضل/ مدير عام المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة الداخلية المحترم.  
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

**الموضوع: طلب دعوة الأفاضل مدراء ومديرات المدارس الابتدائية للمقابلات الجماعية، وتكرمكم بتحديد موقع لإجراء المقابلات في إحدى مدارس مديريتكم الموقرة.**

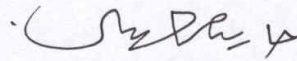
بناء على رسالة الفاضلة/ مدير المكتب الفني للدراسات والتطوير رقم: ص م.ف.٢١٦ والمؤرخ في: ١٣ ذو القعدة ١٤٢٠ للهجرة، الموافق: ٢٠٠٠/٢/١٩ للميلاد.  
أرجو من جنابكم التكرم بإخطار مدراء ومديرات المدارس الابتدائية لحضور المقابلات الجماعية، وذلك حسب الجدول المبين أدناه (أو حسبما ترونه مناسباً)، وفي المكان الذي يحدد من قبلكم.

الموقع	التاريخ	اليوم	الجنس
	٢٠٠٠/٦/١٧	السبت	الفضلاء مدراء المدارس الابتدائية
	٢٠٠٠/٦/١٨	الأحد	الفاضلات مديرات المدارس الابتدائية

حيث أن هذا البرنامج ضمن التطبيق الفعلي للعمل الميداني ولتمتطلبات رسالة الدكتوراه.

وتقبلوا منا وافر التقدير والاحترام.

حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي  
(باحث)



حرر في: ٢٠٠٠/٦/٧

ملاحظة: المقابلات يمكن أن تزيد على يومين لكلا الجنسين وذلك حسب أعداد المشاركين.

Letter 25, dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 2000 was handed by the researcher to the Director General of AlDakhiliah region. This letter was attached to the original copy of the formal letter which was issued by the Chief Officer of the Technical Office for Studies and Development (COTOSD) of the Ministry of Education (see Letter 11, p. 296). In this letter, the researcher suggested some dates for conducting the focus group interviews (17<sup>th</sup> June 2000 for a session

with headmasters and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2000 for a session with headmistresses). This was planned to make the best use of time and provide sharply focused targets for the researcher. Furthermore, this would make it easy for the official administrators to comply with the requests of the researcher. The following circular indicates the dates which the researcher offered in this letter (Letter 25) for the focus group interviews in this region (see Letter 26 below).

### **Letter 26 - from the MSPED to the primary school headteachers in AIDakhiliah**

Letter 26 was considered a straightforward circular, which was issued by the Manager of School Performance Evaluation Division (MSPED) for circulation to the primary school headteachers in AIDakhiliah region (issued on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2000). In the AIDakhiliah directorate, the administrative officials had borne in mind the difficult conditions for the researcher, including the long distance that he had to travel daily (500 km for the round trip). Thus, they had done their best to send out the required circulars and to fix appointments for both individual and focus group interviews in advance (for more information about the scheduled dates for both the individual and the focus group interviews, see Table 7, p. 83).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



سلطنة الكويت  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم  
لمنطقة الدوحة  
مكتب متابعة وتقييم الاداء المدرسي

الرقم: م.ع.ت.د. / ١١ / ٢٠٠٤  
التاريخ: ٤ / ٢٠ / ٢٠٠٤  
الموافق: ٧ / ٦ / ٢٠٠٤م

الفاضل / مديري ومدرسات المدارس اللاندرائية الخزين  
مادرا الكلفين برثانة مراكز الثانوية العام

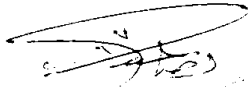
السلم عليم ورمة اللهم وركانه .....

أود إفادتكم بان الباحث / حارث بن ناصر بن سعيد الهنائي من وزارة التعليم العالي يقوم حالياً بالتطبيق العملي لمتطلبات رسالة الدكتوراة ، الأمر الذي يتطلب إجراء مقابلات مع مديري ومديرات مدارس المرحلة الابتدائية شخصياً .  
عليه نرجو التكرم بحضور المقابلات الجماعية وذلك حسب الجدول المبين أدناه :

الجنس	اليوم	التاريخ	المكان
مديرو المدارس الابتدائية	السبت	٢٠٠٠/٦/١٧	قاعة الاجتماعات
مديرات المدارس الابتدائية	الأحد	٢٠٠٠/٦/١٨	بمبنى المديرية

نؤكد مرة أخرى ضرورة الحضور شخصياً والأطلاع على محاور النقاش المضمنة في الاستمارة المرفقة .

شاكرين حسن تعاونكم  
وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير

  
ناصر بن عبدالله بن سالم العبري  
نائب مدير مكتب  
متابعة وتقييم الأداء المدرسي

نسخه الى:  
مكتب المدير العام  
مكتب متابعة وتقييم الاداء المدرسي  
الملف

## Appendix 7 - Analytical samples of the assessment scale factors of the T&T Model

Appendix 7 gathers information from both the research findings (research factors of the indicated tables under each theme of this research) and the assessment scale factors (based on the constructed factors of both the transactional and transformational school leadership models, see Table 4, p. 55). The score scale levels are: Highly Acceptable (HA) and Acceptable (A). It should be understood at the outset that the two scales, transactional and transformational, are in a sense sequential, the latter following the former. As a result, some factors of the research findings which reach a perfectly acceptable standard in transactional terms may be equal to other factors which meet the same standard in transformational terms; however, there is no overlap between these factors. In other words, each factor will be located only under a single assessment scale (transactional or transformational). The abbreviations **HA** and **A** will be used in the boxes of the following tables (Resource Table 1 to Resource Table 3).

**Resource Table 1 – Assessing the theoretical issues (1<sup>st</sup> theme of this research) of primary school leadership in Oman**

<b>ASSESSMENT SCALE FACTORS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT BASED ON TABLE 4 (SEE p. 55)</b>								
Research findings			Assessment scale levels of the T&T Model					
			Transactional school leadership model			Transformational school leadership model		
Rows	Research Tables	Research Factors	Highly Acceptable	Acceptable	Connected with scale factors of Table 4, column 1, rows 1 - 6	Highly Acceptable	Acceptable	Connected with scale factors of Table 4, column 2, rows 1 - 10
1.	Table 10	1				HA		1, 4 & 8
2.		2				HA		9
3.		3		A	4 & 6			
4.		4				HA		2 - 4 & 8
5.	Table 11	5		A	6			
6.		6	HA		5 & 6			
7.		7					A	2
8.		8				HA		2
9.	Table 12	9					A	5
10.		10	HA		4 - 6			
11.		11				HA		2 & 5
12.		12				HA		2 & 3
13.	Table 13	13					A	5 - 7 & 9
14.		14				HA		2 - 4 & 8
15.		15		A	5			
16.		16		A	6			
17.		17		A	3 - 6			
<b>Columns</b>	<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>	<b>4.</b>	<b>5.</b>	<b>6.</b>	<b>7.</b>	<b>8.</b>

The following tables are also organised according to the themes of this research in order to assess the findings of each theme (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8 in connection with the three themes of this research) in order to draw similarities and differences between them, as well as allowing them to be assessed against the scale factors. Similarly, each Resource Table

indicates information about a certain number of research factors as well as certain tables belong each area of these themes. Notes on individual Resource Tables are given below: Resource Table 1 indicates information which is drawn from the findings of the first theme of this research as well as from the research factors of indicated tables (Table 10, p. 94, Table 11, p. 100, Table 12, p. 106 and Table 13, p. 117). Similarly, it includes information about theoretical issues in primary school leadership in Oman, as discussed in Chapter 6.

**Resource Table 2 - Assessing the practical issues (2<sup>nd</sup> theme of this research) of primary school leadership in Oman**

<b>ASSESSMENT SCALE FACTORS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT BASED ON TABLE 4 (SEE p. 55)</b>								
Research findings			Assessment scale levels of the T&T Model					
			Transactional school leadership model			Transformational school leadership model		
Rows	Research Tables	Research Factors	Highly Acceptable	Acceptable	Connected with scale factors of Table 4, column 1, rows 1 - 6	Highly Acceptable	Acceptable	Connected with scale factors of Table 4, column 2, rows 1 - 10
1.	Table 14	18				HA		10
2.		19	HA		4			
3.		20	HA		4 & 5			
4.		21		A	1 & 6			
5.		22					A	4, 5 & 10
6.		23				HA		5 & 6
7.		24				HA		1, 2, 5, 7 & 9
8.	Table 15	25		A	5			
9.		26		A	5			
10.		27		A	5 & 6			
11.		28		A	4 & 5			
12.		29		A	4			
13.		30		A	6			
14.	Table 16	31	HA		1 & 3			
15.		32				HA		3, 5 & 9
16.		33				HA		5 & 7
17.		34		A	2 & 4			
18.		35					A	2
19.		36					HA	6, 7 & 9
<b>Columns</b>	<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>	<b>4.</b>	<b>5.</b>	<b>6.</b>	<b>7.</b>	<b>8.</b>

Resource Table 2 indicates information which is drawn from the findings of the second theme of this research as well as from the research factors of indicated tables (Table 14, p. 128, Table 15, p. 145 and Table 16, p. 166). Similarly, it includes information about practical issues in primary school leadership in Oman, as discussed in Chapter 7.

**Resource Table 3 - Assessing the developmental issues (3<sup>rd</sup> theme of this research) of primary school leadership in Oman**

<b>ASSESSMENT SCALE FACTORS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT BASED ON TABLE 4 (SEE p. 55)</b>								
<b>Research findings</b>			<b>Assessment scale levels of the T&amp;T Model</b>					
			<b>Transactional school leadership model</b>			<b>Transformational school leadership model</b>		
<b>Rows</b>	<b>Research Tables</b>	<b>Research Factors</b>	<b>Highly Acceptable</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Connected with scale factors of Table 4, column 1, rows 1 - 6</b>	<b>Highly Acceptable</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Connected with scale factors of Table 4, column 2, rows 1 - 10</b>
1.	<b>Table 17</b>	<b>37</b>					A	3
2.		<b>38</b>				HA		3 & 4
3.		<b>39</b>	HA		4 & 6			
4.		<b>40</b>				HA		1 - 4 & 8
5.	<b>Table 18</b>	<b>41</b>	HA		4			
6.		<b>42</b>				HA		9
7.		<b>43</b>					A	5 - 7, 9 & 10
8.		<b>44</b>				HA		5, 6, 8 & 9
<b>Columns</b>	<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>	<b>4.</b>	<b>5.</b>	<b>6.</b>	<b>7.</b>	<b>8.</b>

Resource Table 3 indicates information which is drawn from the findings of the third theme of this research as well as from the research factors of indicated tables (Table 17, p. 183 to Table 18, p. 192). Similarly, it includes information about developmental issues in primary school leadership in Oman, as discussed in Chapter 8.



## Appendix 8 - Samples of data collection

### Sample 1 - TRANSLATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW WITH ONE OMANI OFFICIAL

Sample 1 represents the officials' perspective (policy makers and administrative officials). All officials were invited for an individual interview by considering their busy days and the researcher believed that this would be more convenient for Directors General as well as their deputies and the other administrative officials (i.e. Educational Supervision Managers). The reader will find a sense of the differences as well as similarities in the two samples of data collection between the official's and the headteacher's perspectives (see this sample and the following one, p. 335, see also Table 6, p. 68).

RESPONDENT (1)

MICRO CASSETTE (1)

#### 1. What do you understand by school leadership in the GES? (Researcher)

**1.1 Interviewee:** As you know the General Education System starts from the first grade of primary school until the third grade of the secondary school. School levels are divided into three in the GES: primary, preparatory and secondary. 1.1a It is possible to find two levels in one building (primary and preparatory) but it is unusual to find three levels in one building, including secondary level.

**Researcher:** How can we differentiate the primary school from the others?

**1.1b Interviewee:** Any school which includes the first to sixth grades of the primary or the first grade of the preparatory.

**Researcher:** What about ... when will the school be equipped up to the third preparatory school level?

**1.1c Interviewee:** This is called a preparatory school level.

**Researcher:** Tell me your opinion about the effective and ineffective administration of school activities (duties) or how far GES management/leadership has been successful.

**1.2 Interviewee:** Usually it depends on the leader's techniques which affect the individuals in school. Usually, a similar level of the effectiveness of school administration could be found between one school and another, but in general it is effective school administration which is evidenced by carrying out the school duties which we are responsible for.

**Researcher:** What is the role of leadership which you play, in relation to school leadership?

**1.3 Interviewee:** We are in the Educational Supervision Division, and our role is represented as a liaison between the Educational Supervisor and the headteacher. Thus, when this relationship is a good one, this will be reflected in the level of teachers' performance in school.

**Researcher:** How can leadership (administration) performance be upgraded in primary school?

**1.4 Interviewee:** In fact, possible upgrading of the leadership performance can be carried out by understanding the tasks which need to be developed and this can be done by establishing workshops and seminars which could support and contribute new ideas to the administration. As a result, this will do a great deal for the support of school administrators in school.

**Researcher:** Are there other topics you wish to add related to what you are agreed on in running school administration in primary schools?

**1.5 Interviewee:** I would like to add relevant to professionalism, that we hope that school administrators would all be awarded a university degree. This means something higher than the current qualifications for headteachers, as there is a link between a higher qualification and the person's thinking at leadership level in primary schools. I believe that there is a necessity for employing people like these qualified people at primary school level.

**2. What ideas has the GES introduced about primary school administration/leadership? (Researcher)**

**Researcher:** What is the Omani educational leaders' concept of school leadership?

**1.6 Interviewee:** The concept of leadership is of tasks which should be performed according to a limited plan and limited goals. These arrangements and goals are drawn from the philosophy of education in the Sultanate.

**Researcher:** Could you describe the Omani school leaders' characteristics which are required for running primary schools in the GES. What we mean by school leaders are headteachers, deputy headteachers and senior teachers.

**1.7 Interviewee:** In fact, I would think that the relevant characteristics are of three kinds:

Firstly, what is known as specialist related subjects (an expert in his/her subject). 'Specialist' means that he/she must be aware of all the work branches (dimensions) in order to be able to manage his/her own work and lead his/her subordinates.

Secondly, he/she should have the gift of vision, which means he/she should be able to have a vision of the future and this would help to plan and implement plans as they should be implemented.

Thirdly, the characteristic of sociableness. The person should get on well with others, as this is important in building relations with others and especially those who are supervised by him. This characteristic always leads to friendly relations in the educational organisation. I believe these are the three characteristics which should be shown by any educational administrator.

**Researcher:** Describe the kind of school leadership that is required for the implementation of the GES at primary school level.

**1.8 Interviewee:** The leadership characteristics – you know there are different characteristics for primary school level which are different from the other school levels. The important characteristic here is that the relationship between the headteacher and teachers (to be close to them), between the headteacher and the pupils and studying their difficulties, between the headteacher and parents. This relationship would help him/her to perform his/her job as a way of accomplishing the school's goals.

**Researcher:** Do you think the GES will enable school leaders to be more or less effective? How?

**1.9 Interviewee:** Usually in primary school the leader sets and balances the maintenance of leadership. If this person (the leader) is mindful of the administrative, technical and social issues, then certainly his/her effectiveness would be strong. However, the leader who is poor in understanding those issues would struggle and as a result he/she would not be able to meet the targets and goals of the institution. Also, a negligent leader would not do the work of the institution. Therefore, you will get some differences between one school and another, between one leader and another, and this can be related to the extent to which they understand leadership issues.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover related to point two?

**1.10 Interviewee:** Of course, I would think of a general system for assessing these leaders' performance from time to time. This system should assess the weaknesses and plan to eradicate them and support the strengths, because educational work needs to be developed and to be modernised constantly. Thus, to have an assessment system would help in evaluating the educational performance as well as strengthening the effectiveness of leadership in the educational institutions.

**3. What practices has the GES introduced in relation to school leadership?  
(Researcher)**

**1.11 Interviewee:** There are several kinds of practices; as you know, the administrative performance is divided into three parts: technical (awareness of his/her subject field), administrative and practical. For example, the administrative duties could be looking after the attendance and the hours of attendance in the school, managing transfers for pupil/teachers' folders, school records which organise school duties and how these records could be arranged and managed. The other issue is the technical which is the most important issue and calls for the headteacher to supervise teachers' performance, supervises the implementation of the school curriculum and subject tasks and look after the provision of teaching aids. In addition, he/she provides direct supervision for the laboratories and school library. All these become administrative practices for school leadership at the primary school level or at any school level. Furthermore, the financial issues and management of the school finances whether in the cafeteria or in the form of school budgets to be spent on school needs such as stationery and other things to be bought for schoolwork.

**Researcher:** What are the responsibilities for headteachers in primary schools?

**1.12 Interviewee:** As I mentioned, these responsibilities could be concluded in three issues: administrative, financial and technical.

**Researcher:** What about the leadership ... how can we know that the headteacher is playing the role of a leader?

**1.13 Interviewee:** For example, in administrative issues, how the headteacher could encourage his/her colleagues to be on time for work, leave at the end of the office hours and not to be absent. Certainly, all these practices could be represented as leadership practices. For example, if teachers do not attend school on time, or leave school too early (before the end of the school day) or are absent from work, these practices would lead to a loss of control by the leader and leaders would be neglecting their duties. Therefore, an uncontrolled school would lead to little progress in work and you can apply what I have stated about the administrative issues to the equivalent issues related to school leadership style.

**Researcher:** So what you have stated above could be taken as a measurement to assess the difference between a headteacher and a leader.

**1.14 Interviewee:** If we would like to think of the concept, behind these two words, it is difficult to differentiate, because the leader is the headteacher and there are many writers who say that the headteacher is a leader. In fact, it is difficult to differentiate between the two concepts. However, we see that leadership could be found in everything a headteacher is responsible for administratively, technically and financially. You can visit some schools and you may find a headteacher who could not organise his/her expenditure bills for school, because he/she does not think about work organisation and arrangements; therefore, this is an example of uncontrolled leadership

**Researcher:** What about deputy headteachers – what are the responsibilities for deputy headteachers?

**1.15 Interviewee:** Commonly, deputy headteachers take over the headteacher's position when he/she is absent, and while the headteacher is in school, they should share responsibilities and duties. Thus, you can see both of them at school, each of them dealing with separate responsibilities and duties within the school building.

**Researcher:** About school administration in primary school - is it different from the other school levels in the GES?

**1.16 Interviewee:** Yes, it is different or there are some differences which may relate to the nature of its level (as primary). You know, all educational activities should be considered according to the pupils' needs. Also, the laboratories and the library should both be arranged according to pupils' needs in primary level. Also, the treatment of pupils should follow the characteristics of primary school pupils and these characteristics are different from the characteristics of other school levels. Indeed, we give particular attention to school administration at this school level, because it deals with beginners and we describe it as the toughest school administration when considering primary pupils' needs.

**Researcher:** What are these needs?

**1.17 Interviewee:** I meant about pupils' needs that they are newcomers to the school environment, and these pupils need to be encouraged to come to school by implementing interesting programmes for them. These pupils would soon miss their mothers, especially in the lower primary level (stage one). Therefore, the whole school should be prepared for offering suitable programmes to these youngsters in order to encourage them to come to school and create a suitable atmosphere to make it up to them for missing their homes.

**Researcher:** Are there any differences between teachers' characteristics in primary school level and the other school levels?

**1.18 Interviewee:** Of course there are differences, which means that we are always careful to employ teachers who have enough experience in treating the youngsters as they should. The teachers at this level should be patient, capable of raising achievements, able to present a diversity of teaching aids and should be lovable. Also, teachers should be visited by the supervisors and supported by letting them attend seminars and workshops in which to develop their job skills.

**Researcher:** What specific advantages/disadvantages have already appeared in leadership practices within the GES at primary school level?

**1.19 Interviewee:** There are many advantages, since school administration in primary school level should always be clear about the wide range of knowledge and the capacity for problem solving, the capacity of preparing the school environment for welcoming the youngsters and creating suitable programmes for them all; these are the advantages in the primary school.

**1.19a** The disadvantage we could say is that it is not easy to make the school a lovable place for the youngsters. Therefore, we should equip schools with toy laboratories for these youngsters and these laboratories should be equipped with drawing materials and varieties of toys. As you know, the youngsters possibly spend each day between three to four hours in drawing. The current primary schools are empty of these laboratories and we wish to implement this idea. Also, as you know, the new system, the Basic Education System (BES) implements places like these laboratories and considers them very important.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover related to point three?

**1.20 Interviewee:** I would like to add that the school leadership responsibilities should be rearranged. This means that it is important to give school leaders authority for carrying out their responsibilities as they should be and this will raise the effectiveness of school

leadership. For example, they should be given the authority to decide suitable punishments, decide on the free days, award teachers and decide on teachers' promotions, i.e. to promote a teacher to an administrative position. Also, this will need to create a system for promoting teachers in which to lay on professional courses for headteachers to make them aware of the promotion system.

**4. Have you ever faced any difficulties or conflicts since the GES was introduced to Omani/your school(s) in relation to primary school leadership? (Researcher)**

**1.21 Interviewee:** There are no difficulties and conflicts. If there are any conflicts they would be trivial, such as having two schools in one school building (e.g. morning and evening shifts) or two school levels in one school building (e.g. primary and preparatory). This could happen only in urban areas, because the number of pupils at each level is small; therefore, we mix two levels in one school building, because it is not possible to open a separate primary school for only twenty or thirty pupils.

**Researcher:** Has it happened that any of the headteachers have arranged a workshop in order to raise their own performance?

**1.22 Interviewee:** Some outstanding work from headteachers has been submitted, who have, for example, written a paper to be discussed with their colleagues through a seminar or a workshop, and this is known as exchanging experiences between school administrations.

**Researcher:** Do you think there are sometimes difficulties in a head's routine which stop him/her participating in such seminars?

**1.23 Interviewee:** In teaching there's more flexibility, but a routine is set up to ensure that work procedures for the school go smoothly. Of course, if any person would like to submit a paper it should be commented on first by experts in the training division, and if it is useful, then it is possible to be presented using the presentation equipment that we have, e.g. overhead projectors and computers.

**Researcher:** I think training programmes are set, but how do you nurture headteachers' creativity?

**1.24 Interviewee:** Each year we set a training plan and we nominate certain people from those who are creative and who need to be supported professionally. Usually, those who are creative attend certain programmes run by lecturers from the Teachers' Colleges and by experts and technicians from the Directorate.

**Researcher:** It is commonly thought that the Omani school leaders are receivers ... what do you think about this concept?

**1.25 Interviewee:** It depends on the lecturer, but this brings up the idea of giving practical issues more time in the workshops than the theoretical issues. For example, a lecture which lasts an hour will spend a quarter an hour only on theoretical issues and the rest of the time would be spent practically. Also, in each workshop would be group discussions to bring up more ideas and I think this would allow the respondents to express their opinions more freely.

**Researcher:** On what occasions can headteachers in primary school discuss their ideas and introduce their own work?

**1.26 Interviewee:** There is more than one possibility, the senior officers welcome anyone who would like to introduce new ideas. Also, each year there are two meetings held for them to exchange ideas and projects that could improve educational performance. The other thing is that any person can present a paper after coming to an agreement with the technicians in the training division or they can implement their ideas in their fieldwork, which would reflect whether the ideas are acceptable or impossible to implement.

**Researcher:** Have you ever observed any school leaders who arranged a self-maintenance programming in order to improve their performance?

**1.27 Interviewee:** As you know, the school system includes the senior teacher, therefore, every subject field has a senior teacher who could discuss related subject issues with his/her colleagues, such as giving a model lesson. Also, they may be able to pass on their observations to each other and this would help them to improve their teaching performance. In addition, the subject supervisor provides them with suggestions and ideas for improving their teaching performance. All these would help them to improve their school performance.

**Researcher:** What about the administrative or leadership workshops which can be given by headteachers and deputy headteachers – do they run a self-maintenance programme in order to raise their own achievement?

**1.28 Interviewee:** Self-maintenance could be encouraged by reading and exchanging ideas, one with another. However, school leaders should have a self-maintenance plan made by the headteacher or his/her deputy and this plan should include tasks that they think need to be practised in seminars and workshops and they should invite external experts as well as qualified staff members from the school itself.

**Researcher:** Are these seminars and workshops conducted in schools?

**1.29 Interviewee:** Yes, these are conducted in schools and finding a self-maintenance plan in these schools is evidence of this. Also, the self-maintenance plan is created according to school needs and not found randomly. If the headteacher finds that his/her school is a short of teaching aids or during his/her class observation finds a weakness in the verbal interaction or some teachers do not know how to make use of the blackboard/whiteboard, then he/she should arrange a workshop to get rid of these weaknesses. Thus, from actual observations conducted by school leaders this becomes a self-maintenance plan. Probably, if the headteacher is not qualified to manage certain workshops, then he/she should invite external experts to help him/her in running them, such as from the Directorate General in the region or from the Teachers' College of Education.

**Researcher:** You have mentioned a staff development plan which is prepared for teachers; what about school leaders?

**1.30 Interviewee:** The staff development plan is the administrative advisors' responsibility. They register some weaknesses through their regular visits to schools and suggest whether they need attention. At the beginning of this year we arranged a workshop for school leaders and included some tasks relevant to school leaders' performance such as asking them how they arranged their own staff development plan and school record establishments. Also, there was a form suggested by the subject supervisors, to be sent to schools at the beginning of the academic year, to show what each school needs in terms of staff development. Of course, this applies only to persons capable of assessing themselves. In addition, school administrators' observations are used for developing a general staff development scheme for school leaders.

**Researcher:** You have mentioned that there is an administrative advisor. What are the issues that are considered by him/her which may develop school leadership or a school leaders' performance?

**1.31 Interviewee:** As you know, there is a subject supervisor and now there are administrative advisors for school leaders and their deputies. Also, these administrative advisors are known as school administration advisors. They visit school leaders (headteachers and deputy headteachers) to listen to their suggestions in order to pass them on to other school leaders. Also they provide school leaders with necessary advice in carrying out the role of the head of school.

**Researcher:** What about school leaders' effectiveness?

**1.32 Interviewee:** The role of the leader is to distribute certain tasks or information, but the main point is that the role of the leader should clarify and empower his staff in their implementation. For example, a teacher's morality is considered his/her own responsibility, but the school's morality should be looked after by the leader. Thus, the school leader may clarify what is the benefit of nurturing and practising morality. Perhaps many teachers ignore the benefits of keeping a high moral standard. New teachers may be most ignorant, but leaders should guide them by clarifying the dimensions of morality.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover related to point four?

**1.33 Interviewee:** Providing school leaders with more authority may help them to run schools more smoothly.

**5. How can the success of school leadership within the GES in primary school level be ensured? (Researcher)**

**1.34 Interviewee:** There is a group of administrative advisors who are always in touch with school administrators. In addition, there is a series of visits which are conducted by senior officers (in the Directorate General of the region) in order to learn about leaders' performance in school administration. Therefore, through the continuous visits and from what can be reported on the performance of leaders we can judge whether school leadership is effective or whether perhaps there are some weaknesses which should be dealt with. Thus, through workshops, seminars and training courses we can tackle these weaknesses.

**Researcher:** What about the feedback from the field to the Ministry of Education: do they assess this issue?

**1.35 Interviewee:** Yes, it is based on regular reports which are written on a leader's performance.

**Researcher:** Ministry of Education guides?

**1.36 Interviewee:** The guides are prepared as guidance for headteachers to be used at primary school level and the other school levels too.

**Researcher:** How about effective educational leadership guidance which is followed at primary school level? Do you have any comments on this?

**1.37 Interviewee:** From our perspective, the leadership is effective according to our scales, as I have described them earlier. Also, as regards our supervision process, we are happy about it considering the possible equipment that we already have.

**Researcher:** Could you give me an example of leadership effectiveness in primary school?

**1.38 Interviewee:** Yes, the leaders in primary school administration could arrange a performance plan for one or two years by involving teachers in the arrangement and doing their best to implement it. Also, they are able to evaluate and assess this plan and find a proper solution for the problems that could face them during the implementation.

**Researcher:** Is your position considered as central and what about leaders' effectiveness in the Central Office from your point of view?

**1.39 Interviewee:** Usually, the Central Office makes general policies of education and there are effective experts and inspectors. This is evidenced by the way in which the field is provided with regulations and developmental programmes which serve it.

**Researcher:** Does this provide a direct support for raising school leadership performance?

**1.40 Interviewee:** Yes it does, because the educational field is linked to the Central Office

and the experts visit the field regularly to consider the field's needs. Therefore, this communication is effective in raising school leadership performance.

**Researcher:** Do you think that headteachers have ambitions to become effective leaders in future?

**1.41 Interviewee:** Yes, it is normal that headteachers have ambitions and this is evidenced by the promotion of many of them to higher positions in the Central Office or in the Directorate General in this region. Also, the Central Office uses some experiences from the field, either administratively or technically.

**Researcher:** Is there any headteacher who sets a good example of an effective leader?

**1.42 Interviewee:** In fact, there are many women who became leaders (taking higher positions) either in the Central Office or in the Directorate General in this region and this is evidence of more women becoming effective leaders.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover related to point five?

**1.43 Interviewee:** Of course, school leadership is always developing and its performance is different from one person to another and this is related to the individuals themselves. However, in general all leaders have the capacity of performing their work acceptably. It could be found that some leaders perform outstandingly and this is related to the skills of the person.

**6. How can school leadership within the GES at primary school level be developed? (Researcher)**

**1.44 Interviewee:** The social philosophy and its traditional background are reflected in the educational system; therefore, we have male schools administered by male leaders and female schools administered by female leaders.

**Researcher:** This is in the model schools of the GES (schools of the Basic Education System).

**1.45 Interviewee:** This is in the GES also, but in the Basic Education System (BES) in stage one in mixed schools.

**Researcher:** Do you mean the leaders are mixed?

**1.45a Interviewee:** No, the pupils are mixed until the fourth grade; however, the leaders are females. It is true that there are some similarities between male and female leadership, but there are differences to be found in the performance of women and men by their nature. However, these differences are not much seen as advantages or disadvantages. Both leaderships do well in putting the educational policies into practice.

**Researcher:** What about the idea of creating new positions according to the level of educational development; do you want to list some positions that might be created in order to raise school leadership performance?

**1.45b Interviewee:** In fact, these positions have been included from the beginning of the advancement, since 1970, but they have not been completed for one reason or another. These are such positions as school co-ordinators (secretaries), social workers and administrators and these positions would certainly help the headteacher to discharge his fundamental responsibilities.

**Researcher:** Were the social worker and the administrative assistant positions created recently?

**1.45c Interviewee:** These positions are included in the GES system, but have now been implemented (in the BES). In my opinion these positions are enough to help the headteacher.



**Researcher:** How could we link the administrative assistant position to improve school leadership performance?

**1.46 Interviewee:** We could link it by considering the distribution of administrative responsibilities, because every person in school should know his/her responsibilities and his duties should not overlap with other people's.

**Researcher:** Do you think there is an unsettled situation in running school leadership in the GES?

**1.47 Interviewee:** The situation is settled, and I do not think there is any instability in school leadership; perhaps, the Central Leadership may be at the heart of this situation, but I do not think so.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover related to point six?

**Interviewee:** No.

**Researcher:** Thank you.

## Sample 2 - TRANSLATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW WITH ONE OMANI PRIMARY HEADTEACHER

Sample 2 represents Omani primary headteachers' perspectives about the existing practice of primary school leadership within the General Education System in Oman. This sample indicates an extensive knowledge which was provided by one Omani primary headteacher; however, this also shows his/her response to the methodological questions (see Table 6, p. 68) of this research project. Indeed, this interview took the whole time assigned for an individual interview (90 minutes). It was recorded on two sides of a single micro-cassette of 60 minutes, which gives 120 minutes of normal recording.

RESPONDENT (4)

MICRO CASSETTE (4)

### 1. What do you understand by school leadership in the GES? (Researcher)

**4.1 Interviewee:** We use the Ministry's Guide as it was set up, and I believe it is clear and straightforward. **4.2** However, there are some difficulties facing the headteacher in implementing its elements and this is caused by a shortage of administrative assistants in schools. **4.3** In addition, we feel that the GES is excellent and benefits both pupils and teachers. **4.4** However, the system which has recently been created brings many difficulties in directing pupils' behaviour.

**Researcher:** What system is this?

**Interviewee:** The created system is the Basic Education System, because the Ministry of Education has required many things of the headteacher in forming the pupils' behaviour within the GES.

**Researcher:** How could we develop the GES and do you feel good about it?

**4.5 Interviewee:** Yes, it is going well, but it is important to understand how to deal with its elements and how to obey its rules.

**Researcher:** Please give details of what is effective or ineffective in administering school arrangements (the extent of successful GES management/leadership).

**4.6 Interviewee:** We have staff development programmes, and before conducting these programmes the headteacher is allowed to follow up teachers' needs and to plan how he/she treats their needs by letting them benefit from such programmes in an effective way.

**Researcher:** What about effective techniques?

**4.7 Interviewee:** This depends on the headteacher's personality and his/her appreciation of the responsibility of a headteacher. Of course, the headteacher should remember that he/she is dealing with human beings and human relations. Also, the headteacher should consider teachers' needs, accomplishing teaching/learning goals and in the same way he should think of involving all school members in order for them all to benefit from the involvement. Moreover, the headteacher should bear in mind that he/she is dealing with the foundations of education when dealing with youngsters in primary school.

**Researcher:** Do you think this is an effective way?

**Interviewee:** Yes, I would think so, because he/she is dealing with human beings. It is true that is difficult to meet people's demands. However, at the beginning of each academic year I spend a considerable time on getting to know teachers' and pupils' needs and the requirements of the school environment. In this regard, after collecting enough information on those needs and school requirements I start to organise the information

according to its importance and plan to satisfy teachers' and pupils' needs by getting them to take part in school activities. Also, I try in managing such activities to engage some teachers who have enough experience to benefit those who haven't.

**Researcher:** What kind of school administration techniques do you use?

**4.8 Interviewee:** There are many techniques which can be used and it depends on each case that the headteacher is dealing with. Also, there's a difference between one situation and another. However, each case should be treated on the basis of how our pupils and our society will benefit.

**Researcher:** What role of leadership do you play in relation to school leadership?

**4.9 Interviewee:** We try to build good relations between our school and other institutions in society and we always seek to participate by introducing programmes and activities representing our school locally.

**Researcher:** Please provide details of upgrading leadership (administration) performance in primary school level.

**4.10 Interviewee:** It is good for the headteacher to broaden his knowledge by reading widely about updated tasks in school administration. Also, he/she should exchange experiences with others in order to upgrade the administrative and leadership performance in primary schools.

**Researcher:** Are there any other skills which you use to upgrade your performance?

**4.11 Interviewee:** At the beginning of the academic year we hold meetings with teaching staff members and we distribute a form which includes questions to assess the headteacher's performance. Therefore, teachers have an opportunity to give their opinions on their headteacher's behaviour and the characteristics which they like or dislike and this happens in our meetings regularly.

In addition, we ask for teachers' opinions on each programme which we are planning to conduct or on the previous ones, to see whether they have been performed successfully. We consider their comments in order to provide better programmes in future. Their comments may be useful to combine with the headteacher's comments, but it is important to have various opinions from staff members as well as introducing their ideas for the benefit of others.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover, related to point one?

**4.12 Interviewee:** The headteacher should strengthen his/her relations with the teaching staff in order to encourage them to carry out their responsibilities and accept their orders. Also, he/she should be close to the youngsters and choose an easy manner for communicating with them, e.g. when speaking to them through loudspeakers after the session of the Omani anthem or whenever he/she meets them.

## **2. What ideas has the GES introduced about primary school administration/leadership? (Researcher)**

**4.13 Interviewee:** The headteacher should possess professional competencies and should also have freedom in decision making and should know that the school administration is based on knowledge and techniques. It is good to gain experiences from pupils when they have the opportunity to lead their fellow-students in school activities. Furthermore, we may think that they are unaware of things, but they are aware and they may suggest excellent ways of managing their own activities. In fact, we should bear in mind that we are nurturing youngsters and we have to deal with them in the way they like or from what we explore with them in such techniques as managing their peers while playing games and practising activities. Indeed, we could explore many contributions from pupils and we

may get interesting answers by questioning them: for instance, ‘what would you do if you were in charge?’

**Researcher:** Please give details of Omani educational leaders’ concept of school leadership

**4.14 Interviewee:** School leadership in Omani schools should enable the headteachers to plan and organise/arrange their work effectively. They should be capable of directing school members and use the school’s resources to accomplish targeted educational goals. This enables them to develop human relations, accept others’ opinions and be free to make decisions and make use of valuable ideas when they emerge from others’ perspectives.

**Researcher:** Please give details of the Omani school leaders’ characteristics which are required for running the primary school level of the GES.

**4.15 Interviewee:** First of all, the headteacher should allow others to express their opinions freely. We should not be rigid and we have to respect people in order to receive their respect and to exchange trust with them. Also, we need to be committed and kind to our colleagues in order to raise the effectiveness of their performance and to feel at peace with them. Moreover, the headteacher should be well educated and widely knowledgeable. In addition, headteachers should be capable of developing their own job techniques to minimise the routine of the work. Also, headteachers should delegate responsibilities in managing meetings, supervising school activities or even class observations, because they will never be able to manage the work of the school by themselves and this also enables their colleagues to demonstrate their skill in school leadership tasks.

**Researcher:** Please supply details of the kind of school leadership which is required for implementation at the primary school level of the GES.

**4.16 Interviewee:** The educational leaders in both the Ministry and the General Directorate in the regions see the headteachers as implementers of their own ideas and they are eligible to evaluate our performance. These leaders cannot imagine what sort of thing we are dealing with in our own schools, but we know the situation of the educational field better than anybody else. I would like to say that the headteacher could play the role of a supervisor or advisor. The officials in the Ministry of Education and in the Directorates General in the regions should not only give orders to us which they would like us to implement. These officials think that our schools are equipped according to what is mentioned in the Ministry’s guide to the GES, but on the basis of this guide the headteacher faces the difficult situation of managing 1,200 pupils without the support of a deputy headteacher. The head has to manage 36 teachers and there is no school coordinator (secretary). However, the administrative assistant positions are listed in the guide of the Ministry; therefore, when the officials want to visit our schools they have to excuse us for not being able to perform some of the schoolwork as they wish, or else they have to provide us with enough administrative assistants.

**Researcher:** Do you think the GES will enable school leaders to be more or less effective? How?

**4.17 Interviewee:** Yes, it would make the headteachers more effective if they could make use of its elements and develop them in order to meet the needs of the school. Of course, headteachers should not be rigid and seek to give orders. Nevertheless, they should persuade teachers and design programmes to support their careers and also they could use their authority whenever it is needed to accomplish school goals, because they have the power to enable school members to accomplish the Ministry’s teaching/learning goals.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover, related to point two?

**4.18 Interviewee:** We would like the officials in both the Ministry of Education and the

General Directorate in the regions to delegate more authority to the headteachers. This would enable them to deal with pupils' needs and teachers' circumstances and to solve problems according to the availability of school resources. Also, as they know more about the teachers' situations, therefore, the Directorate should allow headteachers to plan and arrange professional programmes for their own school members. I found in my visit to the schools of the Muscat region that the headteacher was allowed to do many more things than we are allowed. However, we try hard to accomplish school targeted goals by using the school resources available to us.

**Researcher:** What are the differences between your school and the schools in the Muscat region?

**Interviewee:** In the Muscat region the headteacher is given more authority over teachers' promotion. This means that the headteacher is eligible to justify the promotion of a teacher who may be capable of holding a higher position; thus, in order to be fair to teachers, the Ministry should allow headteacher to judge teachers' performance for this purpose. I mean, promotion for teachers should not be judged only by those who are in the Central Office or in the regional directorate.

### **3. What practices has the GES introduced in relation to primary school leadership? (Researcher)**

**4.19 Interviewee:** At the beginning of each school day we check who is absent among members of staff. If a teacher is absent we have to distribute his/her subject periods among the other teachers. Also, distributing extra periods to teachers should be balanced between them and we should give more extra periods to those who have fewer lessons. Moreover, at the beginning of the school day we also check the attendance of pupils; perhaps, a teacher is late for one reason or another and this observational work is shared with colleagues. In this case, each of us has a responsibility for a certain area of the school to deal with and if there is any difficulty then I have to be informed, for example, about a pupil's behavioural or transportation problems. In this case, my colleagues and I come together to solve these problems.

In addition, there are other things that we have to deal with, such as meeting parents, conducting classroom observations, arranging staff development programmes for nominated teachers to send them on arranged sessions and these programmes could be weekly or monthly. However, if we cannot finish all the items that we are scheduled to deal with on a certain day, we have to transfer them to another day, because there are many things to perform daily. But we try to finish most of them.

**Researcher:** What does the word a 'head' mean to you?

**4.20 Interviewee:** It means responsibility and understanding the actual meaning of responsibility. Also, it means that the headteacher should bear in mind the Prophet Mohammed's speech: "*all of you are nurturers and all of you are responsible for your own followers ...*", and also the headteacher should consider Allah's commands in performing his/her job.

**Researcher:** How do you consider him/her as an educational leader?

**Interviewee:** He/she has to be capable of building good relations with his/her subordinates, such as teachers, pupils, school workers and even other people in the community. He/she should not be arrogant, otherwise, he/she will lose his/her subordinates and they will not cooperate.

**Researcher:** Please provide details of the responsibilities of deputy headteachers in primary schools.

**4.21 Interviewee:** The role of the deputy headteacher is similar to that of the headteacher.

When the headteacher is absent he/she should manage similar responsibilities for the headteacher or take over his/her duties. For this reason, the deputy headteacher should be given a chance to monitor and perform the work of the school under the supervision of the headteacher, because some of the deputy headteachers are new and they don't have any experience in dealing with the actual duties. Thus, the headteacher is urged to allow his/her deputy to gain experience, because one day he/she will have to lead a school.

**Researcher:** Please give details of distinctive practices for the primary school level, considered as different from the other levels in the GES.

**4.22 Interviewee:** The only thing which makes the primary school level distinctive from the others is that this level is considered the foundation of education for the other school levels, because it is nurturing youngsters. Also, it is a sensitive level; therefore, the headteacher should be seen to be in contact with the youngsters in order to be aware of their difficulties and disturbances and to help teachers to solve their problems. Perhaps a teacher may not notice a child's difficulties; in this sense, the headteacher should deal with the child directly. This also could reduce the work pressure on teachers and at the same time would show the teacher how to treat the child properly. Furthermore, both the headteacher and the teacher should be exemplars for the youngsters, because at primary school age the youngsters imitate the teachers or perhaps their headteacher. However, the youngsters would pick up any behavioural conflicts among staff and this would stay in their minds.

**Researcher:** What specific advantages/disadvantages have already appeared in leadership practices in the GES at primary school level?

**4.23 Interviewee:** Every task should have both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages in primary school leadership are that the headteacher has been given the responsibility of commenting on school needs and also his/her opinion is considered by the Directorate General in the region or in the Ministry. **4.24** The disadvantages are that the officials in the Ministry of Education think we do not have a shortage of resources, e.g. visual aids, but we do. Therefore, they should provide us with updated visual aids, because some of them are obsolete. In addition, when we make a request they do not act immediately. Also, the main point of these disadvantages is the shortage of administrative assistants in schools, e.g. deputy headteachers and school coordinators. At least, if they provided us with a school coordinator he/she would reduce the paperwork which takes a considerable time to perform during the school day and sometimes headteachers have to take it home to get it done.

Moreover, there is no way for the headteacher to delegate responsibilities to someone else, because teachers are overloaded and at the same time the headteacher is responsible for supporting them in performing their managerial tasks, should they seek promotion to an administrative position later on. Also, in order to help them build their confidence, they need to be allowed to practise and perform these tasks under the supervision of the headteacher.

Also, another disadvantage is that the headteacher is often left in his/her school only for one year and then the officials transfer him/her to another school; this doesn't allow him/her enough time to get to know the school properly. In any new school the headteacher has to understand the new school environment, study the individual situations of staff members, be aware of pupils' needs and to know about the availability of school resources, but this process takes at least three months for the headteacher to build a full picture of the new school. It is important that the headteacher be left in his/her school at least five or six years, in order to provide better service for school members.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover related to point three.

**4.25 Interviewee:** I would like to add that headteachers should be given more authority in order to develop their skills and to accomplish school targeted goals effectively. Also, providing them with administrative assistants should support them.

**4. Have you ever faced any difficulties or conflicts since the GES was introduced to Omani /your school(s) in relation to primary school leadership? (Researcher)**

**4.26 Interviewee:** There are no difficulties and we try to arrange things in order to carry out our school duties.

**Researcher:** How do you manage schoolwork if teachers are absent?

**Interviewee:** We distribute the absentees' duties to the teachers who have lighter timetables rather than overloading those who have heavy timetables and here we try to be just in distributing extra work to teachers. Also, everybody should know that the distributed work belong to absentees and we all have to take our share in order to keep the work balanced.

**Researcher:** Please give details of staff (school leaders) development programmes.

**4.27 Interviewee:** We have many staff development programmes, such as exchanging observational visits between teachers and this is a sensitive programme, because the invited person feels that he/she is less knowledgeable and less experienced than the host. Consequently, we should clarify to teachers that this programme is a normal way for experiences to be exchanged between one teacher and another. Also, they have to understand that it doesn't mean that the guest teachers are less knowledgeable about their subjects. For this programme we select between three and four teachers for each visit. Furthermore, at the beginning of each academic year and for about two months we arrange workshops supervised by school leaders and experts from the Directorate General in the region, managed by experienced teachers and conducted by new teachers and other colleagues. Of course, volunteers who would like to present a paper should submit their papers to us for revision and comment before presenting it.

**Researcher:** Please give details of the teaching staff's (school leaders') awareness.

**4.28 Interviewee:** Some teachers understand their responsibility and some don't. However, the headteacher tends to solve it through a continuum of advice and supervision. During this process the headteacher should not be rigid and harsh in directing teachers, but he/she should provide useful information in an acceptable way for better understanding and hence improve teachers' performance.

**5. How can the success of school leadership within the GES in primary school level be ensured? (Researcher)**

**4.29 Interviewee:** At the end of each academic year we try to evaluate our performance through pupils' results but this cannot be considered a hundred percent correct in evaluating our success in school leadership.

**Researcher:** How could you link pupils' results to the success of school leadership?

**4.30 Interviewee:** Of course, at the end of the academic year we evaluate our performance by considering the pupils' results as one sign of our success. Also, we evaluate pupils' achievements through a test which is different from the normal examinations and we evaluate teaching performance through professional programmes which we plan to conduct by asking ourselves whether these programmes were managed and implemented correctly or whether they served teachers' needs properly.

**Researcher:** Do you plan professional programmes?

**4.31 Interviewee:** We distribute forms to teachers in order for them to list particular

programmes that they wish to attend according to their interests, either to be conducted through seminars, workshops or lectures. Thus, the feedback of this form is used for planning proper professional programmes later on.

**Researcher:** That is for teachers, but what about school leaders?

**Interviewee:** We use an evaluation form about the school leader, which is distributed to the teachers to fill in. This form includes items which are based on, for example, the headteacher's characteristics which in their opinion are acceptable and the managerial style they would like him/her to use. Furthermore, the self-evaluation form asks whether the headteacher obstructed teachers in meeting their targeted goals. In addition, we try to elicit ideas from them in order to develop our performance and not to stick to one particular style. This too may help pupils and teachers to be served properly.

**Researcher:** Please give details of feedback from the field to the Ministry of Education (as Central Office) and the reverse.

**4.32 Interviewee:** This is done through the Directorate General in the region and sent to the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, we do our best to report on school performance by including school difficulties. We receive some feedback on this from the Directorate General on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

**Researcher:** Anyway, we can consider the Directorate General as a Central Office like the Ministry.

**4.33 Interviewee:** Yes, the officials in the Directorate General reply to some of our requests and we are interested in their response, but sometime they take ages before they reply and provide us with the school requirements that we need. However, we try to provide the school requirements by using what resources we have.

**Researcher:** What about the guide of the Ministry of Education?

**4.34 Interviewee:** It is clear and straightforward.

**Researcher:** Could you use it as a scale to ensure the success of school leadership?

**Interviewee:** No, the guide of the Ministry of Education does not give a clear picture for each school and sometimes I feel it is unclear.

**Researcher:** I mean, could you use it in order to enable you to know the extent of the success of your school leadership?

**Interviewee:** No, some tasks are not included in the guide and we try to match its elements to the tasks of school leadership as practised.

**Researcher:** Do you mean that you use it as guidance?

**Interviewee:** Yes, we do. It is necessary in order to implement the targeted school goals, but we add some tasks in order to develop our performance.

**Researcher:** Please give details of effective educational leadership guidance which are followed at the primary school level.

**Interviewee:** In the light of the General Education System guides we could manage our work and they are excellent, but some of them are full of routine.

**Researcher:** Please give details of effective leaders in the Central Office as well as in the Directorates General in regions.

**4.35 Interviewee:** One Director General is different from another. In the past three years we had a wonderful Director General and he took on the role of both advisor and facilitator. He told us that he would like us to list our school's difficulties for him in order to help solve them. He never came to schools to pick out errors, but was helpful and created a



warm relationship with our school members.

**Researcher:** What are your ambitions for becoming an effective leader in the future?

**4.36 Interviewee:** To raise pupils' achievements in order to build their confidence to manage their own responsibilities when they grow up. I would like them to be a well-educated generation to keep pace with the economic and the technological revolutions.

**6. How can school leadership within the GES in primary school level be developed? (Researcher)**

**Researcher:** Please give details of school leadership.

**4.37 Interviewee:** I think it is good.

**Researcher:** Do you have any comments on the school leadership which you are implementing in your school or elsewhere?

**Interviewee:** I used to be a teacher and I learnt from my former headteachers many things and I still use what I have learnt from them. The only thing that I don't like is to make teachers look foolish by recording their mistakes so that they can be commented on in their appraisal. I would like to say that the headteacher's report shouldn't be based on mistakes, because this harms teachers psychologically. Also, I would like to add that we are dealing with human beings, so that we have to be reasonable in reporting on teachers' performance and the mistakes shouldn't be considered as the last word in a teacher's appraisal. **4.38** In addition, a headteacher's rigidity could lead teachers to transfer to another school, but the important thing is that the headteacher should play the role of resident advisor and supervisor for his/her school.

**Researcher:** Are there any further posts you would like to add in order to improve school leadership?

**4.39 Interviewee:** Before we think of new posts we have to recruit for those which are stated in the guide of the GES; these positions are important in supporting the school administration.

**Researcher:** What are these positions which are stated in the guide of the GES?

**4.40 Interviewee:** These positions are deputy headteachers, social workers and school coordinators. All these positions are stated in the guide of the GES, but not fully implemented in schools.

**Researcher:** Do you think, if we have all these positions which are stated in the guide, then we wouldn't need to create new positions?

**Interviewee:** Yes, we still would need to implement the senior teacher positions; thus, those who are promoted to occupy senior teacher positions should be trained professionally. However, when they become capable of leading their colleagues, surely they will be supportive. Indeed, we need to implement those administrative positions in the GES in order to know what else we need to adapt. I believe these administrative positions are important in order to run schools.

**Researcher:** Other topics you wish to cover, related to point six?

**4.41 Interviewee:** The headteacher should be seen as resident advisor/supervisor and should provide the right expression for his/her school and should look out for careless actions from some of the school members, because such carelessness should not become public. Also, he/she should evaluate teachers' performance logically. Furthermore he/she should make use of all the available school resources.

**Researcher:** I would like to go back to the position of senior teachers; is it stated in the guide of the GES?

**4.42 Interviewee:** I can't remember ... this idea is implemented in secondary more than in primary schools of the GES.

**Researcher:** As we could say that the senior teachers' position has been created recently, how could you link it to school leadership improvement?

**Interviewee:** Through sharing the responsibility to develop schoolwork, raising the standard of teachers' performance, understanding teachers' needs and developing and improving professional programmes.

**Researcher:** Thanks.

Appendix 9 - Evaluation Form for Headteacher's Performance (EFHP)

التاريخ : / / ١٤٢٥ هـ  
الموافق : / / ٢٠٠٣ م



سلطنة عمان  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
المديرية العامة للتربية والتعليم لمنطقة الباطنة جنوب  
مكتب المدير العام  
مكتب متابعة وتقييم الأداء المدرسي

**استمارة تقييم أداء مدير المدرسة**

الفصل الدراسي ( ) للعام الدراسي : /

أولاً : البيانات الشخصية :

الاسم : ..... الجنسية : .....  
رقم الملف : ( )  
تاريخ الميلاد : / /  
تاريخ التعيين : / /  
الدرجة : ..... الحلقة ..... تاريخ شغلها : / /  
مسمى الوظيفة : .....  
المدرسة : .....  
ثانياً : عناصر التقييم :

[ ١ ] دائرة التخطيط والمعلومات التربوية :

م	عناصر التقييم	الدرجة القصوى	درجة التقدير
١	إعداد الخطط المدرسية ومتابعة تنفيذها وتقييمها .	٣	
٢	القدرة على القيادة الإدارية وتفويض السلطة .	٣	
٣	إدارة الاختبارات ومتابعة الأعمال المتعلقة بها .	٣	
٤	الالتزام بمحتوى اللوائح والقوانين المتعلقة بشؤون المدرسة والطلاب .	٣	
٥	الإشراف على تنظيم وحفظ السجلات والملفات المدرسية وتوظيف الحاسب الآلي في خدمة العمل المدرسي .	٣	
٦	أساليب ضبط الطلابي وتفعيل الإدارة الذاتية .	٣	
٧	تفعيل مجالس الآباء والأمهات والمجالس المدرسية وتحقيق أهدافها .	٣	
٨	النظافة والمظهر العام للمدرسة .	٢	
٩	دقة الإحصائيات وإنجاز الأعمال في المواعيد المحددة .	٢	
	مجموع درجات الدائرة	٢٥	

يعتمد ، مدير الدائرة

الاسم : .....  
التوقيع : .....

Page 1 of the Evaluation Form for Headteacher's Performance<sup>20</sup> (EFHP) includes two sections; the first section starts on page 1 and ends on page 3, summarising five different reports written by the administrative officials (division managers) of the Directorate General in each region. The second section of the EFHP is reported on page 4 which gives the final results of comments by the division managers on the headteacher's schoolwork. These reports are approved by the Director General himself; see page 4 of the EFHP, below.

The headteacher's personal and professional details are indicated at the beginning of page 1 (i.e. headteacher's name, his/her nationality, his/her registration number, date of birth, date of employment and its category, as well as the date of taking up the post, the type of post and the name of the school).

The first report, written by the Manager of Planning and Educational Information (MPEI), considers certain items and comments on the capability of the headteacher in: (1) designing and implementing the school's plans, (2) leading the school and delegating responsibilities, (3) supervising and managing the examination sessions, (4) following the Ministry's guidelines, (5) supervising the school's records, including the records held on computer (6) controlling the pupils' behaviour, (7) activating the PTA activities, (8) caring for the appearance of the school building and maintaining its healthy environment and (9) considering the accuracy of schoolwork and how efficient/effective the headteacher is in submitting the required work to the division of Planning and Educational Information (PEI), considering the targeted date of the submission. The items under the PEI are nine: items from 1 to 7 were given three points each, items 8 and 9 given two points each, in total 25 points. In addition, it seems that this EFHP is used for reports twice a year (at the end of the first and the second semesters of the academic year). The managers normally put their signatures at the end of their reports, including the Director General, who also approves its final results as collected from the division managers (see page 4 of 4 of the EFHP, below).

#### **(EFHP continued - page 2 of 4)**

Page 2 of the EFHP includes two reports (the second report issued by the Manager of Educational Supervision (MES) and the third by the Manager of Administration and Finance (MAF)).

The second report summarises the MES's comments on the headteacher's performance in connection with the responsibility of the Educational Supervision Division (ESD) which reported on the capacity of the headteacher to (1) monitor the school curriculum and provide developmental suggestions; (2) to develop teaching skills; (3) to update teaching methods and develop professional programmes; (4) to use teaching aids effectively; (5) to indicate accuracy and competencies in classroom observation; (6) to monitor pupils' achievements and make plans to remedy their weaknesses; (7) to set up educational activities; and (8) oversee the distribution of school timetables. Items 2 to 4 and 6 of the above list are given three points each, items 1 and 5 four points each, item 7 five points and item 8 only two points, in total 27 points.

The third report on the headteacher's performance issued by the MAF includes six items of assessment. These items cover the headteacher's capacity to (1) understand and implement the administrative and financial guides; (2) to care for the school's textbooks and its furniture; (3) to maintain the good appearance of the school; (4) to solve the school's problems; (5) to arrange and complete the school's records; and (6) to oversee school attendance.

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<sup>20</sup> This sample of the EFHP was collected from the Directorate General of AlBatinah South; however, the same guidelines of the EFHP may be used in other educational regions of Oman. Perhaps each region can modify and improve only specific details of each report according to the view of the administrative officials in each division of the directorate. The EFHP is used as a resource for appraising primary school headteachers every year.

## [ ٢ ] دائرة الإشراف التربوي :

م	عناصر التقييم	الدرجة القصوى	درجة التقدير
١	متابعة تنفيذ المناهج وتقديم مقترحات التطوير .	٤	
٢	القدرة على تطوير أساليب التدريس وتنويعها .	٣	
٣	التجديد في أساليب العمل الفني وتفعيل الإنماء المهني .	٣	
٤	الاهتمام بالوسائل التعليمية ومصادر التعلم وتوظيفها والمحافظة عليها .	٣	
٥	مصادقية الزيارات الصفية وكفائتها .	٤	
٦	متابعة المستويات التحصيلية وتفعيل خطط العلاج .	٣	
٧	تفعيل الأنشطة التربوية والمسابقات .	٥	
٨	إعداد الجداول المدرسية وعدالة توزيعها .	٢	
مجموع درجات الدائرة		٢٧	

يعتمد ، مدير الدائرة

..... : الاسم  
 ..... : التوقيع

## [ ٣ ] دائرة الشؤون الإدارية والمالية :

م	عناصر التقييم	الدرجة القصوى	درجة التقدير
١	الإلمام بالنظم وتطبيق اللوائح الإدارية والمالية .	٣	
٢	المحافظة على الكتب والأثاث المدرسي .	٣	
٣	الاهتمام بالمظهر العام للمدرسة والعاملين .	٢	
٤	القدرة على معالجة مشاكل العاملين بالمدرسة .	٢	
٥	اكتمال السجلات وملفات شؤون العاملين وتنظيمها .	٢	
٦	المواظبة على العمل و متابعة مواعيد دوام العاملين بالمدرسة .	٣	
مجموع درجات الدائرة		١٥	

يعتمد ، مدير الدائرة

..... : الاسم  
 ..... : التوقيع



## [ ٤ ] دائرة المشاريع والصيانة :

م	عناصر التقييم	الدرجة القصوى	درجة التقدير
١	إستخدام وتوظيف المبنى المدرسي ومرافقه والمحافظة عليه .	٣	
٢	القدرة على تنظيم وتوظيف السيارات المستأجرة وحل مشاكل نقل الطلبة .	٥	
٣	مدى التجاوب والمساهمة في إجراء الصيانة بالمدرسة .	٣	
٤	الإشراف على المياه واحتواء مشاكلها .	٢	
	مجموع درجات الدائرة	١٣	

يعتمد ، مدير الدائرة

الاسم : .....

التوقيع : .....

## [ ٥ ] مكتب متابعة وتقييم الأداء المدرسي :

م	عناصر التقييم	الدرجة القصوى	درجة التقدير
١	متابعة الأداء المهني وآلياته إدارياً وفنياً .	٣	
٢	تخطيط وإعداد وتنفيذ برامج الإنماء المهني .	٣	
٣	تخطيط وتنفيذ الزيارات الصفية وفعالية التوجيهات .	٣	
٤	تحليل نتائج الامتحانات وتوظيفها لتحسين مستوى تحصيل الطلاب .	٣	
٥	حسن استغلال الإمكانيات المتوفرة في المدرسة .	٣	
٦	متابعة الجوانب الصحية والغذائية في البيئة المدرسية .	٣	
٧	المساهمة في دعم أنشطة وبرامج العلاقات والإعلام التربوي داخل المدرسة .	٢	
	مجموع درجات الدائرة	٢٠	

يعتمد ، مدير المكتب

الاسم : .....

التوقيع : .....

report is issued by the Manager of Building Maintenance and Refurbishment (MBMR) and the fifth report comes from the Manger of Monitoring and School Performance Evaluation (MMSPE).

The fourth report covers the following items of the headteacher's performance: (1) using school building efficiently and effectively; (2) arranging and using school transportation effectively; (3) cooperating with the Building Maintenance and Refurbishment Division (BMRD) in terms of keeping up the refurbishment of the school building; and (4) providing the school with clean water. The above mentioned items were assigned various points which should be included under the MBMR's report: items 1 and 3 are given three points each, item 2 is given five points and item 4 given only 2 points, in total 13 points).

The fifth report on the headteacher's performance was issued by the Manager of Monitoring and School Performance Evaluation (MMSPE) which includes seven items for evaluation (this division provides specialist advice on supporting the headteachers in school management and leadership). The items of the Monitoring and School Performance Evaluation Division (MSPED) indicate the headteacher's capacity to (1) supervise in monitoring subject-related activities and issues of school management; (2) plan and design the programmes for staff's professional development; (3) plan and implement classroom observations; (4) analyse pupils' results and use this feedback to make more improvements; (5) use school resources efficiently and effectively (6) provide healthy food for pupils; and (7) improve methods for making school announcements.

ثالثاً: المجموع الكلي للدرجات :

م	عناصر التقييم	الدرجة القصوى	درجة التقدير
١	دائرة التخطيط والمعلومات التربوية .	٢٥	
٢	دائرة الإشراف التربوي .	٢٧	
٣	دائرة الشؤون الإدارية والمالية .	١٥	
٤	دائرة المشاريع والصيانة .	١٣	
٥	مكتب متابعة وتقييم الأداء المدرسي .	٢٠	
المجموع الكلي للدرجات		١٠٠	

التقدير الكلي :-

- ممتاز : من ٩٠ إلى ١٠٠ درجة .
- جيد جداً : من ٨٠ إلى ٨٩ درجة .
- جيد : من ٧٠ إلى ٧٩ درجة .
- مقبول : من ٥٥ إلى ٦٩ درجة .
- ضعيف : أقل من ٥٥ درجة .

ملاحظات الرئيس الأعلى :

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..... : الاسم : ..... : التوقيع :  
 ..... : الوظيفة : ..... : التاريخ : / /



Page 4 of the EFHP comprises the second section of the EFHP. The conclusions of the five reports which were provided by the division managers in the directorate are summed up on this page.

The final result of the EFHP is 100 points, as noted earlier; these points are awarded on the basis of the five reports (i.e. 25 points for the Manager of Planning and Educational Information (MPEI), 27 points for the Manager of Educational Supervision (MES), 15 points for the Manager of Administration and Finance (MAF), 13 points for the Manager of Building Maintenance and Refurbishment (MBMR) and 20 points for the Manager of Monitoring and School Performance Evaluation (MMSPE). Comments from the Director General (DG) are provided at the end of the EFHP. In addition, the points of the EFHP are ranked in terms of excellent and lower levels (i.e. the 'excellent' level ranges from 90 - 100 points, 'very good' from 80 - 89 points, 'good' from 70 - 79, 'decent' (acceptable) from 55 - 69 and finally 'poor' achievement in school performance denotes 55 points or lower.

## **Appendix 10 - Papers presented at conferences associated with topics relevant to this research project**

The researcher presented four papers on material taken from the findings of this research project. He presented a paper at BELMAS Annual Conference 2000, under the conference theme “*Focusing the Leadership Vision: learning from a Wider Experience*” held in Bristol, England, from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2000. The second paper was presented at Muscat Conference 2001, under the conference theme “The University of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” sponsored and organised by the Ministry of Higher Education and Unesco, held in Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman, 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> March 2001. The third paper was at the BELMAS Annual Conference 2001, under the conference theme “*E-learning and Leadership Development: Technology for Education Managers*” held in Newport Pagnell, England, from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> October 2001. And finally, the fourth paper also presented at the BELMAS Annual Conference 2002, under the conference theme “*Leaders and Leadership: Leadership Teams, Team Leaders and Middle Managers*” held in Birmingham, England, from 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2002.

In addition, papers presented at BELMAS can be read through the Internet by visiting the following Website [<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol>] and then searching by title or the author’s surname (AlHinai). These papers are provided in this appendix. The three papers which were presented at BELMAS had the following titles:

- ❑ Developing Primary School Leadership in Oman.
- ❑ Some perspectives of Omani Primary Headteachers on E-Learning.
- ❑ Exploring the *Alshura* School Leadership Model in Oman: The Perspectives of the Omani Primary School Headteacher on Traditional Views of Consulting and Sharing Responsibility with Others.

The paper which was presented at Muscat Conference 2001 had the title:

- ❑ Omani Primary School Leaders’ Opportunities for Professional Development within the First Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Does Developing Omani Primary School Leadership Require School Leaders to be Holders of a University Degree?

The researcher has received enormous support from his supervisor, Dr. Desmond Rutherford, in attending conference sessions (to gain preliminary experience in presenting papers, the researcher also attended the BELMAS Conference 1999 for this purpose) and presenting papers in connection to his research findings. This experience helped him greatly in presenting the above-mentioned papers.

## Paper 1

### Developing Primary School Leadership in Oman

Harith Nasser Said AlHinai

School of Education, The University of Birmingham

A paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Management and Administration Society (BEMAS) on “*Focusing the Leadership Vision: learning from a Wider Experience*” in Bristol, England, from 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> September 2000.

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**PS.** This paper has the full support of the researcher’s supervisor Dr. Desmond Rutherford.  
**Preliminary Draft:** Not to be quoted without the author’s permission.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to highlight some of the researcher's findings from a pilot study on primary school leadership in Oman which part of a PhD programme that is being undertaken at the University of Birmingham, UK, and conducted in the researcher's home country, Oman.

Initially, this paper will discuss the research strategy for the pilot study which is based on the use of interviews and focus groups. The paper will bring together the perspectives of both officials in the Central Office (the Ministry of Education & Directorates General in the regions of Oman) and those of practitioners in the field (school leaders).

The researcher will then discuss some of the initial findings on the current practice of primary school leadership in Omani schools which have emerged from the pilot study. Four themes and two sub-themes have emerged in the research. These themes are: firstly, **exploring leadership**; with the sub-themes of theory and practice, secondly, **identifying conflicts**, thirdly, **ensuring success** and, fourthly **developing leadership**. The paper will be based on quotations taken from the interviewees. The paper also focuses on how school leadership can be developed within the current General Education System (GES) in Omani primary schools.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the Omani national advancement began in 1970, the educational system has been developed on the basis of the General Education System (GES). The GES has been continuously developed through the 1970s to the 1990s. The first development of the GES started when the Omani national advancement began on the initiative of the current Sultan, Qaboos bin Said. The second stage of the development was in 1980s when the Ministry of Education adapted the *Semester System* and this system has been implemented in the preparatory and secondary school levels. The third stage of the development was continued in 1998 when the Ministry of Education began the new reform of the Basic Education System (BES). The main difference between the GES and the BES is that the GES has six years at primary school level, three years at the preparatory level and three years at the secondary level whereas the BES has ten years at the basic education including stage one and two, and two years at secondary level.

Developing the GES schools requires, for example, the creation of new positions to support school management and, in turn, to enable school headteachers, deputy headteachers and senior teachers (school leaders) to become effective leaders. The new reform, the BES, is planned to replace the GES by stages until 2020. AlBelushi & AlKitani (1997) state that:

*The Government suggested recommendations to the Ministry of Education and the result of that was Vision 2020, which included goals to be met by the Ministry of Education (AlBelushi and AlKitani, 1997, p.111).*

Therefore, the Ministry of Education worked out its educational goals immediately in the light of the suggested recommendations by the government and through the Oman 2020 Conference (see diagram #1, p. 3). AlHammami points out that:

*The framework of the reform was decided by the Cabinet after the Development Council reviewed the needs of the country as expressed in the views of the Oman 2020 conference (AlHammami, 1999, p.162).*

Therefore, the Ministry of Education started the BES with 17 of the 1039 State schools in the whole of Oman in the academic year 1998/99 (Ministry of Education, 1998, p.5; MI, 1998, p.198; AlBelushi & AlKitani, 1997, p.109).

Also, Primary School Management (PSM) has been developed through out these reforms in order to serve the needs of the country and develop a unique education system and to improve the GES (AlBelushi & AlKitani, 1997, p.111). The reforms introduce new ideas to support the GES by redefining it, including PSM. The Ministry of Education (1997) points out that:

*The development plan pays great attention to [the] development [of] school*

management ... (ME, 1997, p. 29).

However, the plan is to secure the implementation of the new reform whether for full implementation through the BES or gradual percolation through the GES process.

Diagram #1

**THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN OMAN**

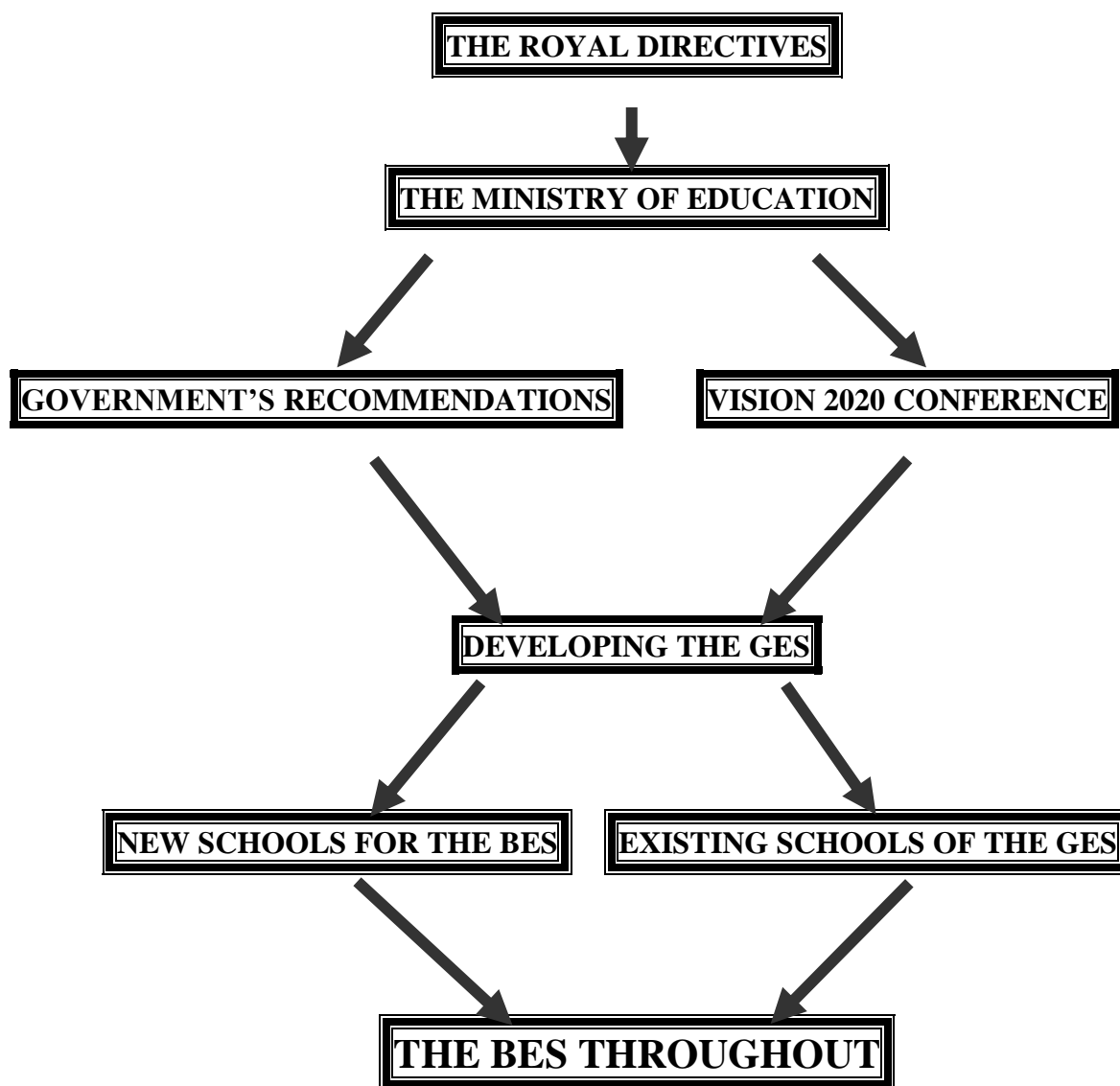


Diagram #1 is based on collected information from different resources: (Ministry of Education, 1997, p.2; AlBelushi, 1997, p.111; AlHinai, 1997, p.203; AlHammami, 1999, p.162).

**RESEARCH THEMES**

Four themes and two sub-themes emerged in the research. These themes are: firstly **exploring leadership**; with the sub-themes of theory and practice, secondly **identifying conflicts**, thirdly **ensuring success** and fourthly **developing leadership**. These themes emerge from the pilot study and are based on the use of individual interviews and focus groups. The interview questions are as follows:

1. How is the implementation of primary school administration/leadership in the General

Education System (GES) going?

- a) What ideas has the GES introduced about primary school administration/leadership?
- b) What practices has the GES introduced in relation to primary school leadership?
2. Have you ever faced any difficulties or conflicts since the GES was introduced to Omani schools / your school (s) in relation to primary school leadership?
3. How can the success of school leadership within the GES in primary school level be ensured?
4. How can school leadership within the GES in primary school level be developed?

The first question and its two sub-questions represent the current situation of school leadership; the first theme. These two major parts of school leadership are: the theoretical framework and the practice. Therefore, any system should be recognised and implemented through those two parts; the theory and the practice. Thus, school leaders practise concepts which represent a theory, and these concepts can be transmitted into practice; also, equally, practising concepts may lead to a theory.

Question two; the second theme and question three; the third theme work in opposite directions; the conflicts and the successes. However, every system should produce conflicts and successes, the awareness of conflicts may lead to successes and planning for success may produce conflicts. Hence, the best practice of school leadership is the one which has fewer conflicts.

The fourth question; the fourth theme gathers participants' perspectives on the best ways of developing Omani primary school leadership by considering the current situation in their own schools and the idea of developing the GES as introduced by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education has started developing the GES in two directions; by creating fully equipped schools under a new system which is called the BES, and by implementing gradually the new school leadership responsibilities to the GES schools (see diagram #1, p. 3). For example, the Ministry of Education has started to make the GES schools responsible for new responsibilities, such as administrative supervision and implementing senior teachers' positions. Thus, the above questions represent the research themes which simplify the task of studying the development of Primary School Leadership in Omani schools. As mentioned above, these four themes emerge from the pilot study (see diagram #2, p.5) and have been transmitted to the development of Primary School Leadership which currently exists in Omani schools. The researcher will try to bring both the perspectives of the officials and the practitioners in relation to each theme of the research. Furthermore, the first three themes will explore Primary School Leadership **practice** in Omani schools and the fourth one will focus on how this **practice** can be developed.



**SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN OMANI PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Exploring Leadership | 2. Identifying Conflicts |
| a. Theory               |                          |
| b. Practice             | 3. Ensuring Success      |
|                         | 4. Developing Leadership |

In addition, by considering the research themes, the researcher seeks to identify good practice in school leadership. This will lead to an examination from both the officials' and the practitioners' perspectives. Moreover, the examination will be taken by considering other researchers' perspectives in order to make a balance between both. For example, AlKitani (1997) expressed his opinion on school leaders' responsibility:

*Above all, the leader in any school should be responsible for the quality of the relationships among his or her staff, they should provide all conditions possible to create and sustain good and healthy relations, otherwise, it will be difficult for professional learning to occur (AlKitani, 1997, p.230).*

The researcher has tried to gather together the participants' perspectives according to each theme of the research for both the officials in the Central Office (the Ministry of Education &

Directorates General in the regions of Oman) and the practitioners in the field (school leaders). Participants' perspectives will be discussed according to each theme in the following section.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES**

### ***The First Theme: Exploring Leadership***

Under this theme the participants expressed their opinions of the way in which school leadership is practised in Omani Primary Schools at the present time. In fact, most of the participants were familiar with the term "School Leadership" and they talked about it with confidence. Participant #2 states that:

*School leadership is the tool which can be used for accomplishing general educational goals and the headteacher is responsible for the success and the failure in meeting the targeted goals. (2.1)*

In the above statement, participant #2 considers school leadership as an important tool for accomplishing school goals and there are two important points which are included in this statement; an effective school leadership model and visionary headteachers. Also, participant #4 indicates an understanding of good leaders' behaviour and points out that:

*The headteacher should strengthen his/her relations with teaching members of staff in order to encourage them to carry out their responsibilities. Also, he/she should be close to the youngsters and choose an easy manner for communicating with them, e.g. speak to them through loud speakers after the session of the Omani anthem or whenever he/she meets them. (4.12)*

Where as participant #3 indicates his/her experience of dealing with male and female school leadership and making a judgement on which one is more productive and he/she indicates that:

*There is a differentiation between male and female leadership, because male leaders can meet and communicate with individuals in social institutions when supporting school activities, whereas female leaders can move only in a small area in the society (this is linked into social regulations). However, the females seem to accomplish more than males, and this is evidenced by producing higher students' results for girls than boys and introducing more work in school activities than boys do. (3.26)*

Furthermore, there is a sense of humour which should be considered by school leaders in order to upgrade their school productivity and strengthen the relations among the teaching staff. Hence participant #4 made the following statement:

*I used to be a teacher and I learnt from my former headteachers many things and I still use what I have learnt from them. The only thing that I don't like is to make teachers look foolish by recording their mistakes which would be commented on their appraisal. I would like to say that the headteacher's report shouldn't be based on mistakes, because this harms teachers psychologically. Also, I would like to add that we are dealing with human beings, so that we have to be reasonable in reporting on teachers' performance and the mistakes shouldn't be considered as the last word in a teacher's appraisal. (4.37)*

This tells us that Omani school leaders are aware of their own situation as school headteachers and also they are knowledgeable enough to launch the educational development of the GES. However, Omani school leaders have suggested that they are aware of their own school situations and capable of solving their problems better than those who came from neighbouring countries. Participant #2 states that:

*The Omani school leader is more capable than the expatriate of dealing with parents and the social leaders. Thus, the role of the Omani school leader (headteacher) has to be performed inside and outside the school. (2.7)*



### **(A) Theory**

Although there is no particular school leadership model clearly appointed to be followed by Omani school leaders, school leaders' characteristics may be clearly identified. Participant #1 represents perspective from an official in the Ministry:

*In fact, I would think that the relevant characteristics are three kinds of characteristics which can be shown by these leaders.*

*Firstly, what is known as specialist related subjects (an expert in his/her subject). 'Specialist' means that he/she must be aware of all the work branches (dimensions) in order to be able to manage his/her own work and lead his/her subordinates.*

*Secondly, he/she should have a visionary characteristic, which means he/she should be able to have a vision of the future and this would help to plan and implement plans as they should be implemented.*

*Thirdly, a characteristic is the sociableness, the person should get on well with others, as this is important in building relations with others and especially those who are supervised by him. This characteristic always leads to friendly relations in the educational organisation. I believe these are the three characteristics which should be shown by any educational administrator. (1.7)*

Indeed, though these characteristics might not yet be linked to a certain school leadership model, certainly they reflect the background of the Omani school leaders' knowledge. Also, the above statements reflect the Omanis' social priorities which are linked to the teachings of Islam, e.g. human relations. Furthermore, participant #2 represents a practitioner's perspective and states that:

*School leaders should be experienced in their own subject fields, knowledgeable, capable of problem-solving, good communicators, capable of making agreements with others, patient and forgiving and not easily made angry. (2.5)*

By reviewing the above statements from both the official (participant #1) and the practitioner (participant #2) we find that both kinds of participants are knowledgeable about school leadership and the points that they provide are crucial. Also, participant #3 clarified essential points for school leaders to be aware of as innovative leaders. Participant #3 states that:

*The concept of school leadership represents techniques, therefore, school leaders should be capable of leading their schools and should seek to modernise and update their techniques of school leadership performance. Also, school leaders should be well-balanced, knowledgeable in their administrative and technical tasks and should build good relations with both the officials and the community members. Also, school leadership should enable school leaders to strengthen relationships with both school members and their community (3.7). Furthermore, school leaders should play the role of innovators, seek useful and new ideas from research for improvement. (3.9)*

Also, the above statements indicate a connection between the officials' and practitioners' perspectives as they brought healthy comments on school leaders' responsibilities and what they do or even what they should do. Their comments indicate two main things; things that they are aware of and perform and things they are aware of but want encouragement to perform or they are cannot perform because they have a lack of resources.

The above-mentioned statements could be linked to a theory which is practised by the Omani school leaders. In addition, they will help in identifying a school leadership model which is comparable to that is practised in primary schools in Oman.

### **(B) Practice**

These concepts seem to be more understandable in practice than in the theoretical framework of school leadership duties in Omani schools. This is evidenced by the full

awareness of the school leaders' role by both the officials and the practitioners. Participant #1 represents the officials' perspective whereas participant #4 represents the practitioners' perspective. Participant #1 states that:

*There are several kinds of practices; as you know, the headteacher's performance is divided into three parts: technical (awareness of his/her subject field), administrative and practical. For example, the administrative duties could be looking after the attendance and the hours of attendance in the school, managing transfers for student/teachers' folders, school records which organise school duties and how these records could be arranged and managed. The other issue is the technical which is the most important issue and calls for the headteacher to supervise teachers' performance, supervises the implementation of the school curriculum and subject tasks and looks after the provision of teaching aids. In addition, he/she provides direct supervision for the laboratories and school library. All these become administrative practices for school leadership at the primary school level or at any school level. Furthermore, the financial issues and management of the school finances whether in the cafeteria or in the form of school budgets to be spent on school needs such as stationery and other things to be bought for schoolwork. (1.11)*

Participant #4 considers his/her responsibilities from the beginning of the school day and she says that:

*At the beginning of each school day we check who is absent among members of staff. If a teacher is absent we have to distribute his/her subject periods among the other teachers. Also, distributing extra periods to teachers should be balanced between them and we should give more extra periods to those who have fewer lessons. Moreover, at the beginning of the school day we also check the attendance of students; perhaps, a teacher is late for one reason or another and this observational work is shared with colleagues. In this case, each of us has a responsibility for a certain area of the school to deal with and if there is any difficulty then I have to be informed, such as a student's behavioural or transportation problem. In this case, my colleagues and I come together to solve these problems. (4.19)*

This seems to be comparable to a normal school day anywhere else, however, participant #4 has clear guidelines for running his/her schoolwork. This indicates that he/she has gained useful ideas from the routine of performing schoolwork, despite the fact that this participant is not a degree holder. What the researcher wants to say here is that the information one gets from a programme or a course is not enough in itself. The practice and experience gained from everyday routine in the school contribute to the role of the headteacher. For example, some of the characteristics which the participant mentioned such as distributing the workload evenly between the teachers in the school and working collaboratively with the school teachers to resolve daily encounters, cannot be gained from reading about administration but from experience in the field.

### ***The Second Theme: Identifying Conflicts***

The theme of identifying conflicts will raise some of the problems which can be found in the field of primary schools within the GES.

*There are no major difficulties that can be considered as problems, but there are some of the expatriate headteachers who are misleading schools in their way of facing difficulties of understanding Omani school environments and the work of the schools. This indicates that the expatriate headteachers are used to dealing with different school environments in their own countries. (3.23)*

The above experts highlight some of the obstacles which hinder the growth of leadership in schools. Having schools run by expatriates is one of these sources of conflict as expatriate

headteachers are not familiar with the system and the culture and it takes them a considerable amount of time to familiarise themselves with it. They might reach the familiarity stage by the time that their contract has come to an end.

Another problem is related to the gap between the schools and the Ministry or the directorates reflected in misunderstanding by officials of what resources are available in schools and what are not. Participant #4 expressed his/her comments as he/she is facing these problems personally. Participant #4 says that:

*The disadvantages are that the officials in the Ministry of Education think we do not have a shortage of resources, e.g. visual aids, but we do. Therefore, they should provide us with updated visual aids, because some of them are no longer valid. In addition, when we make a request they do not act immediately. Also, the main point of these disadvantages is the shortage of administrative assistants in schools, e.g. deputy headteachers and school coordinators. At least, if they provided us with a school coordinator he/she would reduce the paperwork which takes a considerable time to perform during the school day and sometimes headteachers have to take it home to get it done.*

*Moreover, there is no way for the headteacher to delegate responsibilities to someone else, because teachers are overloaded and at the same time the headteacher is responsible for supporting them in performing their managerial tasks in case they seek promotion to an administrative position later on. Also, in order to help them build their confidence, they need to be allowed to practise and perform these tasks under the supervision of the headteacher.*

*Also, another disadvantage is that the headteacher is left in his/her school only for one year and then the officials transfer him/her to another school; this doesn't allow him/her enough time to know the school properly. In any new school the headteacher has to understand the new school environment, study the individual situations of staff members, be aware of students' needs and know about the availability of school resources, but this process takes at least three months for the headteacher to build a full picture of the new school. It is important that the headteacher be left in his/her school at least five or six years, in order to provide better service for school members. (4.24)*

Furthermore, administrative assistance is a big obstacle which impedes the application of effective leadership. The problem turns out to be worst when the headteacher cannot delegate responsibility to other school leaders or even teachers, because of the shortage of administrative positions, e.g. school coordinators and deputy headteachers. There is some routine work which the headteacher can delegate to other school leaders such as deputy headteachers or senior teachers, but, in the main, headteachers work take the responsibilities of leading and managing the school on their own.

Finally, as mentioned above, to have good leadership in schools we need to solve the problem of headteacher transfer and devise policies or standards which organise the transfer of headteachers between schools effectively. What the participants have mentioned is true - the creativity of the headteacher is hindered by his or her incessant shifting from one school to another.

### ***The Third Theme: Ensuring Success***

Ways of ensuring the success of headteachers' role and performance are not easy to identify. The process of ensuring the success of school leadership may need the headteachers to focus on the major issues and concerns. In other words, the headteachers should identify clearly the goals which must be accomplished. Each goal should be elaborated according to a plan and by nominated staff members or school leaders, to move toward the goal in order to help the headteachers. The official point of view that the GES is running successfully. Also, that the GES enables the headteachers to carry out school leadership effectively. Participant

#3 agrees that the GES enables the headteachers to become effective as far as providing them with sufficient training programmes. Participant #3 points out that:

*I think the GES will make the headteachers more effective by involving them with continuous training courses. (3.8)*

Participant #4 represents the practitioners' perspective on what school leaders should do in order to develop and improve their performance. First of all, headteachers could assess their own and their teachers' performance by considering, for example, the level of students' results and the need for in service programmes for both school leaders and teachers. Participant #4 indicates some ideas which could be considered to measure the success of school leadership performance. These ideas are as follows:

*Of course, at the end of the academic year we evaluate our performance by considering the students' results as a sign of our success. Also, we evaluate students' achievements through a test which is different from the normal examinations and we evaluate teaching performance through professional programmes which we plan to conduct by asking ourselves whether these programmes were managed and implemented correctly or whether they served teachers' needs properly. (4.27)*

The Omani school leaders have to identify major factors for assessing their performance, e.g. students' results.

#### ***The Forth Theme: Developing Leadership***

There are already some ideas which have been received by school leaders that the Ministry of Education hopes to implement the first two new positions, which are: administrative assistants' and senior teachers' positions. Some of the primary schools of the GES have received administrative supervision, despite already providing the position itself of "administrative assistant". Nevertheless, participant #3 comments that the position of the administrative assistants is implemented in the GES primary schools (participant #3 represents official perspectives). In fact that the positions of the administrative assistants are not yet implemented, but the Ministry of Education has provided administrative supervision for most primary schools. The administrative supervision might be of support headteachers in managing schoolwork. Participant #3 states that:

*There is an administrative assistant's position recently introduced in the development of the GES. This position deals with administrative and financial duties. Indeed, this position will support the headteachers in raising their performance by saving them time to perform major responsibilities. (3.27)*

Another perspective from a practitioner indicates that the development of school leadership must take a series of steps in implementing the administrative positions. Firstly, the Ministry of Education should implement those positions which are included in the old guide of the GES such as deputy headteachers' positions, before implementing the new suggested positions such as those of administrative assistant. Participant #4 comments:

*Before we think of new posts we have to recruit for those which are stated in the guide of the GES and these positions are important in supporting the school administration. (4.39)*

Finally, developing the school leadership should consider implementing the most important administrative positions before those which are important for upgrading and supporting the school leaders' performance. In other words, schools might need deputy headteachers more than administrative assistants.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The education system in Oman is centralised, so that headteachers run schools according to the regulations from the Ministry of Education. The headteachers have to set school targets, which must be agreed and approved by the Ministry.

No major studies have been conducted on the practice of leadership in Omani schools,

neither on the old system, the General Education System (GES), nor the current reformed system, the Basic Education System (BES). Most of the available studies have been conducted as Master Degree Dissertations which are written on school administration or school management but not about leadership as such. Studies both of school administration/management and leadership are needed to be conducted by researchers who have enough experience in schooling to combine practical knowledge and wider theoretical expertise. The researcher believes that researchers who are experienced in school management would be more capable of studying actual school activities relevant to the leadership or day-to-day school duties, rather than researchers who have no experience of tackling school problems.

Some evidence collected from a pilot study indicates that the Omani school leaders have a distinct model of practice, and this might be a mixture of different concepts formulated in the practice of primary school leadership. This will be more clearly seen when the researcher has a chance to conduct his fieldwork and analyse the data in order to identify the model which the Omani school leaders practise.

The Omani educational leaders (policy makers and practitioners) are urged to focus on a certain model of school leadership in order to secure the development of the GES and the new reforms of the BES.

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**Paper 2**

**OMANI PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS' OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE  
21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**Does Developing Omani Primary School Leadership Require School Leaders to be  
Holders of a University Degree?**

**By**

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and  
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## ***ABSTRACT***

The purpose of this paper is to highlight some of the researchers' findings from fieldwork required for a PhD programme which is being undertaken at the University of Birmingham, UK, and conducted in Oman.

The data for this paper is based on the results of interviews and focus groups with headteachers and officials from the Ministry of Education. The researchers will discuss some of the initial findings which have emerged from analysing the data on the current practice of primary school leaders in Oman. The paper will be based on quotations taken from the interviewees as well as from the wider literature.

This paper argues that school leaders need to be qualified graduates (i.e., having a university first degree: Bed, BA, BSc ... etc.); thus, the opportunity to study for a university degree or higher degree is essential for Omani primary school leaders. They have to become more effective leaders if they are to carry out the new leadership tasks within the current educational developments in Oman and so those who hold intermediate diplomas need to upgrade their qualifications to become degree holders.

Nevertheless, officials in the Ministry of Education must also recognise that school leaders' practical experience in school management is as important as academic study. Furthermore, this research also raises some important ideas for supporting school leaders and preparing them for the new school leadership tasks. These ideas include the need for preparatory training, for headteachers to gain experience in a number of schools, for induction training for newly appointed headteachers, and for on going training for experienced headteachers.

## ***INTRODUCTION***

The paper focuses on some results which derive from a PhD research project. This research project is sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education, the Sultanate of Oman and, it is hoped, will serve the Ministry of Education by studying a major priority of the current development of education in Oman, namely, 'Developing Primary School Leadership'. However, the current development of education has been set up since 1998 as a continuation of developing the education system and primary school leadership from 1970 until 1998 (MI, 1998, p. 198; AlBelushi and AlKitani, 1997, pp.109 - 111, AlHinai, 2000, p.2).

As mentioned above, this paper will discuss results which emerged from the PhD project to highlight the needs of primary school leaders in upgrading their qualifications to the equivalent of a degree. Although some of them are already qualified as degree holders, the majority still seek to upgrade their qualifications, because they are non-degree holders. These results indicate a considerable number of issues related to the current development of the Omani educational system

Hence, further qualification – to give headteachers degree status – it is proposed which is aimed at developing management and leadership qualities, skills and approaches to enable headteachers to meet the challenges of the future. In other words, headteachers should develop their confidence and competence to meet new challenges and changes within the educational development in Oman.

## ***THE POPULATION FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT***

The researcher targeted a selected population for conducting this research project within four out of the ten regions of Oman: Muscat, AlBatinah North, AlBatinah South and AlDakhiliah. In addition, the research involves interviews with officials of the Ministry of Education which is considered as a Central Office. Thus, the researcher planned to interview twelve officials and a hundred and thirty five primary headteachers. This means that the targeted population of this research was a hundred and forty seven people.

According to the circumstances of this research, the actual numbers which were involved went eighty-two people, including both officials and headteachers. This includes thirty-three people who were involved in the Pilot Study and forty-nine people involved in the Fieldwork (Table 1 indicates the population according to the targeted regions in Oman).

**Table 1**

PARTICIPANTS	THE CENTRAL OFFICE AND TARGETED REGIONS					TOTAL
	Muscat	AIBatinah North	AIBatinah South	AIDakhiliyah	Ministry of Education	
<b>Headteachers</b>	12	18	25	15		70
<b>Officials</b>	2	2	2	2	4	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>82</b>

**ACTUAL POPULATION FOR CONDUCTING THE PhD RESEARCH PROJECT**

As mentioned above, a number of people were unable to meet the researcher for different reasons, for example, the General Directorates were reluctant to let all their primary headteachers (school leaders) leave their schools to attend Focus Group Interviews and also some of the headteachers did not show up, for unknown reasons. Chart 1 indicates two categories; headteachers (either officially confirmed or acting headteachers) and officials (policy makers and administrators). Headteachers represent a higher percentages than the officials, because they were targeted to be involved in a higher percentage to serve the focus of the research study and also because they form a larger population than the officials (for more information, see Chart 1).

**CHART 1  
ACTUAL POPULATION OF THE PhD RESEARCH PROJECT**

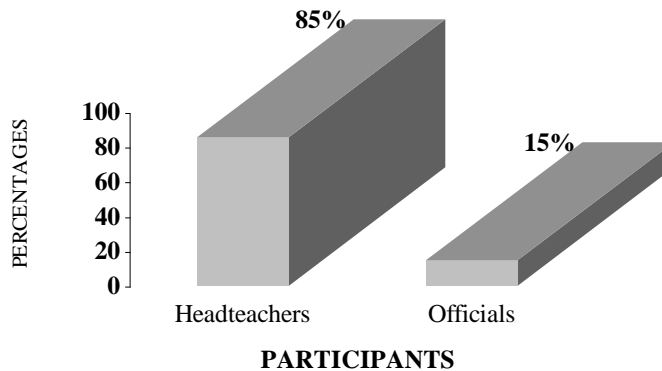


Chart 1 indicates the actual population of the PhD research project divided into two major groups; officials (policy makers and administrators) and practitioners (headteachers).

In addition, Chart 1 shows the reality of conducting fieldwork for such a research project. It indicates some possible percentages which can be approached among the targeted population; hence, this reflects the nature of the educational research project.

**FINDINGS**

The researchers analyse the results according to the availability of information relevant to the participants' qualifications. However, some of the participants did not, for one reason or another, provide such information. Thus, the indicated percentages on Chart 2 show two major groups among practitioners: those who have no degree and those with a degree qualification. The qualifications of the former group were based on the Teacher Training Institute and the Intermediate Certificate of the Teachers' Education College and the degree qualifications were based on degrees obtained from the Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, or other universities in the Arab World. A comparison between those two categories is indicated



in Chart 2.



Chart 2 indicates the levels of education of school leaders according to their qualifications. This chart also shows the higher percentage of those who have no degree qualifications. The need of primary school leaders to be qualified as degree holders is clearly indicated.

Chart 2 indicates a much higher percentage of practitioners who still lack degrees. This makes school leaders feel vulnerable. They talk a great deal in the interviews about their future in connection with gaining degree status; this means that the non-degree headteachers need to be enrolled in a university programme which should be designed to serve their needs and provide them equivalent qualifications to a university degree, to provide them skills and confidence to do their jobs more effectively and to prepare them for the challenges ahead.

Furthermore, it was again clear in the interviews, that the non-degree headteachers feel that they are capable of continuing their education and they should be provided with the opportunity of doing so. Most school leaders are still young; their ages range between 25 and 40 years, because they graduated in the 1980s and 1990s (see information about the school leaders' graduation year on Chart 3) and have many years of service ahead of them.

Moreover, providing school leaders with the opportunity of upgrading their qualifications to degree status may help the Ministry of Education to secure the effective implementation of the new leadership requirements which depends on the effective leadership of the headteachers. This will ensure an increase in the quality of the headteachers performance in their role and responsibilities.

In relation to the indicated percentages on Chart 2, there are different perspectives between officials and practitioners. School leaders would like to be qualified as degree holders. However, some officials argue that it is not necessary to have a university degree to run a primary school; thus, the intermediate diploma is enough. Therefore school leaders, including deputy headteachers, need little further training as they have enough experience in the school leadership role (Resource Participants #: 63.20, 16.13b, 9.8, 50.10, 57.9, 52.20). However, one official argues that it is necessary to upgrade all school leaders' qualifications as if they were degree holders:

*I would like to add relevant to professionalism that we hope that school administrators would all be awarded a university degree. This means a higher degree than the current qualifications for headteachers, as there is a link between a higher qualification and the person's thinking at leadership level in primary*

*schools. I believe that there is a necessity for employing people like these qualified people at primary school level (Resource Participant #: 1.5)*

The school leaders were becoming frustrated at the delay in up-grading their intermediate qualifications; indeed, some of them believed that they had no chance to move forward to higher positions. One school leader believes that:

*There is no way to hold a higher position except by being qualified with a better degree and officials should have to decide on this (Resource Participant #: 2.23a).*

This school leader, 2.23a, emphasises a crucial point which is logical and justified as regards promotion to more prestigious position. Moreover, this indicates a mature understanding among the school leaders and also they realise their need to move from a lower to a higher position. This may show the relative level of power between that of headship and that of official, which is not at the moment are of equal partnership, as we argue should be the case.

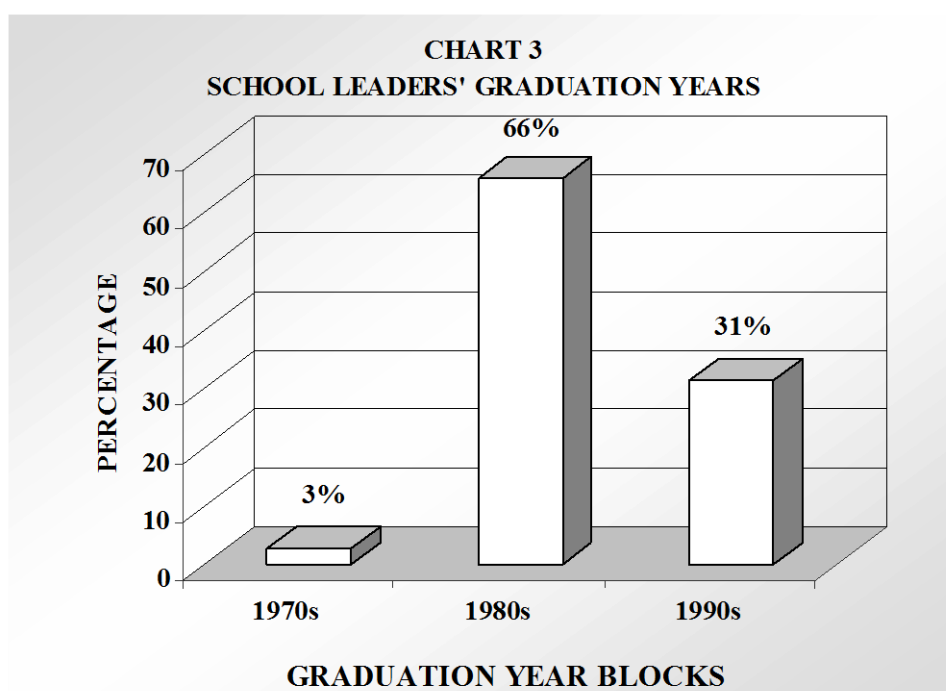


Chart 3 indicates the years of graduating which range between the 1970s and the 1990s. This shows that the majority of headteachers graduated in the 1980s and this implies their approximate ages at present.

According to Chart 3, most primary school leaders have fairly extensive experience of dealing with the tasks of school leadership, especially those who are non-degree holders, because they have spent considerable time running schools. Even so, they would appreciate a formal opportunity to reflect on their experience and practice, and to learn new thinking about leading and managing schools.

In fact, the present provision does not help school leaders to become effective leaders in implementing the current developments in the General Education System. They need to be provided with an opportunity to up-grade their intermediate certificates, through intensive training courses and on-going feedback and coaching based on their day-by-day school responsibilities and practice. Officials point out that:

*'School Administration Diploma' is required for headteachers or deputy headteachers who implement the new developmental tasks of school leadership. Before it used to be called the 'School Administration Course' which was established by the Ministry in 1977 and ended in 1995/1996, and this course developed in various stages through the 70s until the 90s (Resource Participants #*

6.2, 7.38, 65.4b, 66.1b, 67.13a)

There are close links between school leaders' qualifications, their experience and the length of time between the different stages of promotion. These three points represent a chain of three links in building school leaders' knowledge, understanding, skills in problem solving and self-confidence in making decisions and in delegating responsibilities to others. Participants indicate the following:

*The developmental process requires administrative staffing in primary levels. Also, it requires small class sizes, different teaching techniques and the involvement of pupils in school activities. The development process should involve Omani experience and up-to-date knowledge in education, but not be the result of accident. Also, its themes should be studied carefully and according to clear principles (Resource Participants # 6.6b, 7.3b, 7.7, 7.19, 7.28a, 64.6, 68.32, 68.35, 69.24).*

In addition, Omani primary school leaders could be the good human resource to carry out the new tasks of the current educational development by if they are considered to have sufficient experience for tackling leadership issues and headship responsibilities. Furthermore, officials in the Ministry of Education should consider school leaders' needs in addition to their development requirements, e.g. upgrading school leaders' qualifications and providing them with up-to-date knowledge. Otherwise, according to the results in Chart 2 and Chart 3 the school leaders with suffer from lack of wide experience and qualifications, with a subsequent loss of confidence and motivation.

### **CONCLUSION**

In line with current educational development requirements, Omani school leaders seek to upgrade their qualifications to enable them to meet the challenges of change in schools now and in the future. This might lead to considerable problems in implementing the new requirements of educational development in Oman if school leaders are not allowed to upgrade their qualifications. These problems might cause an ineffective implementation of the current developmental reforms. At the same time the officials in the Ministry of Education should consider efficient progresses in implementing the adapted new tasks of primary school leadership. Officials should recognise how much useful experience exists among those headteachers who graduated in the 1980s and should take action to allow them to share their experience with other headteachers and to upgrade their qualifications in order to refresh their knowledge. Thus, they might be more capable of meeting the current responsibilities and future expectations of school leaders.

Finally, the programme for upgrading non-degree qualifications to a degree status must include a major contribution from experienced headteachers in order to play the role of mentor and to share their own good practice, not just from academic lecturers. Also, these experienced headteachers should be involved in the planning team together with academic lecturers in a new partnership to develop the effectiveness of primary headteachers in Oman.

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**Paper 3**

**SOME PERSPECTIVES OF OMANI PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS ON  
E-LEARNING**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to present some of the researchers' findings from the fieldwork required for a PhD programme on 'Leadership in Omani Primary Schools' at the University of Birmingham, UK, which was conducted in four out of the ten educational regions in Oman. The primary schools in these regions make up 59% of the total population of primary schools in Oman. The targeted groups for this research consist of officials from the Ministry of Education and its regional offices (policy makers) and headteachers (school leaders/practitioners).

The focus of this paper is on exploring the officials' and the school leaders' intention to equip schools with Learning Resource Centres (LRC) and so enable them to use Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to modernise the primary schools.

Furthermore, it is essential for Omani primary school leaders, especially headteachers, to be confident in their use of ICT to enable them to manage their schools more efficiently. From this point of view, they have to be knowledgeable about these new technological opportunities and their relevance to school management and leadership, in order to be able to guide their own schools through the ICT revolution. In so doing, they will become more effective and more efficient leaders and so more able to meet the challenges of the current reform of primary schools in Oman (Rutherford & AlHinai, 2001).

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper will focus on the current reform of the General Education System (GES) in Oman which has been in progress since 1998 (MI, 1998; AlHammami, 1999; Educational Consulting Services, 1995a; AlHinai, 2000). Moreover, the major focus with which the researchers are concerned is "the development of primary school leadership" in the context of this reform.

At the same time, this paper will highlight some findings relevant to the theme of this Conference. Thus the paper will include perspectives from both the major groups of the authors' research population: the officials and the headteachers. As described above, the first group (officials) represents the policy makers in the Ministry of Education as well as the Directorates General in the educational regions in Oman; whereas the second group (headteachers) represents the practitioners in Omani primary schools.

The researchers' concern is to explore the respondents' views on E-learning, whether as currently implemented or as a future intention which it is hoped will be implemented within the current reform programme of education in Oman. The respondents' views will be illustrated in a selection of quotations which the researchers will interpret and comment on. In addition, a wide range of references will be cited in order to build up a body of evidence to support the arguments developed in the quotations.

## **CONDUCTING THE PHD RESEARCH PROJECT**

It has been possible to study a reasonably high percentage of the targeted primary schools and to have interviews and discussions with a great many of the targeted primary headteachers. The targeted schools were concentrated in four large regions out of ten regions in Oman (see Chart 1).

Consequently, the targeted population of the primary headteachers is 59 percent of all Omani primary headteachers and this also represents the targeted number of primary schools. In other words, the targeted headteachers numbered 135 participants from the same number of schools. None of the schools were represented by more than one person. Of course, those who represented their schools were considered as headteachers, whether official or acting headteachers. The official headteacher, it should be explained, is the person who officially holds the position of headteacher whereas the acting headteacher is someone who is on probation for the position of headteacher. Remarkably enough, it was found that the percentage of acting headteachers was higher than those who were considered official headteachers (see Chart 2, p. 4). This means, that the majority of primary headteachers were not yet fully confirmed post-holders.

**CHART 1**  
**PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE TARGETED REGIONS COMPARED**  
**WITH THOSE IN THE UNSTUDIED REGIONS**

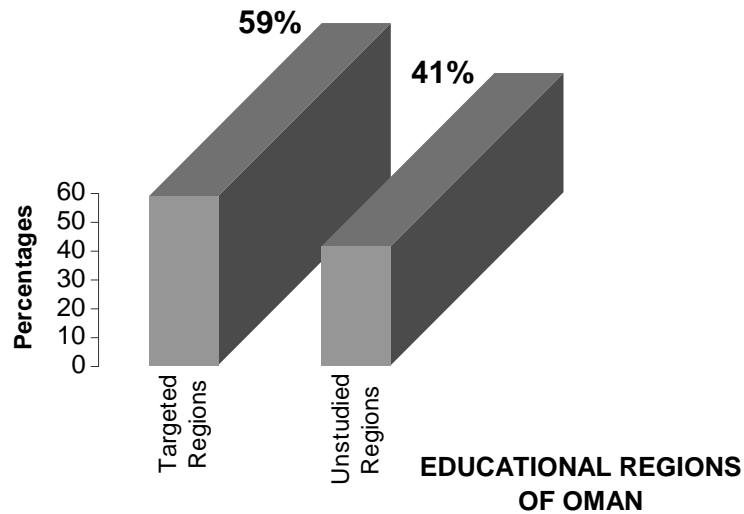


Chart 1 indicates the percentages of primary schools in the targeted regions of this research project and the rest (unstudied) of the educational regions in Oman. Also, the chart shows that a higher percentage was targeted to be covered by the scope of this research. This chart shows that the research project targeted a large proportion of the primary schools for study.

Altogether, Charts 1, 2 and 3 provide basic information about the population of this research project; hence, they provide the reader with a clue to the way in which this research has been conducted. Unfortunately, as indicated in Chart 3 (see p. 5), for one reason or another, there was a considerable percentage of the targeted population who did not show up at the interviews to which they had been invited. Of course, this can be considered as a common problem in such research especially in a qualitative research project, since it emphasises face-to-face interviews, whether with individuals or in focus groups.

**CHART 2**  
**STAFFING IN THE TARGETED PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

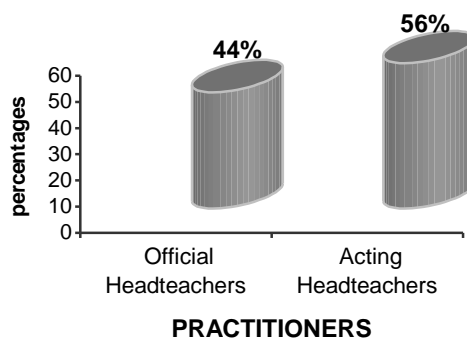


Chart 2 indicates two major possibilities for school leaders: official headteachers or acting headteachers (on probation). Those acting as headteachers have the actual rank of deputy headteachers and sometimes even teachers.

Furthermore, it may be helpful to mention that the methods used for this research project were individual and focus group interviews. In all, seventy headteachers and twelve officials participated in the research.

**CHART 3**  
**HEADTEACHERS WHO ATTENDED AN INTERVIEW COMPARED WITH**  
**THOSE WHO FAILED TO DO SO**

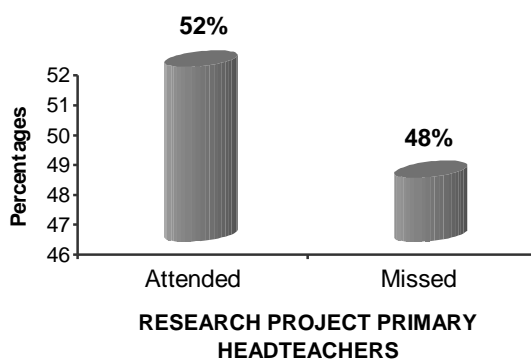


Chart 3 indicates both groups of headteachers (practitioners): those who attended their interviews with the researcher and those who missed their interviews. This clearly indicates that the former group exceeds those who did not attend the interviews.

### **PRESENT SITUATION OF OMANI PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

The present situation of the existing primary schools of the General Education System (GES) indicates that there are no computer labs in these schools, except that individual schools might have a few computers which may be used for school management purposes. Thus there is no E-learning practised in these schools, although the GES has been under development within the current reform which ultimately will equip the whole of the Omani primary school level with computers to integrate E-learning and ICT applications. As mentioned earlier, the current reform of the GES was started in 1998 by the Ministry of Education. This brings to mind that Oman is not the only country which started to redefine its educational system as well as its school curriculum. Thus, there are many countries that have decided to reform their educational curriculum, for example, the UK (Secretary of State for Education and Employment, 1998) and the United Arab Emirates (AbdAlmawgood, 1999; Cassidy, 1999; Riley, 1999; Hind, 1999).

Of course, Oman has continued to update its educational curriculum in various stages throughout the past three decades (1970 – 2000). However, in 1998 the Ministry of Education started the current reform of the General Education System (GES), the old system. Therefore, it is hoped that the reformed schools will be equipped with the Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) which will include computers and useful software in connection with each subject field for effective teaching, for example, by using CD ROMs (Compact Disk - Read Only Mammary) that are relevant to school curriculum. No doubt, the existing primary schools of the GES will be improved to the level of the model schools of the current Omani reform in education, which in a sense means that the existing schools will have to be refurbished, redefined and reequipped with modern technology such as LRCs which represent computers, E-learning and ICT applications. This in turn will transform the existing schools into modern ones which meet the standard of the model schools of the current reform. Hence, according to the present situation of Omani primary schools, there is little technology equipment but there is a hope that the current reform will implement E-learning as the Ministry of Education has planned to do since 1998. Thus, Table 1 indicates the availabilities of new technology equipment in the existing schools of the GES and as is currently happening in the model schools of the current educational reform in Oman. Thus, Table 1 also draws a contrast between the former and the model schools, examples of which can still be found in Oman's primary schools system (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT TO BE FOUND IN THE PRIMARY**  
**SCHOOLS OF OMAN**

USES OF THE ICT	ALREADY IN PLACE	NEW INITIATIVES (Not yet in place in every school)
<b>Management and Leadership</b>	A few computers in some schools only	More computers have been equipped (word processing, spread sheets and, perhaps, power point for presentations)
<b>Curriculum and Pedagogy (E-learning)</b>	Audiotape Recorders, Audio Cassettes, VCRs, TV Sets & Videotapes.	LRCs (computers, CDs and books), LRC Teachers (information technology lessons) and LRC Technicians (on-going support)

**Source:** Table 1 is combined with different information which is based on the researchers' experience and also collected from various sources: Ministry of Education, 1998; AlHammami, 1999; Educational Consulting Services, 1995; Educational Consulting Services, 1995a.

The columns of Table 1 show that there is a useful collection of technological equipment which may support teachers in introducing related-subject information and in integrating E-learning according to each subject field. For example, the VCRs, TV sets and videotapes could be considered very useful and effective tools in enhancing the pupils' understanding on every aspect of the school curriculum.

Furthermore, Table 2 indicates both situations of the existing schools of the GES and the reformed schools in terms of providing Information Technology Lessons (ITLs) for pupils in all grades: from grade one to grade six in the existing primary schools of the GES and from grade one to grade four in the reformed schools (both school levels indicate the equivalence of what can be described as the primary school level).

Moreover, as indicated in Table 2 below the existing primary schools of the GES have no opportunity of ITLs which would allow pupils to understand the use of both E-learning and ICT facilities. However, the model schools of the current reform indicate that the Ministry of Education seeks to integrate E-learning as part of the current reform of the GES (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WEEKLY TIMETABLE AT PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**LEVEL**

TYPES OF SCHOOL	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY LESSONS					
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
<b>Existing Schools of the GES</b>	None	None	None	None	None	None
<b>Model Schools of the Current Reform</b>	1	1	1	2		

Table 2 indicates that the existing primary schools of the GES have no information technology lessons (ITLs); whereas the current reform model school provides such lessons for the youngsters. Also, this table shows that the current reform model school has only four grades in comparison with the old system which includes six different grades in the primary school.



Finally, the Ministry of Education has been transforming the existing schools of the GES into equivalent schools which can be considered, in the officials' perspective, as modernised schools (taking current reform schools as their model) and which at present are integrating the E-learning and ICT applications. At this stage, the current reform model schools is attempting to phase out the earlier type of school a way of transforming them into the most desirable model for primary schools in Oman, which go beyond the minimum requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **E-LEARNING RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In this section, the researchers will illustrate some of their findings which relate to E-learning in Omani primary schools. These findings are drawn from both the officials' and the practitioners' comments. It was expected that all the participants, officials and practitioners, would think of both the major aspects of the challenge of E-learning: first, to develop the use of what they are already have in terms of technological equipment and its applications; second, to identify new initiatives which would aid the development of ICT and which are desperately needed as part of the current reform agenda (see above Table 2). The Ministry of Education is already working on some ICT initiatives such as equipping the reformed schools with LRCs, but these are still in the process of development. This means that the respondents in this research can either put these initiatives at the top of their list of priorities or they may suggest other initiatives which they feel are more important for their schools.

As we can see from the following statement, one practitioner expresses his/her opinion on the need for the current reform in Oman and says that Oman should play its part in taking advantage of globalisation in the use of ICT. He/she states that:

*No doubt, we need to develop our educational system; hence, the reasons for the current Omani educational development are to meet the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, e.g. scientific advances and the ICT revolution (headteacher 75.4).*

In response to the requirements of the Third Millennium (21<sup>st</sup> Century), the Ministry of Education seems to be implementing the current reform plans one at a time. For example, at the beginning of this academic year (01/2002), there were altogether 200 model schools in the current educational reform in Oman; new schools have been added to this list each academic year since 1998 (OMNP, 20001a, OMNP, 2001b; OMNP, 2001c; OMDO, 2001).

Furthermore, response 75.4 brought to mind that the Omani government, which is represented by the Ministry of Education, has studied its needs in order to make appropriate changes, either major or minor, to the Omani Educational System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The above argument is supported by one official's point of view; he/she says:

*As you know, the third millennium has witnessed a technological revolution which requires the Ministry of Education to develop its curriculum for schools. Thus, the Ministry seeks to benefit from the global revolution of ICT (official 70.8).*

Indeed, since the ICT revolution got under way, the whole world has become what can be described as a small village because we can communicate with each other faster than we ever could before; for example, by using faxes and e-mails. In addition, the ICT facilities have become useable by all ages, particularly youngsters. From this point of view, E-learning can easily be integrated in the Omani primary schools, mostly in the model schools of the current reform, since the Ministry of Education has decided to equip them with the Learning Resource Centres (LRCs). The LRC is one of the new trends which have been introduced by the current reform of the GES and which take the form of merging two major learning resources (the computer lab and the traditional school library) into one (the LRC). Thus, most of the existing primary schools of the GES have libraries but they do not have computer labs and not all of them have LRCs yet, except those which considered as model schools under the current reform. Therefore, any school of the earlier type which could be equipped with an LRC would automatically be called as a model school of the current reform because it would then be equipped to do all the new tasks called for in the new reform. In addition to the LRCs it would have, for example, computers, computer software, an LRC Teacher and an LRC

Technician. Hence, by integrating the LRCs into the existing schools (primary schools) this in turn will develop the Omani Educational System and transform it into a modernised one.

Consequently, the Ministry of Education has to keep to its commitment of reforming the Omani Educational System; hence, the most urgent aspects of the reform should be implemented, e.g. the “LRC Teacher” (a new position in each model school of the current reform), which in a sense creates the basis of E-learning by providing Information Technology Lessons (ITLs) to the pupils. The IT Lessons should be given by the LRC Teacher, for example, to show the pupils how they can use computers and their software, e.g. the CDs. Therefore, in a sense the E-learning is different from providing a single IT Lesson which covers a specific topic. In other words, the E-learning is broader unit which includes many IT Lessons; they are exactly like normal lessons for any subject which can be linked to different units of the textbook. Thus the IT Lessons can be provided for the pupils on the basis of using the E-learning facilities in relation to any of the subjects of the school curriculum. At this stage, all teachers should be capable of working with the CDs, for instance, which relate to their subject field. However, the normal teachers in both the existing schools and the current reform model schools have no idea of how to relate their lessons to E-learning. From this point of view, the Ministry of Education should provide both the headteachers and the teachers with adequate ICT courses, including the use of E-learning facilities in their own schools, e.g. ways of exploiting computer facilities by the choice of the most suitable CDs to aid the delivery of school curriculum. Furthermore, both the headteachers and teachers will require on-going support in order to strengthen their understanding of integrating E-learning according to the current reform of the Omani education system. Thus, the point which arises is that there is no logical sense in providing each school, for example, with only one LRC Teacher if they want to promote effective E-learning in schools. As well as providing an LRC Teacher, the Ministry should equip the normal teachers with enough E-learning to use the computers in connection with their specialist subject, whatever it is. Otherwise, the idea of providing only a single LRC Teacher for each school becomes ineffective as well as inefficient.

One practitioner sees the role of the LRC teachers as necessarily limited. He/she states that:

*One of the new posts is that of the Learning Resource Centre Teacher (LRC Teacher), which to some extent, would support and raise the quality of school management (headteacher 23.4).*

Regarding the above response, the LRC teachers and technicians may help the headteacher to organise appropriate courses for school leaders, including the headteachers as well as other members of the school staff. This might fulfil the school staff's requirement of using ICT effectively, if adequate courses could be provided. However, this would not include the headteachers of the existing schools of the old system, the GES. In this case, the Ministry should provide or encourage the present headteachers of the existing system, the GES, to attend computer courses in order to prepare them to discharge the new leadership tasks of the current reform, whether these new tasks are connected to the management and leadership of the school or connected to leadership in E-learning (leadership and school curriculum).

Again, the present headteacher should be prepared for the E-learning crisis before turning their schools towards the new trends which will be introduced by the current reform of the GES. Furthermore, providing the headteachers with ICT courses will enable them to understand the use of computers, including the use of ICT. No doubt, the headteachers require, at least, basic information in using ICT applications if they are to implement the new trends of E-learning in their own schools. Simply, they have to be knowledgeable in promoting E-learning in particular and the use of the ICT applications in general. Thus, the new reform requires many new features to be integrated in Omani primary schools (the current reform model schools). One official explains some new trends which accompany the current reform. He/she says:

*Self-learning is the new trend of the current reform in education. Thus, the pupils should be trained to search for relevant information by using the available facilities of the Learning Resource Centre, such as computer applications or even using the Internet (official 7.20a).*

Most countries of the world, including those which are named as developing countries, have taken advantage of ICT by integrating E-learning into their school curriculum. However, those countries which have just started to integrate E-learning will surely take a minimum period of time to gain the necessary experience of every aspect of it to use E-learning as effectively as possible. From this point of view, the headteacher who is not familiar with the uses of ICT certainly will take a considerable time to learn to make effective and efficient use of it, and so will the teachers who want to integrate E-learning in their classes. Thus, there is a hope that the Ministry of Education will provide access to technology to enforce the teaching and learning processes (Ministry of Education, 2001). The Ministry of Education (2001) states the following:

*Educational technologies do not stand apart by themselves; rather, they are embedded in the context of learning and teaching strategies and methods (p. 13).*

Thus the Ministry of Education is willing to integrate effective E-learning skills (which should be provided to pupils) so long as the teachers can themselves use the new educational technologies and this will require the headteachers to be fully understand, for example, how to select useful computer software in relation to their own school curriculum and their pupils' needs. The headteachers must, in this case, play a positive role in leading their school staff to make effective use of E-learning and ICT facilities.

Furthermore, it is believed that there is no way for primary school leaders, to avoid using ICT if they want to make the teaching and learning processes as accessible as they should be; sooner or later they must come to terms with these new technologies. Therefore, integrating E-learning in today's schools is necessary for the next generation; of pupils, of teachers and even of school leaders, including the headteachers.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education is serious about implementing the current reform as fast as possible. Hence, as discussed above, 200 model schools have been set up according to the current reform plans since 1998; therefore, the new model schools is steadily replacing the old one, the GES. This can be considered a sign that the current reform model schools is being implemented. According to the latest information, the current reform model schools represent 20 percent of the total, compared with the existing schools of the GES (OMNP, 2001c). Thus, a step has been taken by the Ministry of Education to initiate major developments in the educational system, including the enhancement of E-learning by equipping its schools with LRCs. Indeed, E-learning cannot possibly be integrated into the school curriculum without having computer labs. However, it seems that there are no separate computer labs in the model schools of the current reform; however, the LRCs do include computers, computer software and books (Ministry of Education, 1999).

In addition, there are still many primary schools which seek support to move forwards to integrate E-learning; most present headteachers are minimally aware of the use of computers and, wherever possible, use ICT in their daily work. This idea is explained more fully by one practitioner. He/she points out that:

*As far as I know, there are many primary schools which have computers and perhaps they are used effectively. However, in our school we only have one computer which is used for a managerial purpose; hence, we still need a person to support us in order to activate its functions as much as possible (headteacher 72.15a).*

The above response makes it clear that the present Omani primary headteachers of the GES are evidently taking part in the ICT revolution and have aspirations to use it as effectively as possible, limited by the resources of their own school. However, they have not

yet benefited enough from the current reform of the GES. Also, this response indicates the need for immediate support for them, as discussed earlier, by providing the headteachers with adequate computer courses and on-going support in understanding and using the ICT facilities which will allow them to lead their own schools successfully. Furthermore, the following response indicates more details of experience in an Omani primary school. One practitioner explains the following:

*I think we need to have a new position for a person who should be responsible for school data which relates to both records of pupils, staff and financial transactions (headteacher 72.15).*

The above response indicates a genuine plea for help from a typical headteacher who seems to be overloaded with the work of the school; they do not have time to solve all their school problems, whether administratively or pedagogically. The response also indicates that the typical primary headteacher has a lack of skills in using ICT; hence, he/she requires, for instance, extensive courses in ICT. Regarding the request which is indicated in response 72.15 to create a new post in order to deal with the data of the school, to some extent, this might be acceptable if, for example, he/she could deal with timetabling data. However, only the headteacher should use the computer for the purpose of keeping confidential records and financial information. Thus, the headteacher may need to deal with confidential information related to teachers, pupils and even parents; hence, they have to be able to use the computer professionally. Indeed, it is a good sign that the present Omani primary headteachers can afford to buy a few computers for their own schools without having extra funding from the Ministry of Education. However, equipping their own schools with LRCs is quite beyond them.

In addition, the following response raises crucial points that the present Omani primary headteachers apply to themselves: whether they are competent in the use of ICT and aware of the possibilities and, as we discussed earlier, whether they might require certain training and support to enable them to face the new challenges of the current reform. One practitioner has already registered him/herself to attend a computer course. He/she states the following:

*I personally have registered to attend a computer course in order, it is hoped, to manage my school records more easily. This course should be provided by the Directorate General; however, I shall have to make my own arrangements [This practitioner made the last remark because no word had so far been received from the authorities] (headteacher 73.15).*

The above response indicates three crucial points: firstly, that the primary headteacher has the ambition to update his/her knowledge of ICT for use in the management of the school. Actually, considering the day-to-day schoolwork, the computer has become very useful and important for everyone - the headteacher, the teachers and the pupils (Dimmock, 2000).

Secondly, the respondent gives the impression of being a far-sighted school leader trying to prepare him/herself to face the new challenges of the new reform. This also reflects a good understanding that his/her leadership effectiveness can be raised by acting independently, and not waiting until the last minute in order to discharge the new leadership tasks which are connected to the use of ICT and which also require urgent integration into the school curriculum, e.g. in leading both pupils and teachers to use ICT effectively. This is evidence that the present Omani primary headteacher is capable of updating his/her knowledge independently. Moreover, it indicates that the Omani primary headteacher does not always wait to be spoon-fed in gaining experience.

Thirdly, response 73.15, indicates a basic step in using ICT, which is vital in academic life as well as in a headteacher's professional life. Thus, the respondent has already taken action to develop his/her leadership and managerial performance by seeing the computer as a tool for various purposes; for example, to be used for word processing, spread sheets and for communication, whether nationally or internationally, through the internet and e-mail.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we were addressing some perspectives contributed by the officials (policy makers) and headteachers (practitioners) who represent Omani educational leaders as they participated in the fieldwork for a PhD research project that was conducted in Oman. The researchers come to the conclusion that the current reform of the GES is being implemented according to the Ministry's plans, as announced in 1998. However, the new model schools of the current reform should be considered the best possible model for modern Omani schools if the Ministry of Education could maintain its high standard of equipping and staffing for all schools (Ministry of Education, 1997) including the existing schools of the GES.

Furthermore, school leaders need to update their knowledge in terms of using the educational technologies (e.g. ICT) which serve school needs.

In addition, at this stage, the present Omani headteachers should be trained and given proper knowledge of ICT. Thus, they have to transform their traditional style of managing their own schools into a modernised one which will enable them to integrate new technological ideas and communicate through ICT.

This is an indication of an important requirement; it would certainly be in the government's interests in educating the new generation of pupils with needed knowledge in terms of using ICT effectively and efficiently.

In general, officials think that the current reform will address most of the new generation's technological needs, whether pupils, teachers or school leaders, including the headteachers. This is evident by equipping the reformed schools with the LRCs (ICT and E-learning facilities). However, the headteachers think that they have not yet ready to lead their own school members; pupils and teachers, in making effective use of E-learning. Thus, the headteachers are not yet aware of the basic skills of using computers and ICT facilities. As the Omani proverb puts it, "he who has nothing can give nothing". However, all the official documents available to the researchers have indicated no evidence so far of providing both the headteachers and normal teachers with adequate ICT courses. This may not yet be included in the official agenda but it is vital to consider it in the current reform of the GES in Oman.

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**Paper 4**

**EXPLORING THE *ALSHURA* SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MODEL IN OMAN: The  
Perspectives of the Omani Primary School Headteacher on Traditional Views of  
Consulting and Sharing Responsibility with Others**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents some findings from a research study conducted in primary schools in Oman. The sample for this study consists of twelve officials (i.e. policy makers and administrators in the Ministry of Education) and seventy primary school headteachers. The methods used for collecting data were individual and focus group interviews.

For the first time, this paper explores the traditional model of school leadership – the *AlShura* model – in Oman (which has evolved under the guidance of the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said). According to the officials and the headteachers, this model is unique in that it reflects the expectations of the Ministry of Education and the Omani people about how schools should be led and managed. It encompasses educational values and beliefs particular to the societal and cultural traditions of Oman, emphasising the practice of consulting colleagues and sharing school responsibilities. This produces an open style of school management and leadership. Thus, this model enables headteachers, deputy headteachers and senior teachers to work together as a team to raise the quality of their leadership, minimise crises in day-to-day management, and promote school efficiency and effectiveness.

The *AlShura* School Leadership Model embodies the need, which is recognised by Omani primary school headteachers, to consult and share school responsibilities with others. This enables them to work side by side with all their colleagues in order to face the challenges of modernising Omani schools. This model is more likely to be successful than any model of leadership directly imported from other (Western) cultures.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper explores a unique research finding: the traditional Omani school leadership model (*AlShura*) which in many ways reflects the societal and cultural traditions of the country (e.g. distinct educational and leadership concepts, principles, values and beliefs). *AlShura* will be explained according to its initiatives factors and some quotations drawn from the respondents will be highlighted in the discussion of each factor.

Thus, *AlShura* is known intuitively - based on experience and intuition but not generally thought through in a rational, open way. It is not explicit, but implicit, not analysed, not written down, and without detailed guidelines. Also, it can be said that *AlShura* is unspoken but is understood by Omani headteachers (tacit, as a product of hidden knowledge). In fact, *AlShura* is a traditional leadership style which can be practised in the society as well as in the schools of Oman.

*AlShura* emerged from the findings of this research project. In particular, the primary school headteachers linked their present practice with their own inherited style of school leadership. In other words, in the interviews they addressed leadership issues which were brought up by such research questions as: What is the history and what are the values which underpin primary school leadership in Oman? No doubt, *AlShura* owes a great deal to Omani tradition and is also associated with their educational values (e.g. the integrity of the job, honesty and trustworthiness). Hence, these characteristics certainly have the greatest impact on the existing practice of primary school leadership. From this point of view, *AlShura* is unique to Omani schools, including the primary schools.

Furthermore, a formal statement outlining and describing the *AlShura* has been requested by the interviewees, whether officials or headteachers (see the quotations in the following sections) in order to create a genuine Omani school leadership model. In fact, this model will be useful in transforming the existing practice of primary school leadership in those schools operating under the General Education System (GES). Recalling the *AlShura* should be considered vital; for instance, it is a good moment for Omani school leaders, including headteachers, to think of combining the school leadership concepts of the *AlShura* with modern concepts (e.g. adapting useful aspects of the transactional and the transformational school leadership models).

The *AlShura* should be required in order to implement new school leadership tasks which were introduced by the current educational reform of the GES. This reform has been in



progress since 1998, including reforming primary school leadership (AlHinai, 2000; AlHammami, 1999; MI, 1998; Educational Consulting Services, 1995).

Again, this paper will highlight some findings relevant to the theme of the BELMAS Annual Conference, 2002, “*Leaders and Leadership: Leadership Teams, Team Leaders and Middle Managers*”, by identifying, investigating and interpreting findings in connection with the *AlShura*.

In addition, the researchers’ concern is also to explore the respondents’ views on the *AlShura*, whether as currently implemented or as a future intention, when it is hoped that the *AlShura* will be clearly identified, modified and modernised in order to suit the current implementation of the current educational reform in Oman. The respondents’ views will be illustrated in a selection of quotations which the researchers will present, interpret and comment on. In addition, a wide range of references will be cited in order to build up a body of evidence to support the arguments developed in the quotations as well as the body of this paper.

### **ALSHURA AS A SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MODEL**

Between 628 and 630 AD (more than fourteen hundred years ago according to the Arabic Hegira (AH) calendar), the leadership of *AlShura* was founded in Oman at the time when *the people of Oman embraced Islam* (Ghubash, 1997, pp. 12-29; Kashif, 1994, pp. 5 & 22-40). The following statements are drawn from the speech by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to the Omani people and address the role of *AlShura* in the work of leadership; he states the following:

*The [AlShura] Council has given due attention to drawing up [a] long-term programme to develop productive sectors and to improve the standards of performance of service-related outlets ... through the serious and objective studies which have been conducted by the Council [of AlShura], which have in turn enabled it to make constructive proposals and recommendations ... the Council’s activities which take into account our deep-rooted Omani traditions and which call for sincere work and cooperation ... the Council’s duty to propose appropriate means to encourage development efforts ... to step up their efforts toward true coordination and increase the level of cooperation. (MI, 1995, pp. 149, 151 & 248)*

The above quotation identifies some responsibilities which any team on the *AlShura* model should address (the role of the *AlShura* Council members to study recent projects that the government undertake and similarly this role powerfully can be practiced in schools, too). Of course, this model would be an appropriate school leadership model in Oman; hence, the school leaders might need to trace its characteristics and related concepts as a foundation for implementing the model. Also, they should understand and study in depth its significance as a unique school leadership model. The following statement provides a clue to its importance:

*[Al]Shura is firmly rooted in the life of the Omani community, who are well aware of the important role it has to play in building that future which we all seek to achieve. (OMDO, 2001, p. 1)*

In addition, the above statement indicates that the Omani people have experienced the effect of *AlShura*, since they practise this kind of leadership in everyday life. This is evidence that it would be appropriate for it to be integrated into the educational sector formally. In this regard, the ALSHURA requires a crystal clear vision and belief in a bright future for both educational and the school leadership practices.

Furthermore, the leadership of *AlShura* entails responsibilities which must be performed honestly, faithfully and reliably. The leader following the principles of *AlShura* should be knowledgeable in understanding its characteristics as well as its boundaries (e.g. the leader can be flexible but he/she cannot be lenient). The leader also should be *experienced and skilful* if he or she is to implement its terminology accurately; hence, it requires that the headteacher’s *commitments should be linked to the needs of his/her staff’s* (AlKhalily,

undated, pp. 9-10) such as to provide them with adequate support for performing their job effectively; in addition, he/she should be closely in touch with the community members' requirements (e.g. to provide a good educational service for parents and their children). In connection with the characteristics of *AlShura*, the followers should be united and supportive of their leader; however, this can only happen when they feel that he/she is capable of influencing their activities for the better and has convinced them by exemplifying the characteristics of *AlShura* genuinely and as if it were his/her second nature. In addition, the followers of an *AlShura* leader should offer him/her their honest decisions and opinions when they are asked to do so. The *AlShura* leader should also weigh up whether their views are adequately supported by evidence from knowledge and experience. This also means that both the leader and his/her colleagues must be fully committed to making the best possible decisions (minimising the room of doubt). However, the final decision is the responsibility of the leader him/herself; therefore, it is important for him/her to be knowledgeable. If the headteacher is not in a position of knowledge he/she cannot tell whether the advice and opinions offered by colleagues is good or bad. Therefore it is vital for the leader to be well informed. Moreover, for the leader to be able to convince the followers, and the reverse, seems to be vital in creating an active atmosphere of stimulating interaction between the leader and his/her colleagues in making proper decisions. This will undoubtedly lead to effective school leadership. This model urges the *AlShura* leader to be open-minded (in terms of sharing current interests, e.g. on the information evolution) and should always seek up-to-date knowledge. Furthermore, this kind of leadership must not be considered dictatorial, rigid or harsh in directing and leading colleagues (AlKhalily, undated).

In conclusion, *AlShura* means consulting colleagues (others) and sharing with them in the making of proper decisions. This means that primary school headteachers should share responsibilities with their colleagues; consult pupils in order to create a peaceful school environment and demonstrate, for example, high standards of morality, trustworthiness and honesty which represent Islamic principles, values and beliefs.

#### **RESEARCH FINDINGS OF THE ALSHURA SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MODEL**

This section will highlight some findings to do with the factors of the *AlShura* school leadership model. Each factor will be briefly explained and supporting quotations will be included. Some of the *AlShura* factors to be discussed are as follows:

##### ***1 - Transmitting educational values and goals and ensuring their acceptance and implementation***

The respondents claim that it is important to embody Omani traditions based on Islamic principles. Thus, the argument indicates that certain values must be borne in mind to put into practice and certain goals must be achieved in the practice of school leadership. Naturally, the values and the goals which emerge from Islamic principles are also endorsed by the Ministry of Education. Endorsing the existing values of Omani society, however, needs to be accomplished within clearly targeted goals and these goals should be adequately redefined so that the country benefits in an appropriate way by *considering at least the vision of 2020* (Ministry of Education, 1997, pp. 2 & 7-10) which the government aims to complete in the current development stage of the General Education System (GES). The Ministry of Education (1997) states the following:

*... the Ministry has started in the light of the Royal directives of His Majesty the Sultan to study the different modern educational systems with a view to deriv[ing] and fram[ing] a suitable educational curriculum that complies with the Omani educational philosophy, which in its turn is deduced from the True Islamic Teachings, the cultural heritage and traditions and values of the Omani society ....*  
(p. 2)

As indicated above, there is evidence that the Ministry of Education focuses on reforming the whole educational system, including school management and leadership. For example, educationalists in Oman need to think of how reformed school curriculum can be managed,

what kind of skills the headteachers need to be familiar with, how can they be sure that the new challenges of the reform will be dealt in appropriate ways, whether they are confident enough and whether they have sufficient competences to implement the reform, as well as to transform the existing practices of their school management and leadership: all these questions must be high on the agenda for headteachers. Thus, there is a necessity for choose a certain model of leadership which can serve the transformation of the existing practices and take on the new challenges of the current reform. From this point of view, recalling *AlShura*, now might be the right time for the Omani official administrators and primary headteachers to work together to agree a desired model of school leadership. In this case, it is important to combine the traditional (*AlShura*) and the modern concepts of school leadership. One official highlights formal school administration and informal school leadership; he says that:

*The concept of leadership is of tasks which should be performed according to a limited plan and limited goals. These goals are drawn from the philosophy of education in the Sultanate of Oman. (Official 1.6)*

No doubt the Ministry of Education has its own goals, whether short or long term goals; however, it is vital for school leaders to set their goals on the lines of the Ministry's targeted goals; but to do so, it is crucial for them to act as *AlShura* leaders who have their own autonomy. Hence, their targeted goals must serve the country's requirements flexibly and prepare the citizens to face the scientific, economic and technological challenges confidently (Ministry of Education, 1997). One headteacher points this out:

*Headteachers should be aware of the goals targeted by the Ministry of Education and its philosophy, because this is needed by them for school leadership. (Headteacher 19.13)*

Again, the connection between the Ministry's philosophy and the *AlShura* model is clearly implied in the above quotation, since its philosophy is based on the teachings of Islam (Ministry of Education, 1997). Hence, the *AlShura* model must be the one which serves the Ministry's educational and leadership philosophies.

In conclusion, it is crucial for the Ministry of Education to check the further effectiveness of its targeted goals in redefining and transforming the existing practice of school leadership as part of the requirements of the current reform of the GES.

## ***2 - Implementing the concepts of sharing school responsibility with their colleagues, be truthfulness, trustworthiness and honesty***

*AlShura* allows everybody to share in the responsibility for running the school. Thus, each school member would be making some contribution to the work of his/her colleagues. However, this model is not yet formally practised in primary schools; hence, in Oman the *AlShura* is practised mostly by politicians (MI, 1995). Thus, the desires expressed by the research contributors (respondents), may indicate a significant direction for development; hence, here we introduce it as a contribution of this research which should be understood as part of the current educational and primary school leadership reforms in Oman. In addition, the officials (policy makers and administrators) should also consider the respondents' invocation of the *AlShura* School Leadership Model, since they have the same wish to improve schools. Their request certainly will enable the school leaders to clarify related tasks in the light of *AlShura* characteristics in order to secure their own style of school management and leadership. One official finds that:

*The values in education are considered a major component of primary school leadership, which are mainly derived from traditions and the principles of Islam such as AlShura. Equally, all school members are considered colleagues; therefore, they have to share and to be consulted in performing school responsibilities, of course, according to their role obligations. (Official 68.3)*

The above statement indicates an interpretation of *AlShura* which in one way or another is

found in Omani primary schools, but has not yet been formally approved by the Ministry of Education. It is beyond question that *AlShura*, because it is connected to Omani traditions. The guides published for educationalists do not indicate any school leadership model which is required for Omani primary schools; however, there are some elements in school guides which link to *AlShura*, such as *electing a school committee council* (Ministry of Education, 1993, pp. 5-113). In addition, the present researchers have investigated *AlShura* by discussing the respondents' ideas and perspectives. The above statement also indicates the headteachers' daily school routine; hence, many seem to have adopted *AlShura* in practice in their own schools. One official describes this:

*According to school regulations, the headteacher should appoint members from among school staff to the senior school committee council, in order to share the responsibilities of running their school. This committee is responsible for addressing all school matters before taking action. Also, this committee should reach consensus about each topic needing to be addressed; thus the headteacher is not making decisions on his/her own. (Official 65.11)*

According to the above quotation, Omani primary schools are run by a group of school leaders, including school academic and administrative staff, who meet to think critically but cooperatively about their own school's requirements and difficulties. This is evidence that there is a sense of working together; in addition, the headteacher is urged to consult his/her colleagues. Again this is an indication of *AlShura*. Indeed, this is supported by the following statement:

*The headteacher should bear in mind the Prophet Mohammed's speech: "all of you are nurturers and all of you are responsible for your own followers ...", and also the headteacher should consider Allah's commands in performing his/her job. He/she has to be capable of building good relations with his/her subordinates, such as teachers, pupils, school workers and even other people in the community. He/she should not be arrogant, otherwise, he/she will lose his/her subordinates and they will not cooperate. (Headteacher 4.20)*

Here are some of the responsibilities of the *AlShura* leader in both school and community affairs. Thus, the above respondent sees that the *AlShura* leader should transmit those meanings of *AlShura* into their practice of school management and leadership. Hence, this respondent speaks from his/her experience and his/her idea certainly implies a distinctive background as an Omani headteacher. His/her response indicates many details of the *AlShura* model such as drawing genuinely Islamic connections, being concerned with a high quality of human relationships and above all having the modest character of this kind of leader, i.e. not being arrogant.

In conclusion, the *AlShura* school leadership model embodies crucial means relevant to Omani school culture such as consulting and sharing school responsibility with one's colleagues (subordinates or followers); this is supported by the argument of Wallace (2001) who disapproves of too autocratic a conception of school leader as:

*... often entailing restricted sharing of leadership which cast[s] their colleagues exclusively in the role of followers. (p. 156)*

In other words, the headteacher's support in raising the achievement of teachers who are struggling is vital in order to avoid the risk of leading pupils to low achievements. In this regard, teachers may at times become followers rather than colleagues in sharing responsibilities, sometime it is important for them to follow what they have been advised.

### ***3 - Integrating of social qualities such as equity, creation of a peaceful school environment and fairness in distributing duties***

Fairness, creating a peaceful school environment and a pleasant teaching/learning atmosphere, valuing justice and equity in, for example, teachers' work, are considered

*AlShura* features. These qualities are well illustrated by the following quotations. One official points this out:

*Primary school leadership is based on justice and equity in terms of headteachers' distribution of school duties among their colleagues. (Official 63.1)*

All the above-mentioned features should be encouraged, to create good relationships between headteachers and teachers, between headteachers and pupils and between teachers and pupils. From this point of view, the headteachers need to build close relationships with both groups, teachers and pupils. One headteacher explains the following:

*Good relationships between the headteacher and his/her staff can be gained if he/she distributes school duties among teachers equally, for example, timetabling responsibilities. (Headteacher 59.1)*

As discussed earlier, a peaceful school environment, in fact, requires both equity and good relationships with staff members and pupils, which also in turn will strengthen home and school relationships. No doubt, these factors can be considered important factors of the *AlShura*. One headteacher suggests that:

*There are three main characteristics that headteachers should possess: to be communicative, persistent and capable of enhancing AlShura (principles of Islam). This means that they should appear in public to be persistent in solving problems and should implement the related principles of AlShura. (Headteacher 45.1)*

In fact, these characteristics reflect the background of the *AlShura*; however, any successful school leader would require them. Also, the above statement indicates the Omanis' social priorities, which underpin their own style.

In conclusion, it seems that interdisciplinary features for many school leadership models, such as 'value of fairness,' (Northouse, 2001, p. 120); hence, the features which are addressed under this factor are also associated with the *AlShura*.

#### **4 - Accomplishing of higher achievements in teaching/learning performance which leads to higher results for pupils**

The respondents' perspectives on a valuable aspect are addressed under this factor, which can be considered a major factor of *AlShura*. In fact, achieving higher standards in the teaching and learning processes will certainly lead to better school results in general and specifically will be reflected in pupils' results. This factor also means that the *AlShura* leaders have as their target the raising of the quality of their leadership and so of educational standards. Thus, most of the respondents were agreed that higher achievement is a good sign of the effectiveness of the *AlShura* leadership.

Moreover, the topic of this factor is well illustrated by the following quotations. One official remarks:

*There are many fundamental leadership values; however, the most important values to be gained by pupils are moral lessons (behaviour) and learning achievements. (Official 64.2)*

Achieving higher results does not point only to the staff's and pupils' achievements, the headteachers, too, should consider this as a sign of their leadership quality. This also can be linked to other school leadership models rather than being considered unique to the *AlShura*; hence, it is a crucial indication that Omani educators accept useful adaptations and modifications within their own (the proposed) school leadership model. This is also evident in current developments in Oman: both the officials and the headteachers seem to be open-minded about adapting elements from other models for the sake of developing Omani education system. The following statement from a headteacher, supports the previous one:

*One of the important values of primary school leadership is the higher standard of staffs' and pupils' achievements and, in addition to this, the quality of the school*

*curriculum. (Headteacher 58.1)*

As stated in the above quotation, here is a connection between school commitments and achieving high standards which the *AlShura* leader should consider carefully. In this regard, adaptation of “*headship standards*” from those current in British schools might be useful (TTA, 2000, pp. 1-2). Fundamental educational goals seem to be universal; however, each country can make the necessary modifications to suit their own school environments (AlHinai, 2000).

In conclusion, the concern to achieve higher results can cover three major areas for the *AlShura* leader: firstly, the quality of leadership; secondly, establishing a useful school curriculum; and, thirdly, creating a peaceful school environment.

#### **5 - Transmitting moral instruction and providing a role model**

*AlShura* leaders are urged to be precise and concise in clarifying school responsibilities and matters of school management. They have to make every managerial task as clear as possible in order to lead their colleagues according to the school’s requirements and also according to their colleagues’ needs. In this regard, when *AlShura* leaders perform even a single task of school leadership, such as timetabling procedures, it gives them a chance to show their accountability and their care to handle things justly among their colleagues. This is evident from the following quotation. As one official explains:

*The role of the primary school leader (headteacher) is to distribute certain tasks or information, but the main point is that the role of the leader should clarify and empower his/her staff in their implementation. For example, a teacher’s morality is considered his/her own responsibility, but the school’s morality should be looked after by the leader. Thus, the school leader may clarify what is the benefit of nurturing and practising morality. Perhaps many teachers ignore the benefits of keeping a high moral standard. New teachers may be most ignorant, but leaders should guide them all by clarifying the dimensions of morality. (Official 1.42)*

The *AlShura* leaders are committed to taking responsibility for setting a good example of the best and most desirable behaviour to the staff. This indeed would lead them to be respected in both staffs’ and pupils’ minds. Another official supports the supplementary element in morality:

*If the pupils in primary schools are trained to be well disciplined this will lead them to be so as they go up the school system. (Official 6.25a)*

In conclusion, this indicates that setting a good example and training pupils so that they can exercise self-discipline are both necessary. This also in turn would lead to a pleasant school environment.

#### **6 - Appreciating of the opinions of colleagues and welcoming their critical comments**

The *AlShura* leaders (Omani headteachers) should respect their colleagues’ opinions. Thus, letting others express their opinions freely embodies four major concerns of *AlShura* model, they are as follows:

1. Creates cooperation in handling school responsibilities.
2. Raises job satisfaction.
3. Strengthens human relationships.
4. Avoids giving a false impression of the tasks of leadership.

In addition, it allows a leader’s colleagues to feel free in negotiating and offering appropriate decisions whenever it is necessary to study any topic with them, such as managing classrooms properly. Therefore, the Omani headteachers should involve their colleagues, especially teachers, because they are closely involved in the school situation and aware of pupils’ needs as well as their own teaching requirements.

Both major groups of the research population, officials and primary school headteachers were altogether agreed on this topic (being appreciative of the opinions of colleagues). One

practitioner, for example, points out the following:

*First of all, the headteacher should allow others to express their opinions freely. We should not be rigid and we have to respect people in order to receive their respect and to exchange trust with them. Also, we need to be committed and kind to our colleagues in order to raise the effectiveness of their performance and to feel at peace with them. Moreover, the headteacher should be well educated and widely knowledgeable. In addition, headteachers should be capable of developing their own job skills to minimise the inflexibility of the work. Also, headteachers should delegate responsibilities in managing meetings, supervising school activities or even class observations, because they will never be able to manage the work of the school by themselves and this also enables their colleagues to demonstrate their skill in school leadership tasks. (Headteacher 4.15)*

Indeed, the discussion of the above statement highlights major issues of *AlShura* leadership such as exchanging trust and respect with colleagues (issues covered in the traditions of Oman). These practices are crucial in developing school leadership, because if they are in place, colleagues will see themselves working with considerate school leaders who appreciate their efforts in carrying the responsibilities of the school and developing leadership side by side with the school leaders. Furthermore, this certainly contributes to the quality of *AlShura* school leadership, whether this, for example, is shown in the raising of teaching and learning standards or in strengthening home/school relationships.

In conclusion, the discussion on this factor of partnership adds a crucial dimension to what can be considered as the *AlShura* characteristics of Omani primary school leaders.

#### **7 - Encouraging staff members to respect their commitments to the school and the community**

School commitments are connected to both school and the community. The *AlShura* leaders are encouraged to strike a balance in their responsibilities between these two major areas. By considering their commitments, they are obeying an essential precept of Islam which should be practised at all times as a major element of *AlShura* (the principles of Islam represent, for example, equity and justice). In other words, the headteachers as well as the teachers should be honest and trustworthy in the way that they serve their school and its community.

Of course, considering school commitments means that both the leaders and teachers practise what they believe is valuable and this would in turn raise their job achievements. Thus, the *AlShura* leader's responsibility is to encourage staff members to respect their commitments to the school and the community. One official points out that:

*For example, on administrative issues, how can the headteacher encourage his/her colleagues to be on time for work, leave at the end of office hours and not be absent? Certainly, all these practices could be represented as leadership practices. For example, if teachers do not arrive for work on time, or leave school too early [before the end of the school day] or are absent from work, these practices would lead to a loss of control by the leader and leaders would be neglecting their duties. Therefore, an uncontrolled school would lead to little progress in work and you can apply what I have stated about the administrative issues to the equivalent issues related to school leadership style. (Official 1.13)*

Keeping school commitments is strongly recommended as the staff's obligation to the school, whether academic or administrative staff members. As one headteacher states:

*Most of the teachers in my school are aware of their responsibilities, apart from those who are newcomers. (Headteacher 5.31)*

In conclusion, the concept of honouring commitments is an obligation of the *AlShura*. Hence, *AlShura* represents a group of Islamic principles. Being faithful to one's commitments

should be practised outside as well as inside the school building. In other words, the headteachers should bear in mind that they serve both the school and the community, according to the targeted goals of the Ministry of Education.

#### **8 - Providing the driving force for school development**

This factor indicates a sense of powerful leadership, which drives everything in the direction of transforming the existing practice of primary schools in Oman. Also, this factor expresses the responsibility that the *AlShura* leader has to keep every school member mindful of his/her duties and responsibilities.

Another thing that this factor includes is that the *AlShura* leaders should be capable of providing teachers and pupils with sufficient and adequate advisory support, including offering them sufficient teaching and learning opportunities.

Furthermore, the respondents consider that the *AlShura* model must represent a powerful force for directing education as a whole along the right path. Another headteacher describes primary school leadership as the heart of running the processes of teaching and learning in primary school; he/she says that:

*School leadership provides the central impetus of schoolwork. (Headteacher 5.10)*

Another description of school leadership in Oman is provided by one headteacher, who sums up as follows:

*Primary school leadership in Omani schools should enable the headteachers to plan and organise/arrange their work effectively. They should be capable of directing school members and using the resources of the school to accomplish targeted educational goals. This enables them to nurture human relations, accept other people's opinions and be free to make decisions and make use of valuable ideas when they are offered from others' perspectives. (Headteacher 4.14)*

In conclusion, the model (*AlShura*) which the respondents expected to be adopted in Omani primary schools should be considered as a fundamental component of implementing the current educational reform.

#### **LESSONS FOR OMANI SCHOOL LEADERS**

There are immediate lessons which are needed to be considered by the Ministry of Education and Omani school leaders in primary schools. They are also required both to transform the existing practice of primary school management and leadership and also to integrate and implement the new leadership tasks which are introduced by the current educational reform of the General Education System (GES). These lessons are as follows:

5. It is important to run primary schools according to a certain school leadership model, i.e. the *AlShura* school leadership model, which unfortunately has not yet been clearly identified in the present schools of the GES. However, the model which we are introducing in this paper seems to fit naturally into the Omani school environment; hence, an extensive study to clarify and identify this model is required for introducing it sensibly side by side with the Ministry's vision of the current educational reform in Oman.
6. Identifying the desired school leadership model should be sponsored by the Ministry itself in order; for instance, to develop the *AlShura*; hence, Omani experts are required to study this model which is unique to Omani schools.
7. Primary school leaders should play a major role in identifying, redefining and perhaps modifying the *AlShura*.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The above discussion includes both officials' and practitioners' perspectives and also sums up a few of the ideas which indicate a theoretical framework for the personal and professional characteristics, competences and skills of a school leader, and especially of the Omani headteacher as an *AlShura* leader. The opinions of the groups (respondents) were rather rhetorical than practical. In order to know whether their opinions are followed according to



*AlShura* school leadership model, comprehensive research would be needed to find out and examine the present headteachers' practice. This may be one of the directions which further research might take.

Furthermore, the enhancement of Islamic principles requires, for example, that headteachers should show justice, honesty and truthfulness when they are holding their staff accountable for the discharge of their duties.

*AlShura* is an Islamic term; it requires the involvement of every member of the school staff in leadership activities, rather than granting licence to one person alone. However, the concept of *AlShura* is, perhaps, not yet fully practised in the existing schools of the GES; thus, the respondents called for a full exercise of *AlShura*. This indicates that the respondents are looking for a school model which reflects their own culture and their own traditions, and which in turn informs their style of leadership in their own schools.

Respondents also agreed that the school leaders should embody Islamic principles (*AlShura*). Thus, there is a close connection between both the practice and the theoretical framework of Islamic principles for running schools.

*AlShura* emerges as a traditional concept in Omani society and also has cultural implications including educational, social, religious and political ones. However, the officials did not seem to be eager to share power and consult with the school leaders (sharing responsibility with headteachers would lead to *AlShura* being practised at the level of policy makers). This would account for the fact that the Omani primary headteachers did not feel they themselves were obliged to practise *AlShura* but did so only as a voluntary and ethical matter. In this regard, through considering the current educational reform in Oman, officials and school leaders be able to more open-minded about their own traditional strictures in leading primary schools in Oman.

It is hoped that with such open-mindedness something now desperately required could be implemented in Omani schools, for example, that headteachers integrate technology in their own schools (Rutherford and AlHinai, 2001). Thus, the modification and transformation of the *AlShura* model, perhaps, may work to the benefit of schools by widening leadership effectiveness and efficiency. In other words, primary school leaders, including the headteachers should decide what is their desired school leadership model in order to tackle the challenges of the current educational reform as well as those for the 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements (Ministry of Education, 1997).

Finally, *AlShura* School Leadership Model must be seen as a new model in the Western world, because it is genuinely a product of Omani culture.

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## **Appendix 11 - Modified school leaders' responsibilities in the model schools of the current reform of the GES in Oman**

In contrast with the existing responsibilities of primary headteachers which are stated in the GES guide, their modified responsibilities within the model schools (BES schools) will be described in this section. Also, this section will explore the new roles of school leaders (primary headteachers).

The following sections concern the Omani school leaders' roles within the reformed system as indicated in the model school guide (MSG) of the current reform of the GES.

### **OMANI SCHOOL LEADERS**

#### ***Headteachers***

In this section the headteachers' roles, responsibilities and duties are described within the model schools of the GES. Their roles, responsibilities and duties are identified and categorised in educational terms. These categories are: administrative, academic, financial and social. They cover 22 *responsibilities* which are stated in the 'model school guide' (MSG), and list them under the four above-mentioned categories. This allows the researcher to strike a balance between the categories in order to examine headteachers' work according to the official guide. The responsibilities in the guide represent 13 items of which are administrative, 3 academic, 1 *financial* and 5 *social*, altogether 22 *items* (Ministry of Education, 1998, pp. 11-12). The following sections will explain each term in more detail.

#### **Administrative responsibilities for headteachers**

As indicated above, there are 13 administrative responsibilities for headteachers to carry out. This indicates that headteachers have more administrative work than work of other kinds, such as academic responsibilities (see academic responsibilities, below). The administrative headings which are mentioned in the official guide state that the headteachers should follow the official guide for school work, work on an annual plan for managing their work and distribute the work between the school staff, monitor targeted plans for pupil acceptance and supervise school buildings. Further responsibilities indicate that headteachers should investigate their school's needs for academic and administrative staffing by following the official routines through the Director General, and request teaching materials for implementing the educational programmes and their related activities by following the official procedures through the Director General. Also, other responsibilities indicate that headteachers should supervise and develop computerised records for school staff, pupils and other workers and supervise and develop the school timetable and implement it according to the academic plan. Further administrative responsibilities are indicated, such as regular staff meetings, consideration of pupils' achievement, supervising examinations and evaluation processes, nominating classroom teachers and supervising their work, school activities and programmes, e.g. resource centre programme schedules, in order to ensure proper implementation of the curriculum.

The administrative responsibilities specified above show clearly that headteachers are directed through the centralised authority of the Ministry of Education. These responsibilities are outlined on two pages of the guide (11 and 12) and are stated in no particular order. On page 11 there are 9 responsibilities and on page 12 there are 3. The researcher has tried to categorise them, because the administrative are mixed with other responsibilities, such as academic. The following are administrative responsibilities as stated randomly in the official guide: 1,2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11,14, 15, 16 and 18. If they were separated from other responsibilities, it would help headteachers to identify their responsibilities more clearly. Also, they need to be clarified, because each responsibility can be extended into several sub-responsibilities. Lack of sub-categorisation can lead headteachers to be unclear about their responsibilities, and also to work in a disorganised way. As a result, the way in which these responsibilities were set out in the guide may lead to lower productivity in school work.

Headteachers need to be supported by having clearly delineated responsibilities to enable them to be both creative and further the development of their schools. Also, they should

exercise further responsibilities by fully practising the characteristics of educational leaders, e.g. transformational characteristics. In addition, they are not provided with instructions related to their administrative responsibilities to help them create co-operative teamwork. In other words, none of their responsibilities emphasise teamwork, staff development or external relations. The researcher thinks it is not enough to ask headteachers to follow the guide; we also need them to have think independently in the management of their schools. They need to develop their own creative ideas in relation to each responsibility and this need should be stated in the guide clearly and specifically. The researcher believes that Omani headteachers could be good leaders even within the centralised system. In this situation, it is not enough for headteachers to blame the central system for problems; they should themselves take responsibility for initiating and implementing change. In this case, it would be expected that they would find that their work, according to these responsibilities, would be varied as a result of their creativity.

Some of the administrative responsibilities ask the headteachers to supervise teachers and others ask them to develop, implement and evaluate teachers' performance. This indicates that they should involve other staff members in this task, making decisions together and supporting staff members' work.

Furthermore, the researcher would like to investigate an example of the headteacher's administrative responsibilities, such as supervising school activities. The headteachers should think of exercising this responsibility in different activities, e.g. physical and intellectual activities. Therefore, headteachers should think of regulations related to each activity, staff members who should be involved in and a way of supervising these activities. However, headteachers may nominate a staff member to supervise some activities when he/she is absent, such as his/her deputy. All these ideas will be crucial for headteachers to investigate, according to each responsibility, setting up sub-divisions of their major responsibilities.

#### ***Academic responsibilities for headteachers***

As indicated above, headteachers have three academic responsibilities to perform. This indicates that headteachers have less academic than administrative responsibility, but the different areas of responsibility may be balanced in value (see Administrative Responsibilities above). The academic responsibilities which are mentioned in the official guide include observing and evaluating teachers' performance and directing teaching staff to be aware of the linkage between theoretical and practical aspects, on the one hand, and introducing interdisciplinary ideas, on the other. Furthermore, *headteachers are encouraged to co-operate with inspectors and officials in order to update the knowledge of the teaching staff as well as to accomplish the targeted teaching/learning goals* (Ministry of Education, 1998, pp. 11-12).

Headteachers are urged to take seriously the academic responsibilities mentioned above. Each responsibility includes further details as sub-responsibilities. For example, headteachers should identify specific items to be assessed within class observations in order to evaluate teachers' performance.

The three items which make up the academic responsibilities are stated randomly in the official guide as items: 10, 13 and 17. The researcher gathered these responsibilities together under headings, i.e. administrative, academic, financial and social, in order to provide a systematic arrangement for discussing under a separate heading. Also, he made a critical analysis of these to ascertain whether they are clearly and comprehensively stated.

The researcher believes that the grouping of these responsibilities together provides headteachers with a set of headings for conducting each aspect of his/her role. In addition, the officials in the Ministry of Education should provide more specific details for each item of academic responsibility to supplement the MSG. The officials in the Ministry of Education may call for headteachers to participate in the clarification of the sub-responsibilities themselves, in order to gather different perspectives from all regions in the country. In this way officials could take advantage of headteachers' practical experience. Also, this will enable headteachers to be aware of their schools' needs and encourage them to participate effectively in the implementation of the prescribed role.

### ***Financial responsibilities for headteachers***

There is only one financial responsibility which the headteachers need to consider, namely, to develop budgeting plans for their school and be responsible for implementing them. This gives the headteacher primary financial responsibility for his/her school's expenditure. It indicates that *the headteacher should develop financial skills* in order to spend his/her school budget wisely. Item 5 of the guide sets this out (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 11).

### ***Social responsibilities for headteachers***

There are five social responsibilities for headteachers to deal with. The social headings which are mentioned in the official guide include that the headteachers should take care of pupils' social, health, and psychological difficulties, should use environmental resources and build good relationships with parents. Furthermore, *headteachers are urged to ensure that there is an effective Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and create a healthy school environment*. Again the social responsibilities are randomly indicated in items: 12, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the guide (Ministry of Education, 1998, pp. 11-12).

In conclusion, these four headings, administrative, academic, financial and social represent the totality of headteachers' role in the school. Thus they have freedom to show their creativity in the manner in which they implement the four broad aspects of their work both efficiently and effectively.

## Appendix 12 – A brief history of the educational system and school leadership in Oman

### QUR'ANIC SCHOOLING IN OMAN

The development of Qur'anic schooling went through various stages in order to create an appropriate educational environment for Omani society. The following sections will, briefly, describe the Qur'anic schooling system in Oman.

#### *Schools*

At first, there were only two main types of school, commonly known as the Basic Qur'anic and Advanced Qur'anic schools. The Basic Qur'anic schools included primary and preparatory, and Advanced Qur'anic schools included secondary and advanced levels. The Basic Qur'anic schools were spread throughout Oman, in cities and rural areas, whereas the Advanced Qur'anic schools were found only in certain cities of Oman, e.g. Nizwa, Bahla and Rustaq. The teachers who taught in the Basic Qur'anic schools were normally less educated than those who taught at the Advanced level of schooling. A single teacher ran each school, whether basic or advanced, and normally schools carried the teachers' names, such as *Mu'lim Khami's* school. The researcher had the experience of being a pupil in *Mu'lim Khami's* basic school. He left this Qur'anic school in the academic year 1970/71, when the Omani new reforms began, replacing the Qur'anic schools by the General Education System all over Oman.

A teacher who taught at the basic level was called in Arabic *Mu'alim* and a teacher who taught at the advanced level normally was called a scholar, in Arabic *A'lim*. In addition, the schools differed from each other in terms of pupil population, educational environment, curriculum content, period of study and fees.

#### *School levels*

The Qur'anic Schooling was managed in certain ways depending on the level of the school. There were three distinctive levels running in Oman according to the Qur'anic Schooling Style: the basic level which set the foundations of religious education, including elementary and preparatory levels, and secondary and the advanced levels, including higher education (AIDhahab, 1987, p.65).

AIDhahab (1987) reported that the basic level was offered to the pupils aged 6-12, who were taught the foundations of religious education, e.g. reading, reciting the Qur'an and basic writing. Both boys and girls were taught together, the pupils sitting on the floor in a large classroom and most of these schools were located in mosques or in teachers' houses (AIDhahab, 1987, pp.65 & 66).

AIDhahab (1987) added that the secondary level was attended by pupils aged 12-20, and they taught more advanced *religious matters*, for example, the Islamic law and the capacity to speak, read and write Arabic (p. 68).

The advanced level was attended by pupils, e.g. aged 18-25, and this level prepared the pupils to be *judges* throughout Oman (AIDhahab, 1987, p. 69). Therefore, many Omanis were found capable of teaching religious education and Arabic in 1970. In other words, when the Omani modern reforms began in 1970, the Omani government did not need to invite expatriates to be employed as judges. Also, the background of the Omanis in religious education prepared them to be employed in teaching both the Islamic and Arabic subjects within the new General Education system. This is described in more detail in the following sections.

#### *The Basic Qur'anic school*

The Basic Qur'anic school which served, e.g. pupils of 6-17 years old could be found everywhere. The estimated number of pupils in each school was between 50 and 80, boys and girls, sitting together perhaps in a room, under a shelter or in a mosque. Therefore, the educational environment was mixed, but the teacher arranged a semi-circle of pupils. This allowed the teacher to instruct, watch and help the pupils to learn. His location also allowed him to move freely in any direction between the pupils. In the researcher's experience, the

teacher was using a co-operative teaching technique by asking the older pupils to listen to the younger pupils reciting the verses of the Qur'an. Of course, the curriculum content was based on the Holy Qur'an (see the Omani Qur'anic system). The fees and provision of teaching materials for the children were the parents' responsibility, in addition to unfixed payments for teaching. Thus, parents were responsible for supporting the teacher who ran the school by providing money or goods for his support.

### ***The Advanced Qur'anic school***

The Advanced Qur'anic school was located in certain cities in Oman (see above, Omani Qur'anic schools) and served pupils of 18-25 years old. Estimated pupil numbers were fairly small, about 10 to 20 pupils, because the teacher had to look after his pupils throughout the duration of the teaching/learning process. They spent most of their time with him, shadowing him everywhere, for example, when he paid visit to other scholars to discuss the interpretations of debated verses. The scholar was normally as famous in society as a judge or an Imam was. The pupils were accommodated near the scholar's house, and the mosque was the place of teaching and learning. Of course, these pupils would have come from different areas and cities and spent months away from their parents. Therefore, in these schools only, boys were accepted. Girls were allowed to study to an advanced level, but they had to return every evening to their parents' residence.

The educational environment comprehensively involved pupils in learning through the daily process of discussion, for example, verses of the Holy Qur'an and through interpreting its meaning. The teaching/learning process involved the pupils through collaborative and group work. As noted above, the curriculum context was mainly based on the Holy Qur'an, the Prophetic traditions and Arabic literature. The pupils spent almost 8 years in this school, until the age of 25 years. The cost of teaching materials were met by the government (the Imamate), supported by the pupils' parents. The scholar was on the whole generous in looking after his pupils, at least providing them with free accommodation if he could afford it. The pupils who graduated successfully could be made judges or teachers, and most of them became scholars themselves later on.

### ***School curriculum***

The curriculum of the Qur'anic school was based on the verses and chapters of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions. Later on, the curriculum was extended to include Arabic literature e.g. philosophical and rhetorical studies. For example, reciting basic verses of the Holy Qur'an was taught at the basic level of schooling and generally required for secondary and advanced levels. The curriculum of the advanced level was extensively focused on religious instructions and Arabic literature. AlDhahab (1987) states the following:

*The curriculum, although varied, could be divided into three [parts]: Islamic Law, Arabic language and science. Under Islamic Law, pupils learned Shariah, Hadith, Fiqh, and Tafsir (explanation of the Qur'an by various Islamic scholars). Under Arabic language, pupils learned ancient and medieval poetry, Arabic literature, grammar, speech, rhetoric and Islamic history. Under science, pupils learned astronomy. (AlDhahab, 1987, p. 69)*

The Qur'anic school style was commonly used in Oman between 628 and 1970.

### ***Teaching materials***

At the beginning of the early Qur'anic educational process, materials from the schools' everyday surroundings were used for the purpose of writing verses of the Holy Qur'an, e.g. a wooden board and papyrus leaves. These materials were not easy to find and could not be used for teaching children, but were used only for certain purposes, such as writing verses or chapters of the Holy Qur'an. Alternatively, animal bones were used to write on instead of white boards, e.g. the shoulder blade of a camel. These materials were used for a long period of time as teaching equipment in Oman, and later on "slab of slates" were used instead of black boards and "clods of mud" instead of chalk (Baalbaki, 1993, pp. 928 & 1006).

### ***School leadership***

Teachers in Qur'anic schools were playing other roles beside teaching, such as the role of headteachers, facilitators, counsellors, psychologists, and religious and educational leaders. They managed to nurture children and prepared them to read and write Arabic and to be educated religiously. The Omanis also played the roles of basic education teachers and scholars. Teachers of basic education and the scholars in advanced levels of education were involved in the Qur'anic schooling system, which represented both public and private schooling. In most cases, educating people was considered as raising religious prestige; therefore, anyone who became a teacher was respected by the society, e.g. parents and local officials, e.g. sheiks. He/she was considered a knowledgeable person, hence, he/she played an important role in Omani society, with the role of educational leader. Teachers were needed to teach their children and parents were needed to pay the teacher to live on. The private Qur'anic schools were funded by parents alone. In other words, parents usually sent goods or money to the teacher at the end of the week, thus; the teacher should put great effort into teaching children to persuade parents to keep their children in his/her school. Otherwise, parents had a right to report the situation and the teacher's behaviour to the governors, and he/she might be punished. From this point of view, parents and governors played the role of school monitors as they kept an eye on the quality of teaching and the teacher played the same role as at present of keeping his/her school attractive and successful.



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