

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

School of Management

**Creating an Enabling Environment in Private Higher Education in Oman**

**by**

**Ali Hamdan Al-Balushi**

*Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

*July 2017*

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

**ABSTRACT**

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**CREATING ENABLING ENVIRONMENT IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN  
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This research undertakes a critical evaluation and analysis of the leadership style at higher education institutions in Oman and determines whether the direction it takes is in strict conformity with creating an enabling environment there. To address this, Saxena's framework on creating an enabling environment in higher education is used as a foundation, along with the theoretical concepts of transformational leadership to explore the role of heads of higher education institutions in creating an enabling environment. Hence, the major question examined in this thesis is: *"To what extent do presidents and deans create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders at private higher education institutions in Oman?"*

The research employed a mixed method design in which data were collected through a combination of semi-structured interviews with presidents, deans, officials, and recent graduates. A survey of lecturers, full-time employees, and students was also undertaken to seek their views. The target sample in the main research was drawn from six private universities and colleges and selected public Ministries.

In line with the theoretical structure, the findings of the research show the higher education environment in Oman to be an area of concern. The findings highlight four gaps, which also fall in line with the four components introduced by Saxena. The first gap is between the higher education institutions and industry; the second gap relates to empowerment among staff, management, governance and authorities; the third gap is between physical environment and facilities; and the fourth gap is between research and teaching. The findings recommend a leadership framework to provide necessary guidelines for creating an enabling environment.

The research opens avenues for upcoming researchers who would add more to the previously achieved goals so that the sustenance offered by lifelong learning may also be perpetuated in the years to come.

## **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to my father, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohamed Al-Balushi. He told me once a person needs to be self-motivated and willing to take risks to set the route to his future.

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## ***Author's Declaration***

I, Ali Hamdan Al-Balushi, declare that the thesis entitled creating an Enabling Environment at Private Higher Education in Oman, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously has been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated,
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed,
4. Where I have quoted from the work of other, the source is always given; with the exception of such quotation, this thesis is entirely my own work,
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help,
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself; and parts of this work have been published as:

Paper on Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman (Conference proceeding Malaysia, 2007)

Signed

Ali

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## Abbreviations

OAAA	Oman Accreditation Academic Authority
QAA	Quality Audit Agency
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
BOOT	Build-Operate-Transfer
BAC	British Accreditation Body
CBFS	College of Banking and Financial Studies
OC	Organisational culture
CNAA	Council for National Academic and Accreditation
CVC	Committee of Vice-Chancellors
CWQC	Companywide Quality Control
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DIIG	Durham Model
FVTC	Valley Technical College
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HMI	Majesty's Inspectorate

ICT	Information communication technologies
INQAAH	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies In Higher Education
Kish	A government Gas project in North Oman
LBDQ	Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaires
MENA	Middle East, North Africa Region
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NPM	New Public Management
RA	Research Assessment Exercise
ROSQA	Requirements for Oman's System of Quality Assurance
RGOTC	Royal Guard of Oman Technical College
RIT	Rochester Institute of Technology
SANAD	A Government's programme to support self-employment projects and develop small businesses
SQU	Sultan Qaboos University
TQM	Total Quality Management
TQC	Total Quality Control
UGC	University Grand Commission

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The Context**

It is imperative that any new research endeavour first sets the context of the study. Bearing in mind that this thesis is presented for audiences in the United Kingdom, it is important to present an overview about Oman and its education system. This would help the readership to better grasp the study at hand. The context of the study is presented in a funneling strategy starting from the general and progressing towards more specific and relevant issues. It is important to highlight to the reader that the following chapter (Chapter two) focuses the discussion more on the context of the higher education system in Oman. After presenting the research context and setting, next, the area of research is stated, and the significance of the research objectives and questions are explicated. This section also overviews the methodologies used in this research. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

The Sultanate of Oman is an Arab country located in South East Asia. Its total land area is 309,500 square kilometers and it has a population of 4,550,358 according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information 2016 data. Based on these statistics, the number of Omanis stood at 2,461,386 people, who constitute 54.01% of the total population, while the number of expatriates stood at 2,088,972; they constitute 45.901% of the populace. The country occupies a strategic location connecting Asia, Europe and Africa (Allen Jr, 2016).

The Sultanate was lagging behind other countries in education, health, housing, and infrastructure, and was politically unstable until 3 July 1970, when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said took office. His Majesty has since put all his efforts into controlling and stabilising the country. Oil is the main source of income since production first commenced in 1967, and the revenue it has generated has been used to develop the infrastructure and to improve the country's social and economic situation (Carmody, 2013). Under the leadership and vision of His Majesty, Oman has become a modern developing country, with latest infrastructure and effective educational and health systems (Al-Barwani et al., 2009).

The Government has developed and implemented a series of five-year development strategy plans using the oil revenue for economic and social development, and aims to diversify the national economy to decrease its dependence on oil as a main source of income. It has developed its economic policy to assure the continuing level of economic and political stability, and to create more jobs for young Omanis (Dirani and Hamie, 2017). In addition, the Government has used different tools to encourage the private sector to contribute more towards the development of the national economy. It has granted various incentives such as free land, soft loans, low tariffs and free industrial estates, and has also subsidised programmes to offer higher education and training through private universities and training institutes. The Government has an Omanisation strategy to feed the economy with young Omanis and to reduce the number of expatriates employed within different sectors (Dedousis and Rutter, 2016). The Public Ministries are in charge of infrastructure projects, which need qualified and trained employees to supervise the implementation process undertaken by private companies.

The Government has a strategy to educate and train its employees in order to develop a well-qualified young generation of Omanis. Thus, human capital has become a strategic aim to meet the demands for economic and social development (Al-Lamki, 2006). This in turn has led to an increase in the

demands for higher education due to an increase in the number of students registering annually in public and private universities and colleges. The Government has supported, and encourages, the private sector to cooperate in its vision by investing more resources in education in order to train more Omanis to enter the public and private sectors. To enable the private sector to play its role in national responsibility, the Government offers various incentives such as free land, funds and scholarships as it has realised the importance of improving the education system, and of maintaining an affordable and high-standard system to meet the requirements of all sectors. The Government's strategy includes basic education, general education and technical education. All the private universities and colleges have educational programmes, with many affiliated to reputable foreign universities (Issan, 2016). The aim of the country's leader is to have educated and qualified Omanis who can carry out their tasks professionally; this is realised by providing free education, vocational training programmes, and technical education for all citizens.

The Sultan's vision and focus is primarily on ensuring that students attain a high standard of education. Both technical education and vocational training are similar in nature where the types of training are less academic and more practical, focusing on skills and abilities that an individual needs to accomplish the role of their job. Both types of training are quite short in duration, and targeted to prepare students for work in jobs that need skilled labour (Rauner et al., 2012). The difference between the two training types is mostly related to the subjects that each focuses on. Vocational training develops individual knowledge, skills and attitudes needed in the workforce. It refers to education and training that focuses on applied skills and the ability to accomplish tasks related to working in a specific industry, mainly manufacturing and construction. Technical training on the other hand develops individual skills and knowledge to be applied in practical situations with a focus on technology and changes that take place in the realm of computers and digital information (Stone, 2014).

At present, there are two public Universities in Oman: Sultan Qaboos University and a new one under formation. Overall, there are six applied science colleges, seven technical colleges, four vocational training colleges and 13 health institutes, all of which are supervised by different government bodies. There are eight private universities and 19 private colleges that are affiliated with foreign universities (Al-Barwani *et al.*, 2009). The private higher education institutions are still new and need direct guidance from the Ministry of Higher Education to assure their quality; however, the higher education system must have qualified and experienced expertise in the areas of accreditation and quality assurance and this currently limits the effectiveness of evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance procedures. In general, the private universities and colleges are primarily interested in providing higher education and at the same time making a profit, whereas the Government and society ascribe more importance to extremely positive quality and high standards in education. Efficient and competent management in both public and private institutions is important to decision makers in higher education in Oman, but it is the measurement criteria that still need development (Al-Lamki, 2006).

One of the major challenges facing the decision makers in higher education in Oman is the effectiveness of the leadership of colleges and universities. Strong academic leadership is paramount to the effective running of educational institutions, and a professional measurement is needed to analyse the performance of the current leadership of higher education institutions in the country. There seems to be a perceivable absence of definitive direction in policy that ensures the suitability of leaders to run these institutions so as to meet the dynamic changes within the society. To address this, there is the requirement for a system or a set of criteria designed to escalate and analyse performance and the quality of the leadership of an institution, preferably under the Ministry of Higher Education.

## 1.2 The Area of Research

The research investigates the Government's policies towards higher education in the Sultanate of Oman. It explores the leadership of private higher education institutions; the style of leadership demonstrated by presidents and deans and their ability to create enabling environments, to provide appropriate programmes, and to recruit extremely positive lecturers and administrators. An enabling academic environment is thought to be able to support the private universities and colleges to produce graduates with sufficient skills to satisfy private sector expectations. This indeed will reflect their responsiveness to the market conditions and to the needs of the society.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this research is to assess the tendency of the performance of the presidents and the deans of the selected institutions in terms of transformational and transactional leadership. The major question examined in this study is: *To what extent do presidents and deans create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders at private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, as perceived by faculty, administrators and students?*

Transformational leaders are leaders who are able to initiate, develop and introduce important changes in their organisation. They become role models for their followers, and empower and authorise them to make changes. Four main components or "I's" of transformational leadership represent the behavioural characteristics of transformational leadership: Idealised influence (charisma) is a transformational leadership behaviour that stimulates strong feelings among followers and identification with the leader. Leaders who exhibit this behaviour act as strong role models who instil a vision in their followers; they are able to gain respect, trust and confidence and motivate followers to work hard, and to

put in extra effort to achieve the maximum levels of their performance (Bass et al., 2003). Individualised consideration is a behaviour that contributes to the personal development of the followers to assess their needs individually first, then to provide support, encouragement, training, entrustment, guidance and feedback (Bass et al., 2003, Northouse, 2015).

Intellectual stimulation is a behaviour that drives the followers to analyse and solve problems from a new perspective. Followers are inspired to challenge their own beliefs and values and those of their leaders to be creative in their organisation. Followers are stimulated to solve problems effectively without the presence of their leaders. Inspirational motivation is a behaviour that is used by leaders to communicate their vision using different means and tools such as symbols and images to catch the attention of the followers and to form their behaviours to become more loyal to the organisation's vision. Followers become more confident and motivated to analyse and solve problems.

## 1.4 Research Questions

In this study, the major research question is as follows:

- *To what extent do presidents and deans create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders at private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, as perceived by faculty, administrators and students?*

This is addressed by the following sub-questions:

What types of leadership styles are currently practiced by the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges in Oman?

- Do the presidents and deans of private universities and colleges in Oman act as transformational leaders?

- What views do staff and students hold in regards to the perceived leadership style at private universities and colleges in Oman?
- How do private higher education institutions evaluate the performance of their presidents and deans?

## 1.5 Methodology Overview

A mixed method approach was employed to address these questions. Quantitative methods were used combining a survey of lecturers, full-time employees and students to seek their views and feedback on how their colleges' leaders (presidents and deans) contribute to creating an enabling environment at their institutions. Qualitative data were also generated through semi-structured interviews with presidents and deans, Government officials, human resource managers, and recent graduates. The main objective of collecting the qualitative data was to understand the type of leaders at the selected universities and colleges and the strategies employed to create an enabling environment at their institutions, to feed their society with well-qualified and skilled graduates. This approach facilitates an understanding of the complexity of leadership in academic institutions. It also aims to increase the researcher's familiarity with and understanding of the internal leadership of presidents and deans of the selected private universities and colleges and their ability to create an enabling environment at their institutions.

A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the reliability of instruments, and three sets of questionnaires addressed to lecturers, employees and students were sent to one university and one college for their input on how their colleges' leaders (president and deans) contribute to creating an enabling environment at their respective institutions.

The target sample for the main research was drawn from presidents, deans, Government officials, human resource managers, and recent graduates, lecturers, employees and students in six private universities and colleges, and

selected public Ministries. The selection was based on relevant relationship of the concerned parties, both internally and externally, with the selected universities and colleges. The collected data, the literature review and the researcher's experience contributed to an evaluation of the internal leadership styles and the performance of the presidents and deans of the selected private universities and colleges. These also contributed to developing an academic leadership framework to assist the decision makers at the Government or the Board of Governors of private institutions to select qualified and experienced presidents and deans able to lead and to create an enabling environment at their higher education institutions. It is intended that the framework will also help the current presidents and deans to reform their academic and administrative strategies to create an enabling environment and to perform better in their institutions.

The academic leadership framework was designed to help the higher education institutions to construct an enabling environment to advance the performance and the output of the presidents and deans of Omani private universities and colleges, and may be appropriate for academic leaders of public and private higher education institutions in the other Gulf countries. Finally, the research concluded with some recommendations along with a concept description analysis to help improve institutional leadership quality and to improve the output of universities and colleges in the Sultanate of Oman.

## 1.6 Research Significance

The current study may be useful for a complete understanding of the role of the presidents and deans of the private selected universities and colleges to create an enabling environment in Oman. The particular emphasis of this study is significant to a number of areas of educational administration.

Firstly, some of the results of this research could increase knowledge about the role of the academics and the administrative employees as part of the

managerial system in higher education, particularly in relation to academic leadership. Secondly, findings of the research are expected to raise the awareness among potential academic leaders (presidents and deans) of the complexities involved in managing and leading higher education institutions and, in particular, afford them a better understanding of the role of staff members. Thirdly, by investigating the viewpoints of members of faculty, administrators and students in term of satisfaction with the extent to which their universities' leaders have created an effective enabling environment, this research could contribute to an increased understanding of the roles of the employees and their satisfaction the contributions they feel they make to the effectiveness of HE. Finally, the data collected by this research could be of value to higher education institutions in Oman to investigate potential problems that might pose barriers to the establishment of an enabling environment.

The research also opens up areas for further investigation for researchers in a range of aspects of higher education in Oman, such as the quality of programmes, funding, competition, the role of institutional leadership, access, equity, and quality of teaching and academic standards, the improvement of evaluation of accreditation systems, affiliation with foreign institutions, and the need for national research.

There has been very little research on higher education in the Sultanate of Oman; even less research has used a theoretical lens such as Transformational Leadership. This research aims to address this gap. This research contributes new knowledge on higher education relevant to Oman in particular and to the Arab world in general, which may drive the development of higher education studies in the Gulf region.

## 1.7 Thesis Outline

Chapter one sets out the context of the study and explains the purpose, research questions, methods, significance, and limitations. Chapter two outlines the development of higher education in Oman including State and private provision, and the challenges it faces including economic factors and quality provision. It highlights the strategic response of Government to the challenges. This chapter also underlines the two Government strategies – Omanisation and economic diversification – employed to counter an increase in population and a decrease in oil resources. Chapter three focuses on the literature around the central theme of an ‘enabling environment’. Saxena’s theoretical framework is utilised to achieve this objective highlighting the four components for creating an enabling environment at higher education institutions. The chapter also explains the role of presidents and deans in creating an enabling environment in higher education institutions, as recounted by scholars. The chapter concludes with a brief review of the limitations of the literature on ‘creating an enabling environment’.

Chapter four briefly reviews the philosophical assumptions, the paradigm of the research and the approach used in the research design of this study. The chapter also discusses the research methodology and describes the underpinning research design including plans, instruments, and data collection and analysis methods. It covers the issues of validity and reliability, the study population, the procedures involved in preparing for interviews, and finally the method used to analysis the data. Chapter five covers the findings in terms of their significance to create enabling environment for private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. It also identifies the relationship between the findings and the relevant literature presented in earlier parts of this study. The chapter also analyses the perceptions of government officials towards the role that universities play to produce skilled graduates. The chapter concludes by analysing the opinions of faculty, administrators and the students of their deans and presidents’ roles to provide an academic enabling environment within their

institutions. While chapter six summarises the main findings from the semi-structured interviews along with the analysis of survey data, chapter seven summarises the research and the findings. It highlights the thesis' contribution to knowledge in the area of the enabling environment and the role of leadership. Based on the research results the chapter makes some recommendations for those in the field; it concludes by stating some limitations to the study and recommends future research topics.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### ***DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN OMAN***

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter briefly outlines the higher educational system in Oman, including State and private provision. It highlights the rationale for developing private higher education institutions, intake capacity and programmes, as well as the rules and bylaws that regulate this sector.

The challenges facing higher education in Oman are reported below. This includes areas such as access, quality of programmes, attracting qualified academics, skilled management, and governance of private higher education. This is essential to build the first step for the main focus area of this research – creating an enabling environment in private higher education in Oman. The chapter concludes with the strategic response of Government to the highlighted challenges and the contributory role of private HE in this strategy. To understand the structure of higher education in Oman, it is important to examine the context of the Omani educational system in its entirety.

#### **2.2 Educational Structure**

Oman has experienced two types of educational system. The first was a non-formal educational system, used throughout its history until 1970. This system was a traditional way of teaching, which focused on religious studies and some basic mathematics. The second system is the Modern Education System, which is used in other developing countries, and started in 1970 with major government efforts to expand access to education, opening as many schools as possible in

order to get the maximum number of students. The government put more emphasis on educational quality in the 1980s and 1990s, and introduced several reforms to ensure better-quality education (Al-Hammami, 1999).

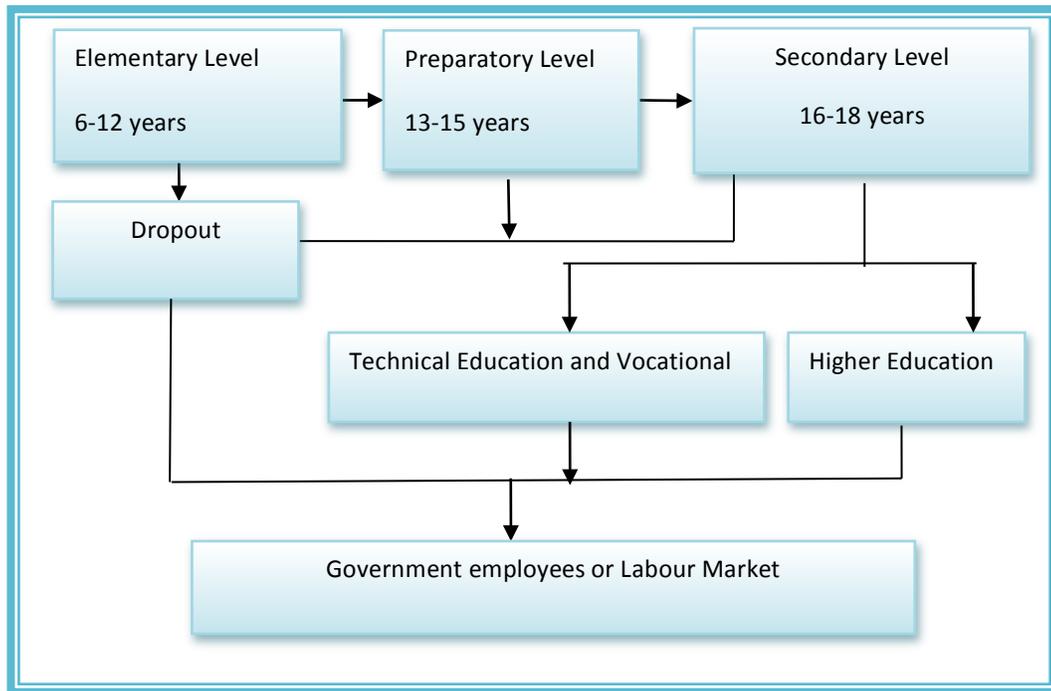


FIGURE 1: GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Source: (Ministry of Education, 2005)

There are two different structures of the modern educational system. The first is the 'general education system', which is structured into three stages as illustrated in Figure 1. The elementary stage extends for a period of six years from the ages of 6-12, the preparatory stage extends for a period of three years from the ages of 13-15, and the secondary stage covers a period of three years from the ages of 16-18. In the second year of the third stage, students have the option to study sciences or arts. The second is the 'basic education system', which was implemented in the academic year 1998/1999 and consists of two cycles. The

first covers grades 1-4 and the second covers grades 5-10 as illustrated in Figure 2.

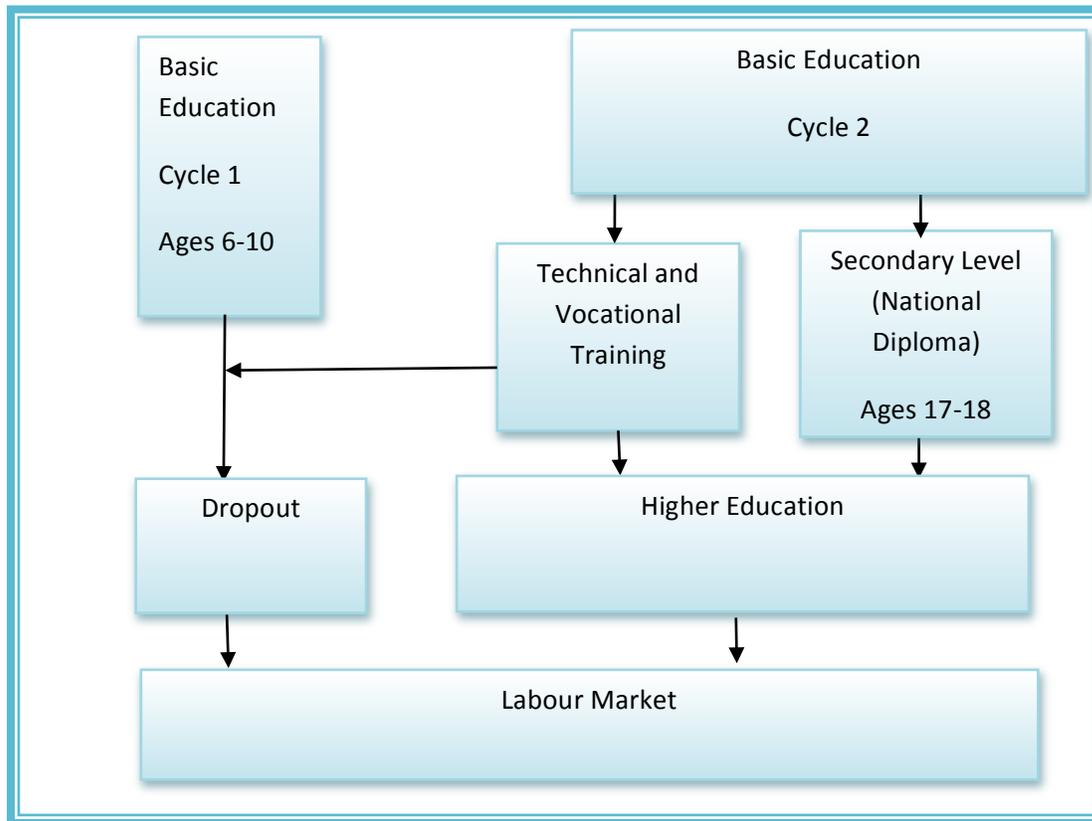


FIGURE 2: BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

Source: (Ministry of Education, 2005)

This educational reform was a component of long-term social and economic development strategies for the period from 1995 to 2020 under the 'Vision 2020'. The aim of the basic system is to develop students' skills through engaging them in-group work rather than delivering the traditional type of learning, such as memorising the subjects. The new basic system enhances students' general knowledge and helps them in their future higher education and technical training (Alhajri, 2005) . As stated by the Ministry of Education (1995, 1):

"The challenges facing Oman, particularly the need for self sufficiency and the need to diversify the economy and keep pace with technological change, require

new educational goals to prepare Omanis for life and work in the new conditions created by the modern global economy. 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” (Ministry of Education, 1995)

The Ministry of Education has introduced several training programmes to educate and train teachers to equip them to implement the new basic system. It has also provided the necessary facilities and has encouraged other reforms, which include development of the school curriculum, English language programmes, reduced size of classes, and laboratory development (Issan and Gomaa, 2010).

The graduates from secondary school proceed to complete their higher education either by enrolling on a four-year higher education programme or taking up technical and vocational training of up three years depending on the final grades and the number of places available in higher education institutions. The higher education institutional structure of education in Oman is divided into two main levels. The Council of Education is responsible for the policy-making body, and different Ministries and institutions represent the second level responsible for implementing the policies and strategies approved by the Council of Higher Education.

Because higher education is an important sector in many Arab countries, including Oman, the members of the Council of Education are experts and specialists in education, planning and human resource development (El-Baz, 2007). All higher education institutions come under the jurisdiction of the Education Council (EC). The EC is the supreme governing body that oversees higher education in the country and is entrusted with higher education policies and strategies. The Government of Oman established the Education Council (previously known as the Higher Education Council) in 1998 to formulate public policy on Higher Education and Scientific Research to fit with the requirements of social, economic, cultural and scientific objectives. It is a coordinating body that

operates as a link agent between the government and academic institutions. Its main functions are to permit the formation of public and private higher education institutions and academic programmes; to ensure quality and accreditation of higher education institutions; to approve and permit an accredited institution to award an academic degree; to authorise foreign universities to operate in Oman; and to make recommendations to government regarding higher education planning (Al-Lamki, 2002).

The Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court was appointed as the president of the Council and the Minister of Higher Education as the vice president. The members are appointed by His Majesty the Sultan for a four-year period and selected from academics and administrators of public and private higher academic institutions, government officials, and the private sector. The Council of Education has contributed to the development of Higher Education in Oman, and its initiatives include developing a Strategic Plan of Education for 2005-2020, encouraging private sector investment in new private universities, establishing the Accreditation Board, initiating a project for a Centralized Admissions Office, and initiating a project for the establishment of a Career Guidance Centre. The Ministry of Civil Service, the Ministry of Health, and representatives of private universities and the colleges are members of the council, which offers them a forum in which to share their experiences (Carroll *et al.*, 2009).

The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) was established in 1994 with a vision to build a quality higher education system. The Ministry's vision states that all Omanis will have access to high-quality education from pre-school through higher education, regardless of where they live, or the economic circumstances of their families (Issan, 2016). The MoHE is playing an important role in responding to the increasing demands of the graduates of the General Education Diploma and to assure the quality and efficiency of Oman's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The MoHE currently supervises six Colleges of Applied Sciences established in 2007. The Colleges offer five programmes in Information Technology, International Business, Communication Studies, Design, and

Engineering and are located in the main regional cities of the Sultanate at Nizwa, Ibri, Sur, Sohar, Rustaq, and Salalah. Each College is a centre of specialisation for at least one of these programmes.

The MoHE has focused on developing education in key areas, such as improving quality, expanding access, and skills and competencies for life and the workforce. This approach to education will indeed support the Omanis' economic and social development. The MoHE formed Oman's System of Quality Assurance in Higher Education to ensure quality academic standards in Oman's system of private higher education. The Ministry formed the Oman Accreditation Board (OAB) in June 2001 to evaluate the academic standards of private colleges and universities and to award accreditations to qualifying institutions. The OAB followed up the quality assurance process and accreditation of Oman's private colleges and universities through a standardised quality assurance system in the context of international standards (Razvi *et al.*, 2012). Accreditation has been defined as

“.... an evaluation process that determines the quality of an institution or programme using predetermined standards ...normally carried out on a peer review basis by competent, non-governmental agencies...”(Oakes, 1999).

Quality assurance is a process similar to accreditation. It is a process of evaluation and monitoring to ensure quality of performance in higher education institutions. The institutions follow four steps to complete this process: self-assessment, external consideration of the self-assessment, feedback, and monitored changes. The OAB requires all the higher education institutions to present a detailed process for local assurance of quality. Both the Ministry of Higher Education and the Council of Higher Education issue such official permits. The Accreditation Council is responsible for approving and accrediting programmes for all higher education institutions (Razvi *et al.*, 2012).

The Government provides free modern basic education for 10 years for all citizens at the primary and secondary stages. The graduates of basic education

should be of ages that enable them to work after attending short training courses. The two-year advanced secondary education programme enables its graduates to enroll in university studies according to the terms of admission and competition for the available places. This strategy provides equal educational opportunities for the maximum number of citizens, besides fulfilling the labour market requirements. Equal opportunities are generated through education at different government colleges and private institutions and colleges, and through distance learning and short-term courses available within the vocational qualification system. This flexible training system has contributed to the upgrading of different skills of Omani workers. In addition to these, the Royal Guard of Oman Technical College (RGOTC) was established in 1976 as another public institution to provide a training environment where young Omanis could combine technical studies with a full academic programme. All technical subjects are delivered in English.

The number of students who decide to complete their higher education abroad has increased over the past two decades as a result of parents and students' increasing awareness of the importance of higher education. Figure 3 shows the number of students who have been granted scholarship opportunities during the past three years, and also shows the number of students who have met the requirements of the opportunities available to study for Diplomas and Bachelors both inside and outside the Sultanate.

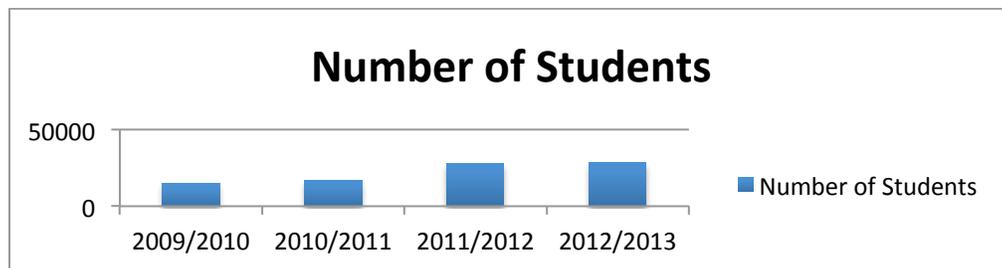


FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF STUDENTS GRANTED SCHOLARSHIPS: 2009-2013

Source: (Al Sarmy et al., 2013)

The Government awards around 1395 scholarships annually for students to study abroad in more than 23 countries. Students are either privately supported, or receive scholarships; they account for 4.2% of the total number who are awarded scholarships to universities in the Gulf Arab countries. The majority of students, 95.1%, who elect for Western education, normally head to India, Malaysia, the UK, the USA, Australia, Germany, Poland, New Zealand, Turkey, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Canada and Europe, while only 0.06% go to other countries (Lane, 2015).

The Sultanate of Oman has experienced rapid educational development during the last 40 years alongside the simultaneous social and economic progress. Rapid development has led to a higher demand for higher education because of growing numbers of graduate students from secondary schools from the 1980s onwards, as well as the additional costs involved. The number of students has been increasing annually; for example, the number of students increased from 47607 in 2007 to 50564 in 2011, but the public colleges and universities were only able to accept 68% of all prospective students (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014). This high demand brought difficulties for the Government; demand for higher education abroad could not be met, so local higher education institutions were established. Scholarships began to decline during the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s due to the establishment of the Sultan Qaboos Universities and other private colleges in Oman (Bandary, 2005). Today, there are 57 higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman: 30 are public higher education institutions and 27 are private ones. The private universities and colleges are affiliated to foreign international universities and provide programmes similar to those of the affiliated partners. These are profit-making institutions as measured by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). All private universities and colleges have to apply for a formal permit to commence their educational activities, following an official regulation system, which clarifies the process of establishment and the beginning of educational provision.

The development of degree-level studies in public and private colleges in Oman is another main change to the higher educational system. For instance, the teacher training colleges supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education were upgraded to Colleges of Education offering Bachelors in education and further upgraded to become Colleges of Applied Sciences offering Bachelors in different programmes. The Ministry of Manpower's Technical Institutes were changed to one degree-granting Higher College of Technology and five Colleges of Technology offering diplomas. Similarly, private higher education programmes range from two-year programmes offering diplomas to four-year programmes offering Bachelor's degrees (Al-Lamki, 2006).

Sultan Qaboos University, the first and the only public University, was opened in 1986. It admits more than 3000 students annually and offers degrees in different fields. The University has developed its programmes to reflect international standards and to serve the social and economic development of Oman. It also cooperates with international institutions to developed areas such as education, scientific research, and community development.

The College of Banking and Financial Studies is another government higher education institution established by Royal Decree in 1983 with the objectives of education, training bankers, and encouraging research in banking and financial subjects. In addition, the Ministry of Health is running 14 public health institutes – one is located in the capital and others are placed at different locations in Oman – to educate and train students to work in different public health areas.

The Ministry of Manpower established five regional colleges during the last 10 years to address the labour force needs of the private sector. It supervises technical education and vocational training in Oman. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Manpower represented by the Directorate General of Vocational Training has developed vocational training programmes, which keep abreast of the requirements of the Omani labour market for a skilled and semi-skilled

national workforce. The Omani private sector was provided with the opportunity to contribute to such training programmes in an endeavour to create a direct link between training and work, so as to ensure that the graduates are qualified technically and vocationally so they can play a considerable role in increasing efficiency and productivity in the various economic sectors to boost the national development in the country.

Technical education is an important part of the education system in the Sultanate of Oman to prepare young Omanis holding a General Education Diploma to meet the needs of the labour market. Technical education falls under the management of the Ministry of Manpower and started with one college in 1984 by the name of the *Oman Technical Industrial College* and four vocational training centres. Technical education started awarding technical diplomas to students after two years of study. They initially worked as technicians. Then the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) system was introduced. It covered three years of study of which the first year was a foundation course in English language, Information Technology and Mathematics.

The four vocational training centres were transformed into technical industrial colleges. These are: the Higher College of Technology which awards its graduates diplomas, advanced diplomas and technical Bachelor degrees and six other colleges of technology in Mussana, Nizwa, Ibra, Salalah, Shinas and Ibri. These six colleges award their graduates diplomas and advanced diplomas only. The Higher College of Technology awards a Bachelor's degree in all specialisations except photography, fashion design and pharmacology as well as some engineering specialisations such as cooling and air conditioning. Other colleges of technology award only diplomas and advanced diplomas. Qualifications are only awarded after students attend training through work-based placements in organisations.

Technical colleges enroll around 40% of the total number of government-funded students admitted to higher education. The number of students admitted recorded an increase of 160% during the years 2009-2014, to bring the total

number of students from about 6600 in 2009/2010 to more than 11600 students in 2011/2012 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014).

The Ministry of Manpower continuously reviews the quality of curricula, programmes and specialisations of these colleges to match the needs of the labour market in cooperation with the private sector. Technical colleges are subject to quality assurance systems in higher education institutions and in accordance with quality standards issued by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA). Specialised committees supervise quality assurance in these colleges in with cooperation the Department of Quality at the Ministry. This department reviews quality reports and makes periodic auditing visits to the colleges.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF NEW ENTRANTS IN HEIS BY HEI AND GENDER IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2013/2014

HEI	Percentage	Gender		
		T	F	M
Private Institutions	58.0%	20233	13880	6353
Technical Colleges	21.5%	7502	3189	4313
Sultan Qaboos University	10.3%	3609	1950	1659
Colleges of Applied Science	4.7%	1648	1259	389
Vocational Training Centres	2.6%	913	372	541
Institutes of Health	1.9%	651	474	177
Military & Security HEIs	0.6%	202	4	198
College of Sharia Sciences	0.4%	135	38	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>34893</b>	<b>21166</b>	<b>13727</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>60.7%</b>	<b>39.3%</b>

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

The table above illustrates the number of new entrants into HEIs by institution and gender in the academic year 2013/2014. The public higher education institutions enrolled 14660 students in the academic year 2013/2014, which represents 42% of total enrolments in this year. The Technical Colleges absorbed the highest proportion of total admissions in higher education, 21.5%, followed by Sultan Qaboos University, 10.3%, and then by the Colleges of Applied Sciences, 4.7%. Additionally, other admissions accounted for 2.6% Vocational Training Centres and Fishermen Training Institutes, 1.9% Institutes of Health, 0.4% Institute of Shari'a Sciences and 0.6% Military & Security HEIs, in 2013/2014. However, private universities and colleges in the Sultanate enrolled 20233 students, comprising 58% of the total admissions, which can be reflected in the role of these institutions in raising the rate of enrolment in higher education in Oman.

From Table 1 above, it is noted that the intake capacity of state higher education (at government expense) in that year was only 14660 students, leaving more than half of the total number of school leavers with no access to higher education within Oman unless their families could afford to pay the tuition fees demanded by the private colleges within Oman or in other countries around the world. The gap between school graduates and access to higher education institutions will continue to increase due to this limited enrolment. On the other hand, as can be seen from Table 2, the system of higher education in Oman is managed by a number of different government regulatory structures and authorities.

TABLE 2: OMAN`S HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

Higher Education Institution	Governing and Regulatory body
All institutions of higher education	Council of Higher Education
College of Banking and Financial Studies	Central Bank of Oman
Health Institutes	Ministry of Health
Colleges of Education and Private Colleges	Ministry of Higher Education
Technical Colleges	Ministry of Manpower
Sultan Qaboos University	University Council

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

The Government finances the above institutions and the accepted students are not required to pay admission tuition fees. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) also awards scholarships and sends students abroad to continue their higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels; scholarships however are only available for outstanding students with extremely positive academic achievement. As can be noted from the above brief section on the structure of higher education in Oman, the public higher education institutions are supervised and managed by several bodies as shown in Table 2 above.

The consequences of managing public higher education institutions by different Ministries and Government bodies have been increased competition for resources, different admission criteria and different levels of assessment with regards to quality and performance. The recommended solution to assure better performance of higher education institutions can be to bring them all under the umbrella of the MoHE as this is thought to help achieve a unified vision and policy on making decisions concerning financial resources. It would also improve the quality and accessibility of higher education in the country (Ministry of Education, 2008). The above recommendation is consistent with the responsibilities of the Ministry of Higher Education determined by Royal Decree No. 36/2000, as Article 11 of the Decree stated that:

"The Ministry of Higher Education shall follow up coordination and integrating between higher education institutions with respect to fields of specialisation and degree awarded by each of them"(Official Gazette, 2001).

The Majlis Al-Shura is the Sultanate's parliamentary system. The representatives are elected every four years to represent the public and have legislative, economic and social powers. The duties of the members are to ensure public participation in the development process and to update the public of such developments. During its 23<sup>rd</sup> regular meeting of the second annual session 2012/2013, it was strongly recommended that the members of Majlis Al-Shura retain higher education institutions under the umbrella of the Ministry of Higher Education. Members proposed a number of topics relating to the need to develop clear strategies for higher education in the Sultanate, commensurate with the requirements of the labour market in the coming years, and the importance of coordination between the Ministry of Higher Education and other Ministries to reflect the labour market needs, on the condition that these policies are well researched, and workable (Ministry of information, 2015).

To conclude, the social and economic development has been rapid in Oman since 1970, and this has led to a greater demand for higher education because the number of students has been increasing annually, and the public colleges and universities could not absorb all the students. Figure 4 illustrates the increase of the total number of new entrants in HEIs by nationality and academic year from 2011 to 2014.

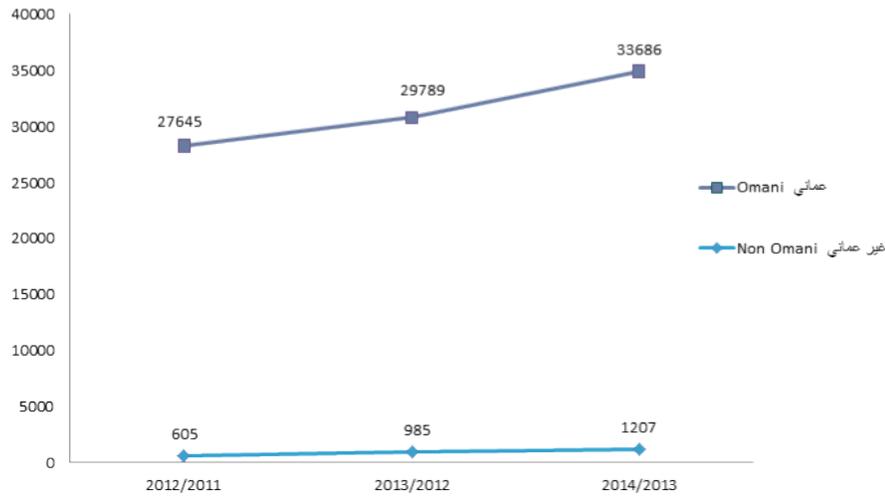


FIGURE 4: NUMBER OF NEW ENTRANTS IN HEIS BY NATIONALITY AND ACADEMIC YEAR 2011-2013

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

Therefore, the Government has encouraged the private sector to invest in higher education to share the responsibilities for demand, and to contribute to the education and training of young Omanis to meet the economic and social requirements of the country (Masoud, 2011). Such support includes various incentives to the investors such as free land, and funding and scholarships for lower-income students who enroll at private colleges and universities to complete their education. The next section highlights the rationale behind developing private higher education.

### 2.3 Private Higher Education in Oman

Many factors have led to the emergence of private sector higher education in many countries at the turn of the twenty-first century; these include the shortage of spending on higher education, the demand for access to higher education, and the inability of public universities and colleges to meet these demands. Tilak (1991) related the formation of private higher education institutions to the

difficulties that governments face in financing public higher education institutions, while demand for access and skilled graduates continues to rise (Tilak, 2015). Altbach (2016) also assured that the importance of private higher education is linked to the ideology of privatisation and with a worldwide trend to reduce public spending on higher education (Altbach, 2016). This means that the private sector is providing a paid 'product' to students; this product comprises the knowledge and skills used to secure their future jobs.

In many Arab countries, the private sector contributes to public expenditure on higher education through investment in forming private higher education institutions. Jordan and Lebanon, for example, have established a number of community colleges and universities financed by the private sector. This initiative has also extended throughout the Arab region. Jordan has 11 private universities compared to nine public universities and Lebanon has 34 private colleges and universities (Al-Mulais, 2001). Oman is not exempted from that trend, and has 27 private universities and colleges.

The Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) which consist of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have experienced fast development and expansion of private higher education to respond to the increasing number of high school graduates (Wilkins, 2011). The public sector, however, could not absorb the increasing demand for higher education; therefore, the governments of all GCC states are facing higher educational challenges (Bandary, 2005). Access to higher education has become one of the main educational challenges and concerns of the Gulf countries due to the increasing number of youth under 21 years of age (Al-Lamki, 2006).

The private higher education institutions in the Gulf countries have had to respond rapidly to meet the governments' and families' expectations to ensure the education of their future generations (MacLeod and Abou-EI-Kheir, 2017).

Oman is facing the same situation where its existing higher education system does not completely meet the needs of the private sector to have graduates of different specialisations and required skills. For this reason, the Government of Oman has realised the importance of the higher education sector and continues to invest in it, and encourages the private sector to invest in and establish higher education institutions to prepare the young generations to meet future demands. The Government decided to encourage the private sector to invest in higher education. A Royal Decree was issued in 1996 to promote the development of private higher education in the Sultanate (Ministry of Higher Education, 2005).

Currently, there are eight private universities and 19 private colleges affiliated to foreign higher education institutions to ensure the quality of the programmes delivered by these institutions. The foreign institutions provide complete programmes in different fields. They are responsible for all curricula development, as well as the assessment and awarding of degrees. The role of local colleges or universities is mainly in marketing and delivering programmes. The higher education system in the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed a number of important changes in the past two decades in terms of the number and the type of private colleges located in Muscat and the emergence of private universities in the major regions of the Sultanate, including Dhofar University in the south, Sohar University in the Northwest, the Nizwa University in the interior, the University of the Sharqiyah in the Eastern region, and Buraimi University in the Western region. In these, students can pursue their studies in their local areas. Muscat has three private universities: the German University of Technology, the Arab Open University and Muscat University. Table 3 illustrates the numbers of current students in private HEIs by institution and gender in the academic year 2013/2014 with exception of Muscat University, which was founded in 2016.

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN PRIVATE HEIS BY HEI 2012-2013

HEI	Percentage	Gender		
		T	F	M
German University of Technology	1.7%	1027	770	257
Arab Open University	4.3%	2671	1252	1419
Al-Buraimi University	2.9%	1826	1541	285
Al-Sharqiyah University	2.9%	1769	1565	204
Sohar University	8.9%	5510	4486	1024
Dhofar University	8.0%	4935	3270	1665
Nizwa University	% 12.7	7838	6353	1485
Middle East College	8.2%	5079	2853	2226
Caledonian College of Engineering	5.8%	3610	1800	1810
Gulf College	4.1%	2570	644	1926
Majan College	4.9%	3066	1666	1400
Al-Buraimi College	6.2%	3845	2188	1657
Mazon College	3.5%	2170	1735	435
Sur University College	2.7%	1659	1094	656
Muscat College	1.6%	962	621	341
Al-Zahra College for Women	2.5%	1523	1523	0
Waljat College of Applied Science	2.1%	1288	754	534
College of Banking and Financial Studies	3.6%	2215	1473	742
International Maritime College Oman	1.8%	1098	233	865
Oman Medical College	2%	1216	1090	126
Int. College for Engineering & Management	0.8 %	66	165	301
Scientific College of Design	2.1%	1294	1260	34
Modern College of Business and Science	3.1%	1937	1428	509
Oman Management and Technology College	1.6%	987	745	242

HEI	Percentage	Gender		
		T	F	M
Oman Tourism College	0.8%	488	277	211
Oman Dental College	0.6%	350	306	44
Al-Bayan College	0.9%	558	479	79
Total	100%	61953	41571	20386

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

It can be seen from Table 3 above that universities are enrolling more students than colleges are and the female students are exceeding males in both universities and colleges. Nizwa University enrolled 12.7% of the total number of students followed by Sohar University, 8.9% and Dhofar University, 8%. The Middle East College of Information Technology, 8.2% and Al-Buraimi College, 6.2% have the largest number of students after the above universities. In 2016 a new private university called Muscat University started to function.

To conclude, the above discussion presented the rationale for the government's approach to encourage the private sector to invest in higher education. Among the reasons is the high and increasing cost of higher education and the increasing demand for education; the limited available seats for the increasing numbers of qualified students to proceed with their higher education; the country's long-term economic strategy 'Vision 2020', requires more qualified and skilled citizens to replace many skilled expatriates working in different jobs in Oman's labour market; and finally to encourage the private sector to play a major part in scientific research as this area is not a core activity in public higher education. The next section highlights the main challenges facing the higher education sector in Oman and the Government's strategic response to the challenges.

## 2.4 Challenges Facing Higher Education in Oman, and Government Strategy

Higher education in the Sultanate of Oman has faced different challenges, such as access and maintaining quality in the areas of educational policies and regulations, funding, staffing and institutional leadership, as well as increasing participation and equity in higher education institutions (Al-Lamki, 2006). This section highlights the main challenges such as access, quality of programmes, attracting qualified academics, skilled management, and governance of private higher education.

Access to higher education in the Sultanate of Oman is the first challenge faced by the Government due to the increasing number of secondary school graduates seeking higher education, and the widening gap between them and the recruiting capacity of public educational institutions.

TABLE 4: DEVELOPMENT OF NEW STUDENTS STUDYING ON GOVERNMENT EXPENSES 2013/2014

Number of students	Year	Student Pass Rate
14148	2009/2010	31.4%
16856	2010/2011	34.7%
27951	2011/2012	65.7%
28774	2012/2013	72.8%
34893	2013/2014	89.0%

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

Table 4 shows the increase in the number of students enrolled in higher education in Oman in the year 2013/2014. The numbers of students have doubled from 2009 to 2013. The pass rate also increases from 31.4% in

2009/2010 to 89% in 2013/2014.

**TABLE 5: STUDENTS ENROLLED IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN OMAN 2013/2014**

Higher Education Institution	Total number of students	Female	Male	Percentage
Private institutions	20233	13880	6353	58%
Technical Colleges	7502	3189	4313	21.5%
Sultan Qaboos University	3609	1950	1659	10.3%
Colleges of Applied Science	1648	1259	389	4.7%
Vocational Training Centres	913	372	541	2.6%
Institutes of Health	651	474	177	1.9%
Military & Security HEIs	202	4	198	0.6%
College of Sharia Sciences	135	38	97	0.4%
Total	34893	21166	13727	100%
Percentage	100%	60.7%	39.3%	

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

Table 5 shows Omani students enrolled in higher education institutions in Oman in the academic year 2013/2014. As outlined in section 2.1, the number of students admitted into higher education institutions in the academic year 2013/2014 at government expense was 34893, whereas the number of students admitted into private institutions was 20, 233, which counted as 58 % of the total number (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014). The only choice left for the parents is to send their sons and daughters abroad to study. Access to higher education has a close link with other issues such as the type of higher education; families who can afford financially to sponsor their dependent, and how to ensure quality.

The students in Government higher education institutions do not have to pay fees, and receive free books, travel and living expenses allowances for accommodation if they stay off campus, compared to students at private higher education institutions who are only entitled to scholarships that cover fees. The students and their families believe that the Government will provide free higher education and that they should not have to pay fees; however, this perception has shifted following the introduction of private higher education and the majority of students find it difficult to pay the fees and attain Government scholarships (Al-Lamki, 2002).

Facilities to help students pay their fees are very limited in Oman and there is no system to enable students to repay loans after they begin paid work. The main concern here is whether the public will have the financial means to pay for higher education, particularly low-income families. However, the Government supports low-income students in private higher education financially and through scholarships so they can complete their higher education at the private institutions (Al-Lamki, 2002). The private higher education institutions generate income through students sponsored by the MoHE and the owners of the private institutions requested that the Ministry increased the annual fees to cover the expenses and to maintain quality education at international standards (Al Shmeli, 2009).

The Government is expecting increased participation of the 18-24 year-old age group in Higher Education to exceed 20% by 2020 (Al Shmeli, 2009). Through the Educational Council and the MoHE the Government decided to allocate an additional budget annually to Government HEIs allowing more students to complete their higher education. The Government also decided to permit and support private higher education providers in the country to absorb the excess number of students who cannot enroll at Government public universities and colleges.

The second challenge of higher education institutions is the quality of programmes they offer. The Ministry of Higher Education and the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority are concerned with the quality of public and private educational institutions and their academic programmes. The Ministry of Higher Education works on setting legislations, regulations and bylaws to ensure that the higher education systems in Oman are of higher standards and that graduates of these institutions subsequently meet the requirements of different sectors in the Sultanate of Oman. The Ministry's staff regularly visits the universities and colleges to ensure quality performance and hold the HEIs responsible for providing evidence of quality assurance for their programmes, resources, laboratories and the performance of the supporting staff.

The Government continuously assists private higher education institutions to ensure quality through different means such as awarding sizable grants for quality initiatives and facilities directly related to the classroom, along with other benefits which include matching capital grants, an endowment of land, and tax exemptions (Al Shmeli, 2009).

The private higher education institutions have responded positively in respect to quality improvement while implementing quality audits by the OAC. The Oman Quality Network, a system-wide sharing of expertise, also contributes towards enhancing quality within higher education institutions. At present, both public and private higher education institutions have to develop their quality assurance systems, and to develop their own internal culture of quality (OMAN, 2011). In 2001, Professor Margot Cameron Jones from Edinburgh University was assigned by the MoHE to lead the process of quality assurance.

For this process, the institutions are required by the MoHE to produce an evaluative, analytical account, outlining areas of strength and areas that need development. This exercise is similar to a SWOT analysis in which HEI internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats are examined to develop an improvement strategy. Following the initial step, an external team

made up of the consultant from Edinburgh University, the dean of a private college in Muscat, the director from the MoHE and a representative from the Director-General's office visit the institution spending three days learning their task, and spend two days in each university and college and conducting formal and informal meetings to evaluate the activities and make recommendations to the institution. The MoHE will monitor the development of the institutions. The cycle is repeated every five to six years and the next self-assessment account is based on the work produced by the previous cycle.

The MoHE has faced challenges in doing this exercise such as rapid turnover rate of deans and faculty between the writing up of the self-assessment account and the visit of the team (Al-Lamki, 2002, Bandary, 2005).

The Ministry organises workshops with representatives from all the colleges to share their experiences and the difficulties they faced during their internal assessment process. At present, the institutions, which completed the initial stage, have developed their improvement plans and formed their Quality Assurance Units and Committees. The private higher education institutions are still new and need direct guidance from the MoHE to systematically improve their internal management and student services. In addition, there is a need for qualified and experienced expertise in the field of quality assurance and accreditation to ensure quality assurance at higher education institutions to match professional international standards. This is a major challenge and a concern for the MoHE as it seeks to ensure implementation of the Government's policies and to evaluate institutions concerned. The private HEIs are encouraged to implement quality audits introduced by the OAC and have started to develop a culture of quality, and to establish quality assurance systems and quality networks (Bandary, 2005).

The third challenge facing higher education institutions in Oman is the difficulty in attracting qualified academics due to lower salary scales compared to some other GCC countries, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia

(SA) and Qatar, as these countries are investing heavily to provide quality higher education by hosting campuses of reputable universities. In Oman, however, most of the qualified academics in HEIs come from the Indian subcontinent and prefer to work at well-known Western institutions or to return to India due to more competitive salaries. Table 6 shows the number of employees working in HEIs by employment type and gender in the year 2013/2014.

TABLE 6: NUMBERS OF EMPLOYEES IN HEIS BY EMPLOYMENT TYPE, 2013/2014.

Employment type	%	HEI type								
		Total			Private			Public		
		T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
Administrative	26.1%	3832	1673	2159	1336	614	722	2496	1059	1437
Academic & Administrative	3.9%	568	137	431	125	32	93	443	105	338
Academic	45.2%	6638	2389	4249	2261	893	1368	4377	1496	2881
Assistant academic	0.3%	51	26	25	17	12	5	34	14	20
Services	9.7%	1427	132	1295	1019	119	900	408	13	395
Medical services	0.3%	42	30	12	20	14	6	22	16	6
Technical	12.3%	1803	558	1245	364	112	252	1439	446	993
Hostel supervisor	2.2%	316	285	31	212	199	13	104	86	18
Other	0.1%	13	0	13	0	0	0	13	0	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>14690</b>	<b>5230</b>	<b>9460</b>	<b>5354</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>3359</b>	<b>9336</b>	<b>3235</b>	<b>6101</b>

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

TABLE 7: NUMBERS OF EMPLOYEES IN HEIS BY NATIONALITY, 2013/2014

HEI type	%	Nationality								
		Total			Non Omani			Omani		
		T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
Public	63.6%	9336	3235	6100	3963	1119	2844	5373	2116	3257
Private	36.4%	5354	1995	3359	2813	869	1944	2541	1126	1415
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>14690</b>	<b>5230</b>	<b>9460</b>	<b>6776</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>4788</b>	<b>7914</b>	<b>3242</b>	<b>4672</b>

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

The above Tables 6 and 7 show numbers of employees in HEIs by HEI type and gender, where different nationalities accounted for 46.1% of staff working in HEIs, compared to 53.9% of Omani staff in the academic year 2013/2014, and a large percentage of non-Omanis are working as lecturers.

In the academic year 2013/2014, the total number of staff in private institutions was 5354, of which the academic employees constituted 2261, forming 42.2% of the total staff in these institutions. As can be seen from Table 6 above, of the total employees (Omanis and non-Omanis), academic staff represented 45.2% of the workforce. This is an important point to highlight, as this is one of the main challenges facing higher education institutions in Oman.

A large proportion of skilled labour from India seeks work in the world's labour market, but not from among the highly educated portion of the Indian population. In general, India has been a major global supplier of professionals and students. Most of the Indians seeking work migrate to the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as popular destinations. Immigration of Indian IT professionals and students is welcomed by countries such as Germany and France, and Asian countries (Tejada et al., 2014). The immigrant engineers from the Indian Institute of Technology comprise between 22% and 33% and, from a premier medical institution, 55% of skilled migrants (Binod, 2002).

The Omani Government follows two strategies to overcome immigrant workers' challenges; one is to offer competitive packages to attract high-calibre academics and the other long-term solution is to prepare Omani talent by sending them to universities in the UK and the USA to do their Masters and Doctorates (Al Shmeli, 2009).

The fourth main challenge facing HEIs is to improve the English language of the students along with soft skills such as the development of critical thinking, communication, computing skills and problem solving. The language problems and lack of skills are related to the teaching method in schools in Oman and other Gulf countries which depend on delivering information in summarised

format for memorisation rather than analysing such data. This method affects students' capability to cope with their studies in higher education in all GCC countries. However, the style of teaching in schools is improving; students understand the importance of the English language and learn more skills such as problem-solving abilities, and studying in groups (Cassidy, 2006).

Management and governance of private higher education is another main challenge in Oman. The founders and stakeholders of private higher education institutions are more concerned with making profit with a margin than with providing quality programmes (Al Shmeli, 2009). The students and their parents on the other hand want quality academic programmes and such a scenario represents a major challenge, and area of concern, for the MoHE as it seeks to ensure implementation of the Government's policies and to continually evaluate the Government and the private HEIs. To meet these challenges, there is a need to review higher education policies and strategies, and this requires further support from the government. The strategy from the point of view of the researcher should include funding higher education institutions, encouraging high-quality academic standards, improving the evaluation and accreditation systems, reviewing higher education programmes to meet the societal and economic needs, improving accessibility and equity, and encouraging the private sector to invest in higher education.

Each challenge needs separate investigation; however this study focuses on management and governance of private higher education mainly looking at the performance of the presidents and deans of some private universities and colleges and their ability to create an enabling environment at their institutions. Before conducting a review of the literature, the Government strategy to respond to the above challenges is reported.

## 2.5 Government Response to the Challenges

The Government had to address two key problems: a fast-rising population and a decrease in oil resources (Sajwani, 2001). The population of Oman increased from 2.264 million in 2000 to 2.782 million in 2010 with a population growth rate of 2.71% between 2005 and 2010 (Ministry of National Economy, 2011). The Government realised the need to create enough jobs for younger citizens to keep up with the population growth and the efforts to recruit young Omanis in both public and private sectors, and implemented two strategies to address these issues - *Omanisation* and *diversification*. Omanisation is a government policy to replace foreign workers with native workers (Ministry of National Economy, 1998). The companies in various fields, such as transport, insurance, real estate, industry, hotels and restaurants, have to account for a certain percentage of Omani nationals in their total workforce. One of the Government's policies is to introduce a new tax on the employment of expatriates, which is about 7.5% of a basic salary to finance vocational training projects, to encourage private companies to recruit more Omanis, and to reach the Omanisation quota as an incentive to benefit from the Government's long-term loans.

**TABLE 8: OMANISATION RATIOS ACHIEVED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR, PROFESSIONAL SECTIONS**

<b>Sectional professional</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Expatriate</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Clerical occupations	48576	2279	50855	95.5 %
Technicians in the scientific, technical and humanitarian sectors	17608	62333	79941	22%
Service occupations	46170	178735	224905	20.5 %
Specialists in the scientific, technical and humanitarian sectors	16759	73031	89790	18.7 %
General Administration director, business employees and investors	8780	42824	51604	17 %
Sale occupations	13190	70591	83781	15.7 %
Occupations - industrial processes, chemical and food industries	14424	95856	110280	13.1 %
Occupations - Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, birds and fishing	793	10066	831664	7.3 %
Engineering professions basic assistance	58398	773266	831664	7.6 %
Total	224698	1308981	1533679	14.7 %

Source: (Ministry of Manpower, 2013b)

The above table shows the percentage of the national workforce compared to the expatriate workforce in the private sector and professional sector by the end of 2013. This could become critical in the future, as the demand for technically capable and service sector-trained individuals rises (Al Kindi, 2007).

The percentage of the national workforce compared to that of the expatriate workforce is still very low, particularly in the occupations of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, birds and fishing at 7.3% and the Engineering professions basic assistance. The Clerical occupations only accounted for accounted for 95.5 % (Ministry of Manpower, 2013a).

To achieve the objectives of Omanisation, more training has become a priority demand to replace foreign workers within technical construction and manufacturing jobs. The Government encourages younger citizens to work in private companies. In most of the Gulf countries, people prefer to do managerial jobs and hold professional positions than to work in technical jobs, which does not leave enough manpower to respond to the growing demand for labour (Shaban et al., 1995). The companies' minimum expatriate wage is low compared to the wage demanded by the local people. In 2013, the Ministry of Manpower elected to fix the minimum wage for Omanis at RO 325, but this has been rejected by most of the nationals (Rejmon, 2015 ). Private companies recruit labour by paying them even lower salaries, as there is no minimum wage set for foreign workers (Al-Lamki, 2002).

The second Government objective is to diversify the economy to ensure another economic source of national income. In the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, the Government encouraged national and international firms to construct the Rusyl Industrial Estate on the periphery of the capital, Muscat. Although existing industries had grown very fast, their contributions to the Government's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) were small and they only employed a limited number of citizens.

In the 1980s, the Government's economic policy shifted to confer on the private sector more opportunities to contribute to the building of the economy, and this saw increased investment in the development of infrastructure and industry. For example, the Government sold some of its shares in Government companies in the Muscat Securities Market, and planned to privatise the General Telecommunication Organization (GTO) and payphone and phone card services. Immediately, the private sector invested in infrastructure development projects such as the Manah Power Project, which was opened in 1996. This project was constructed on a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) basis. This means that the private firm that built the plant will run it for 20 years, after which it will be

transferred to Government control. The Government also built two waste water systems in the capital and in Salalah City on a BOOT basis.

The public owns 40% of the company's shares while the founder shareholders (the Ministry of Defense Pension Fund of Oman, MENA Infrastructure Fund, International Finance Corporation [part of the World Bank Group] and MGEC, Oman, Holding Limited) own 60%. The role of HEIs to educate and to train young Omanis to work at the above projects has clearly become essential.

Finally, the Government has invited foreign investment and advanced its domestic competition, through easing of procedure licenses and other incentives such as tax rate reduction for public shareholder firms with foreign partners. Younger Omanis were also encouraged to trade, and were allowed to import without the requirement for licensing agreements, as long as the imports were not from the original manufacturers (Khan and Almoharby, 2007). The Government introduced new policies and incentives to develop its national economy. The new policies have assisted the country in ensuring that it controls its expenditure to recover from the national deficit in its public budget, to diversify the economy through non-oil resources, to limit the Government's role to strategic supervision only, and to reduce the Government's input (Callen et al., 2014). In addition, the Government has tried to educate and train its people by providing higher education and technical training to qualify them to work professionally in both Government and private sectors. The aim of the Government is to achieve a stable economic environment in order to attract national and international investment and to encourage domestic saving and investment rather than consumption (Ministry of Development, 1995).

In 2002, the Government undertook an evaluation of its achievements in the above areas, and examined the new economic challenges for the country's future development. To facilitate this, the Vision Conference: Oman 2020 was held to discuss and to design efficient and effective policies and measures to move the Omani economy towards a higher level of growth in the future. To formulate future strategy, the Government called in specialist agencies,

universities, strategic planners and economic experts from all over the world to help evaluate the country's previous economy, and to contribute to the introduction of a new development strategy for the next 25 years (Ghafri and Hamed, 2002).

The Sultanate of Oman is aiming to achieve its fundamental goals by ensuring an effective economy as determined by the Royal Decree number 1/1996. Health, education and training are the main areas of policy, besides retaining a balance between revenue and expenditure, maintaining the present level of per capita income at a minimum, and trying to increase it in real terms in the future to improve the citizens' standard of living. The Government is planning to develop new resources, and is encouraging the private sector to invest more and to offer more jobs to young Omani graduates. The Government policy and strategy has focused on maintaining well-developed Omani human resources with skills to meet the needs of the labour market (Al-Ani, 2016) .

The companies in Oman face some difficulties such as the low level of productivity of labour resources as young Omanis are unwilling to enter some professions and occupations to meet the requirements of the world economy and to replace non-Omani labour (Harry, 2007). The other two main challenges are the weakness and inadequacy of basic education to respond to the dynamic scientific changes and the employment working conditions; and among public and private sectors in terms of working hours, official holidays and pensions. However, to address these problems, the Government introduced a sequence of changes to the structure and content of basic education during the academic year 2007/8. All schools offer elective courses to prepare students for the job market or for higher education (Ministry of Education, 2008). The Government also improved pension benefits and unified the weekend and public holidays for both public and private sectors during religious (Eid) and national holidays in its 2013 announcement.

The Oxford Business Group 2010 Oman Country Report refers to dramatic changes in retail and industry environments in Oman with resultant effects on the

labour force composition. The emphasis on labour force planning has been considered a key issue to link the output of the educational and training systems to the requirements of the national economy to avoid any distortions in the labour market that may result in non-conformity between the two sides. This plan is intended to reduce the dependency on the expatriate labour force.

Education and training comprise the first step towards human resource development. According to Auerbach (2016), a country that is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilise them efficiently in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. Education does not only focus on learning how to read and write but implants values, ideas and attitudes that form – and inform – the culture of an entire generation (Auerbach, 2016). Thus, the private and public higher education institutions provide the academic environment needed to fulfill this objective, and the aim of this research is to find the link between leadership and the output of the private institutions. The leadership of private higher education institutions led by presidents and deans and their ability to create enabling environments, to provide appropriate programmes, and to recruit extremely positive lecturers and administrators will lead the private universities and colleges to produce skilled graduates able to meet labour market requirements (Bryman, 2007).

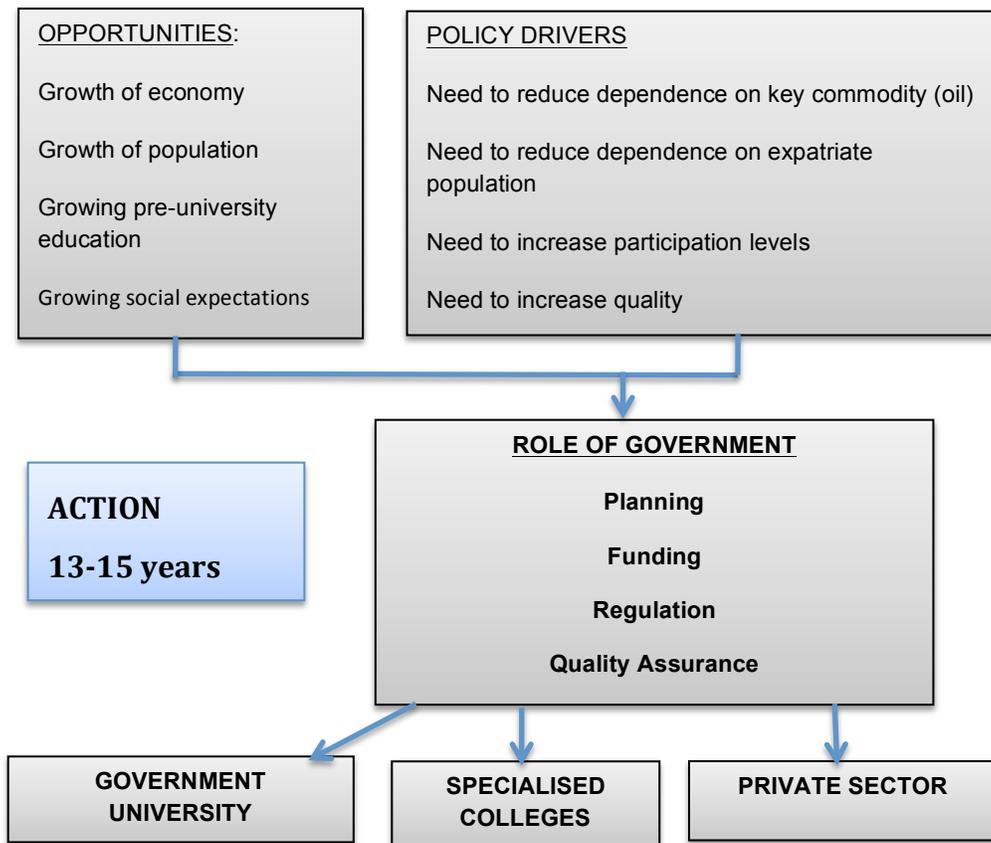


FIGURE 5: INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES WITH POLICY DRIVERS

Source: (Delilkhan, 2009)

Figure 5 highlights the interaction of opportunities with policy drivers and the crucial role of Government in shaping its higher education system. The Government needs to analyse these challenges for higher education in the Sultanate of Oman in order to find solutions and control strategies to meet the challenges (Al-Lamki, 2006).

Before looking at the literature, the next section highlights the rationale for ensuring qualified and skilled graduates to fit in the Omani market and the future role of the private higher education institutions.

## 2.6 Market Trends and Skills Requirements

Oman launched its long-term economic development strategy in 1995 to carry forward strategic goals to ensure economic and financial stability, boost private sector participation, and diversify the economy by training and investing in the Omani workforce. The main projects that have been carried out under Vision 2020 include the development of new industrial estates at Buraimi, Nizwa, Salalah, Sohar and Sur; a series of investments in the country's power and water networks; and tourism and human resource development to improve the quality of Oman's national workforce to ensure that Omanis are skilled and well educated (Al-Hamadi et al., 2007).

As of mid-2014 the Secretariat General of the Supreme Council for Planning and an independent committee made up of ministers and other senior policymakers outlined a new long-term economic strategy known as Vision 2040. It is expected to build on the goals laid out in Vision 2020 to carry out major objectives such as boosting non-oil economic growth, reducing government expenditure, and expanding the existing SME and Omanisation programmes.

By 2014 the number of labourers in the private sector in Oman was 1.33 million, which includes 129,627 women; statistics show an increase of 1.1% by the end of January 2012 compared with data from the end of 2011. The numbers of expatriate workers in the construction sector rose to 690,000, whereas there are 265,000 expatriates in the service sector, 77,000 in the agriculture sector, and 121,000 in the IT sector. There are 1,909 Omani workers in the private sector, 2.2% of the total Omani workforce, earning a salary above OMR 2,000 per month. This number includes 115 female workers. In all, there are 172,187 Omanis working in the private sector, including 35,374 female workers. At the senior manager level, there are 37,980 expatriates, and 317 were appointed to even higher positions. There has also been a 0.7% decrease in the number of expatriates choosing clerical jobs (Ministry of Manpower, 2013b).

Oman`s employment market is undergoing changes with the transformation of the country`s economy. Omanis in the public sector also increased by 4.1% compared to the expatriate numbers, which increased by 2.7% in 2009 over the previous year. This reached 85.6% in 2009 compared to an average of 84.6% during the previous three years of the total employment in the public sector. The total number of expatriates in public sector employment has declined over time due to Omanisation policy to prioritise employment opportunities for Omanis. The employment of Omanis in the private sector increased by 9.8% during 2010 compared to 9.6% in the previous year. The growth of employment of Omanis in the private sector was relatively higher at 12.3% in 2010 compared to 9.3% for the expatriates. Growth of employment of Omanis in the private sector since 2001 has continued to remain higher than that in the public sector (Central Bank of Oman, 2010).

The number of Omanis employed in private sector operations has overtaken the numbers of employed Omanis in the civil service: this shift poses a challenge. Formerly, parents could be sure that their children, if well educated, would automatically have the opportunity to work in the civil service. However, the Government budgets are tightening and allocation of positions for Ministries are being harder fought for than was the case five years ago. Most fresh graduates are finding it difficult to get a job in their field of specialisation. Omani companies are hesitant to employ fresh graduates because they do not have employability life skills; that is, the ability to enter an organisation and adapt to that organisation`s needs in the shortest possible time (Budhwar et al., 2002).

Companies are looking for graduates who can work under pressure and have oral communication skills, accuracy, time management, and initiative; and who are able to work with a team (Al Wahshi, 2016). Al-Mahrooqi (2012) stated that in Oman (as in other Gulf countries) there was a shortage of skilled graduates and a lack of adequate English, communication and IT skills among the population, which is essential in most private sector jobs (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012). Both Al-

Dhahab (1997) and Al-Hinai (1998) emphasise the need to provide adequate technical and vocational skills and qualifications to meet the needs of the labour market.

The trade profile of Oman has changed over a period of just a few years, as old traditional *souks* (markets) have given way to modern malls full of international retailers. Government spending has risen on huge infrastructural projects and more Omanis occupy the labour force, with better salaries. Foreign investment has also increased. The economic downturn has had little effect on the Omani retail sector, which has continued to grow since 2009 (Belwal and Belwal, 2010). The skills required for professional activity may change several times due to the change in the composition of sectors participating in the economy that has an impact on the workforce. Omani workers have faced such a challenge and need to gain additional skills to meet job requirements (Dirani and Hamie, 2017). This means that a specific discipline knowledge and expertise background alone will not protect an individual and create employability; instead it will be the ability of an individual to enter the workforce and adapt to changing conditions that will mark that person as employable for life (Strycharczyk and Bosworth, 2016). Across the globe, the concept of “talent” is transforming from the notion of specific capability to broader adaptability and multi-skilling (Parker *et al.*, 2015).

The general expectation of university graduates anywhere in the world is that their degrees will afford them an opportunity to enter management (Lehmann, 2014). As organisations develop in modern times, the area of specialist expertise, whereby specialists shift from one role to another in a lifetime, is replacing management as a notion. The career path does not automatically lead to promotion and rise vertically; shifts can also be horizontal (Kim, 2013). More and more international companies are entering the Omani business environment and they will change the way companies do business in Oman. In particular, they will change the way organisations are run in the country. Here, too, with competition, the face of work and organisational structures will transform. International standards mean that human resource models will shift as well.

People will not see promotions as just upward but as expertise-derived engagements in competitive environments (Brusco and Johns, 1998). This means that the graduates need to build their expertise and skills to meet the expectations of local and international firms, and will subsequently have more chances to work with them.

According to Delinkhan (2009), no individual can expect to be employed by the civil service or by a company for his entire life, and careers may end between the ages of 40 and 55, leaving people with 10 to 30 years to do their own activities. Many individuals will have to function outside a regulated and organised work environment at some stage of their lives. In Oman there is already a trend among some civil servants to seek a second career operating parallel to their Government employment, which should be seen as an aspect of self-employability. Others may want to become self-employed from the first day they leave university (Al-Yahya, 2008). The level of flexibility and risk is obviously high in this field, but forms the backbone of a society when it comes to entrepreneurship and business-building locally. Without this ability, no society can nurture an industry of its own. However, most individuals who enter university lose all appetite for risk and entrepreneurship and are moulded as corporate and civil service employees who depend on others to care for them (Kleinman, 2008).

Self-employability is also about self-reliance and a degree of independence which modern organisations value. Graduates come to organisations asking not what they can do for them but how the organisation will secure their future. Graduates can lack resilience, which is a key characteristic of employability. Bennett (2002) contended that the ability to secure a position in the job market, flexibility in the face of change, the willingness to become a specialist, commitment to self-employment, and resilience are the five key employability skills that colleges and other higher education institutions need to build in their students (Bennett, 2002).

The GCC countries are struggling with the issue that they are either generating graduates not ready for the job market, or that they are failing to introduce skilled experts to the job market (Harry, 2007). Any institution capable of transferring employability life skills to its students will not only provide Omanis with a future but also will secure demand for Omani specialists in the GCC and further afield as well. Harry (2007) stated that the attitudes and skill requirements of the employers would also have to change to respond to the market changes.

Unemployment is one of the main challenges in the GCC region. GCC governments are encouraging the young generation to work in the private sector rather than waiting for the government jobs. Underemployment (overstaffing or mismatching of skills) is also another challenge as governments are trying hard to recruit their citizens without the required qualifications; therefore employees are not motivated to gain such qualifications or to acquire personal skills. Such a situation creates an environment for the expatriates to continue working in the GCC's private sector, particularly in some important technical fields (Dedousis and Rutter, 2016).

There are many reasons for the GCC's employment problems such as the system of education that is not aligned with the needs of the private sector, a culture of citizens' perceptions, and expectation to work in the public sector, and the government policies in areas such as incentives and retirement. Therefore, GCC countries have to introduce some changes in the culture, in their governments, and in the private sector to solve their unemployment problems (Al-Khouri, 2010. Exeter).

Unemployment in the GCC countries is perceived to be worsening. For example, national unemployment in Saudi Arabia and the UAE was estimated to be close to 13% and 14%, respectively, and 15% in both Bahrain and Oman in 2008, despite the rapid growth in those countries' economies since 2003. The situation in Qatar is improving, with 3.2% unemployment in 2007 compared to 11.6% in 2001. The GCC governments currently manage to provide work for their citizens, but if oil revenues decline, governments need to seek other sources of income to

maintain their payrolls (Insight et al., 2010). There has often been criticism aimed at the GCC that productivity of the workforce is not up to international standards, and, indeed, the statistics of the International Labour Organization (2009-2010) show that the region is the only one in the world where productivity has declined over the past decade. Productivity losses occur only in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and, with the exception of Oman, all economies are suffering from this problem. Productivity loss is like inflation, making products and services more expensive and less efficient, draining the country's resources and capabilities, and creating hurdles to genuine growth (Al-Harathi, 2011). Many major projects in the Gulf have suffered from productivity drops and from a lack of suitably skilled resources. Despite the recent financial crisis (2008-2009) and financial industry meltdown the medium- to long-term projections are favourable for the global economy, which means that global demand for skilled individuals in services and industry will rise. The projected labour force growth within Oman is around 6% per annum up to 2020, while GDP growth is predicted to be 7.4% per annum for the same period (Delilkhan, 2009).

Commerce, which includes most service sector disciplines in the private sector, has been by far the fastest growing discipline globally. Industrial business is shifting to service economies, with a focus on expertise in finance, transport, logistics, tourism and hospitality. Public administration is also increasingly becoming a service, and universities as well as colleges globally offer programmes in new public management and e-Government services. In order for the global economy to grow, the service sector contribution needs to be between 60% and 65% (Bhuiyan, 2011).

The private universities in Oman introduced new specialisations to respond to the growth in the service industry: these include tourism and hospitality, real estate and facilities management, particularly in the Gulf region, and public administration (Delilkhan, 2009). The demand for new specialisations has also grown globally; and, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics (2007), for

example, the demand for technicians and engineers in the USA will grow at an average rate of 11% between 2010 and 2016. Environmental engineering shows the highest projected growth rate at 25%. There are 54,000 employed environmental engineers in the USA, and a 25% increase means a further 14,000 within the next eight years. The Bureau of Labour Statistics (2007) mentioned that demand in the USA is stagnant compared to the case in developing countries. Demand for technicians and engineers in India, China, Russia and the Middle East is rising fast. Cisco learning Network announced in June 2008 that they would train 360,000 network engineers by 2013 to meet rising global demand (Gereffi et al., 2008).

Regionally and globally, engineering and technical specialisations are becoming areas that attract fewer graduates but at the same time there is rising demand from industry for these specialisations (Jing et al., 2011). The German Department of Statistics (2009) noted that the current demand for engineers in Germany is over 45,000 per annum, but that the number of graduates falls substantially below that requirement so that engineers from foreign countries are being encouraged to come to Germany. There is also an increasing demand for new engineers to join the industry in the UK. Annually, the engineering companies will require around 182,000 persons with engineering skills in by 2022, to address the current annual shortfall of 55,000 skilled workers. Therefore, the number of engineering apprentices and graduates entering the industry will need to double in order to meet employer demand. According to Paul Jackson, Chief Executive of Engineering UK, engineering is an important part of the UK economy in terms of significant turnover and with regards to employment. He added that for every new engineering role a surplus of two jobs are produced in the economy (Guildford, 2007, Soltani et al., 2012)

The statistical records of the employment figures, industrial development and education changes that have been achieved across the country during the period 2005 to 2010 have indicated the success of the healthy and strong strategy of

Oman`s Vision 2020. According to the reports of 2008 and 2010 issued by the Oxford Business Group, the requirements of Oman`s workforce will increase over the next decade. An estimation of 6% per annum increase in the workforce and the net increase in the labour force by 2020 will be over one million, which is double the total projected number of school graduates in Oman for the same period. The estimated requirements for graduates from different fields by 2020 are expected to increase. Skilled resources have proven difficult to source within Oman for many jobs in companies, particularly in new ones. One of the major points of criticism raised by the corporate sector is that fresh graduates are not job-ready. Delinkhan (2009) clearly stated that the human resource manager from Sohar Aluminum who was responsible for recruitment and Omanisation in the early stages of set-up in Sohar found that all Omanis who were employed as fresh graduates needed substantial training and development before they could be deployed in the business. Vale, the Brazilian mining company also indicated that they were unable to find qualified Omani staff in minerals and factory operations, and had to go abroad instead to meet their workforce needs (Delilkhan, 2009). The rapid changes in Oman`s economy bring new challenges and require different types of qualified and skilled graduates (Al-Lamki, 2002).

The number of HEI graduates is growing annually in different fields of study as can be observed from Table 9

**TABLE 9: NUMBER OF GRADUATES OF HEIS BY FIELD OF STUDY,  
ACADEMIC YEAR AND STATUS 2011-2014**

Field of Study	Annual Growth Rate	2014 /2013			2013 /2012			2012 /2011		
		Total	Non – Omani	Omani	Total	Non - Omani	Omani	Total	Non - Omani	Omani
Management and commerce	24.8%	5057	180	4877	3951	116	3835	3251	176	3075
Society and culture	0.6%	1318	34	1284	1507	23	1484	1324	36	1288
Education	7.0%-	1001	5	996	1198	1	1197	1170	6	1164
Personal services	106.7%	63	0	63	27	1	26	15	1	14
Religion and philosophy	26.2%	174	10	164	388	43	345	187	8	179
Agriculture, environment, and related studies	13.1%-	31	0	31	31	0	31	42	0	42
Health	8.6%-	915	25	890	1454	20	1434	1212	12	1200
Natural and physical sciences	10.3%	893	5	888	746	3	743	739	3	736
Architecture and building	60.1%	322	9	313	278	13	265	136	9	127
Creative arts	0.8%	906	12	894	960	4	956	895	6	889
Engineering and related technologies	30.8%	5599	172	5427	4349	111	4238	3275		3116
Information technology	2.1%	2183	39	2144	1786	32	1754	2181	31	2150
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>18462</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>17971</b>	<b>16675</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>16308</b>	<b>14427</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>13980</b>

Source: (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

Table 9 illustrates the annual growth rate of 13.1% in the number of graduates from 2011 to 2014 in different fields of expertise. The skill sets required by the organisations were not sought after 10 or even five years ago in Oman and the job classifications available in Oman today do not take into account the different needs of the economy. For instance, in Singapore, 52 relevant job roles have

been defined for the banking industry alone (Koh et al., 2002), and these classifications have not yet been introduced by the concerned authorities in Oman, although they have been internationally proven and accepted. Again, this is not a failure of the strategy of human resource development in Oman, but rather is attributed to the speed of change that the country has to deal with as its employment sector improves and matures. Researchers expect Oman to produce three times as many college graduates each year as there are jobs available in the country.

As inferred above, the annual number of college and university graduates exceeds the number of jobs that become available. Moreover, demand for higher education is heavy and the Government plans to develop an economy that depends on highly-trained citizens rather than national oil revenue; its goal is to have at least 50% of those in the 18–24 year-old age group attend post-secondary education by the year 2020, up from the current 19% (Al-Barwani et al., 2009). Chomka (2002) and Mohammad (2013) concluded that the employability creates demand for individuals from certain universities and colleges or countries: in the hotel industry and aviation industries, for instance, there is a preference for skilled staff from Sri Lanka, as they have proven to be highly employable throughout those industries anywhere in the world (Chomka, 2002, Mohammad, 2013). This is to say that one of the main tasks of the universities' presidents and college deans is to produce multi-skilled Omani graduates to meet increasingly complex job requirements.

## 2.7 Summary

To summarise, demand projections for well-qualified service and commercial staff on the one hand, and technical and engineering staff on the other, will continue to rise, and as the global talent pool shrinks compared to the needs of economies, a major battle may ensue for talent, and Oman may find itself not only wanting more skilled labour for its projects, but also witnessing its human resource supply being poached by other countries. In 2008, India made

overtures to skilled Indians employed in the GCC to return home with similar salary packages and termed tax-free status to India as there was a shortage of technical expertise available in the country. The private universities and colleges are expected to provide quality education, different skills and internship programmes for graduates to equip them to get jobs and to contribute to the national economy, and these institutions should offer more scientific programmes to replace the expatriates who are occupying technical jobs in different sectors in Oman. Omanisation is a government policy to replace foreign workers with native workers. The role of the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges is understood to be to ensure the creation of an enabling environment and the quality of output, i.e. that the students from their institutions are fully skilled and ready to work.

This chapter has highlighted the Government's strategic policies towards education and training young Omanis. A review has been undertaken of the development of the educational system, technical training and private higher education in Oman to respond to the demand for higher education in the country. I also underlined some of the challenges facing the development of higher education such as governance, funding and quality assurance. Finally, Omanisation and economic diversification were discussed as Government strategies to counter an increase in population and a decrease in oil resources.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the theoretical framework to provide the background for this research. The review is structured to build a relevant theoretical argument, to highlight the main challenges facing higher education institutions, and to provide the reader with the necessary knowledge of what an enabling environment is. This is followed by some details on how an enabling environment is created for productive education at higher level. The chapter also reflects on the role of governments and the impact of the corporate sector on policy making. Finally, the chapter highlights the importance of strategic partnership plans, entrepreneurial universities, challenges and competition.

Various strands of the literature are integrated around the central theme of an 'enabling environment'. Saxena's 2013 theoretical framework is utilised to achieve this objective. He presented four components for creating an enabling environment at higher education institutions. Physical environment is the first component to facilitate easy interactions among the administrative, faculty and students. Empowering employees to carry out their responsibilities and to be able to take decisions and to produce results is the second component of that ecosystem. The third component of the system is encouraging members of faculty to conduct research, and building relationships with the private sectors as well as government is the fourth component.

There are two reasons for choosing Saxena's framework to structure this chapter. The first reason is that the framework is organised in a manner that

structures related aspects in four distinctive categories. This issue is important, as it will add more structure and cohesion to the chapter and the thesis. The second reason is the framework focus; there are other models that are probably more cited in the literature or have a stronger impact on theory. Nonetheless, Saxena's framework is designed for the exact business context of higher education.

The role of the leaders of higher education institutions in creating an enabling environment is discussed in the context of this research to answer the question: *To what extent do presidents and deans create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders at private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman?* There have been changes in universities' roles over the past decades. The universities worldwide have extended their focus towards creating enabling environments and establishing partnership roles with industry, government and communities, besides their teaching and research responsibilities (Godemann et al., 2014).

The European Commission, for example, identified three main challenges: world-class quality, improving governance, and increasing and diversifying funding to efficiently and speedily respond to the demands to the society (Heyneman and Lee, 2013). Similarly, the European governments have introduced some changes in their educational policies such as awarding autonomy to individual universities by acknowledging that universities are the source of education and knowledge of the workforce. Therefore, creating an enabling environment in higher education institutions becomes an essential strategy (Middlehurst, 2013).

Many higher education institutions are centuries old and have undergone a process of transition observed in a diversified expansion at the higher level of education which is the direct result of social demand (Quintanilla, 1999). Furthermore, Quintanilla (1999) stated that universities have greater opportunities today to demonstrate their competence for adaptability and social and intellectual leadership. This is the main reason they have taken up the challenge to focus on quality in order to create an enabling environment for students and staff, and to

meet the heightened expectations of the student community regarding the increasing demand for skilled labour in society.

In the light of this new development reality, national, regional and international efforts have been made to improve the quality of higher education worldwide. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) held a conference in 2009 involving 16 countries and suggested that the universities should create an enabling environment focusing on modern curricula, adaptability in teaching methodology, and research (Ananiadou and Claro, 2009). The official document of White Papers in England (DES 1991) recommends that the graduates of the modern era must be trained to face the challenges of a rapidly changing working environment. The acquisition of core skills (the ability to think, learn and adapt, and problem-solve, along with communication and team work) was set as the key target to achieve these aims (Dunne, 2000). The graduates were expected to be equipped with these competencies so that the market could feel confident in absorbing them as components of a productive workforce. The Australian Business Higher Education Round Table (1993) showed commitment in this aspect to improve the educational standards through a series of reports pertaining to change in the notion of higher education (Kennelly, 2011).

According to Siddiqui, (2011) creating an enabling environment at higher education institutions (HEIs) means to have an academic environment with a visionary leader able to provide the required physical resources which include laboratories, equipment, qualified faculty, standardised curricula, a number of productive and research-oriented seminars, resource materials, and competent heads and deans who keep themselves abreast of modern trends in education at local and international levels (Siddiqui, 2011). Although Siddiqui, (2011) definition of an enabling environment seems comprehensive, it is arguably too broad and lacks focus. For assigning the tasks and achieving the targets, the heads of departments are to lead the programmers' coordinators, review tasks, monitor the budgets, implement the institution's strategic planning, and act as a focal point among the deans and members of faculty (Rowley, 1997). It is not only the heads

who are involved, though; some researchers such as Carvalho (2014) extolled the role of employees in collaboration with the leaders to create an enabling environment (Carvalho, 2014).

Both Altbach (2002) and Wang and Berger (2010) agreed that a university's main responsibility is to provide the required knowledge and skills through different programmes to produce qualified and competent graduates particularly in the developing countries, in order to compete with those in the developed world. Newman (2004) cited some of these challenges as globalisation, market forces and technology. It is also important to notice the challenges and imperatives being faced by community-university engagement, and community-university-government engagement. Another challenge is that classroom learning is also moving away from a linear model of imparting knowledge to become more interactive and experimental (Newman, 2004). Therefore, universities and colleges have to restructure their missions and strategies and the way they secure funding in the face of market competition (Jokela and Karlsudd, 2007). It is possible to overcome such challenges and to improve graduate output if enterprises adopt strategies to encourage potential students and to develop quality-based educational plans in collaboration with community, government and donor agencies (Hanna, 2007).

Hanna (2010) proposed three demands that must be addressed in this modern age of technology: the first is to succeed in the higher education market place; the second is to work with the decision makers to restructure the educational system to meet the market needs, and the third is to ensure that the activities of universities are serving public needs (Hanna, 2010). Now the universities are under heavy pressure from a market-based economy to achieve quality of education rather than the precious concept of prestige in universities.

A judicious approach on the part of the heads of the HEIs for institutionalisation is required, particularly in accepting forces of change or responding to a challenge (Bose, 2013). For example, one of the challenges is of 'flipped classrooms'. The flipped classroom is a pedagogical model in which the normal lecture and

problem-solving methods of a course are reversed. This type of classroom introduces new teaching methods to students and teachers but preparation for such type of classes is time-consuming and sometimes the students may not be enthusiastic regarding this technique of active learning. The teachers need to explain why such techniques are used and the benefits of learning them. The shift is from a teacher-centred classroom to a student-centred learning environment. One more challenge is that the university leaders will need to find various ways to stay true to the mission, and maintain academic integrity and independence; and at the same time change their business and operating models. A critical component of this change will be the need for speed to market. As the market becomes increasingly competitive domestically and internationally, universities will need to be first to market with new teaching and research programmes and innovative student experiences (Ram, 2003).

Such a competitive market environment would possibly present a number of issues. It has been seen from the literature that there are identifiable implications in accepting the changes and the challenges. The central point under discussion in this section is a sense of competition, which emerges due to international challenges among the investors and policy makers. They exercise their power to shift their educational policies and strategies for higher profits and provision of the skilled employees to the market-oriented system (Gribble and Blackmore, 2012). The system is also regarded as highly pernicious compared to the traditional system of higher education. Therefore, it is imperative to understand that competition leads to results despite the consequences. Although there are positive and negative far-reaching consequences of this competition, it is going to change the face of higher education in the years to come.

Hence, the interest moves on to explore the quality principles. (Massy and Zemsky, 1995) outlined the six education quality principles that help institutions develop a culture of quality for competitiveness:

1. Clear educational quality
2. Well-defined learning outcomes

3. Effective student assessment
4. Effective student training
5. Follow best-practice strategy
6. Re-evaluate the process for improvement

They investigated the impact of IT teaching and learning processes in HEIs through surveying different institutions. They identified the advantages and disadvantages of IT in the teaching and learning processes taking into account internal and external challenges and difficulties and the reasons hindering traditional HEIs from utilising new information technologies. They advised institutions to introduce new technologies and to maintain teaching quality to be able to match the advancement of other institutions (Massy and Zemsky, 1995).

To move in the direction of the modern approach of the organisation system and to create enabling organisations, the public and non-profit planners have adopted strategic thoughts and actions for their HEIs. Strategic planning implements a planning process to develop strategies for better performance. Schmoker and Wilson (1993) divided the strategic planning process into three stages. The first stage is the strategic analysis to understand the position of the organisation in its environment, which leads to the second stage, which is the strategic choice to determine the production, assessment and selection of a specific strategy. The third stage is the strategic implementation that deals with allocation resources and managing strategy; this is based on strategic analysis and environmental scanning (Schmoker and Wilson, 1993).

Many models have been suggested such as the Balanced Scorecard, Data Envelope Analysis techniques and the European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model to improve the performance of HEIs. Universities pay significant attention to total quality as one of the most efficient strategies to enhance educational standards. South Bank University, London and the University of Louisville collaboratively developed the quality measurement system QMS2000. The strategic planning is very important in higher education

institutions, particularly to create an effective learning environment. An inferential concept implies that quality is a key factor in strategic positioning which determines how an enabling environment is created (Mashhadi *et al.*, 2008). Thus, strategic planning can result in enhancement of performance that can be carried out by understanding the learning environment. The following section sets out to clarify the impact of policy making in creating an enabling environment.

### 3.2 Role of Government to Create an Enabling Environment

Higher education institutions are investing huge amounts of money and time to train their members of staff (Sallis, 2014). This investment seems relevant bearing in mind that the educational industry is a service business where the role of people is strengthened in delivering the service. In other words, when an educational institution invests in developing its staff, it invests in developing its services. Similarly, the governmental agencies and policy makers are formulating detailed policies for higher education institutions to produce such qualifications (Kaiser *et al.*, 2014). These policies are believed to guarantee a better quality of education that meets the national labour market demands.

This section presents examples of how legislation supports the creation of an enabling environment. The governments set the standards; these include the requirement for staff with doctorates, compulsory research, land, fully modern laboratories, regular conferences and seminars, and other activities. In the quest to improve the standards of education, some constitutional amendments could be required, without which it is impossible to improve either quality of education or an enabling environment (Siddiqui, 2011). Pakistan is an example, wherein the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the semester system were implemented in 2002 after the constitutional amendments. In order to achieve this, quality assurance departments and accreditation councils conduct the administrative and educational audit of all higher education institutions (Siddiqui, 2011). Hence, the constitutional amendments pave the way for programmes

required for educational learning. Many uncharted and substandard higher education institutions in Pakistan were closed, and for the first time an international system of credit hours was introduced which was totally quality-oriented. Such decisions were taken in Europe and Asia where economic collaboration gave rise to exchange of educational experts to adopt changes.

In order to align the whole educational system with the national policies, universities throughout the world have changed over many decades. Such change could be a result of social, political and technical forces. Marshall et al. (2000) commented on the change required for a higher education institution and they believe there are three points to make this change successful. In this regard, higher education institutions need to (1) develop mutual understanding, communication and cooperation between academic members of staff, administrative members of staff and leadership; (2) design and develop professional strategies for staff, academic and administrative employees in all major dimensions of management and leadership; and (3) focus on the development of policy frameworks and infrastructure.

It is not easy to implement constitutional amendments and primary changes in the infrastructure of universities as they involve intricacies such as cultural, religious and political factors which restrict the fast implementation of policies which facilitate the process of creating an enabling environment (Enders *et al.*, 2013). It is common practice that research-oriented activities enable us to attain specialised production. Therefore, researchers are involved to develop new models, programmes, and learning environments. Similarly, the rapid and pervasive spread of information and communication technologies coupled with increasing globalisation and the democratisation of knowledge will have an impact on technology, culture, religion, political structure and the education system (Spring, 2014). In addition to the government policies, the corporate sector also plays a vital role in countering resistance to change (Zaharia and Gibert, 2005).

Today, the international universities are concentrating on research, education and innovation. These activities impact on the economy of the country and the society.

UK universities are critical to economic growth in this country through the graduates they educate. Future trends in student numbers will have immediate impacts on higher education institutions; consequently they will shape the future supply of highly skilled workers to the economy. The rapid economic and social development in the Sultanate of Oman has led to an increasing need for higher education since 1970. The Government is now involved, and is encouraging the private sector to provide higher education services through colleges and universities in order to prepare Omanis with the qualifications and skills required to meet the country's future political and economic development. The Government of Oman established the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) in 2010 to regulate the quality of higher education in Oman to ensure the maintenance of a level that meets international standards, and to encourage higher education institutions to improve their internal quality (Badry and Willoughby, 2015).

It has always been understood that higher education in many countries worldwide has developed as a result of the expansion and diversification of this sector. The enrolment expansion in China for example was used to assess the results of governmental intervention and market forces on diversification of the Chinese system. The government in China has gradually shifted from a centralised model of governance in its higher education institutions and initiated a legal framework to be independent legal entities able to form their own strategic academic goals, to control their resources, and to respond to competition (Mok, 2013).

French universities are other examples that have moved away from the state-centred higher education (HE) model and converged on the market-oriented paradigm of HE governance. Three main factors have influenced the changes in French universities; these are domestic reform pressures, policy instruments and transnational forces of competition (Dobbins, 2012).

Yet another instance is that the Australian Government introduced funding mechanisms that aimed at reducing doctoral candidates' attrition rate and

completion times, and increasing reported student satisfaction. The introduction of these mechanisms has led to changes in government funding mechanisms and has improved the research education experience (Kiley, 2011).

Recent reforms have led Finland to develop its higher education sector. The reforms have provided universities and polytechnics with an independent legal status, and changed their relationship with the government (Tjeldvoll, 2008). The new Universities Act, 2010, assures that universities have financial autonomy.

The Ministry of Higher Education in Japan is another example of a government body that encourages mergers among colleges to meet both market and public needs. There are numerous other examples of institutions, which gained their autonomy, such as St. Mary's College of Maryland in 1992, Colorado School of Mines in 2001, and Massachusetts College in 2003, the Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden in 1994, and the University of Denmark in 2000. France had a centralised system until 1984, when the Savary Law was introduced that granted French universities financial, administrative, academic and teaching autonomy. Germany has encouraged private institutions in order to stimulate government universities to compete and to be more responsive. China, Malaysia, Oman, Egypt, Chile and New Zealand have followed similar policies (Newman, 2004). These mergers have led to the conceptualisation of collective knowledge that is the direct outcome of sharing experiences and knowledge from different parts of the world.

Altbach, Gumport, Berdahl and Robert (2011) asserted that an essential aspect of the financial resources is that the shortage of revenue available to cope with the greater costs of teaching and research will affect the quality of both areas, lead to limited access, and indeed will negatively impact economic and social development (Altbach et al., 2011). Williams (2003) on the other hand indicated that there is also a change in state funding in Europe and the UK in three different areas:

1. Core funding teaching and research has been disaggregated which leads the university to concentrate on the market;

2. Deregulating of funding through competition;
3. Decreases in the level of resources.

It is often understood that complications arise from lack of funding. If funds are not available, policy makers cannot sustain the pressure and they may fall behind in creating an enabling environment (Robbins, 2003). Through sharing of resources and joint decision-making policies, however, many problems can be solved (Bolton and Nie, 2010). To understand how that can be achieved, the following discussion sheds light on the influence of the corporate sector on changes in the higher level of education.

### 3.3 Corporate Sector Impact on Policy Making

The corporate sector (business and industry) impacts on the higher education institutions and the governments. This section discusses these two facets of impact. In order to create an enabling environment, graduates need to be empowered with a number of skills, e.g., lifelong learning skills. Higher education institutions are under the pressure of market demand and stakeholders who also have high expectations for qualified and skilled graduates, and such demands cannot be met without having an enabling environment (Campbell, 2003). Altbach (2007) and Johnston (2005) were of the view that the economic initiatives and huge public investment in the early 1990s by most of the universities of the world changed the trends in the higher level of education and focused on research-oriented activities to provide highly skilled and professional graduates to meet rapidly changing demands of the market which had become increasingly competitive. The strategies included, among others, the retention of educationalists, recruiting highly skilled and talented faculty, focusing on research, and providing more facilities to the students with the best intentions of creating and sustaining the learning environment (Johnstone, 2005, Altbach, 2007).

Another important advancement under the impact of corporate sector interest was a new type of management, which was introduced after realising the impact of the

global economy and Information Computer Technologies (ICT) (Newman et al., 2004). Colleges and universities have realised the importance of embedding new trends and innovative policies in the existing management style so that collaboration with educationalists can be strengthened in order to establish an enabling environment of learning. This management style also adopted information technology techniques to become familiar with the latest trends and changes at the higher levels of education. The management strive to accomplish the stated missions of teaching, research and service, and they possess the resources to achieve the goals (Massey, 2010). The collaborative and extensive efforts among legislators, educationists and business community can make reforms work, particularly in the areas of children's education and health. Higher education institutions can play a vital role in this respect because they are regarded as the idea-generating sources (Wang, 2014). Another example of such collaboration is the Qalabotjha Multi-Purpose Community Centre in South Africa where community members were trained and engaged by the foundation in 2004. The Centre has incubators containing a computer training centre, a Government communication centre, and a bakery and catering project (Chigonaa et al., 2009). The whole exercise was performed to create an enabling environment for generating jobs in accordance with the market demand.

Similarly, it was realised that the industry-university relationship was very important in a sense that only the industrial sector could provide the best feedback on the graduates, management and researchers, which could further improve and enhance the learning environment at university (Gareth, 2003, Betts and Santoro, 2011). On a global basis, the new planning strategies and applied programmes responded effectively, and were considered relevant to the needs and prerequisites of higher education institutions and industries (Perkmann et al., 2013).

In brief, the academic leaders such as rectors, presidents, vice chancellors, deans and departmental heads face new responsibilities and challenges to provide funds, to implement the government's policy, to develop and handle strategic

planning, and to respond to the competition and merge the institutions for collective knowledge and research activities (Leih and Teece, 2016). It is essential those leaders of HEIs are able to lead effectively and that they are accountable for their institutions and the communities. The next section explains the importance of creating an enabling environment at HEIs to counter the challenges and to assure that qualified and skilled graduates are produced.

Without creating an enabling environment at the higher level of education, it is thought to be almost impossible to establish an education system which could produce lifelong learners who could be on a par with globally recognised international standards of education (Barnett, 2014). Thus, a hallmark of high-level institutions is that they focus on creating enabling environments in their institutions, and they involve all concerned such as executives, entrepreneurs, professionals and PhD scholars. Having an enabling environment requires four main components that will help the faculty to prepare individuals to become lifelong learners (Saxena, 2013).

### 3.4 Saxena's Components for Creating an Enabling Environment

Saxena (2013) shared his views on what Indian institutions can do to improve performance. He introduced four components for creating an enabling environment in higher education institutions to help the institutions to prepare their students to become lifelong learners. The first component is the physical environment to encourage interactions among the administrative staff, faculty, and students. The second component is employees' empowerment to take decisions and to deliver results. The third component of the system is to encourage the faculty to conduct research. The fourth component is building relationships with the private sectors as well as with the government. Saxena's view focused on the internal management and leadership of the academic institutions in general and the role of the leadership to create an enabling environment at their institutions.

The researcher decided to use the four components presented by Saxena as a structure to explore the role of the performance of the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges in Oman to create an enabling environment at the private universities and colleges. These four areas later help the researcher in designing and developing his data collection tools. The choice of this framework is justified due to the direct link between the four components and the issue under investigation. Another possible reason is that this model is designed from an Indian context. This context seems more relevant to the Omani one than the Western contexts are.

#### 3.4.1 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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The first component is the physical environment at higher education institutions. Physical environment refers to the place, buildings and facilities and design of an institution. This means the physical environment is basically the university campus. The physical environment is believed to reflect on a number of issues related to an institution's performance; for example, it reflects on communication and reflects on experiences among students, faculty and the administration staff. The interaction in academia promotes participation among themselves and contributes to the development of the learning process (Brandon et al., 2008). Communication within higher educational institutions is believed to reflect on student as well as staff retention.

Brandon *et al.* (2008) argue that a physical environment that incorporates residence hall building design influences student-faculty and student-student interactions. Hamrick (2002) shared the same views that the space design of a residence hall could influence how students interact where a residence hall with multiple entrances can limit interactions among students. A hall with limited social gathering spaces might not encourage students to interact more with one another compared to one that has more common areas. Residence halls provide students the occasions to meet and interact with other international students (Hamrick et al., 2002).

Students' behaviour has become a source of concern to many universities and members of faculty. Some examples are late attendance and lack of timeliness of delivery duties, and cheating in exams. Students' behaviours are linked to classroom dynamics created by the teacher alone, and the student and teacher together, who need to examine themselves either by following a disciplinarian approach to deter bad behaviours or to pursue a shared responsibility approach where both students and members of faculty create a classroom environment to serve mutual respect. Alberts, Hazen and Theobald (2010) emphasise the importance of the training – particularly those newly recruited – to develop these strategies so as to improve their experience in the classroom and to improve students' behaviour as well (Alberts et al., 2010).

It is important to have common space to serve such a mission besides classrooms, and the location of such facilities is important to encourage such interaction. The physical environment itself does not make any university or college a world-class institution if the presidents and deans do not focus on the development of their people and do not create a positive and enabling human environment (Harrison, 2014). The faculty and the administrative staff have to be empowered to carry out their responsibilities willingly and to build their loyalty to their institutions (Riggins-Newby, 2005). This leads us to the second component raised by Saxena (2013) – empowering individuals to deliver results.

#### 3.4.2 EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS

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In relation to Saxena's (2013) model, the second component is empowering individuals: this is perceived as providing authority to the employee to take decisions, which previously would have been the responsibility of their line managers within a traditional organisational structure and culture. This practice indeed promotes initiative, teamwork, flexibility and employees' commitment. The employees need to develop their empowerment skills to take decisions and to carry more responsibilities for better results. Managers also should acquire

developmental skills to be able to manage their empowered staff in innovative and motivated methods to achieve the organisations' objectives (Hyman and Cunningham, 1998). In this respect this major section of the chapter is divided into three main parts. These are transformational leadership, leadership responsibilities, and the leadership role concerning quality issues. The relationship among these areas emerges from the evident role of leadership in empowering individuals.

Empowering individuals to deliver results is the second component to establishing an enabling environment at institutions where faculty and the administrative staff and students have authority and are ready to carry out their responsibilities, produce effective results and become loyal to their institutions. Drawing from one of the aspects in Saxena (2013) work, the research focused on analysis and identification of such behaviours, which influence the employees' needs, desires and professional attitudes, and which in turn inspires them to give priority to serving the organisation over self-interest (Tremblay *et al.*, 2013).

Accordingly, it is clear that ignoring employees in the creation of an enabling environment is not justified as the employees' collective knowledge and experiences can extend full support to the endeavour to create an enabling environment in the higher levels of education (Finch *et al.*, 2010). Less liberty or absence of thinking independently restricts workers in being imaginative and being willing to carry out risk-taking activities. What the organisations get from such employees is that they are imaginative, have the real potential to diagnose the learners' problems, and can be effectively beneficial to create and establish a successful educational and learning environment.

Similarly, Virany, Tushman and Romanelli (1992) supported the harmonisation of informal and formal arrangements, which, in educational institutions, can be accomplished by assigning some policy-making powers to employees who are driven by variables, actions, components, values and their direct contact with the

students (Virany et al., 1992). Bernstein (1999) accentuated the proposition, and Burke (2005) advocated that learning involves knowledge acquisition and growth for both individual employees and groups (Bernstein, 1999, Burke, 2005 ).

This collective growth and knowledge development serves as the fuel and incubator for an organisation to make its structure effective and productive for a learning process. Creating such an environment will strengthen the relationship among employees and all are thought to be motivated to collaborate in the drive to achieve the vision of their institutions. Building consensus, commitment, ownership and transparency are considered to be the main initiatives in such institutions.

Contrary to the old concept of the organisational system that had less focus on synchronisation of employees' group relationships, organisational structure, and leadership decisions, the modern approach considers the culture of an organisation from a wider perspective in interacting with systems. Institutional structures and cultures are considered the root of the effectiveness of all organizations (Kondalkar, 2013). In HEIs, vision and mission statements bring structure and culture into real practice.

Organisational structure is a method used to describe a hierarchy within an organisation. It categorises jobs and communication channels within the organisation, which in turn uses organisational charts to explain their structures and how they work, and helps organisations achieve their goals (Oberg and Walgenbach, 2008). There are different types of organisational structure such as divisional, functional, and geographical and matrix formats. A divisional structure is appropriate for organisations with separate business units, while a geographical structure offers a hierarchy for organisations that function at several locations nationally or globally. A functional structure is created on the components of each job, and a matrix structure is more complex, run by more than two managers for each job and used for big organisations with multiple tasks at several locations (McCalman, 1996, Wellman, 2007). The type of structure is established to meet each organisation's requirements. It provides a hierarchy that reports to one or

several top executives referred to as the president, chief executive officer or chief operating officer (Ahmadi, 2011).

This method assumes importance in that organisational growth and technology are considered as main factors that impact organisational structure. As an organisation grows, the effect on its structure is important, and technology can have an impact on this and related operations. For example, computer networks are used as a tool for teamwork, so technology may change the function of jobs in the workplace, which may lead to changes in the organisational structure. This leads to the conclusion that organisational structure is how organisations use their resources to accomplish their goals. Therefore, they need to ensure that their structure remains dynamic so as to respond to the matters that may have an impact on it (Ahmadi, 2011).

A related aspect that is of interest to this research is culture. Culture is a set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and goals shared by employees in organisations, which gives continuity and identity to the employees, and which facilitates communication and understanding among them (Scott and Lane, 2000). Despite the fact that structure and culture complement each other, Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that organisations adopt structures to form legitimacy taking into consideration that structure signifies the organisation's identity. However, during periods of change, organisations take both structure and culture into account (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

In order to elaborate on this, there is a need to define organisational culture. O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman and Doerr, (2014) OERR, defined organisational culture (OC) as shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs of members of an organisation (O'Reilly et al., 2014). Deshpande and Farley (1999) also reviewed different studies on OC and defined it as a pattern of common values and beliefs that are embodied by the employees in order to select the right behaviour to understand the organisation's functions (Deshpande and Farley, 1999). Cameron and Quinn (1999) stated that OC the leadership styles, the language and

symbols, the procedures and routines that differentiate the success of the organisation (Cameron, 1999).

Organisational values represent an organisation's culture and a number of studies reflect the understanding of effectiveness in higher education based on its structural and cultural values (Alidoust and Homaei, 2012, Sharimllah Devi, 2011). These studies are built on Cameron's (1978) effectiveness dimensions for higher education, which comprise student educational satisfaction, student academic development, student career development, student personal development, faculty/administrator employment satisfaction, professional development and quality of faculty, system openness and community interaction, ability to acquire resources, and organisational health (Cameron, 1978, Ashraf, 2012). The dimensions of faculty quality and professional development represent the effect of structure on effectiveness. Faculty quality can be described as adding value by the number of publications generated, which is considered as one measure of the structural expectation for faculty research and its results. On the other hand, the effectiveness of the organisational health aspect depends on levels of trust among employees. The institutional effectiveness mainly depends on structure and culture types. Structure in higher education has its roots in teaching, research, and community service. Culture types emerge based on the organisation's efficiency, its management change system, and the common values of the employees (Dolan and Garcia, 2002).

Hence, it can be inferred that effectiveness of the institution relies on both culture style and on the cohesiveness of people in that culture around shared objectives (Jung and Sosik, 2002). Structural factors emerge in institutional effectiveness studies as context and lead directly to results. Smart and Kuh (1997) found that adhocracy cultures, which prize innovation and entrepreneurialism, tend to have the strongest relation to effectiveness in the context of two years of college study. They recommended that adhocracy cultures were effective due to the internal flexibility (Smart and Kuh, 1997). Thus, both structure and culture have an actual influence on the performance of HEIs and their external relationships.

Knight (2004) noted that cultural, academic, economic and social drivers impact on international education. The culture is adaptive due to employees' joint venture and directional approaches (Knight, 2004). For example, Bolton and Nie (2010) compared the transactional approach to HE adopted by a Chinese university and an Australian university. They suggested that transactional education gives those involved a chance to trace and capture the importance of cross-cultural and pertinent global education. Furthermore, while working in the Chinese software industry, it is observed that cultural values enter a country's educational system and influence the decision-makers' values (Bolton and Nie, 2010). In addition, marketing brand image and brand promise of an organisation with positive and negative effects are passed on to the community due to a well-established culture in an organisation (Kishel, 2008).

The argument can be further clarified in a slightly different situation as the culture in a typical research-oriented science department resists teaching on the grounds that research activities are disturbed (Bolton and Nie, 2010). To resolve the issue, HEIs have formed a faculty-learning community to inform students about the participants' approaches to teaching and students' learning. In a number of sessions, many topics such as how humans learn, active learning, learning goals and curricular change, and obstacles were analysed through group discussions, presentations, interactions, think-pair share, jigsaw and brain storming (Daly, 2011). The learning outcomes were very positive as the learning community members admitted a marked improvement in applying something new in the class (Bolton and Nie, 2010). From this, thoughts turned to how this culture can be established in HEIs.

In this regard, the state has an important role to play by creating an enabling environment at the higher levels of education (Yu and Miller, 2005). Based on a survey conducted by a research team from Shanghai Jiao Tong University in 2003, an academic ranking list of 500 universities in the world was published. The team used survey data and quantitative data to authenticate the ranking of the universities in the published list. According to the researchers' findings,

governments in the world are mainly considering the performance standards to increase the funding of the universities (Hicks, 2012).

Williams and Dyke (2007) raise concerns over the ranking criteria, which they believe only provided partial information. However, they assert that underachieving departments in higher education institutions are falling due to the ranking process and the funding given by the government (Williams and Dyke, 2007). Therefore, there should be widespread collaboration among the stakeholders and education-imparting institutions, specifically focused on the issue of creating enabling environment in HEIs. As the culture exists in the society, community sectors, particularly social and non-governmental organisations, should be given opportunities to come up with innovative approaches to strengthen their relationships (Lerner and Simon, 2014). Collaboration among legislators, citizens, local policy makers and business community can make reforms work in higher education (Harper, 2015). In addition to the determined and visionary leaders, employees' collaboration, learning culture, and information system are also helpful in creating an enabling environment. Students at higher levels of learning also show more interest in hands-on experiences with realistic applications.

A culture could be developed among the students in their different stages of learning to connect the theoretical aspects of their study to real-life situations. Technologies could help in improving learning and enriching the learning environment; for this, learning technologies, e.g., laboratories can reflect on creating an enabling environment (O'Brien, 2000).

Making society aware of scientific learning is as important as creating a culture of learning and research (Sirum *et al.*, 2009). In an article titled *Enabling a Culture of Change*, Sirum *et al.* (2009) emphasised the need to involve the educationists and research scientists in order to create an enabling environment in education. Their paper received a positive response even from the funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. The main

aim was to increase the scientific literacy of the society by facilitating students' analytical skills and higher level of thinking. By training "the citizen scientist", the goal was to create an environment in the classroom that allows students to take personal interest in the inquiry and new type of learning (London, 1989).

Lecture-based learning has been criticised as it restricts novelty and innovation. Task-oriented and research-based learning are fully supported by the faculty and the citizens who can effectively help create a learning environment in classrooms. To work in isolation often creates a communication gap among colleagues, administrators and students (Baker, 1988). This environment discourages the students from involving themselves with perceptive learning and innovation. Sirum *et al.* (2009) refer to 'experiment' in order to introduce the concept of 'science faculty with an education specialty' (SFES), and a faculty was appointed to be the science researcher of the class (Sirum *et al.*, 2009).

Furthermore, while working in the Chinese software industry, it is observed that cultural values enter a country's educational system and influence the decision-makers' values (Bolton and Nie, 2010). In addition, marketing brand image and brand promise of an organisation with positive and negative effects are communicated to the community due to a well-established culture in an organisation (Kishel, 2008).

Hence, it can be concluded that the role of the academic leaders is to create an academic working environment to encourage members of staff to make significant changes to their approaches about student learning and how they approach science teaching. It is essential to create an enabling environment to support such educational reforms in science teaching and to lend support for discussion about teaching and learning among the members of the research faculty. In addition, there are some other concepts related to the culture of learning, one of which is transactional higher education (Lavoie and Rosman, 2007).

The attention of leaders is crucial to the creating of an enabling environment in universities and colleges. They are the real experts who spot the problems and lead the workforce to higher achievements and the creation of a learning and enabling environment (Newcomb, 2003). Similarly, Siddiqui, (2010) emphasised the importance of the role of the heads of the institute working as deans or presidents, something that is highly conspicuous in framing an enabling environment for the learners. Hence, their vision, mission and policies are inspirational for all those who are working under them (Siddiqui, 2011, Fudally and Nemani, 2013).

From the discussion above, a top-down change is a possible suggestion in the sense that dynamic leaders have the skills to create and maintain such learning activities because of their constant efforts, innovative ideas and leadership qualities. They are antithetical to the managers who are only confined to specific tasks, whereas the leaders are passionate about bringing advanced changes for the betterment of all concerned. Leaders stimulate, energise and authorise people and provide support for individual creativity. Thus, it is also worth noting that leadership and employees collaborate to create new ideas and knowledge for the development of HEIs, which is strongly linked with an enabling environment (Finch et al., 2010). Similarly, Tremblay *et al.* (2013) suggested that, during the last two decades, important research and lines of theory have inspired educationists to think about the components of highly effective leadership.

Supposedly, leaders in universities motivate academic and administration members of staff to create an enabling environment within their institutions. They reform the universities' organisational structure, if necessary, to meet the interests of the stakeholders and different sectors of society (Stephenson and Yorke, 2013). For this purpose, instead of concentration of power, decentralisation or delegation of some of decision-making powers to the heads of departments seems to be a highly effective approach (Shahmandi et al., 2011).

The discussion can be further detailed by referring to Argyris' (2002) concept of double-loop learning (Argyris, 2002). This is a type of learning in which error is

spotted and rectified according to the objectives; it is also about the employees' involvement in and contributions to solving problems of the educational organisations. In double-loop learning, adaptation is quick and increases the speed of change. Likewise, four key components were considered vital for stressing the need of involvement in creating an enabling environment in learning organisations. These are individual, environmental, cooperative, and situational. The creation of an enabling environment necessitates looking into the leadership concepts, theories and qualities that make a person proactive towards creating that atmosphere. Leadership concepts and theories have been evolving for many decades due to rapid advancement in technology and corporate sectors. Minja and Barine (2012) associated it with power; Bass (1990) focused on traits of leaders; and Hersey and Blanchard (1982) proposed the concepts of effective and ineffective leaders through situational and contingency theories (Bass and Stogdill, 1990, Minja and Barine, 2012).

Siegrist (1999) and Bennett, Anderson and Lesley (2003) postulated that leaders' behaviours are driven by "mindscapes" or worldviews or by mediation abilities (Siegrist, 1999, Bennett and Anderson, 2003). Russell (2001) linked some concepts with the structure and behaviour of leaders (Russell, 2001). Bennis (1989) proposed that effective leaders are visionaries; Russell (2001) suggested that leaders are positive servants and they play an important role in serving others (Russell, 2001), while English (1994) agreed and insisted that we look outside the confines of behaviorism-structuralism to moral leaders (English, 1994, Siegrist, 1999).

A critical analysis based on scholars' views on leadership concepts and theories may help us to construct a better picture of an effective leadership that can help create an enabling environment. Bass and Stogdill (1990) noted that leadership has been defined in a number of ways based on the psychological and sociological position of the definer. Wang and Berger (2010) purported that the subject of leadership is wide and comprehensive in its scope, definition, theories and styles. Therefore, without a critical analysis, we cannot judge which

leadership model is more appropriate for an enabling environment. The concept of leadership has been analysed through different stages of history (Northouse, 2015).

Traditional and mechanical types of concepts can clearly be seen as different from the modern ones. New understanding of leadership needs to be developed for a better performance based on a highly sophisticated environment of learning (Allen et al., 1999). Similarly, leadership can take more than one form and has many special skills and characteristics (Wald and Tyssen, 2013). Kruse and Johnson (2017) posited that leadership in a broader perspective is about leading the people to the top, maximising their efforts, and achieving goals faster. It is something more than engaging employees just in work and utilising their energy for routine tasks (Kruse and Johnson, 2017).

Northouse (2015) defined leadership as a process and the leader as an individual with the power to convince a group of people to accomplish common objectives. Starling (2010) offered a similar definition and looked at leadership as a process of influencing the behaviour of a group to accomplish certain activities and motivate their efforts towards achieving their goals in a given situation (Starling, 2010). Simultaneously, we should not forget that leaders could also emerge from within a group appointed by the head. This is known as a non-sanctioned leadership that has the ability to create an influence which arises outside the formal structure of the organisation, and which is as important as the formal influence (Wang and Berger, 2010).

Related to the discussion on empowerment is the difference between leadership and management. It is important here to differentiate between a leader and a manager. The *manager* is doing a specific job and his/her whole target is to get the jobs done; the *leader*, on the other hand, is also doing the job while caring about people. That is, his or her role involves a significant pastoral element. The leader inspires, energises and empowers people and provides all support to motivate individual creativity (Allio, 2011). Managers are the people to whom this management task is assigned, and it is generally thought that they achieve the

desired goals through the key functions of planning and budgeting, organising and staffing, problem solving and controlling. Leaders on the other hand set a direction, align people, and motivate and inspire them (Allio, 2011). The focus of this section is on theories and concepts related only to leadership so that consensus can be inferred about the linkage between the leadership qualities and creation of an enabling environment. The question arises, however, of what those internationally agreed qualities which can identify the right leaders for the enabling environment are (Marshall, 2007). Similarly, another problem indicates a gap between leadership theory and practice (Jing *et al.*, 2011). That is why it will be considered that only extremely positive leadership qualities can create, sustain and improve the enabling and creative environments at higher education level (Arntzen, 2016).

As far as Oman is concerned, the system of higher education is still under the process of becoming international in terms of globalisation, commercialisation and internationalisation, and leaders are determined to bring revolutionary and evolutionary transitions to achieve a uniformity between Omani and international systems at higher education levels (Al-Lamki, 2002). In Oman, the accreditation process set by the OAAA is also a paradigm for the leaders to follow; they cannot work whimsically and autonomously while exerting their wishes and desires against international standards and codes of ethics. They have to follow what is written and comprehensively detailed to them in the Quality Audit Manual. HEI in Oman will be one of the leading higher education sectors of the world that practice public Quality Audits if it follows the same process (Martin, 2008)

To summarise, this review has explained that the field of leadership is multi-faceted and complex. The concepts and the definition of leadership have changed significantly over time. In fact, social, technological, economic and political changes have affected the concept of leadership. This has become more confusing as academic researchers have approached their subject, applying different definitions of leadership and using different methodologies. Thus, for example, some researchers have focused on studying who leaders are, or what

personality characteristics differentiate those individuals who are perceived as leaders, or who act in the role of leader. Conversely, others have focused more on what leaders do, and how they do it. The literature highlights a link between the enabling environment and the leadership style. The link is most evident in the transformational style of leadership. In this respect, the leadership style in a higher education institution reflects on empowering individuals within this institution. Therefore, the next subsection discusses this style of leadership in greater detail.

### *Transformational Leadership*

Many researchers have been contributing to the transformational leadership approach since the early 1980s and have differentiated between transactional and transformational leaders. If transactional leadership performs through clear instructions and reward and punishment, transformational theory emphasises motivation and engagement. Both have their advantages and disadvantages (Campbell, 2003) but it is relevant to present a detailed analysis of both. Theoretical concepts of transformational and transactional leadership have been applied to build a clear picture of the role of the heads of higher education institutions in creating an enabling environment in higher education institutions. Such literature supports the research analysis to find out to what extent are presidents and deans involved in creating an enabling environment and acting as transformational leaders at private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman?

The concept of reward and punishment is emphasised as a major component in transactional theory because it is inspired by the industrial style of working where employees are concerned more with profit and loss than with outcomes (Bass, 1985, Bartels and Nelissen, 2002). It also took its inspiration from political philosophy where people cast votes to elect the leader of their choice so that they could get some benefits. The leaders transcend themselves from the individual

needs of the employee, and merely focus on reward and punishment or efficiency of the workers, which to some extent is a selfish as against self-less approach. In an exceptional case, the transactional leaders reward their employees if they perform beyond the normal requirements and deserve praise and reward for exceeding expectations (Northouse, 2014).

This theory has also been criticised on the ground that leadership concepts are broader and more comprehensive than the traditional concepts; therefore an individual's characteristics and actions are not as important as are organisational policies. Political leaders emphasise self-reliance, the media glorify facts and the industrial sector propagates independence (Rost and Barker, 2000). Therefore, this theory could not satisfy many researchers and scholars of the corporate sector in general and educationists in particular.

On the other hand, transformational leadership according to Northouse (2015) is a leadership style to engage employees with each other, to increase their levels of motivation and morals, and to encourage them to achieve their goals, which should exceed personal interests and benefit the whole organisation. Followers feel much respect toward the leader and they like to work diligently and to produce more results than they are expected to do. The majority of the researchers believe that the transformational leaders can generate some amazing results by structuring a vision of the future organisation, by providing a model compatible with the vision, and by providing individualistic support (Podsakoff et al., 1996). The theory is also considered important because it is related to employees' satisfaction, self-reported efforts, and job performance. The same idea has been proposed by Bass (1990) and Conger (1999) who suggest that transformational leaders are always available to motivate, provide support to their employees and appreciate their work on different occasions such as ceremonies, rituals and other symbolic cultural customs. The transformational leader raises the interests of their employees and creates an awareness and acceptance of their personal goals along with the organisation's goals (Bass and Stogdill, 1990, Conger, 1999)

It is relevant to question the applicability of this discussion about this style of leadership as being effective for an enabling environment. Some objections are raised relating to controversy regarding the practical application of both theories. McGregor (1960) suggested the difference between transactional and transformational leaders and stated that the two are clearly opposites (MacGregor, 1960). Transactional leaders use rewards to motivate the employees to accomplish the assigned tasks as compared to transformational leaders who participate with the employees and create awareness of the importance of outcome and the most efficient ways to attain organisational goals (Bass and Stogdill, 1990).

As pressure of change cannot be neglected, it is also suggested that adaptation is always subject to this sort of pressure. Changes pressurise organisations to adapt their organisational structure to the market demand, customer satisfaction, emerging trends and competitiveness (Robinson et al., 2000). In the light of all such changes, which created multi-directional knowledge, development and innovation – all due to information technology – the organisations showed a preference for transformational leadership that they thought could address transitions effectively. Large companies such as General Motors and AT&T subsequently implemented major changes to meet the challenges mentioned above. These examples could be useful, although they are from a non-educational context. The transformational leadership has the ability to find the solutions with a synchronised approach which is all focused on motivation, encouragement and involvement (Reeves, 2004). Hay (2006) also highlighted the importance of this style of leadership because it also incorporates ethical perspectives for the achievements of goals. The level of commitment of the employees is maintained as the employees feel a psychological attachment with the leaders due to the decency and polite attitudes of the heads (Shahid and Azhar, 2013).

According to the *Structural Psychological Approach* (Pratch and Jacobowitz, 1997), it is understood that there is a deep-rooted relationship between the

overall personality of the leader and psychology. The study focuses on the traits, which emerge from a typical psychology. Similarly, McCormick (2001) found a deep-rooted relationship between self-confidence and successful leadership. Many findings frequently reported such a relationship, which indicates a leader's perception in addition to behaviour and situation, thus creating a broad-based concept of leadership (McCormick, 2001). Self-confidence is an important aspect of the psychology of the human personality and helps leaders to deal with a variety of situations (Shrauger and Schohn, 1995). In the transformational leadership concepts, the elements of effective leaders' psychology reflect that they are more concerned about productivity and finding solutions to the emerging challenges but they seek this through cooperation, motivation, engagement and reward (Carter et al., 2013).

Leaders' interaction with followers successfully establishes a highly effective working environment which is equally beneficial to industry and employees (Isaac et al., 2001). Furthermore, this sort of attitude maximises the outcomes by meeting the requirements of the organisation and needs of the employees. Leaders are required to be goal-oriented through effective relationship with the employees; therefore Cheung and Wong (2011) considered transformational leadership as successful in production enhancement. The leaders create an environment of respect, trust and loyalty which is more psychological in nature than general practical concepts (Cheung and Wong, 2011). This symbolically relates to the leader more as the family head than as the organisational head. To understand the effectiveness of a leader's stance, it is important to know the difference between Hay's (2006) four factors to be found in transformational leaders and Leithwood's (2000) six factors which are ideally incorporated in effective leadership (Hay, 2006). These are compared in the following table.

TABLE 10: DIMENSIONS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Hay's Four Common Is	Leithwood's Six
<p>1. Idealised influence. Charismatic vision and behaviour that inspires others to follow.</p> <p>2. Inspirational motivation. Capacity to motivate others to commit to the vision.</p> <p>3. Intellectual stimulation. Encouraging innovation and creativity.</p> <p>4. Individualised consideration. Coaching to the specific needs of followers.</p>	<p>1. Building vision and goals.</p> <p>2. Providing intellectual stimulation.</p> <p>3. Offering individualised support.</p> <p>4. Symbolising professional practices and values.</p> <p>5. Demonstrating high performance expectations.</p> <p>6. Developing structures to foster participation in decisions.</p>

Source: (Hay, 2006)

There are certain indicators, which could be considered to measure the behaviour of a leader so that a highly effective concept may be developed to set as a standard for the organisations. In this regard, psychologists place emphasis on a psychological structure; trait researchers are more concerned about characteristics, the transactional approach believes in reward and punishment, and transformational leadership is more about developing relationships, so in this regard a model was developed in 1985 by Bass (1990) known as the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (Bass and Stogdill, 1990). To understand the capacity and level of leadership qualities and behaviour in both transformational and transactional types of leadership, he made the theory sounder by adding three additional factors to transformational leadership, which are also known as indicators of effective transformational leadership, described below. Idealised influence refers to an indicator for the leaders to act as a model for their followers who feel the leaders are building confidence and trust to enable them to perform effectively. A brief discussion on the leadership dimensions presented in the table above by Hay (2006) follows.

*Inspirational motivation:* leaders are linked with the organisation as a whole and motivate all employees to carry out their ideas. The leaders are charismatic types who inspire their subordinates to follow their ideas; such examples are Martin Luther King known for his famous 1963 'I have a dream' speech and US President John F. Kennedy, who realised his vision to put a man on the moon by 1970.

*Intellectual stimulation:* the leaders create awareness to face and solve different types of organisational problems. Transformational leaders expect followers to be innovative and creative. In this context it can be concluded that leaders get the best performance from their employees when they motivate them and respond to their needs (Hay, 2006). Leaders have the potential to influence the decisions and the directions of the employees and the organisations. They are at the centre of controversy, conflict and debate; they can resolve the issues and negotiate in complex situations (Waddell and Pio, 2015). They have the ability to solve the employees' serious issues. In other words, they have innate or acquired ability to retain the competent employees who are the asset of a positive organisation. Additionally, it is also required that they are passionate, enthusiastic and determined to achieve the organisation's objectives (Hay, 2006). The foundation of this concept depends on four assumptions: leaders should be acquired and maintained legitimately; there should be selection criteria based on their traits and behavioural psychology; they should have an influence on the organisation's members to accomplish the assigned tasks, and they should also participate with all members of the organisation (Burke *et al.*, 2012). Among other values are comprehension of clear mission and strategy, effective communication skills, and participation with employees and the availability of required information (Wolfram and Gratton, 2014).

In contrast, Siegrist (1999) argued that educational leadership must focus on visionary and moral transformation. Training and workshops alone are not enough; special attention must be given to enlightenment, vision innovation and transformational leadership. The outcome is that for an enabling and high-level learning environment, preparation of leaders or a positive choice of leadership is

equally important (Siegrist, 1999). Such type of leadership focuses on new concepts of knowledge and understanding along with the delivery system. Lou Gerstner, a retired chairman and CEO of IBM identified some problems inherited in the company's culture, and abolished them to bring in new trends such as employees' motivation and customers' satisfaction (Dodge, 1999, Nye Jr, 2014). The application of his visionary policies as required by the organisation and customers took IBM out of an \$8.1billion financial loss and brought the company huge profit. A similar example of transformational leadership is Lee Iacocca who successfully saved Chrysler Corporation from bankruptcy and remodeled the structure of the organisation . Transformational leadership requires a vast imagination based on knowledge because rich imagination is the real source of generation of such ideas which revolutionised the system of organizations (Imran et al., 2016). In other words, a leader is visionary provided he is enriched with a vast imagination and understanding of complex situations which help in the creation of an enabling environment.

Nevertheless, transformational leadership has also been censured on account of many factors that cannot be overlooked while being the student of the leadership concepts and theories. Empowerment is associated with transformational leadership without which application of revolutionary ideas is perhaps restricted. Lord Acton (1986) traced some inherent temptations to indulge in corruption. This is the main criticism of this theory, which says that the leaders may misuse power because power tends to corrupt. Psychologists believe in analysis of the human psyche, and particularly of leaders; therefore it is quite logical to predict that leaders may exploit employees for personal interests such as incentives and promotion (Pratch and Jacobowitz, 1997).

The same approach was considered and discussed by Hay (2006), who critically examined the power of leaders and proposed that some transformational leaders tend to exploit the employees and fail to consider the interests of both sides. Hay censured transformational leaders on the ground that they misuse power to take

unexpected results and cause changes just due to motivation and training. However, the appropriate consideration of five leadership commonalities propounded by Goldberg rationalised the drawbacks. According to his findings published after conducting almost 43 interviews, five qualities – known as five commonalities – were identified as very important in an effective leader. These are: (1) leaders believe in what they do; (2) they can “swim upstream” to get the objectives done; (3) they have a social conscience; (4) they have a seriousness of purpose, and (5) they can create a paradigm of situational mastery (Goldberg, 2001).

In addition to social conscience, some researchers like Hay (2006) and Sceiffer (2006) suggested adopting this type of theory with some amendments (Hay, 2006). Hay (2006) emphasises moral values, whereas Sceiffer (2006) supports the integration of co-creative leadership concepts, which would enable the transformational leadership to include each relevant perspective for effective results and responding immediately to global challenges. Sceiffer stressed the integration of co-creative leadership concepts because he thought that each individual and unit of an organisation has its own logic, vision and rationality, which restrict productivity. Discussing various complexities and intricacies inherent in almost all educational, non-educational, governmental and non-governmental organisations, he suggested that integration of co-creative concepts would allow the organisation to adapt to its environment as shown in Figure 6.

**Co-creative leadership elements of a new leadership approach**



FIGURE 6: CO-CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

Source: (Schieffer, 2006)

Sceiffer (2006) stated that this type of model is much more about delivering a solution that can be accepted collectively by the organisation. Similarly, Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2014) clearly emphasised that leaders can become creative if they have the abilities to encourage their followers to participate in decision-making, to understand and evaluate their needs, and to trust and appreciate their unique performance abilities (Knowles et al., 2014).

In conclusion, transformational leadership has a long-lasting and an inspirational impact on higher education for creating an enabling environment (Brown, 2001). Vision, effective communication, established channels of interaction and knowledge sharing are vital for higher education of any country of the world (Kotter, 2001) .

There is another relevant model on leadership presented by Adair (2006). It is the action-centred leadership. This model is highly cited in the literature. Adair (*ibid*) based his model on the works of the previous researchers/scholars on human needs and motivation by Maslow, Herzberg and Fayol, and his theory considered additional organisational dimensions to this previous body of research. He helped change perceptions of management to incorporate leadership, which was deemed to be a trainable, transferable skill, rather than an entirely innate capacity. Adair's action-centred leadership model offers a framework for leadership and management to construct a productive team. The leader needs to control the three main areas of the action-centred leadership model – task, team and individual – to develop team working to achieve results which in turn builds morale and improves quality (Bolden, 2004).

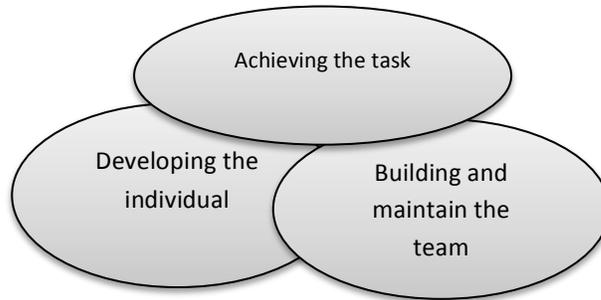


FIGURE 7: ACTION-CENTRED LEADERSHIP MODEL

Source:(Adair, 2006)

The leader's role is to make sure that these sets of needs are met and kept in balance. Adair also identified a number of functional responsibilities for leaders in relation to each circle (setting objectives, briefing, planning, controlling, informing, supporting, and reviewing). His success criteria for leadership revolved around direction setting, achievement (Thomas, 2004).

The other theories on leadership like the Traits and the Behaviour Theories have a much less appreciable role in the Saxena framework. The predominant idea in Traits Theory revolves around the component of human psychology from which emanates emotions, feelings, ideas etc. The supporters of this theory believe that psychology is the main repository of all ideas, concepts and prepositions (Watson, 2000). Allport (1924) suggested different trait categories: central traits which are confined only to human personality; secondary traits which are peripheral in nature; common traits which are known in a culture and differ among cultures, and cardinal traits which help recognise individual personality. Since Allport's time, theorists have focused on group statistics rather than on data of individuals' traits (Brezo et al., 2006). Leaders do have emotions, feelings, specific approaches and decision-making abilities; therefore, to identify the characteristics of leaders, the psychologists and researchers adopted a systematic and practical approach. Leadership qualities vary from person to person due to a range of factors such as educational background, practical

experience, culture, learning, personal attitude and emotional state of psychology (Morley et al., 2010).

In the Behaviour Theory, human behaviour sets guidelines to judge personality, psychology, traits, relationships and individualism. The difference between trait and behaviour is that the latter is wider in its application than the former, which is confined to some aspects of human personality. Therefore, the need arose to study leadership characteristics in a broader context; that is why the chief concern of this theory is to test what sort of behaviour in leaders can be effective for a learning environment (Podsakoff et al., 1996).

Following a review of eight field studies, Tubbs and Hain (1979) concluded that a relationship between management communication behaviour and effectiveness of the organisation exists, which plays a positive role in the development of the organisation. Avolio, Waldman and Einstein (1988) found a relationship between an organisation's behaviour factor and a firm's financial performance (Hackman, 1985). On the other hand, Wilson, O'Hare and Shipper (1990) considered that the observations of the subordinates about the behaviour of the managers are a more authentic indicator of a leader's performance. Brownell (1990) ascribed importance to the fact that direct and frequent feedback about leaders is necessary to align the role and self-perception of the managers (Hackman, 1985). A study conducted by Larson and Lafasto (1989) compared leader/team member assessments of the behaviour of a leader and also critically examined the viewpoint of the team members about the performance of their leaders (Williams, 2008).

The creation of an enabling atmosphere needs leadership qualities; however, a detailed discussion on the development of those qualities or a comparison between leadership qualities is not within the scope of this research. The next section discusses how leadership theories guide us to trace such qualities, which are highly effective in creating an enabling environment, particularly at higher levels of education. The aspect of leadership qualities to create and sustain an

enabling environment at higher education level is also discussed in the next section.

### *Leadership Responsibilities in Higher Education*

A leader in higher education has a number of major responsibilities. These responsibilities have developed through history. To discuss the impact of leadership responsibilities on the learning environment, it is important to know the background and the historical development of the deans, heads and vice chancellors that gradually transformed to their present status as the administrative and educational heads of HEIs. The concept of 'deanship' emerged in the late eighteenth century and was ultimately implemented in the early part of the 1900s, but it was only universally acknowledged in 1913 (Cuthbert, 1996). At the beginning of the deanship, the dean had to be a white, married male, in his mid-fifties, and with over six years' experience in academia. The dean had to carry out multiple tasks in administrative and educational matters alike. Owing much to the traditions, the vice chancellors still have to perform managerial and educational responsibilities, which pose serious challenges to the universities, particularly in creating learning and educational environments (Cuthbert, 1996).

Modern universities are expected to work as businesses with flexible and responsive forms of management to suit academics in the decision-making process (Kenny, 2009). The current situation is still traditional in a number of ways and the deans and vice-chancellors have been involved in a complex structure of administrative and educational activities that, perhaps, hinder their efforts to create an enabling environment (Bano and Taylor, 2015).

The deanship is a type of leadership that emphasises the role of those who hold it as political and social rather than hierarchical or technical (Gmelch *et al.*, 1999). The democratic style of management that encourages teamwork is a desirable model because it discourages the bureaucratic influence which restricts the element of change in the education sector (Siegrist, 1999). Generally, the

universities' vice chancellors are required to be both resource managers and academic leaders; to develop interpersonal and communication skills, and to set clear institutional goals; to recruit and retain staff who are willing to commit to these goals, and to maintain the required resources and infrastructure (Cuthbert, 1996).

Leaders in the educational context are required to minimise the administrative tasks undertaken by the academics so that they are able to develop appropriate timetables, focus on classroom learning, and arrange innovative and creative workshops, seminars and training courses for the upgrading of faculty qualification and educational interest of the students. With the division of responsibilities, the heads of the HEIs will allocate more time and resources for the creation of an enabling environment, which would be more effective and market-oriented. A dean may be consulted as a persuader, negotiator or arbitrator to endorse an administrative policy. In the 1990s, the deans' role expanded to recruiting faculties and representing the university in the community (Gmelch et al., 1999). Today's deans are involved with the college, external constituents, presidents, faculty and curricula (William, 2003). Deans work with top administration, carry out long-range planning, carry out reorganisation, and face legislative accountability (Wolverton et al., 2005). On the other hand, Lerner and Simon (2014) supported the view that community sectors, and social and non-governmental organisations ought to be given opportunities to come up with innovative approaches through power sharing to involve employees in order to improve their work performance (Moustaghfir et al., 2013).

Collaboration with legislators, citizens, local policy makers and the business community can make reforms work more effectively compared to the case where a dictatorial educational system exists (Lozano et al., 2013). The same views have been shared by Siddiqui (2011) from Pakistan who criticises the fact that the role of the heads of the HEIs – whether influential managers or administrators – are restricted to a given job; they cannot handle multi-tasked roles as their job is to manage and not to visualise or enhance educational activities (Siddiqui, 2011).

On the other hand, vice chancellors and deans have concerns with faculty, curricula, students, community and stakeholders; it is he or she who provides opportunities for learning and dissemination of learning for making the enabling environment more flexible and wider in its scope. If power is centralised, the greater focus of the vice-chancellors will be on discipline and management rather than on learning, innovation, vision, rich imagination, faculty development, class room and independent learning, developing relations with the corporate sector, commercialisation of education, and enhancing the educational trends. An enabling environment is adversely affected due to less concentration on educational affairs (Siddiqui, 2011). Optimal success of HEIs reflects the competency of the heads of the institutions who endeavour to focus on expectations of faculty, administration, sponsors, students' educational activities, availability of resources, and finding new opportunities for the successful graduates (Wolverton et al., 2005).

For a brief overview of the development of the concepts of leadership at higher education level, it is important to have a look at the roles of the deans/vice chancellors as heads of the HEIs in an historical context. Table 11 sets the evolutionary perspective from 1864 to the present day.

TABLE 11: HISTORICAL ROLES OF THE DEAN/VICE CHANCELLOR

Period	Place	Role
1864	Harvard's Medical School	To create and maintain a student-friendly environment through charitable interaction and lively manners.
1960s		Results and means of education at the higher level of education were prioritised as highly concentrated responsibilities.
1970s		Managerial-oriented responsibilities were increased such as strategic planning, fundraising and development, internal and external accountability measures.
1990s		A broader concept of leadership and management emerged and the colleges and universities were represented by the deans at community level, and were also empowered to recruit a diversified faculty and admit multi-talented students.
Today		Considering the modern challenges, deans and heads have been involved with the institute, the president, faculty and community in various ways.

Source: (Montez et al., 2003)

As shown in the table above, it is understood that the traditional role of the deans/vice chancellors as the heads of the HEIs underwent a shift. They were assigned roles to set academic policy and to coordinate the work between members of faculty and administrators to create a communication network internally, and to build relationships between the institution and both the political and business sectors. The deans/vice chancellors were located at the centre of administrative hierarchies in colleges and universities; they undertake the role of mediator between administration and faculties, and arrange the necessary resources to achieve the missions and objectives of the institution (de Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009). However, the modern impact of globalisation and

commercialisation has transformed the traditional approach. The modern approach chiefly emphasises the need to focus on the main educational operations and research activities (Rob, 1996). Furthermore, Birnbaum (1992) argued that the deans/vice chancellors need to spend more time with the faculty and administrators, to exchange and share information with colleagues, and to build communication channels with them, which is an ideal situation to create and sustain an enabling environment.

In the past, the universities' presidents used to appoint deans directly from among the members of faculty, but today a committee of faculty and administrative members selects the deans. This is important for a fair and appropriate selection of the dean/vice chancellor, so broad-based selection criteria are always more effective than narrow-based ones. The leaders who are selected through a set of criteria are effective, establish goals and handle the complex nature of the educational organisation professionally (Bryman, 2015). The concept evolved due to the complete or partial absence of accountability, which restricted the persistence of an enabling environment. The practice was common because previous research on *deaning* has been descriptive in nature and restricted to explicit tasks and challenges (Morris, 1981, Tucker, 1991). Contrary to that, the modern approach differs from the traditional one and focuses on three important elements: demands for accountability, performance of students and faculty, and satisfaction of students and faculty.

To improve leadership effectiveness of the deans or vice chancellors, Rosser, Johnsrud and Heck (2003) also recommended four steps to conduct multilevel Structural Equation Modelling (SEM); these are (1) determining leadership fields as a main criterion for assessment purposes, (2) incorporating the multilevel nature of HEIs, (3) using the faculty and staff evaluations of their deans, and (4) examining variations in leadership effectiveness at two levels of analysis (Varg, 1968). Similarly, Wolverton *et al.* (2005) also concluded that multi-dimensional approaches are required to study the leadership effectiveness of the deans or vice chancellors. The complex working environment of the deans requires more

than biographical, structural, contextual or psychological factors to conduct a complete study about their effectiveness. It could be a reliable measure if the purpose of the evaluation process is to hold the concerned authorities accountable for the consequences of their actions. Reward and punishment or demotion in such matters are highly effective strategies to set examples for the employees to learn from their error (de Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009).

On the other hand, Rosser, Johnsrud and Heck (2003) raised some doubts on leadership effectiveness in higher education as a matter of perception, which is based on the individual's experience of the leader's behaviour. They examined leadership effectiveness in higher education through their contention that a single model of evaluation cannot measure the deans' responsibilities, and that the theory of psychology looks at leadership as an outcome of managerial effectiveness (Rosser et al., 2003). Effective leaders are those who succeed in exerting social influence on their employees to achieve their missions: by treating their employees equitably, gaining their trust, and maintaining the required resources for their organisations. Deans practice two exercises while undertaking their duties at their organisations. First, they exert an influence over the employees and help to fulfill their interests on a strategy of mutual income. Second, the leaders' strategies assist them to coordinate the work of highly educated professionals. Heck, Johnsrud and Rosser (2000) raised concerns over leadership accountability. The authors posed questions of who is to be held accountable, for what, to whom, and through what means? Keeping in mind the results and outcomes, they emphasised the need to develop a very comprehensive framework for the analytical study of the accountability relationship. In addition, the authors (*ibid*) identified four basic types of accountability: hierarchical, legal, professional and political. The last two are currently being practiced in most of the world's HEIs. They concluded that academic leaders are answerable to others, and are responsible to report to others to explain and to justify how resources have been used, for what reason, and to what effect (Heck et al., 2000).

Heck et al. (2000) further emphasised that professional and political types are important because such people are more likely to exert their leadership compared to others. Secondly, the governments of the present era also monitor and set direction from a distance (Starr, 2014). The shift from professional accountability to political accountability is a flexible approach that affords room to introduce changes in quality education (Halachmi, 2002). The performance funding policy system of Arkansas, Colorado, South Carolina and Tennessee in the USA suggests that Tennessee receives the lion's share due to a better and more effective accountability system which is quite supportive to generate better results (Banta, 2005). Therefore, it is also highly recommended in some cases that descriptive analysis and observation of the heads of the higher education institutions can be more effective tools of accountability for an enabling environment. The perceptions of faculty and students about the head can also be a better approach for a transparent accountability (Watson, 2003).

Watson (2003) stated that feedback from students might lead to improvement in HEIs and become part of the students' role in university management; therefore, students need to be aware of the actions resulting from their expressed observations. The educational results have been examined from different perspectives. For example, Shupe (2008) studied different models to explain colleges' and universities' approaches to their educational results, such as individual student improvement, individual student accountability, organisational improvement, and organisational accountability. He concluded that the standard for accountability for educational results continues to rise as more choices of performance measurement become available (Shupe, 2008).

Currently, the constraints to organisational accountability were primarily technical, and not a result of the type of data that an academic institution could in fact provide. Academic institutions might have stronger ability to develop their methods based on educational results. According to Shupe (2008), the main constraints to organisational accountability today are no longer technical but

aspirational, which has become an agenda item for discussion among academic leaders and external constituencies about academic accountability.

In current trends, the responsibility for decision-making in universities needs a sharing of hands among administrators, members of faculty and students due to the diverse and complex tasks undertaken by these institutions. Effective university governance requires shared authority among all interested parties. Ratsoy and Bing (1999) conducted a study at the University of Alberta in Canada to investigate students' involvement in the governance of this University to improve decision-making. The University originally employed a bureaucratic structure for its administration and student organisation; however, students have participated in the University's decision-making process as members of the academic community and the University management has considered their proposals such as an income contingency programme for student loans, but the University decided on repayment based on student income after graduation. Today, financial difficulties that universities face might lead to less participation of students, administrators and members of faculty. The outcome of the study was that student participation in university governance declined in the USA in the 1970s and 1980s, and increased in Canadian universities, where students were actively involved in university decision-making processes and contributed and prepared better than academic and staff members, taking into account the management and culture differences of the two countries (Ratsoy and Bing, 1999).

The personal concerns, however, such as prejudice, partiality, favouritism and personal opinion may be considered strong barriers to university accountability (Elmore, 2005). Rob (1996) stated that the duties of the universities' leaders should be to ensure high-quality teaching, research activities and the reputation of the institutions. Institutions should be held accountable to superior authorities for student learning and academic success in accordance with the expansion of populations and global challenges (Rob, 1996, Newman et al., 2004). However, university leaders place more emphasis on the management of their institutions

than on the academic issues because of the pressures for efficiency and achieving results. They are being held more accountable to business leaders and public officials than to the faculty and other internal constituencies. For example, universities' presidents regularly hire professional administrators without academic experience. The universities' leaders consider the professional administrators more loyal and accountable to their administrative leaders and less accountable to faculty and students of their university. Therefore, the faculty role in university governance is shrinking (Schuh and Herdlein, 2005). Taxpayers in the USA, for instance, are holding the universities and colleges accountable for their achievements and their performance. The states' budget allocations depend on the institutions' performance and improving education standards that are based on accountability measures (Kallison Jr and Cohen, 2010).

Higher education requires high costs and it also requires highly trained staff, purpose-designed infrastructure, and advanced equipment and facilities. Hillman, Tandberg and Gross (2014) recommended a new formula for higher education that combines increased funding with increased institutional accountability, taking into consideration the need for a highly educated workforce in today's knowledge-based global economy. It is important to maintain academic freedom at HEIs along with tough accountability standards. Accountability systems should be comprehensive and flexible with different methodologies, and data should be available for the public (Hillman *et al.*, 2014). Hillman, Tandberg and Gross (2014) suggested to increase governmental support of public HEIs, and that any additional public funding is targeted to increased accountability and performance of the institutions.

Another way to keep track of universities' performances and accountability is to allocate funds directly to the students rather than to the institutions. Colorado State in the USA, for example, introduced the nation's first voucher model for financing public higher education in 2004. Colorado State officials aimed to create cost efficiencies taking into account the expansion in demand for universities and college access. The results indicated that the policy led to cost efficiencies among

community colleges and improved college access for some underrepresented groups (Hillman *et al.*, 2014). Other states in the USA are trying financial reforms such as performance funding, and enterprise status that favour the idea that markets should develop educational efficiency and access (Dennison, 2003).

### *Leadership Role in Quality Issues*

Related to the component of empowering individuals is the role of leadership concerning quality issues. The literature on quality management consistently refers to and discusses the issue of empowerment and the role of leadership on this area. The link between quality management and empowerment and leadership is virtually established since leadership would develop and improve quality in an institution by empowering members of staff. Besides, academic leaders of HEIs need to consider quality issues as an integral part of the enabling environment to produce knowledgeable and skilled graduates. Consequently, the role of leaders in the HE context reflects not only on members of staff but also on the graduates.

The higher education institutions build their visions with the effort of all employees, and the leadership of educational institutions plays a major role in developing quality through the quality teams of these institutions. The president or dean of the institutions usually chairs the council or team for quality improvement to ensure commitment and accountability by sharing the responsibility of all units. Burkhalter (1996) explained the need to assign a senior experienced employee to liaise with the top management and to have full access to the right information to in order to effectively advise different departments and individuals to implement the university's plan (Burkhalter, 1996).

The idea mentioned above leads to the success of the organisations, particularly those universities which have a clear vision, quality programmes, innovative research areas, and a reward system for the faculty teaching and administration (Burkhalter, 1996). For example, the US higher education system

put more effort into its “input” such as number of teaching staff and faculty with PhDs, the size of library and information centres, and faculty ratios relating to number of students, graduation ratio, faculty publications and citations and faculty awards. The inputs alone, however, do not guarantee the quality of the universities and colleges (Harvey and Newton, 2004). This is so because of the fact that quality management is a continuous process with extensive cooperation and involvement of all departments at the universities and colleges, boards of trustees or agents, governments, employers, parents and students, stakeholders and society in general to assure acceptance in the labour market (Newton, 2002). Similarly, institutional leadership and culture of institutions are key to the pursuit of quality and must be integrated into institutional management and operations (González, 2013).

The evolution process may be tied to decisions about process, salary augmentation, contract renewal, or dismissal (Heck et al., 2000). The academic leaders can restructure the organisations, train the trainers, prioritise the goals, develop the research strategies, enhance the learning activities, align the educational or industrial systems in accordance with the international standards, and influence the employees to become involved in innovative and creative activities. They also have the authority to chart where a college and its programmes are headed, and serve as facilitators between presidential initiatives, faculty governance, and students' needs (Rowley, 1997, Wepner et al., 2015).

Leadership as the head of the state and within educational institutions at all levels is required for constructing strategies and policies and taking decisions to create an enabling environment (Altbach, 2010). Wang and Berger (2010) argued along the same lines, and added that, along with the sharing of information with the industrial sectors, educationally sound and imaginatively rich leaders are required to create an enabling environment in higher education. Business investors understand the demands of the market and problems at the institutions, so their co-ordination among faculty, students and market can successfully establish a

system which would be run smoothly and would provide highly productive and versatile graduates to the corporate sector (Jing *et al.*, 2011).

The issue of management and leadership became important after the publishing of the 1983 *Nation At Risk* report, when the focus of HEIs was to produce highly effective leaders to meet the challenges emerging from rising industrial sectors such as China and India (Wang and Berger, 2010). It was inferred that leaders are the most important assets of an organisation for creating an enabling environment. Their role is relevant to producing skilled and qualified graduates who can understand the global wave of change and dispense the best solutions to their respective organisations. That is why skillful academic leaders are the indicators for successful institutions (Urooj, 2011). The major changes in higher education require colleges and universities to reform their management practices and to change their traditional thinking about academic leadership (Rowley, 1997). According to Wang and Berger (2010), universities need effective academic leaders with particular knowledge, skills and capability to develop positive policies, to manage their universities successfully, and to be able to remain competitive.

Academic leadership has been regarded as the single biggest advantage in a resource-hungry, competitive higher education environment (Newton, 2002, Sirat *et al.*, 2012). Koen and Bitzer (2010) suggested that higher education leadership in South Africa is confronting many challenges because of transformation under the impact of globalisation (Starr, 2014). They hold the opinion that transactional and transformational leadership types have dominated the scholarly leadership research since 1960. Therefore, they reviewed the concepts of leadership and transformational leadership in literature, then applied qualitative investigation and finally identified possible solutions through an effective leadership. The research question was: *how could challenges of the twenty-first century in higher education be better addressed at this specific institution?* (van der Merwe, 2009). To make the research reliable the following factors were added: openness and trust to keep the information secret; data were supplemented by findings from literature;

accurate description of data, and verification of raw data. The response of the participants suggested that the leaders of the present age need to be effective managers of what they have (Koen, 2010). The participants were of the opinion that the leaders of social capital (university) have people and they can only be effective if they manage them effectively (van Schalkwyk et al., 2013). It was concluded from the study that the role of the leaders is expanding due to globalisation, knowledge economy, contract employment, reduced government funding, new technologies for teaching, and accreditation. On account of that, leadership is expected to promote excellence in all spheres of higher education particularly among academics (Skelton, 2013). An important finding of the study was that there is no fixed approach or theory which can best define or describe an effective leader; rather, it is a multidirectional and multi-approach concept which differs among observers and researchers (Koen, 2010).

Academic leaders act as a bridge linking faculty, employees' community and industrial sector, focusing on knowledge and cultural exchange programmes worldwide, and generating funds and grants for physical and talented human resources. They are also involved in academic activities such as developing curricula, training staff, conducting meetings with the faculty, setting educational goals, and motivating students and faculty (Argyris and Schon, 1974). However, academic leaders still need sufficient time to undertake quality tasks, particularly enhancing teaching and research activities and decreasing administrative tasks for an efficient use of teaching facilities (Kyvik, 2013). As it is clear from the leadership concepts that the university is an institution for generating knowledge, management of HEIs need to apply careful policy to deal with complex situations. To make the conceptual understanding clear, Green (2003) introduced several genuine factors that have led to the transformation in HEIs; these include the information system, the increase in the number of institutions, technology, the Knowledge Society, and the market (Green, 2003).

The future direction of higher education towards transformation requires new missions, roles and new cultures in the institutions, but there is still a gap between

leadership theory and the application of its practice (Wang and Berger, 2010). Moreover, traditional concepts and models of leadership are insufficient to meet the complex, fast-growing trends and latest technological challenges (Ololube et al., 2016). To resolve the issue, a more recommended strategy is to focus on systematic processes out of which leadership emerges. A sustainable world demands new values, attitudes and behaviours, and a greater commitment to cooperative solutions to current challenges (Allen et al., 1999). The government policies also require institutions to provide quality education to improve productivity and to be financially independent (Altbach *et al.*, 2011). Thus, the established corollary provides a cemented relationship between a highly productive leadership and total quality management.

Having discussed the component of empowering individuals and its subsections on transformational leadership, responsibilities and quality issues, the next section explains the third component of the enabling environment; this highlights the importance of building external relationships with different sectors.

#### 3.4.3 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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The third component of Saxena's (2013) framework on enabling environment in higher education is the relationship established between an institution, the government and the private sector. The relationship between these three stakeholders is perceived in the sense of the Government and the private sectors being future employers for an institution's graduates. In other words, the future employers' input on the learning outcomes is of great value and relevance to the market requirements. The section starts by establishing the link between the stakeholders (HE institutions, government, private sector). After this, two major elements are discussed; these are the triple Helix and employability skills.

#### 3.4.3.1 THE LINK BETWEEN THE HE INSTITUTIONS AND INDUSTRY

An investigation was carried out by Bolton and Nie (2010) in China, which shifted its communism-based economic market to the free market economy, and thereafter invited the investors to avail themselves of the opportunities for huge profit. The same venture was carried out in the education system through an alliance between Australian and Chinese colleges and universities (Bolton and Nie, 2010). Transactional educational experience focused on creating an enabling environment to meet the requirements of stakeholders. This system provided an opportunity to identify and capture the value of cross-cultural and global business education from the angle of internal and external stakeholders. This step in general resulted in a joint venture, which was supportive to solving such problems, which a single university cannot. This was achieved with optimal reliance on sharing of resources and joint decision-making policies (Bolton and Nie, 2010).

As can be perceived from the above discussion, if the success of an institute depends on the co-relationship between the business sector and the educational professionals, on the other hand, technological advancement and quality of education need to collaborate for an effective and highly innovative learning outcome (Lucas and Kline, 2008). Considering innovation and evolution, though, the universities need to design and formulate entirely new strategic partnership plans to address the emerging challenges which have the potentiality to slow down the process of an enabling environment (Bolton and Nie, 2010); however, the important factor in this case is sufficient funding by the government, which is required to bring about such framing and developing of policies. This can be achieved by constitutional amendments and increasing the budget for higher education.

Pakistan is an example wherein the University Grant Commission was replaced with HEC through constitutional amendments and public-private funding. Universities were provided funds to train the staff in accordance with the prevalent educational trends (Siddiqui, 2011). The UK where the Higher

Education Reform Acts 1988, 1992 and 2004 were introduced was another example (Middlehurst, 2004). There are, however, some other challenges which need to be addressed for strategic partnership; among these are the rapid changes in the world economy, the requirements for new skills, and the new government policies along with the widespread use of information technology which have forced academic institutions to continuously change their strategies to respond to the new market needs (Valiulis, 2003). The UK government's plan was an example of strategic planning which made fundamental changes in the infrastructure of higher education to meet the challenges of the modern age and the corporate sector. The University Grants Committee (UGC) was set up to allocate funds for HEIs in the UK. The concept of Oxbridge (collaboration between Oxford and Cambridge Universities) was criticised for not shifting to modern ideologies, so the UGC and Research Councils started working under one umbrella known as The Department of Education and Science. In addition, the Labour party emphasised science and technology in the 1980s; on the other hand, previously, in the late 1960s the Conservatives were more engaged with the creation of a social market. In the same way, the institutions had the power to develop and spread the ideas and technologies that are important for an enabling environment.

The Report of The National Advisory Body (1987) focused on bringing industrial and business management structures to HEIs for better efficiency (Dearlove, 1995, Middlehurst, 2004). In addition, some structural transitions affected the HEIs in 1992. For example, many polytechnic institutions were upgraded to the status of universities, resulting in an increase in the number of universities and students by the mid-1990s (Davies, 1997). From strategic planning, the idea of the 'corporate' university emerged, which was considered a system of teaching and learning rather than an institution of learning in the traditional sense (Gareth, 2003). The corporate university system was thought to work as a strategic umbrella for developing and educating employees in order to get the desired results (Gareth, 2003). The strategic changes of the higher education institutions

have led to a better performance and higher quality of their graduates to meet the requirements of different sectors.

The idea led to the establishment of 'Entrepreneurial Universities' that focused on two main areas – the strategic and the structural (Ward, 2014). The goal was to train the fresh graduates to acquire a higher level of skills to meet the market demands. Research conducted by Clark in 2003 investigated the effort of some European universities that managed to convert themselves to 'Entrepreneurial Universities' during the 1980s and 1990s after the gradual reduction of government funding. Their efforts proved that their strategies to become financially independent were successful, which helped them create an enabling environment. These universities included the University of Warwick in England, the University of Strathclyde in Scotland, the University of Twente in the Netherlands, the Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, and the University of Joensuu in Finland.

Clark (2003) measured the transformation process and success of the above universities by looking first at their administrative systems, with full integration and cooperation between the academic and administration staff. Second, these universities expanded their external networks with firms and industries, and succeeded in transferring knowledge technology to research projects for mutual benefits. Thirdly, these institutions have diversified their income through research contracts with companies, local governments, fees and students' services. Finally, the universities encourage the academic departments and individuals to introduce new professional programmes to generate more income, which could enable the universities to develop the educational system. Such strategies have led to the building of a strong culture and values; these determine the identities of these universities that have successfully created an enabling environment for the students who contributed to the development and progress of educational projects and industrial growth (Zaharia and Gibert, 2005).

Middlehurst (2004) concurred with Clark (2003) and summarised the factors that contribute to transforming conventional universities into entrepreneurial ones. The

higher education institutions need to introduce policies with complete records concerning their funding sources, and to reduce their dependence on state funding sources. Hayward and Daniel (2011) agreed with the views of Middlehurst and Clark; that the institutions' strategic plans are required to be flexible and adaptable, and they should be able to exercise their autonomy in current and future operating environments. In addition, these institutions need to have strong administrative departments or teams working collectively to share the responsibilities to raise income and to maintain a spending control system. Institutional expansion, development, and creating research units are other strategies that are applied to attain a self-funding status. Melbourne University, the former Melbourne Private College, and some large-scale enterprises are examples of this model (Hayward, 2008).

Dwelling on this point for further exploration, Shattock (2004) added two other important factors that contribute to successful institutional changes (Shattock, 2004). The first is 'entrepreneurialism' in the core departments, which is very important to the staff, students and customers. This administrative strategy creates a positive link between the centre and other innovative units. The institution-wide entrepreneurial culture is the second factor, where institutions' values and behaviours are essential for their success (Shattock, 2004). The entrepreneurial universities benefit from the development of the external markets and competition among companies to attract qualified students. The approach may vary from country to country – as Middlehurst (2004) explained, different styles and policies of higher education exist in different countries around the world. In China and Singapore, state authorities are centrally directing institutional entrepreneurialism. American universities have their own systems and policies and rely on the market needs. In the UK, the government authorities fall between these two models; and leaders of the HEIs require more freedom to manage themselves without government control (Middlehurst, 2004). The availability of financial resources is an important factor for the lifelong learning environment (Ivanova, 2009). Similarly, the enterprise universities are also forced to follow different strategies and missions to respond to market competition and satisfy

their client groups - students, shareholders, government, industries and communities (Newman, 2004). Hayward (2008) explained that integrated income generation becomes an important process to maintain the accomplishment of strategic institutional goals (Hayward, 2008).

A conceptual framework for the changing position of universities, business and government, within the systems of innovation, is the model of the Triple Helix which highlights the growing interaction between institutional bodies as innovation systems (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1998). Educational institutions and research institutions play a vital role in the development and introduction of innovation in production. Specifically, they constitute a business factor through the creation or participation of new companies (start-ups) in incubators.

#### 3.4.3.2 TRIPLE HELIX MODEL

The change in the global economy as a result of changes in the various sciences has highlighted the importance of having tools and models to create a new kind of cooperation to achieve common goals. One of these models to emerge was the Triple Helix model to clarify the relationship between the university and industry to the government as well as the highlight of the relationships in terms of continuity or change (Lawton Smith and Leydesdorff, 2014).

Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1998) initiated the concept of the Triple Helix of university-industry-government relationships covering elements of previous works by Lowe (1982) and Sábato and Mackenzi (1982). The model interprets the shift from a dominating industry-government in the industrial society to a growing relationship between university-industry-government in the new Knowledge Society (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1998).

The Triple Helix of university-industry-government relations is an internationally recognised model for understanding entrepreneurship, the changing dynamics of universities, innovation and socio-economic development (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1998, Lawton, 1992).

Society is counting on the role of universities and on the exchange of ideas

between with the industry and government sector to drive innovation for economic development, and this is done through the creation of new social institutions to produce, transfer and oversee the application of knowledge. The Triple Helix contributed to the creation of a general framework for the discovery of complex innovations through theoretical and practical research.

Additional to the earlier explanation, the role of the entrepreneurial university is pivotal in the Triple Helix in the creation and use of knowledge in collaboration with the public and the private sectors. The three parties cooperate in scientific innovations and each party plays different roles. For example, as shown in Figure 8 below, the government's role lies in legislation and funding while the companies' role focuses on developing technological innovation and training and exchanging knowledge. The universities' roles are to develop innovative ideas and enable different organisations to communicate and collaborate.

The entrepreneurial university is involved in socio-economic development beside its main traditional missions of teaching and research. It links with the other sectors (public and private) to produce scientific research. Students of the entrepreneurial university are motivated to create new ideas, acquire new skills and to become entrepreneurs and firm-founders who contribute to economic development and job creation in a society. Additionally, entrepreneurial universities are also educating individuals through entrepreneurship, incubation programmes and training programmes at locations such as inter-disciplinary centres, science parks, academic spin-offs, incubators and venture capital firms. Entrepreneurial universities become a source of new firm formation, particularly in advanced areas of science and technology (Hira, 2013).

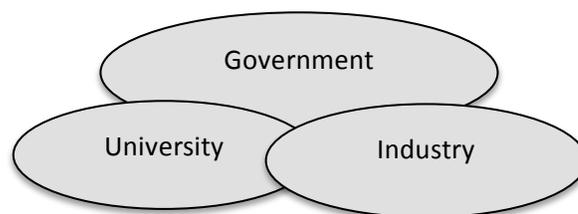


FIGURE 8: TRIPLE HELIX OF UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY-GOVERNMENT

Source: (Leydesdorff and Meyer, 2003)

To summarise, the industry-university partnership generates positive impacts for business, learning activities, academics and students. It is also emphasised that the partnership yields educational research, publication and student employment benefits. However, this relationship has to ensure that transformation leaders are recruited to run HEIs to build a positive strategy and to deal carefully with the policy makers who also need experience and knowledge to understand and deal with academically complex institutions (Wang and Berger, 2010). New strategies, new targets and new policies in response to the requirements of socio-political changes can dissipate the problems to a large extent, and can be a strong force to sustain the culture of an enabling environment (Newman, 2004). Therefore, universities and colleges have to restructure their missions and strategies and the way they secure funding in the face of market competition (Jokela and Karlsudd, 2007).

The universities extend their relationship with the government and the private sector through feeding both sectors with qualified and skilled graduates. The next section focuses on all such factors that increase the probability of employability in corporate and educational sectors.

#### 3.4.4 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Students normally learn two types of skill during their academic years – *technical* and *non-technical*. Technical skills refer to content-specific knowledge which is essential for capable functioning within a particular discipline such as information technology or psychology, whereas non-technical skills are those skills which can be considered related to different jobs or professions and are known as employability skills which include communication, problem solving, decision-making, interpersonal skills, teamwork and leadership. Employability skills are general and useful to all jobs and positions across all levels of businesses (Cassidy, 2006).

According to Baker (2013) employers are looking for competent graduates who have mastered non-technical abilities or employability skills; employers in general value generic employability skills over specific occupational (technical) skills. Educational institutions have the responsibility to develop graduate employability skills and this can be achieved through the instructional method, teacher attributes, the inclusion of skills acquisition as an explicit learning goal, student involvement and activity, relevant context, and student responsibility and autonomy (Baker, 2013).

Many countries continuously review their education policies and the institutions are also required to continuously evaluate graduates' employability skills levels to satisfy the employer and the community (Bettye, 1996). In general, the resources are not utilised appropriately and the employability skills are not imparted, which causes an economic gap between generating and applying resources, and the real challenge is to embed institutions as theoretical growth models. Furthermore, Burkhalter (1996) emphasised that new concepts have reassured the neo-classical standpoint that economic development depends largely on human development. This development of human skills and learning increases the employability skills and generates opportunities for being absorbed successfully. Human development factors include knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes in individuals. They also assure the modern educational or economic growth theories, which do not pay serious attention to human development, technical advance and long-run economic progress. Thus, the understanding of institutional change determines the development of human employability skills and economic growth (Boni and Walker, 2016).

Another factor identified in research conducted by The National Commission on the Public Service in the United States of America in 1989 was about the performance of the most talented graduates in different disciplines of education such as engineering, liberal arts, business administration and public administration (Cohen, 1993). It was found that the most outstanding college graduates were not as talented as they ought to be. In light of this, many factors

were spotted which had had a big impact on the performance of the academically outstanding employees. The factors, which in fact impacted their efficiency, were tenure, job satisfaction and economic challenges.

The international challenges and strong competition push the employers to hire fully equipped and highly skilled graduates for the growth of their business, but the question arises about the sustained interest of the employees who in some cases leave their jobs due to slow or stagnant financial reforms which should be undertaken by the organisations on a par with the efficiency and productivity of the employees (DiMaggio, 2003).

Consequently, the key components that the graduates need to be equipped with were identified as communication, information technology, numeracy literacy, problem-solving and team-working skills, and general knowledge of work. A sound integration of these components within the curricula structure, and an effective practical application in the class environment not only increases the employability factor but can also enable the graduates to acquire the skills deemed necessary by the heads of the corporate sector (Ita and Briga, 2008).

The employer-graduate relationships can be enhanced by creating an enabling environment that provides the graduates with such skills, which the corporate sector needs for industry to prosper (Saxena, 2013). Saxena (2013) stated that a positive example of such an environment consists of four components: 1) interaction-conducive, 2) physical environment, 3) semi-autonomy to students and staff to yield effective results, and 4) collaboration among a variety of social elements and promoting research and creativity. A combination of all these has the potential to increase employability and can establish a system of spotting and rectifying errors; this serves an effective tool for lifelong learning, which is an ultimate aim of the corporate sector (Saxena, 2013). Lerner and Simon (2014) suggested another approach to increase employability: the involvement of community sectors, particularly social and non-governmental organisations, to offer opportunities to come up with innovative approaches.

Community sectors such as social and non-governmental organisations can play an important role in increasing chances of employability. Collaboration among legislators and citizens to create innovative approaches for local policy makers and business community can make reforms work (Lerner and Simon, 2014). Students should be aware of employers' expectations and the requirements for different skills such as problem-solving techniques, teamwork, and communication skills for securing jobs after graduation. Findings from studies of the labour market indicate that planned work experience during college courses and employer involvement in course design and delivery contribute to an extremely positive outcome to develop employability skills in colleges and universities (Mason et al., 2009). The UK National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing Commission 1997) stressed the importance of graduates' skills for them to be able to work professionally within changing and fluid working environments (Bingham and Drew, 2012).

Another study conducted by Correia and Petiz (2007) in Portugal generated very positive results for employability. According to the findings, the universities can play effective strategic roles in the knowledge spillover process. This helps produce research-oriented and highly skilled graduates. In this research, micro data were collected from 390 manufacturing firms and 11 public universities in Portugal. The empirical evidence proved that firms' productivity is markedly influenced by labour and management abilities. It could be inferred, based on this, that the application of knowledge spillover suggests a correlation between productivity, efficiency and availability of trained human resources (De la Fuente and Ciccone, 2003). In this context, two questions are important:

1. To what extent do firms located in the neighborhood of one university have a superior performance?
2. Does this positive effect vary according to the nature and quality of the research performed by the most proximal university?

It was also found that the importance of geographical proximity depends upon the type of knowledge; it is more effective in the case of tacit knowledge rather than scientific knowledge (Correia and Petiz, 2007). These findings show the importance of drawing up a comprehensive list of skills for students, which are considered essential for an enabling environment. However, successful implementation of students' skills development poses a challenge in any HEI. The majority of the models on learning reflect that students who are successful in life have more mature beliefs about learning, have a collection of creative processes, and are able to interpret their tasks without error. That is why academic assistance is offered to students to improve their learning habits (Simpson and Rush, 2003). Generally, generic study skills approaches or integrated approaches that embed instruction across the academic term are used for academic assistance. Furthermore, the writer emphasises the fact that programme evaluation studies are the best source against which to judge the type of courses and skills that are required to improve the standards of education, justify accountability processes, and facilitate the employment of fresh graduates. The next section highlights the key skills and the probability of implementation.

#### 3.4.4.1 SKILLS IMPLEMENTATION

Generally, skill enhancement activities include: encouraging students to take part in different activities; applying information technology; using case studies; implementing the national Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) model, and supporting lecturers who are responsible for implementing skills programmes. This section explains the different approaches of a number of universities worldwide, such as the University of Luton, located in the southeast of England, and its mission to provide skilled graduates to meet the local, national and international requirements. The University designed new courses following consultation with the employers, and incorporated subject knowledge and transferrable skills for the bright future of their graduates who would be able to adapt to the real working environment. The University has a detailed plan to build

students' skills gradually and each student is expected to learn different skills during their time with the University. The core skills include information-handling skills, communication and problem-solving skills by utilising knowledge, and creativity.

The Luton Skills Initiative in 1994 succeeded due to the full support and commitment of senior management of the University and a strong managerial team that assured full participation and commitment of all departments (University of Luton 1994). The Luton graduates have a favourable record in finding employment because of their broad subject knowledge and their skills abilities. Universities in Oman are also adopting the same measures, and almost all highly trained and fully equipped graduates with the above-mentioned skills have better chances of being hired by the organizations (Fallows and Steven, 2000).

According to Fallows and Steve (2000), Alverno College is a liberal college for women in Mileakee, Wisconsin, in the Midwestern United States. The College authorities carried out the same experiment and almost the same results were observed. The students' courses were tailored in accordance with the international standards of communication skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, global perspectives, problem-solving skills, effective citizenship, valuing in a decision-making context, aesthetic responsiveness, and social interaction. The results owe much to the dedication and the commitment of the academic staff. The Alverno College established a continuous system of assessment before and after imparting the knowledge of each skill. With regular feedback, a marked improvement was observed in learning and taught skills. The College also established an Office of Education Research and Evaluation Council with members from faculty and administrators from different departments to evaluate students' achievements and acquisition of different skills to the required level of satisfaction. The College is continuing its efforts to improve its strategies to provide quality education to its students through working with the students, and cooperating with national schools and international higher education institutions (Fallows and Steven, 2000).

Napier University Scotland has developed a culture of collaboration and system analysis of higher education with the employers. The purpose was to assess the probability of employability in accordance with the global changes and the industrial demand. The system was professionally designed to achieve substantial and reliable results. Due to specialised skills of the educational environment, the University was successful in establishing methods of developing and delivering generic skills, the implementation and evaluation of Toolkit initiatives, and a strategy for mapping and enhancing the key skills in all academic years. With the help of a team, a synchronised and well-balanced programme was set up which integrated such skills, which were later developed as a 'Toolkit', shown in Table 12.

TABLE 12: LIST OF TOOLKIT SKILLS

<b>Study Skills</b>	<b>Communication Skills</b>	<b>IT Skills</b>	<b>Library Information Skills</b>	<b>Quantitative Skills</b>
Time management Taking notes Identifying resources Group working	Spelling and grammar Essay writing Giving presentations Using the telephone	Using PC or MAC Using a word processor Using Email  Using spreadsheet	Finding information Using keywords Finding current information Searching the World Wide Web Compiling a bibliography	Arithmetic Simple statistics (averages, percentages) Interpreting graphical data

Source: (Marshall et al., 2000)

The University delivered the Toolkit programme comprising of course content mentioned in the table above. The programme was delivered either as a stand-alone unit or as an embedded one depending on the subject. For example, most of the Faculty of Social Sciences, particularly in the area of Information Technology, chooses to have embedded modules due to their link to the subject area rather than developing these skills as stand-alone ones. However, those that prefer to have a stand-alone model desire to ensure students' awareness of these skills. Napier University has reviewed its employability skills strategy by engaging and encouraging its members of faculty and creating broad internal and external

networks to contribute to the development of this strategy for the improvement of students' employability skills. The Napier University developed the Employability and Attributes Model (Figure 9) to enhance and encourage an open dialogue among staff, students and employers to coordinate and develop the curriculum, skills programmes and delivery to improve the quality of students for the future. The employability skills model given in Figure 9 depicts three areas of skills - *key skills*, *traditional intellectual skills* and *reflective skills*. The objective is to increase the employability of the students by ensuring that all students learn the skills.



FIGURE 9: NAPIER UNIVERSITY'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES MODEL

Source: (Marshall et al., 2000)

The *Toolkit* and *Employability and Attributes Model* are examples of how to ensure greater employability for fresh graduates. The models seem to be tailored professionally so as to meet the market demand challenges posed by the age of technological advancement and commercialisation. Such models reflect a well-structured programme, which incorporates students, faculty, employers and the heads of the institutions. It is important to note that with such group effort and teamwork, employability chances can be increased (Fallows and Steven, 2000).

The quality-oriented strategy developed by the University of South Australia focused both on the standards set by the government and the customers' satisfaction. The prime aim was to enhance the attributes of the university graduates through a series of key skills such as communication, critical thinking and adjustment to workplace. The graduates are expected to master the following skills to work in a professional way:

- Able to continue their professional development at their workplaces due to preparation for lifelong learning.
- Able to solve problems effectively applying the necessary skills such as logical, critical and creative thinking.
- Able to adjust to any working environment and ready to work alone or with others in a professional manner.
- Able to administer professional communication internally and externally as a member of a community.

Able to work globally and to manage the international perspective as a skilled professional (Marshall et al., 2000).

Another notable example is of the University of Nottingham in the UK, which also designed a strategy to maintain high quality in education in research, teaching and learning. The University developed its own key skills embedded in the

curricula as required by the modules, and financed by the Department of Education and Employment (DEE). Due to these measures, the University successfully achieved desired results in targeted areas such as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The results were so far-reaching and effective that the employability skills development has been integrated within teaching and learning strategies (University of Nottingham, 2002). The contribution of all departments in providing the essential requirements and mechanism for developing key skills was considered a highly professional approach to enhance the employability skills of the fresh graduates. Table 13 explains the problems that provided the starting points for key skills development.

TABLE 13: KEY SKILLS

Department	Initial Problem	Key Skills
Biological Sciences	Improving written communication skills of year 1 and year 2 students	Communication
Education	Meeting the key skills requirements of the TTA (Teacher Training Agency) for PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) students	Application of numbers Communication Information technology
English Studies	Developing oral presentation and team working skills of year 1 students	Communication Working with others
General Practice	Improving oral communication skills for year 4 medical students in the context of doctor-patient consultations	Communication Improving own learning performance
Mathematical Sciences	Improving oral presentation and team working skills of year 1 and year 3 students	Communication Working with others
Nursing	Improving oral and written communication skills of post-registration nurses	Communication Improving own learning and performance
Physiotherapy	Improving the information technology skills of year 1 students	Information technology Working with others
Social Sciences and Social Policy	Developing greater learner autonomy in year 1 students	Communication Improving own learning and performance Working with others

Source: (Marshall et al., 2000)

The model presents an example of integrated skills that focus on learning practical disciplines being practiced in the corporate sector. The detailed analysis clearly shows the importance of information technology, communication skills, oral

skills, presentation skills and teamwork; whereas research work has been taken for granted.

The awareness strategy introduced by the UK's Middlesex University is another example of developing extremely positive employability skills. Their programme focused on the evaluation of the acquired skills and boosting the confidence of the students to learn practical skills as required by the industrial sector. The students were made fully aware of the efficacy of such highly professional skills being practiced in the corporate sector. In collaboration with the private sector, the academic faculty was also motivated to develop and modify skills models so that the courses could remain updated; this is another example of an integrated approach as far as strategy formation is concerned. The academic faculty's dedication, the students' awareness and employers' contribution to provide information on highly required skills rendered an effective service to the community.

The University of Wollongong in Australia experimented by developing a direct relationship between transferable skills and quality of graduates. The employability skills were developed by sharing the responsibility with the stakeholders pertaining to selecting the attributes of the graduates, explaining the attributes in the curriculum, gathering data about students' capabilities to learn these attributes, and developing continuous programmes. Along with that, the graduates' attributes within the University of Wollongong environment is another example of a HE institution developing different skills among its students – as is clear in its Strategic Plan:

“We are committed to creating a student experience based on programs and services that open opportunities for all our students. We will deliver student-centred, supportive programs and services that enable our students to achieve their goals” (University of Wollongong, 2014).

The well-developed strategy designed by the University leadership may serve as a practical paradigm for setting trends of high rates of employability because it contains a number of professional skills, which are developed within the University environment and refined through the information and responsibility-sharing

programmes with the stakeholders. The key areas of professional learning dedication to lifelong learning, critical analysis, ethical standards for business world, intellectual diversity, and ability to work in a multi-cultural organisation are highly desired not only for an enabling environment but also to meet corporate sector demands (Hanna, 2009). The transformational leadership supports the whole programme for effective application of all skills designed with the collaboration of faculty (Fallows and Steven, 2000).

In conclusion, collaboration among legislators, citizens, local policy makers and business communities can make reforms work at higher education institutions and support the different skill development programmes introduced, developed and modified by HEIs. Perhaps, in all models, one explanation is common to all – and that is about the collaboration and integration. The former emphasises that all public and non-public sector organisations should contribute to both enabling environment and employability skills, and the latter should synchronise a number of key skills in the academic curricula which should focus on society and global trends (Murthi *et al.*, 2011). The employability skills of international standards are set by the accredited and authorised institutions (Hager and Holland, 2007). For instance, through its approach *Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes* (AHELO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) introduced an important measure of graduate learning outcomes applying international scales; this was expected to be implemented by 2016 (Pearce, 2015).

Indeed, institutional culture and leadership is essential to develop effective systems for the assessment and improvement of graduate outcomes, but it requires full cooperation and institutional commitment that motivate faculty and other supporting employees of the academic community. The next section highlights the importance of research and innovation to complete the mission of universities that has a direct link with the government and the private sector.

### 3.4 .5 ENCOURAGING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AND DEVELOPING A RESEARCH CULTURE

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The fourth component of Saxena's (2013) model is encouraging research. This relates to innovation in higher education institutions and the research culture. Saxena (2013) stressed the point that the members of faculty need full support and reward for – and recognition of – their research achievements. This section reviews the new approach of the higher education institutions and highlights the importance of developing a culture of research.

The value of research has always been relevant to the work of higher education institutions. The level of relevance and significance is relative to different contexts. For example, in Western countries, a number of universities are much directed towards research and innovation. Research universities have contributed to the development and economic wealth of both the developed and developing countries. They have changed in response to internal and external pressures such as reduction in government funding, global competition, and the political and public confidence in the value of university-based research (Leydesdorff, 2013). Therefore, the research universities have decided to rely on high degree research programmes, a competitive environment that rewards success, and an entrepreneurial approach to attracting the resources needed for its success (Wong et al., 2007).

Siegel and Wright, (2015) stressed the need to review the structure of research universities (Siegel and Wright, 2015). Research universities have succeeded in linking several functions of different sectors such as applying an innovation framework to sustainable livestock development research projects in Africa and Asia (Kristjanson, 2009). A further confirmation of Armstrong's views is also found in Rob's concepts of competition and research activities. According to (Rob, 1996), the future of higher education institutions might specifically become more specialised and focused on product and market to target different groups of students and research interests. The universities need to select their

programmes, degrees and types of delivery taking into account other important factors such as the increase in participation rates, long-term learners and real employer requirements.

In their article on enabling culture change, Karen *et al.* (2009) explained the contribution that a science faculty learning community (LC) makes through the contributors and their success in making substantial changes to student learning and understanding science teaching. This approach of reform in science teaching is supported by research scientists, educators and the educational community in the US (Daniel, 2009). It initiated the discussion among research faculties about teaching and learning, and represented a first step to education reform and transformation. In this context the faculty learning community made significant changes to student learning and faculty teaching. This approach is gaining mass support and financial help from the business community such as the National Science Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. The main focus is on the analytical thinking, problem-solving, and higher-order skills. Together, students and faculty help develop their own power of investigation. The traditional teachers who learnt in a passive way tend to resist the implementation of this change which involve asking questions, solving problems independently and sharing ideas. Sirum, Madigan and Klionsky (2009) admitted that one of the biggest challenges is to justify the critics and implement the system to create an enabling environment to meet the challenges. Some tangible results were observed in some cases such as using an active-learning format and teaching with minimal lecturing, and a focus on group problem-solving applied to real-life environmental issues, which were regarded as quite effective for producing scholars for the future who can confidently embrace the competitive environment (Mustapha, 2016).

Contrary to that is the concept of merger and alliance, an example of which happened within the University of Western Sydney. The University merged with four foundation College managers to form an alliance (Sebalj, 2007). After implementing the merger, the outcomes were considered highly effective in terms

of success and tackling competition. The College managers' strategies and multilayered approaches led to a successful management of four change dimensions – organisational, managerial, interpersonal and personal – during the transformational period.

There is a set of facts calculated as an indicator of the success of the merger, including the organisation and flexibility to deal with and recognition of this alliance, which drove this period of transition and consolidation. Among the factors that contributed to the success of the effectiveness of the integration method was the ease of transmission of the administrative staff during the phase change, which is easy to operate, and the gradual renewal of trade relations (Sebalj, 2007). The next section underlines the importance of developing a culture of research.

#### 3.4.5.1 DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF RESEARCH

Marchand (2012) defined culture as a system of shared values. This means that the culture of the preparation of research and information exchange is governed by a set of values (Miller and Marchant, 2009). A culture of research is a structure that confers research conduct importance to enable us to understand and evaluate the research activity. Therefore, a culture of research at higher education institutions is more than about just understanding the importance of research; it is also a collective effort in which research is uniformly expected, discussed, produced, and valued.

Nowadays, research institutions are expected to continue encouraging their faculty to conduct research and publish academic works. At the same time the faculty at traditional teaching universities are also pressured to carry out research, to develop cultures of research, and to increase faculty research production (Blackburn, 1991). The faculty research production is important due to continuous competition within the higher education marketplace. In addition, institutional reputation among research universities is linked to research

productivity which is also essential for the hiring and promotion of members of faculty of both research universities and the traditional teaching institutions (Khazragui, 2015). Bland (2005) presented the characteristics of units with successful faculty research production as a result of a study done at the University of Minnesota Medical School. He stated that the institutions with productive faculty share important characteristics on the levels of the institution, leadership and members of faculty. According to Bland, institutions with high faculty research output have 15 characteristics, which are listed and described in Table 14.

**TABLE 14: INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS THAT FACILITATE RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Recruitment and selection	Great effort is expended to recruit and hire members who have the training, goals, commitment, and socialisation that match the institution.
Clear coordinating goals	Visible, shared goals coordinate members' work.
Research emphasis	Research has greater than or equal priority to other goals.
Culture	Members are bonded by shared, research-related values and practices, and have a safe environment home for testing new ideas.
Positive group climate	The climate is characterised by high morale, a spirit of innovation, dedication to work, receptivity to new ideas, frequent interaction, high degree of cooperation, low member turnover, good leader/member relationships, and open discussion of disagreements.
Mentoring	Beginning and mid-level members are assisted by and collaborate with established scholars.
Communication with professional network	Members have a vibrant network of colleagues with whom they have frequent and substantive (not merely social) research communication, both impromptu and formal, in and outside of the institution.
Resources	Members have access to sufficient resources such as funding, facilities, and especially humans (e.g., local peers for support, research assistants, technical consultants).
Sufficient work time	Members have significant periods of uninterrupted time to devote to scholarly activities.
Size/ experience/ expertise	Members offer different perspectives by virtue of differences in their degree levels, approaches to problems, and varying discipline backgrounds; the group is stable, and its size is at or below a "critical mass."
Communication	Clear and multiple forms of communication such that all members feel informed.
Rewards	Research is rewarded equitably and in accordance with defined benchmarks of achievement; potential rewards include money, promotion, recognition, and new responsibilities.
Brokered Opportunities	Professional development opportunities are routinely and proactively offered to members to assure their continued growth and vitality.
Decentralised organisation	Governance structures are flat and decentralised where participation of members is expected.
Assertive participative governance	Clear and common goals, assertive and participative leadership where active participation of members is expected, and effective feedback systems are utilised.

Source: (Bland, 2005)

It could be inferred that many characteristics require collegiality and a shared mission among members of faculty. Other characteristics need some time to develop such as building a culture of research and recruiting research-focused faculty staff (Serdyukov and Makhluif, 2014). Cheetham (2007) supported this issue and stated that building a culture of research takes up to 10 years in institutions. Some characteristics, such as “open communication” and “assertive participative governance” do not currently have a focus on research within the unit compared to the other characteristics. Individual characteristics are important to facilitate research productivity and considered as indicators of productivity for faculty at institutions. These characteristics include individual content knowledge, research skills, socialisation, self-motivation, and sovereignty and commitment.

Finally, Barner *et al.* (2015) proposed four general characteristics that are important for leadership of research-friendly institutions to motivate the faculty. It was found that the participative style of leadership is important where a leader with clear objectives meets regularly with the faculty, sets expectations and creates an ownership of projects with members, and values their ideas (Barner *et al.*, 2015). From this we can conclude that the university leaders develop a culture of research and increase faculty research productivity through recruiting faculty with a passion for research; providing them with training programmes; and allocate enough time for them to do research (White *et al.*, 2012).

### 3.5 Limitations to the Literature

There are two main points of limitation to the literature on the topic of creating an enabling environment in higher education institutions. The first is that there is critical paucity in the literature on the particular area of ‘enabling environment’. This paucity is even more evident in the case of higher education. The researcher has struggled to find supporting literature related to the various factors catalysing into the creation of an enabling environment in higher education institutions. However, the researcher managed to integrate the related

literature around the central theme of an 'enabling environment'. Saxena's theoretical framework was used as a structure to achieve this objective; for example, the *resource* was subsumed under 'physical environment'; *transformational leadership* under 'empowering individual'; the *Triple Helix model and employability skills* under 'building relationship' and *organisational structure and culture* under 'encouraging research and innovation'. Saxena's (2013) model is not supported by empirical evidence. The limited literature on the topic of enabling environment has created an opportunity of originality for the study. The originality of this research is not only limited to Oman but is applicable to the other GCC countries.

The second main limitation to the literature is that most of the work on the areas of enabling environment, e.g., leadership, is developed in Western countries. The American influence is probably the heaviest of all (Dorfman et al., 1997). There has been a debate about the universal applicability of such models or theories, which have been mainly conducted on American middle-class people. Related to this particular issue is the idea that the concept of the enabling environment is a culturally loaded area of research. Reflecting this on the international dimension, the ideas suggested by Hofstede (2002) and his five cultural dimensions seem particularly relevant. Different cultures have different perceptions about a number of related issues (Hofstede, 2002). For example, according to Hofstede (*ibid*) some cultures are more willing to accept and not to question higher authorities. This seems highly pertinent to the discussion presented in this thesis, and when reflecting on the literature developed in Western, and most particularly American, cultures.

### 3.6 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature in relation to the topic of research at hand on the enabling environment at higher education institutions. The presentation and discussion of the literature has been clearly structured. The role of the government as well as the private sector (corporate) has been highlighted

by the literature to be highly relevant and significant to the enabling environment. For this reason the chapter started discussing literature in these two areas. The discussion of these two sections has highlighted the government and corporates as key stakeholders in shaping an environment to be enabling or not.

The second major section of the literature review presented a framework for an enabling environment. The framework has been highly important in order to give structure to the discussion of related issues. It has been found that the literature is limited in relation to models or theories on the topic of the enabling environment. This limitation does not only apply to such a model in the educational context; rather it even applies to the generic literature on business management and administration. A framework by Saxena (2013) was used with its four components of physical environment, empowerment individuals, building external relations, and encouraging research. One relevant remark is that most of the areas relate the discussion to theories on leadership. Moreover, in this section, the researcher was careful to relate the discussion on leadership to the specific area of higher education. The literature has highlighted a number of challenges for educational leaders, e.g., leading educationalists is more demanding than leading people with other kinds of career. The chapter concluded with a critique of some of the reviewed literature.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter outlined the relevant literature on creating an enabling environment at higher education institutions. This chapter briefly reviews the philosophical assumptions, the paradigm of the research and the approach used in the research design of this study. The chapter also discusses the research methodology and describes the research design underpinning this research study including plans, instruments, and data collection and analysis methods. It covers the issues of validity and reliability, the study population, the procedures of preparing for interviews, and finally the method used to analyse the data.

The mixed method (qualitative and quantitative methods) approach was used in this study and the research techniques are examined considering the sampling issues such as the reliability and the validity. Data triangulation was also adopted as part of the qualitative data collection process to substantiate findings utilising various data sources (survey, interviews and documentations).

#### **4.2 Philosophical Issues**

This section discusses major philosophical aspects of the study. These include assumptions and research philosophy, research paradigm, and research approach. This section is of great importance to the study as it sheds light on significant issues related to the researcher's stance towards research and the concepts of establishing reality and knowledge. Another issue that ascribes further significance to this section is the use of a mixed research methodology. There has been a great amount of attention on the criticality and sensitivity of

using mixed methodology as it reflects on the quality of research. Hence, this section offers detailed discussion of these issues to show the reader the level of attention paid to these significant points.

#### 4.2.1 ASSUMPTIONS AND PHILOSOPHY

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Assumption is defined in the Webster's dictionary as "something that is believed to be true or probably true but that is not known to be true" (Goldman, 2015). Reflecting this definition in the context of research, an assumption is something that the recipient accepts without any proof. Burrell and Morgan (1979) categorised assumptions into four types. To understand this against the background of this research, it is deemed necessary to understand the four types of assumptions so as to ascertain their influence in choosing the paradigm.

First of all, considering assumptions pertaining to the nature of ontology, Burrell and Morgan (1979) argued that researchers encounter assumptions of an ontological nature, and that the nature of reality is very much about the existence of the physical world that has its own typical tangible characteristics. This leads the researchers to acquire a belief in a world which not only consists of structures but also contains a reference towards an objective reality existing outside of human subjectivity (Parkhe, 1993).

Nevertheless, another view states that reality is the creation of human consciousness and cognition. It is seen that the physical world is nothing more than labels, concepts and names that have been given to reality. In other words, reality itself is non-existent but from it emerges 'something', which we term 'reality' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Guba and Lincoln agreed with this on the grounds that the researcher has the right to discuss issues of ontology with regard to their approach. They have raised some epistemological questions on the second type of assumption, where the researcher deals with such concerns, which are related to the condition of knowledge; among these are questions such as what is important to be known, and what can be considered as the

foundations of knowledge? *These have a bearing on the paradigm of positivism.* At the other end of this continuum is *anti-positivism.* It is interesting to infer from this that the conventional ideas, which influence the natural sciences, utilise the concepts of falsehood and testimony to acquire knowledge. However, anti-positivism does not accept the assumption that objective knowledge can be generated, and the belief is in a social, subjective and inspirational type of knowledge.

Burrell and Morgan identified another type of assumption based on the relationship between human beings and the environment in which they live (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

The fourth type of assumption scrutinises the concept of whether human beings are independent. This is to say, do they have the free will in all matters or do the environmental and social forces determine their actions? These concepts are commonly termed as *voluntarism* and *determinism*, respectively. The former is based on the belief in the supposition that the interaction with the social and physical worlds may have an impact on the results of the research. In other words, the researchers who adopt realistic, positive and deterministic approaches focus on the analytical relationships and regularities existing in society (Hassard and Wolfram Cox, 2013).

The understanding of these assumptions, *positivist* and *constructivist* paradigms has a bearing on *interpretivism.* As the research is on creating an enabling atmosphere in the private colleges in Oman, the underlying assumption is that the university presidents and deans of colleges are empowered to create such an atmosphere. Without this assumption, the study does not stand strong. This leads to the clear need to consider the relationships between the creators of the enabling atmosphere and the environment that they work in. This necessitates the adoption of a realistic approach. This needs to build on the data collected to reach a constructed understanding of the different aspects of creating an enabling atmosphere in the private colleges in Oman.

In the above part, the researcher has described how assumptions have a considerable role in the whole research process. It is also thought that the second important aspect is that the researcher's paradigm is constructed in relation to the form of these assumptions, and an understanding of this adds meaning to the selection of the paradigm.

#### 4.2.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

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The above assumptions have added value to the identification of the paradigm of the research at hand. Kuhn (1996) established the original meaning of a paradigm as "universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners" (Lu, 2013 p. 308). A paradigm takes on a philosophical, social, or technical meaning to build up a meaning of required sets of theories (Leech, 2016). (Bryman, 2015) opined that both social and technical meanings refer to particular methods and the researcher's assumptions when conducting research. The assumptions adopted within this thesis reflecting a basic set of viewpoints about the world within a critical realism framework, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, are seen as appropriate for researching the underlying mechanisms that drive actions and events (Bryman, 2015). One major point most qualitative researchers consider, as a major epistemological advantage of what they do, is that the qualitative approach allows them to grasp the point of view of the respondent. The ability of qualitative data analysis to generate meaning makes it a unique and powerful epistemological tool (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

It is understood that positivism and quantitative research is the appropriate choice for descriptive and explanatory research questions. At the same time social constructivism and qualitative research are suitable for interpretive research questions. The latter is understood to be of a more subjective nature compared to the former which is of an objective nature (Sumner and Tribe, 2004). Table 15 summarises the positivism and constructivism approaches to reality.

TABLE 15: POSITIVISM AND CONSTRUCTIVISM APPROACHES

	<b>Positivist approach</b>	<b>Constructivist approach</b>
What is 'reality'?	A definable 'reality' or 'truth' exists and is observable	There is no 'reality' or 'truth' beyond our experiences
What is the goal of academic enquiry?	Acquisition of the 'truth'	A more informed construction of the world
How are the researcher and the 'researched' related?	The researcher is independent of the 'researched'	The researcher is not independent of the 'researched'
What should be the role for values?	Non-objectivity sought	Part of 'reality' - subjectivity celebrated
What kinds of data are preferred?	Predominantly quantitative	Traditionally associated with a predominantly qualitative approach

Source: (Sumner and Tribe, 2004)

Now it is understood that social science research can be approached from three main research philosophies (or paradigms) – positivism, interpretivism and critical theory – which can overlap, but these theories might be identifiable in any research project (Gephart, 1999).

From a theoretical point of view, the entire phenomenon focuses on a specific area, taking into consideration the fundamental assumptions of a certain aspect of that phenomenon to create specific questions about it. The theoretical perspective establishes the philosophical ground for logical explanation of the phenomenon in order to categorise the research (Creswell, 2013).

Positivism, interpretivism and critical theory are understood to be the main three categories of the theoretical perspective. Positivism is a research philosophy often associated with the natural sciences. One of the discerning aspects of this approach is that the researcher remains detached from, unbiased towards and objective about the investigated subject. Hence, it is understood that the researcher searches for facts or causes of any social phenomena in an

organised manner. This approach often looks at the study of human behaviour as it is conducted in the natural sciences (Taylor et al., 2015).

This approach depends on systematic methodologies to build a relationship between the rational deductive logic and human behaviour to confirm the causes of human activities. This can be done by identifying, evaluating and explaining certain phenomena in order to create fundamental links and relationships between the different variables and align them to a particular theory or practice (Sachdeva, 2008). The positivist researchers have an objective view of the world. They believe in objectivity, measurement, and repeatability. They apply quantitative analysis, confirmatory analysis, deduction, laboratory experiments, and nomothetic experiments as their methodology approaches (Fitzgerald, 1998). The positivist perspective helps the researchers to find and explain causes to support their predictions of certain phenomena and to test their results or theories to reach a precise conclusion based on reliable information.

At the other end of the spectrum, interpretivism is a research philosophy associated with the social sciences and the social world, which requires research principles and different philosophies from the social sciences in order to measure or to understand something. It is an organised analysis of a socially meaningful activity based on direct observations of people to understand and interpret their actions in their social world. Therefore, this approach is not applicable to the measuring of phenomena in the natural sciences because human behaviours are not easy to interpret or to generalise. People explain and interpret events from their own perspectives, which can be different from other interpretations (McGlynn, 2012). Instead, researchers choose their research methods to explain and interpret events from their own subjective points of view.

The main features of this approach are that the researcher is part of what is observed, is linked to the research, and may thus, by implication, be considered biased and subjective to the investigated subject. Among other assumptions related to this approach is that those who share the same working environment and share similar systems may have similar behaviours and the researchers

should interpret their behaviour based on data collected according to their situations (Punch, 2013).

Interpretivists argue that social phenomena are considered highly complex, and the approach reflects some knowledge and beliefs of the world. Thus researchers need to dig deeper than just the basic laws to understand the complexity of social phenomena. It takes time to observe and interpret human behaviours and actions in order to develop knowledge and ideas; thus objective observation is impractical in the social world due to the interpretation of meaning by human beings, and only the subjective approach reveals the realities and provides meaningful explanations to all concerned participants. The researcher's participation and close cooperation with the participants is more visible to investigate specific problems and to find solutions.

This approach refuted the idea that research is value-free where human interest is an important issue to guide the researchers to examine the world and to build their knowledge to reflect their aims and beliefs and investigate the social phenomena as a whole. The interpretivist researchers apply qualitative and exploratory analysis, induction, field experiments, and idiographic experiments as their methodology. The main aim of the interpretivist is to understand and explain the phenomena by examining individuals' views that are linked to the phenomena (Fitzgerald, 1998). Several factors lead us to interpretivist research, such as interviews, observations, ethnography and grounded theory (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

These theories assist critical evaluation, which enhances analysis. Hence, this discussion generates an understanding of critical theory. Horkheimer defined critical theory in 1937 as a social theory that emphasises a rigorous critique of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and humanities. It is oriented toward critiquing and changing society and aims to look deeply into social life and clarify our understanding of the world (Friesen, 2008). Critical theory began with Marx and Freud in the nineteenth century and expanded through the twentieth century. It should be directed at the totality of

society during each historical era. This theory should also improve understanding of society by integrating all the major social sciences such as geography, history, political science, anthropology, psychology, economics and sociology (Neilson, 2012).

The discussion above has confirmed for the researcher that critical theory must explain the problems with the social reality, identify the right players who can change this reality, and provide both clear norms for criticism to achieve realistic objectives for social transformation (Fischer-Lescano, 2012). Critical thinking opens up the researcher's mind rather than restricting their analysis to either the positivist approach or the interpretive one. This approach challenges questionable assumptions about phenomena and specifies/identifies contradictory facts, taking into account the views that the social phenomena are associated with our collective experiences and a single truth is not acceptable to explain the reality of the world. Critical social research is a subjective and qualitative type seeking to understand the meaning of human activities (Tesch, 2013).

Since the relationship between the researchers and research participants is of great importance in acquiring the required data from their origin, one of the goals of critical theory is to examine such a relationship and build cooperation between the two. The theory also investigates the influence of those who have authority over resources. Indeed, such cooperation between researcher and participants builds up their own new reality of the social world. According to this theory, the social actors are the initiators of phenomena and their meanings (Gephart, 1999, Cohen et al., 2013). Research in general reflects the researcher's personal aims, values, interests, abilities and ambitions: these indeed reflect combinations of the above elements and influence the research approach.

Further to this, according to Ray (1994), this argument is reinforced as all scientists link their perspectives to their research, whether those views are made explicit or not. The researchers generally fit their research into the context in

which it has been set in order to make any logical statements to knowledge (Ray, 1994, Chan et al., 2013).

In addition, the researchers should make explicit assumptions that shape their research to develop any framework resulting from it (Silverman, 2016).

There is a need for the researcher to differentiate between method and methodology. The two terms are commonly used interchangeably, but imply different functions within the research process. Methodology expresses an overall approach towards the research process including the type of the paradigm, rationale behind asking certain questions, and justification for collecting data. Methods, on the other hand, define certain research practices used to collect the data (Cohen et al., 2013)

In this case, the researcher's paradigm determined the methodology, and questions of method could be deemed secondary (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, it is important to specify the paradigm selected to conduct the research in order to be consistent in methods, which must be appropriate to the methodology (Mertens, 2014).

The quantitative view is described as being 'realist' or sometimes 'positivist', while the people's view underlying qualitative research is viewed as being 'subjectivist'. If one looks at research from a quantitative versus qualitative perspective, qualitative researchers are subjectivists. In contrast to the realist view that the truth is out there and can be objectively measured and found through research, subjectivists point to the role of human subjectivity in the process of research. Reality is not 'out there' to be objectively and dispassionately observed by us, but is at least in part constructed by us and by our observations. There is no pre-existing objective reality that can be observed. The process of our observing reality changes and transforms it, and, therefore, subjectivists are relativistic.

Hence, interpretivism is a research philosophy associated with this research. The main purpose of this research as previously mentioned is to explore and

investigate to what extent presidents and deans create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders at private HEIs in the Sultanate of Oman, as perceived by faculty, administrators and students. The aim of this research is not to discuss the history of science, which has existed based on a specific belief system and might not be appropriate in light of the modern changing beliefs (Kuhn, 1996). In general, all sciences are based on assumptions that validate the disciplines' research (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

There are different types of mixed research approaches, which result when researchers integrate both interpretivism and positivism methods. These styles are known as methodological complementarism strategies (Brannen, 2005) and triangulation (Denzin, 1998 ). According to Denzin (1970), the triangulation style uses different methods in the same study, and includes the use of multiple theories to assure quality control. The combination of methodologies assists the researchers to differentiate between paradigms and their related methodologies and link them together for certain phenomena (Yolles, 1998). There are other forms of triangulation or various study designs used by researchers, such as combining longitudinal research with cross-sectional research, which are complicated to maintain if the researcher decides to apply them (Cohen *et al.*, 2013).

As indicated by Brannen (2005), some researchers use a multi-method strategy in one phase or more phases of the research development of different stages as in the research design, data collection, and interpretation and contextualisation of data. Many parts of the research in the general process can be triangulated and the most common forms of triangulation are data, investigator, theoretical, and methodological triangulation. The researcher may use the same method for different cases, or different methods for the same case (Cohen *et al.*, 2013).

Within this research, data triangulation was adopted as part of the qualitative data collection process from various sources such as survey, interviews and documentations. The researcher also benefits from available documentation submitted by the participants during the interviews. The quantitative method was

also applied to reach more staff and students from the selected private HEIs through the distributing of questionnaires. Therefore, the data triangulation type was adopted to gain the data from one source and use these to gather more data to feed the research. For example, the government sources and literature aid the researcher to build up the interview questions and questionnaires that were distributed to the private institutions. Another example was that the data collected during the interviews were used to draw comparisons with the answers received from the members of faculty, administrators and students. This helped the data analysis process, which indeed strengthened the analysis part of the thesis.

During the data collection process, the researcher encountered some difficulties in accessing certain government documents, and some employees were resistant to releasing certain valuable information. The researcher felt the need to consider both qualitative and quantitative methods in the study. A mixed method is normally employed when the researcher decides to use more than one method to collect two or more sets of data as required to back up the research questions or to investigate certain phenomena (Creswell, 2013). The research questions and context guide the researcher's decision to use either qualitative or quantitative approaches, or both (Bryman, 2015). Punch (1998) posited that some researchers prefer to use a combination of methods to come up with better answers for the research questions.

The positivist paradigm underlies what are called quantitative methods, while the constructivist paradigm underlies qualitative methods (Mertens, 2014). The research methodology envisaged has a bearing on these paradigms. The methodology used is to collect quantifiable data for understanding the environment and qualitative data for understanding the views on creating an enabling atmosphere in the private colleges and universities in Oman. Both these necessitate the use of a mixed methodology approach which is discussed below.

### 4.3 Research Approach

There are two research approaches, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research is characterised as highly controlled and the researcher is confident about the methods and the results. This type of research tends to imply a high degree of internal validity and low external validity, whereas qualitative research is less controlled and characterised by lower validity internally and higher validity externally. No one research method is better than the others; rather it depends on the researcher's choice of the most appropriate one by examining, in depth, the nature of the intended study, the availability of resources, previous research and personal prejudices (Panda and Gupta, 2013).

As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) emphasised, the strengths of qualitative research are seen as lying in its investigative nature, its in-depth focus, and the detailed complexity of the data provided (Cohen et al., 2013). This is important because, despite the benefits of quantitative research, its ability to reach a large numbers of subjects is offset by lack of profound insight, and the focus on the number of the participants, and the uniformity sought from their responses might lead to important details being ignored. As Myers (2000, p. 3) emphasised, "a major strength of the qualitative approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation". Consequently, qualitative research was finally recognised as an effective research device that can provide in-depth information, which could not be derived from a quantitative approach.

Therefore, the rationale behind using a qualitative approach is because such an approach according to Patton (1987, p. 20) emphasises "the nature of understanding the meaning of human behaviour and the social-cultural context of social interaction". This method allows the study of selected issues, cases and events in depth and detail, unconstrained by predetermined types of analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 4) argued that researchers who use a qualitative approach "stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate

relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin, 1998 ).

From the foregoing it can be argued that, according to what is sought in the research, a researcher can decide the paradigm and the method/s he/she wants to use. In this context, this research can be described as essentially exploratory and descriptive in nature. As stated earlier, the intention is to investigate the private universities’ and colleges’ leadership abilities to create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders at their institutions.

In this study a mixed approach of the qualitative and quantitative research stances have been adopted mainly for the following reasons:

- First, the investigated topic is new to the Oman context, and according to Punch (2013), the mixed approach can be very useful in new areas of research.
- Second, related to the above point, the study uses a mixed approach as there is no established theory, and starting with the qualitative interviews was important for the research validity.
- Third, the mixed approach helps the study incorporating the advantages of each of the research approaches. In this regard, the study has breadth and width. The quantitative approach helps in offering width to the study and empowers its ability to generalise and its external validity. On the other hand, the qualitative element will add depth to the study and make it possible to understand the sophisticated nature of the issues under investigation. It also empowers the study’s internal validity.
- Fourth, both Taylor *et al.* (1997) and (Lingard and Blackmore, 1997) supported the idea of using the mixed method in policy process research. This is not to reject using quantitative methods within critical policy research, either alone or in combination with qualitative methods. With reference to the above discussion, the approach of research is a mixed method using both quantitative and qualitative data. This is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the thoughts expressed by the

participants. This type of approach is more reliable and objective.

#### 4.4 Research Design

Research design as described by Easter, Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1994) is a strategy to organise the research activity to ensure the research objectives and aims are achieved. It constitutes the plan for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. It is not related to any specific method of collecting data or any particular type of data. In other words, the research design articulates what data are required, what methods are going to be used to collect and analyse these data, and how all of this is going to answer the research question. Thus, the researcher has to decide the most appropriate method for collecting required data in order to achieve the research objectives.

A research design is an important aspect of any research as it relates to the nature of enquiry (Creswell, 2013). For some research, a particular design is recommended. For example, in the area of behavioural studies, experimental research design is more recommended. For the study at hand, which investigates enabling environments at private higher institutions, and bearing in mind the research question of to what extent top management reflects on creating an enabling environment, the survey research design is used. The survey design as explained by Creswell (2013) is concerned with attitude measurement. In this regard and reflecting this in the study at hand, it measures people's attitudes and opinions about the enabling environment at private higher education institutions.

The research design for this study is a consecutive one as it starts with a pilot and trial stage and then moves on to the main stage (see Figure 10 below).

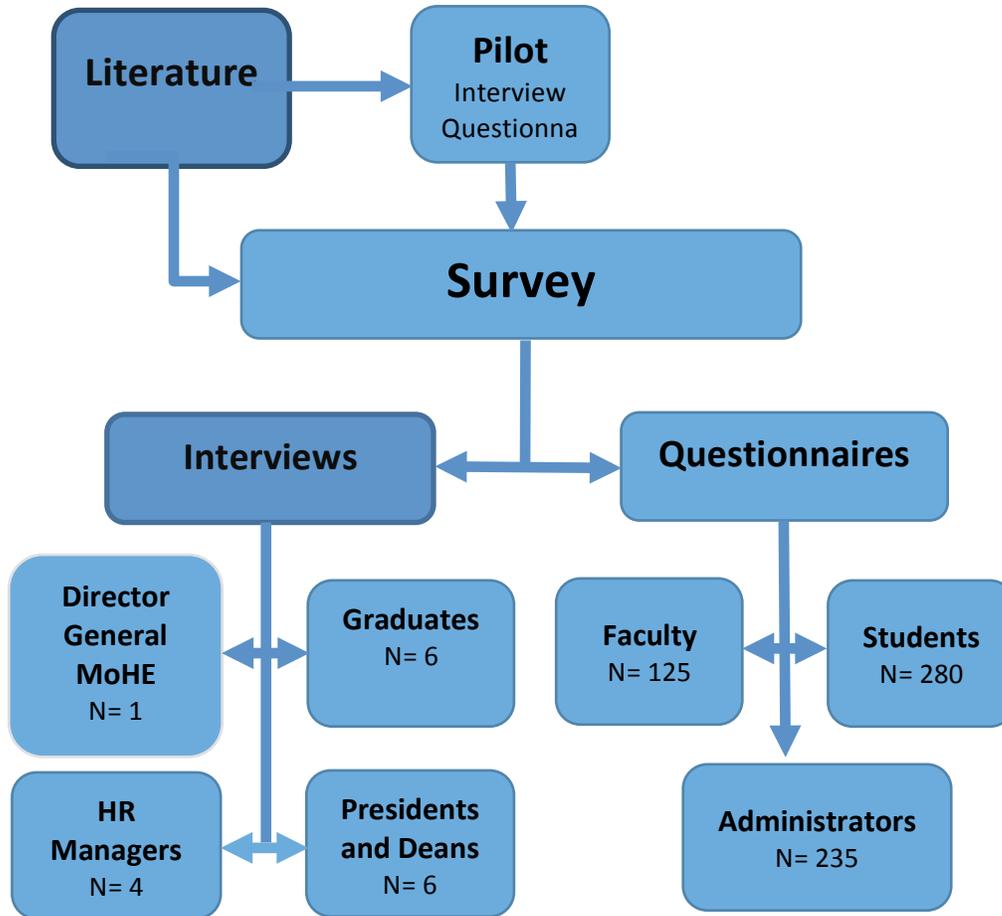


FIGURE 10: RESEARCH DESIGN

This is aimed to help in developing the search tools and direction. The survey design used in this study is a multi-threaded one that triangulates a number of data collection tools and participants. The survey research design incorporates questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires are aimed at three groups of participants (students, faculty, and administrative members of staff) in order to better establish a more vivid understanding of reality (Punch, 2014). Similarly, interviews are aimed at different groups of participants in order to provide more dimensions to the data. It is relevant to remind the reader of the reason for using the survey design in a spatial and consecutive manner as it helps in empowering understanding of the issues under investigation. The next section provides

detailed description of the data collection tools used in this design.

#### 4.5 Sampling and Pilot Study

As mentioned above, the empirical research started with a pilot study. This proved an essential part of the research by offering an invaluable opportunity to understand the target population size and nature. It also helped in sampling and selecting research locations and participants, and gaining access to the research locations. The following parts of this section discuss these issues in some detail.

It is important to explain the sample, which has been selected to examine the research questions. Researchers may use different sampling methods, such as statistical, random, theoretical, natural, or purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2013). Researchers choose samples, which fit with the research question; this is more of a conceptual and theoretical choice rather than a decision guided by representativeness specifically within interpretive research. This choice is more flexible and the researcher puts more effort into the investigation (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Currently, there are 27 private HEIs in Oman; eight are private universities and 19 are colleges. A large percentage of these institutions are affiliated to foreign HEIs providing complete programmes in different fields, including all curriculum development, assessment, and awarding of degrees. The programmes at these institutions range from two-year college programmes offering diplomas to four-year college and university programmes offering Bachelor's degrees (Issan, 2016).

For this research six private institutions out of the 26 HEIs were selected which share similar objectives to provide higher education to Omanis. In order to reduce the sampling error and to obtain a better representation of the private higher education institutions, four selection criteria were considered:

- Sector of the universities: only private universities were considered and the public universities, which are run by the government, were excluded from this survey.
- Random faculty: participants were chosen from different disciplines at the selected universities and colleges that broadened participation in this survey.
- An institution's age
- Geographical distribution: where three universities from different regions were selected to participate in the survey to enrich the study with different experiences.

By combining the above four factors, six private HEIs were selected from different regions in Oman as follow: University of Sohar from the north, Nizwa University from internal Oman; Dhofar University from the south, and the Modern College for Business and Science, Majan College and Muscat College from the capital area.

Pilot studies are essential to decide the feasibility of studies; to validate the content of elements; to define the effectiveness of the designs and sample techniques; to improve the data collection instruments and analyses planned; and finally to develop the researcher's experience with the subjects, methodology and research instruments (Morin, 2013). The main reasons for the pilot study in the current research were to validate the content of elements; to develop the data collection instrument; and to gain experience with the subjects, methodology and research instruments. The researcher briefly highlighted the interview questions and the survey questionnaires with the participants before implementing the pilot study.

#### 4.5.1 RESULTS FROM THE PILOT STUDY

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The data collected during the interviews held with the president and dean of the two trial institutions (University of Nizwa and Modern College for Business and

Science) cover the main areas as identified earlier. The sample was considered reliable for this research for several reasons:

- (a) The support of the presidents and deans of the selected institutions and their interests in the research;
- (b) The members of faculty, administrators and students were randomly selected from different fields; and
- (c) The private universities and colleges share similar activities such as students' admission policies, faculty recruiting procedures and regulations, organisational structures, curricula and study systems. The selected private universities and colleges were chosen based on their location, size, and years in business.

Table 16 illustrates the percentage responses from the two institutions out of the total responses received from members of faculty, students and administration staff.

**TABLE 16: PERCENTAGE RESPONSES FROM MEMBERS OF FACULTY, STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS OF THE TWO TRIAL INSTITUTIONS**

Respondent Group	Total Distributed	Total Responses	Percentage of the trial responses
Members of faculty	116	37	31.9 %
Students	105	32	30.5 %
Administrators	120	40	33%

#### 4.5.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

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##### 4.5.2.1 INTERVIEWS

The thesis started data collection with semi-structured interviews because this is a successful tool to gather data due to direct verbal communication between the

researcher and respondent (McKernan, 1996). According to Kumar (1999), an interview is the interaction between person-to-person or between two or more individuals discussing a certain topic. The interview is a common practice for collecting data from people and easier to track and remember through an informal conversational style using a certain expression or story. Wragg and Bennett (1994) categorised the face-to-face interview into three main types: structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews fall between the structured and unstructured interviews. The researcher specifies the questions, but the interviewer has more time and opportunities to explore, in depth, the issues of the study by interacting with interviewees. The interviewer is not restricted to ask the same questions in the same order to get more information. He/she has the freedom to ask open questions to get the required information to serve the purpose of the research. Such a flexibility allows the interviewer to ask questions in the sequence he or she selects, or change the wording in every semi-structured interview (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In addition, semi-structured interviews help the researcher to produce qualitative data to support the research findings. However, the ability and the skills of the interviewer to conduct semi-structured interviews play an important role to allow interviewees to express themselves in more detail. Wragg and Bennett (1994) supported such an approach, emphasising that educational researchers follow the interview schedule of the semi-structured method as it allows interviewees to express themselves in depth to cover issues around the studies(Wragg and Bennett, 1994).

The qualitative aspect of this study was achieved through conducting semi-structured interviews with presidents and deans from the selected private universities and colleges, the Director General of the private universities and colleges at the Ministry of Higher Education, and human resource managers of some public Ministries whose views were sought on the role of presidents and deans in creating an enabling environment in HEIs in Oman. The semi-structured interviews are also less formal for the participants, which helped in collecting

more and deeper insights from participants. This is supported by King *et al.* (1994) who clearly stated that interviews used in a qualitative manner should comprise open-ended questions to obtain descriptions of specific examples that lead to an understanding of the reality of the situation under investigation (King *et al.*, 1994).

Having cited the advantages of the interview method, there are also some disadvantages; these include the level of the interviewer's skills to conduct reliable interviews; interviewees' reluctance to release information due to the lack of confidentiality; and the data gathered during the interview do not reflect real practice (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). However, the researcher's letters to the interviewees explained the aims of the research and assured the principles of confidentiality to minimise some of the above disadvantages (see Appendix 5).

The present research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches for its data collection and analyses. Two main instruments were used: semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in two stages – a pilot study and a main study, and a questionnaire. The pilot study allowed the researcher to check the instruments, and evaluate the validity, reliability, and usefulness of the means within the overall research design. In this section, first, the development of the research instruments is highlighted. Second, the population is defined and the sample selection process is explained. Finally, the data analysis of the pilot study and its results are discussed.

#### 4.5.3 INSTRUMENT DEVELOPING

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The main purpose of this study, as previously explained, is to investigate the role of presidents and deans in creating an enabling environment in their selected universities and colleges in the Sultanate of Oman. To address this, the research examines the main dimensions of HEIs which include visions and missions, institutional structure, plans and strategies, academic committees, quality and skills of the graduates, relationship with the private sector, research and development, social activities, teaching and research, faculty recruitment and

Omanisation policy, financial status of the private institutions, and academic working environment.

The relevant studies showed that the semi-structured interview method and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires (MLQs) by Bass (1985) mostly measured leadership behaviours and underlying attitudes towards them in business and industrial environments rather than in educational institutions. Bass, 1985 Most of those instruments were developed in the USA and Canada (Furtwengler, 1986, Berridge, 1989, Steinhoff, 1989, Leithwood, 1993, Bass, 1985).

Since the background differs from that of the present study, the questionnaires were not used as such, but the interview questions for this research were developed on the basis of analysing those instruments in relation to educational leadership. This generated broad knowledge on which to develop and a new set of questionnaires was implemented to address the issues of concern in the context of the current study (Oman). The literature review, the researcher's experiences in the field of management in the higher education sector and as an external reviewer at Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (to assess the performance of HEIs) in Oman have contributed to developing the interview questions and survey questionnaires (External Reviewer HEIs, see Appendix 3).

Scholars' thoughts of other types of measurement have been used to measure academic leadership performance: these include the concept of double-loop learning; educational learning culture; collaboration among the stakeholders; education; community sectors, and graduates' employability skills.

## 4.6 Interview and questionnaire design and administration

### 4.6.1 *THE INTERVIEWS*

An interview protocol consisting of the rules that guide the administration and implementation of the interviews was developed in order to ensure consistency between interviews, and thus increase the reliability of the findings.

The data gained through the qualitative method helped to achieve different objectives, such as understanding the role of institutional leadership to create an enabling environment at their institutions to produce qualified skilled graduates and gaining insight of the government policy towards higher education in Oman, and the procedures adopted to recruit institutional leaders, presidents of universities, or deans of colleges. The qualitative data collection also helped the researcher to understand the types of leaders of the selected universities and colleges and the strategies they apply to manage their academic and administration activities at their HEIs to enable them to create an enabling environment. The researcher also wanted to highlight their output in terms of real contributions to feed both the public and private sectors with well-qualified and skilled graduates.

To cover the research purpose, interviews with the presidents and deans of the selected private institutions were conducted to cover their main activities. The qualitative approach of this study was also achieved through conducting semi-structured interviews with different officials at the government agencies and in the private sector (as mentioned above) to collect data and feedback on the performance of the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges, the quality of the programmes, and the skills of the graduates from external parties.

The interview questions and the forms for the survey were discussed with and approved by the researcher's supervisor before the fieldwork was conducted. It was agreed to approach two institutions to test the reliability of the survey before deciding to send it out to the other four selected institutions. Also the researcher requested the participants to add their comments on the survey.

The University of Southampton provided the researcher with a formal letter addressed to the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman to facilitate the interviews with the presidents and the deans of the private universities and private colleges (see Appendix 1). The Ministry of Higher Education also provided a similar letter

supporting the researcher's request to the selected private HEIs, in order to facilitate the interview process (see Appendix 2).

The qualitative stage of the study was divided into two parts. The first part took place during October-November 2007 and focused on interviewing three presidents of the selected private universities and three deans from the private colleges. The process started by calling the presidents' and deans' offices to arrange appointments for interviews with follow-up telephone calls and using personal relationship to confirm the time and dates (see Appendix 4). At each interview, the researcher explained the research objectives and the purpose of the interview and requested permission to use the verified data for his doctoral thesis. The interviewees were informed that the data would be analysed qualitatively and they kindly agreed to share their own experiences on management and leadership. The researcher did not use audio recording during the interviews, but took notes. The questions were open ended. This was to encourage the leaders to express their reflections on each of the characteristics of effective academic leadership. Leadership is an area that has many aspects and open-ended questions were considered the most appropriate way to gather responses of these leaders about aspects, which they consider important. For each of the questions, participants were requested to cite suitable examples from their practice of leadership. The intention was to know how they incorporate the aspects of leadership they consider important into practice.

Open-ended questions were used throughout the interviews to give more opportunities to the interviewees to present their ideas and experiences to avoid directive conclusions. Interviewees focused on their experiences related to their management and leadership, and creating an enabling environment at their institutions. Interview questions that covered the main responsibilities of the president and dean of two private institutions (the president of the University of Nizwa and the dean of the Modern College for Business and Science) were first posed, before the others were interviewed. The interviews went very smoothly; all questions were covered with full cooperation from the presidents and deans of

the private universities and colleges, and they appreciated the purpose of the research. They agreed to distribute the survey questionnaires to students, members of faculty and administrators through their offices for faster response and follow up.

At the conclusion of each interview, the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges were thanked for their valuable time and their cooperation in allowing the researcher to collect data and documentation from their institutions. Interviewees asked to have a copy of the research in the near future. The researcher also interviewed the Director General of the private universities and colleges at the Ministry of Higher Education, human resource managers of some private firms, and a few graduates, to seek their input on the performance of private universities and colleges (see Appendixes 7-9). The second part took place during May-October 2008 and interviews were conducted with human resource management of some public Ministries involved directly with recruitment and training, and with a few graduates from the selected institutions.

#### *4.6.2 QUESTIONNAIRES*

The research also used the quantitative method through sets of questionnaires distributed to students, administrators and members of faculty of the selected universities and colleges. Reliability and validity were tested and the questionnaire was found to be reliable.

The survey started with a short introductory paragraph on the first page of each form; this contained an explanation about the purpose of the research, a statement expressing appreciation to the participants in the study, instructions for the participants, and an assurance of confidentiality. The questionnaires were tested at a university and a college before being distributed to other private institutions. The reasons behind doing the survey can be summarised as follow:

- Understand the participation of the members of faculty in setting up the Visions and Missions and strategic plans of their universities and colleges.
- Examine the university students' motivation policy, the relationship between lecturers and management, and see if the university's policy encourages teamwork to achieve the objectives.
- Check the availability of the educational tools, library services and students' services, and the lecturers' initiatives to develop their own curriculum, the types of additional skills the lecturers are teaching students, and students' motivation strategies.
- Check the lecturers' level of satisfaction with the motivation policy of their universities and colleges.
- Understand the administrative support, the communication flow and the relationship between the academic members and the administrators.
- Understand the faculty perception towards changes and building external relationships to conduct research through their institutions.
- Seek students' views about their relationship with the lecturers, quality of teaching, students' services and student records.
- Gain staff feedback about universities' and colleges' management, working environment, and the importance of social activities.

Further, using quantitative methods in this study helped the researcher to reach more participants within and outside private HEIs in order to establish a link between the factors identified in the literature review and from personal experiences, and the data analysis output.

Because the survey was conducted in an Arabic-speaking environment, the questionnaires were translated by the researcher into the Arabic language from English, and then translated back to English to ensure that the questions convey the same meaning and interpretation in both languages. The participants selected

the version they preferred to ensure that their responses were based on a clear understanding of the questions.

The questionnaires moved from general questions towards more specific ones using a Likert-type ranking scale of four answers to enable participants to choose the appropriate one. The scale is used to rate each item on a response scale. A 5-point Likert (1931) scale is an appropriate choice and would include the items: “agree,” “strongly agree”, “neutral,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree” (Likert, 1931, Adelson, 2010).

The researcher use a 4-point Likert scale instead as the *neutral* item was not deemed appropriate in this survey. Using this type of scale allows the researcher to ask many questions, to code the data and report back by simply assigning codes to the responses - strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1, so that a higher score reflects a higher level of agreement with each item. This allows the researcher to enter the individual scores and calculate an average – or mean score – for the whole group for each survey question. If higher values are given to ‘strongly agree’, then higher mean scores for each question will translate into levels of agreement for each item, and therefore, lower scores will reflect participants’ disagreement with each item asked.

The questionnaire distributed to the members of faculty in two institutions covered different issues related to communication and relationship with the university management, motivation, and quality of teaching (see Appendix 12). The questionnaire addressed to students mainly related to students’ awareness about the university/college, relationship with the lecturers, and skills development (see Appendix 13). Finally, the questionnaire addressed to administrators covers the areas related to staff recruitment, staff development, and communication and staff motivation (see Appendix 14).

## 4.7 Data Analysis Techniques

There are wide ranges of statistical techniques available to analyse quantitative data, from simple graphs to show the data through tests of correlations between two or more items, to statistical significance. Other techniques include cluster analysis, useful for identifying relationships between groups of subjects where there is no obvious hypothesis, and hypothesis testing, to identify whether there are genuine differences between groups. The study has used two different techniques to analyse the data. This is the case as the study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data.

### 4.7.1 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Reviewing the literature on qualitative data analysis, it is understood that the process centres on similar concepts of data grouping, visualising, or summarising and drawing conclusions. This study followed the Miles and Huberman (1994) qualitative data analysis approach, which involves three steps. These are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. In this the first thing done with any data was to reduce the large amount collected by summarising them into groups, categories, themes and subthemes. The starting point was to group the raw data into categories, and/or to visualise them.

As qualitative data are drawn from a wide variety of views, they can be radically different in scope. There are, therefore, a wide variety of methods for analysing them, many of which involve structuring and coding the data into groups and themes. The present study used the computer-aided qualitative data analysis package, NVivo. Using this required transcribing the interviews (N=17) into text in order for them to be uploaded to the software for analysis.

Next, codes are developed or identified in the data and affixed to the textually represented data. The codes are translated into categorical themes and the collected materials were sorted using these categories. The software has allowed the researcher to sort and to examine the materials and to choose the related ones.

#### 4.7.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher used the SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to analyse the quantitative data. The quantitative data were generated through three sets of questionnaires that were distributed to members of faculty, students and administrators of the selected private higher education institutions (see Appendices 13-15). The quantitative data analysis followed descriptive methods of percentages and frequencies. Another statistical analysis that was conducted was Cronbach's Alpha test. This was significant in order to check the results' strength and reliability.

The total number of questionnaires returned was 456. Detailed description of these is provided below. The results showed that 116 members of faculty had complete answers out of 125, rating 92.8% of the total responses, and 7.2% were excluded due to incomplete answers. The Cronbach's Alpha for the 31 questions was .980, which indicates high reliability. A total of 235 out of 280 students responded to the survey, rating 84% of the total responses: 18% were not completed. The Cronbach's Alpha = 0.995 indicates that the questionnaire is highly reliable. The third set of survey questionnaires was distributed randomly to administrators of different departments at the three private selected universities and three private colleges, and 105 responses were received.

#### 4.8 Reliability and Validity

The trustworthy method is a measure to ensure an effective research; in particular the researchers mainly concentrate on validity and reliability. The researcher understands that all the data collected are expected to be reliable and valid. According to Creswell and Miller (2000) validity and reliability are fundamental principles and notions in the design of the whole study (Creswell, 2000). Reliability and validity are normally used within a functionalist framework and may not be considered applicable for interpretive research, as also debated by some authors

(McKinnon, 1988).

This section reviews the use of reliability and validity in a qualitative research paradigm.

A number of issues have been considered to ensure the reliability of this research. This has been significant as reliability is the extent to which results are consistent over time and offer an accurate representation of the total population under study, and, also, if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology (Joppe, 2000). The first issue to ensure the research reliability was checking its stability. For that, the test-retest technique was used. This was most relevant to the questionnaire. For that the researcher piloted the retest reliability of the questionnaire instrument, which is obtained through the pilot testing of the instrument, the questionnaire, and analysed the results in a retest. Results of the actual survey were then compared and correlated with the initial results in the pilot study (Gibson et al., 2010). It could be considered that the test-retest method could render the instrument unreliable, to a certain degree, due to the respondent's behaviour and attitude (Crocker, 1986, Joppe, 2000). The tests of reliability were applied to the three questionnaires of this research and the results indicated that the questionnaires were reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha test was used for testing the reliability, and academic experts validated the questionnaires.

Another issue to support the reliability of this research was the use of the Likert-type rating scale in the questionnaire design. Maurer (1998) advocated the use of this particular scale as reliable for measuring self-efficacy. That is to say, inter-item correlation is examined on the basis of the correlation matrix of all items on the scale, corrected item-total correlation and alpha if an item is deleted. In this respect, the analysis has provided the researcher with information on which items needed rewording or even needed removal from the scale.

The discussion now moves to present issues of validity related to the research. Validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept or construct that the researcher is attempting to measure

(Yilmaz, 2013). Yilmaz (2013) explained validity as a tool to check whether the research truthfully measures what it is supposed to measure. In another words, validity means that an instrument measures what it intends to measure. There are a number of measures of validity that confirm the quality of this study.

Internal validity relates to the design of a research study to test if the hypothesis or the research question is right. This is ensured in this study as the research develops a design that incorporates a number of stages as well as a number of data collection methods and even a number of respondent groups. This relates the discussion to the idea mentioned above regarding research triangulation of tool and respondent. On the other hand, external validity discusses how generalisable the study's inferences are to the general population. Reflecting on this study, external validity was ensured in two main methods. The first is sampling which used a large number of participants. The second issue also relates to sampling where responses were gathered from six different sources or locations (institutions). Porter (2000) raised an interesting relevant point that external validity depends on internal validity (Porter, 2000). In this respect, this study has ensured internal validity with its design, and this, in itself, empowers external validity. Construct validity is used to assess the validity of data collection tools (Creswell, 2014). In this regard, this study ensures construct validity as the tools were developed based on a combination of sources; these are the literature review and the pilot study.

Apart from the traditional discussion on validity and reliability, there is a current trend in research philosophy thinking to dispute these terms and to replace them with the term 'trustworthiness'. This term typically consists of four aspects; these are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Guba, 1981). Reflecting these against this research, all four aspects are met. Credibility refers to internal validity; issues of empowering the research validity have already been discussed above. Transferability refers to external validity. This was also discussed above where the use of the questionnaire as a data collection tool has enabled conducting statistical tests. The use of sampling techniques has also

helped in empowering the research transferability. Dependability refers to the research replicability. This is ensured in two main ways. The first relates to the use of the interview as a data collection method; and dependability of this is ensured through the detailed description of the conduction and administration of the tool. Dependability of the questionnaire has been ensured in the tool itself where the interference of the researcher is absent (Pandey and Patnaik, 2014). This point also relates to the final aspect of conformability, which refers to the neutrality and non-biased research practices. There has been some debate on the issue of conformability in the qualitative and mixed method approaches as they generally depend on the interpretivist paradigm and the researcher's role in understanding and shaping reality (McKinnon, 1988, King et al., 1994). For this the researcher also ensured that he did not influence the views of the participants in order not to contaminate the data.

#### 4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are one of the most important parts of a research study. Theses may even be doomed to failure if this part is missing. Throughout the collection of data and analysis, ethical considerations were paramount in the mind of the researcher. According to Bryman and Bell (2007) there are 10 principles of ethical considerations. These have been paid serious attention to in this research. Research participants were not subjected to any pressure to respond or to respond in any other way, other than through free expression. The researcher has seen that respect for the dignity of research participants is prioritised. Full consent was obtained from the participants prior to the study and the protection of the privacy of research participants was ensured (Bryman, 2015).

The research data were not shared in order to maintain adequate level of confidentiality. Moreover, the anonymity of individuals and organisations participating in the research was ensured. The research has been careful throughout to stringently avoid any deception or exaggeration about the aims and

objectives of the research, and research data findings are presented in an unbiased way. The researcher ensured that affiliations in any forms, sources of funding, as well as any possible conflicts of interests were declared. The highest standard of honesty and transparency has been maintained in all communications.

While keeping in focus the above points, the researcher only requested voluntary participation of the participants, taking care to ensure that the questionnaire and the questions were not discriminatory or in unacceptable language. There is acknowledgement of works of other authors used in any part of the thesis with the use of the Harvard referencing style. In addition, there is maintenance of the highest level of objectivity in discussions and analyses throughout the research.

The responses of the questionnaires in the trials had some slight changes to some words from the faculty questionnaire, which had been made and were used for the main research. Therefore, the researcher decided not to re-examine statistically the internal consistency of each of the scales. Students' and administrators' questionnaires were considered suitable without any major changes and they were used for the main research.

#### 4.10 Summary

This chapter discussed methodological issues about this research on an enabling environment in higher education in the Sultanate of Oman. The chapter started with the philosophical aspects of the study. This included research assumptions, philosophy, paradigms, and approaches. The study employs a mixed method approach that combines thoughts from both schools. After that the research design was discussed. This was shown in the study using the survey design in a multi-threaded style. After this the chapter discussed issues of sampling and piloting. Then the chapter moved to talk about data collection methods. These were the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires. Issues concerning the data collection tools were also discussed in this section such as tools design

and administration. The next section discussed the issues of data analysis in its two styles: the qualitative and the quantitative. After this the chapter addressed issues of validity and reliability. These issues were also discussed by relating them to the concept of trustworthiness. The final part of the chapter presented the ethical considerations of the research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the methodology of this study. This chapter presents the findings in terms of their significance to create an enabling environment for private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. It also identifies the relationship between the findings and the relevant literature presented in earlier parts of this study. The first part of the chapter presents the qualitative data of the research. These data were collected by semi-structured interviews with relevant participants. The decision to start with the qualitative data was supported by the ability of qualitative research to offer better understanding (explorations) of the issues under investigation (Robson and McCartan, 2016). The second part of the chapter presents the analysis of the quantitative data that were collected from the questionnaires.

#### **5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

This section presents the results from the interviews. The results in this section are grouped in four sections. These are: (1) presidents and deans, (2) Director General for Private Colleges and Universities, (3) Human Resource managers, and (4) graduates. Some reflections on the literature are also made throughout the section. The final section of this part brings the data from the four groups of participants together, to achieve five thematic areas. These are external relationship, research activities, social and academic working environment, faculty recruitment and Omanisation, and financial status of private institutions.

### 5.2.1 RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH THE PRESIDENTS AND DEANS

The interview questions covered various responsibilities of the presidents and deans of HEIs (see Appendix 6). The analysis follows a similar style to cover the ideas related.

Table 17 shows key quotes drawn from their responses to different issues rose during the interviews, followed by data analyses. The responses were labeled as follow: responses from presidents as P1, P2 and P3, and responses from deans as D 1, D2 and D3.

TABLE 17: RESPONSES FROM PRESIDENTS AND DEANS

Theme	Quotes from presidents' responses	Quotes from deans' responses
University/ College Board	<p>"The board of the university always supports the university management and there is a positive relationship between the two as long as there are transparency and clear objectives." (P 1)</p> <p>"The relationship between the presidents of these universities and their board council seems very positive." (P 2)</p>	<p>"The college management had faced problems in the past due to the interference of a member of the board in the operations and even in the academic activities of the college." (D 1)</p> <p>"The interference of the council members of the private colleges is the main problem facing these institutions today." (D 2)</p>
Organisational structure	<p>"Works through a vertical structure consisting of a president, and two assistants." (P 2)</p> <p>"Vertical structure that starts with the university president, and two assistants to run the academic affairs and students' affairs." (P 2)</p> <p>"The president has limited authority and limited freedom." (P 3)</p>	<p>"The chairman of the college supervises the college's activities directly particularly the financial side and the external relationships." (D 1)</p> <p>"The dean is handling all the academic and administrative affairs at the college without financial responsibilities." (D 1)</p> <p>"The system in the college is an upside-down system and the structure reflects the structure in the society that forms such a</p>

Theme	Quotes from presidents' responses	Quotes from deans' responses
		<p>system.”(D 2)</p> <p>“The college management had faced problems in the past due to the interference of a member of the council in the operations and even in the academic activities of the college.” (D 3)</p>
Committees	<p>“It is important to have the academic committees in the universities to ensure the participation of the members of faculty and to share their experience to develop the academic performance.” (P 1)</p> <p>“University has several councils across its colleges and each college has its own board that consists of a representative from each section. The executive board consists of the deans of colleges who are authorised to take decisions except with regard to introducing new programmes that must be approved by the University Academic Board.” (P 2)</p> <p>“We have a committee at each college that deals with academic affairs, administration, curriculum, admission and students' services. The dean has the authority to take decisions based on university regulations but not to introduce new programmes or modify the current programmes if required by different sectors in the society.” (P 3)</p>	<p>“The college has an academic board to discuss different issues and to make decisions.” “More committees would be time-consuming, particularly if the committees cannot take decisions.” (D1)</p> <p>“I preferred to have an academic board rather than committees that consists of the dean, assistant dean and head of sections to discuss different academic and administrative issues and raise recommendations to the chairman of the college to make decisions.” (D2)</p> <p>“The academic committee at the college makes recommendations and suggests a future strategic plan, but the decision makers prefer to follow their own ideas.” (D 2)</p> <p>“Although there are a number of committees in the college, their members are facing problems because they are not used to such a system.” (D3)</p> <p>“The committees could function well in Oman if there is a full understanding among their members and availability of information; also the leader of higher education institutions must be active and represent a model for them to follow.” (D3)</p>

Theme	Quotes from presidents' responses	Quotes from deans' responses
Graduate skills	<p>“Students who gain their diplomas have acceptable skills but not at the level required by the university or the public and private sectors.” (P 2)</p> <p>“The university’s vision is to create a new generation of graduates who have ethical and leadership skills.” (P1)</p> <p>“The university philosophy depends on integrated training where the students of engineering and nursing undertake the minimum skill development.” (P2)</p> <p>“Each subject has its syllabus, which includes the course objectives and the expected outcome, and the system of observation and evaluation carried out by the members of faculty.” (P3)</p>	<p>“The private colleges cannot confirm the level of the graduate skills due to the lack of the feedback about graduates’ performance in the workplace and the inadequate evaluation techniques used to measure and evaluate the skills of the graduates.” (D1)</p> <p>“Our own quality assurance process ensures that the students acquired the required skills for future employment.” (D2)</p> <p>“The college graduates have the right skills but there is room for improvement and a need to better understand the market needs.”(D3)</p>
External Relationship	<p>“The university always communicates with the private sector and business firms and also encourages the university to undertake research with those in the private sector.” (P3)</p>	<p>“The dean believes in the importance of strengthening the relationship with the private sector; he feels the employers are much more open and accessible but that they need to understand more about the importance of higher education.” (D3)</p>
Financial status	<p>“The university president has the academic and the financial authority to run the university and present annual reports to the board of trustees about the university activities. “(Ps 1,2, 3)</p>	<p>“Financial power of the board members exceeds the dean’s authorities.” (D3)</p>

The first question posed to the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges was about the visions and objectives of their universities and colleges in general. The researcher wanted to understand the vision and mission

of the private colleges and universities, and how they are implemented and transformed into reality based on strategic positioning and action plans for sound academic and administrative activities to create an enabling environment at their institutions. The question addressed was:

**Question One: Could you please explain the vision and objectives of the university?**

The responses from presidents and deans' interviews are summarised on the following points:

- Provide quality higher education and special programmes from international standards with a minimum cost to attract students and feed the economic sector with skilled graduates to improve the economy of Oman.
- Provide talented highly qualified students, and build in them loyalty, leadership and ethical behaviours.
- Have quality in higher education.
- Improve the English level of the students and bring their college to international standards in its programme.

The responses from the presidents and deans indicated that their institutions have clear visions and missions. Their responses focused on offering quality higher education, matching international standards with acceptable fees to feed the society with skilled graduates.

The responses from the members of faculty indicated that their universities and colleges have clear visions and missions and they are aware of that, which means that universities and colleges are clear about their current and future plans. The members of faculty also rated as 97% their participation in setting up their college and university vision statements and mission plans. The responses of the members of faculty match the responses of the presidents and deans who clearly explained the visions and missions of their institutions. Many studies like those of

Feudally (2013), Finch et al. (2010), Siddiqui (2011) and Tushman (1980) support these findings. The role of the head of the institute (dean/president) is highly conspicuous in framing an enabling environment for the learners. Hence, these leaders' visions, missions and policies are inspirational for all those who are working under them (Siddiqui, 2011, Fudally and Nemani, 2013).

However, the visions of these institutions do not cover other important areas such as research and development, extending external relationships, and serving their communities. It seems that these institutions are focusing on improving their quality in higher education which is similar to other universities around the globe that are also under pressure to respond to the market demands and to provide skilled and qualified graduates to solve social and economic problems within their societies (Zaharia and Gibert, 2005).

The second question addressed to the presidents and deans aimed to develop a sense of understanding of the fundamental structure of communicative strategies and channels between the private colleges and universities' management and the staff. The researcher wanted to know about the HEIs' structures - whether these fall under a horizontal structure or a vertical one.

**Question Two: Where do you see your university? Is it more inclined towards a horizontal structure or a vertical structure?**

It can be concluded from the above quotes (see Table 17) that the universities have similar structures and minor differences with regard to financial authority of the university president; they also have plans developed with the cooperation of their international partners. It can also be inferred that there is no complete strategic plan derived from international standards. The universities however are reviewing their plans to match with the higher education policies and regulations and market needs, taking into consideration the underpinning cultural and religious principles. These universities have positive teams to share their views on the various academic and administrative activities. The management of these universities also has the full support of their boards and it seems that both the

universities' management and the boards have clear visions, objectives and strategies with which to reach their goals.

The three colleges on the other hand have different structures depending on their boards' strategies. These structures fall in between the horizontal and vertical ones. One college has a dean with no authority who uses his charisma on employees to run the academic and administrative activities. One of the boards' members of the college may have an overpowering influence over the college's system and could control the operations of different activities. The dean of another college stated that they have an "upside-down system" where the dean has limited financial authority; whereas an investor has more authority in this aspect than the dean has. In explaining the dean's expression of the system being "upside-down", it infers that there is a perceived state of chaos instead of an organised system.

The relationship between the boards of the three selected private colleges and their dean is more or less moving in the same direction. For example, a board member of one college interferes in the operations and even in the academic activities of the college. Such a situation leads one dean of a college to prefer not to have ultimate financial power, and only to handle the academic affairs of the college independently without the involvement of the board members.

The colleges' structures and the strategic plans can be termed as vague despite the structural charts of these colleges. They have their own plans, which cannot be considered as complete strategic plans and which were implemented completely internally in these universities. Therefore, it can be seen that there may be a need for the boards of the selected private colleges to restructure their colleges and to authorise their deans to run their colleges efficiently without direct intervention from the board members. Similar issues between the institutions' presidents and board members are evident in the USA (Eckel, 2013).

The third question addressed to the presidents and deans was about the role of committees in the university. University management is often seen to establish

committees to generate collective opinions. Staff who participate in these committees are willing to share in decision-making and in implementing the management's decisions. However, in some universities and colleges, the management feels the committees are delaying issues and taking a long time to discuss matters without reaching conclusions.

It can be concluded from the above quotes (see Table 17) that the three private universities have well-organised committees and their academic members are sharing their ideas and participating in different academic and administrative activities. The presidents of the private universities agreed upon the importance of different committees, particularly the academic committees, to discuss and share ideas and experiences to develop the academic performance at the universities. On the other hand, the perception at the college level is different; this may be due to its limited number of staff; the fact that most of them are not used to such a system, and the direct involvement of the members of the board of these colleges. The researcher agrees with the deans and their opinions with regard to the situation and the structure of the committees at their colleges, but it is considered more efficient if the deans were given more authority to form small groups to deal with the different activities within their colleges. Both members of faculty and administrative staff may need to be more coherent and work together to develop the performance of their colleges.

The three main areas of investigation raised with the presidents and the deans of the private higher education institutions in Oman – vision, organisation structure and the role of the committee – fall within the second component of Saxena's (2013) views of encouraging communication between academics, non-academics and the other stakeholders of the private institutions, and empowering individuals to deliver results to achieve an enabling environment at institutions where faculty and the administrative staff and students have authority to carry out their tasks, and build their loyalty to their institutions. Such a leadership strategy will satisfy the employees' needs, enhance professional attitudes, and motivate them to serve their institution effectively.

The fourth question addressed to the presidents and deans was about graduates' skills. A similar question was addressed to human resource managers of some public Ministries and also addressed to members of faculty of the private universities and colleges. The question was formatted as follows:

**As it is generally known and can be witnessed in Oman, the government invests heavily in development projects all over the country, which requires employees with various skills to do the work.**

- 1) Does your university offer the required programmes?
- 2) Does the university train its students to acquire the necessary skills?
- 3) How do you evaluate the quality of private local universities' and colleges' graduates in terms of their specialisations and their general knowledge?

One can infer that the presidents and deans agreed on the importance of producing quality graduates and the need to offer the best programmes and training to their students. There is currently a low level of graduate skills to uneven distribution of students among universities and colleges where the private universities and colleges have students of low level in the English language and general knowledge. The weak students need several preparation programmes and normally they stay at least two years to complete the foundation programme. The presidents and deans added that private universities and colleges put more emphasis on the importance of student training, which was considered compulsory at the University for jobs such as nursing, teaching and business.

The answers from the presidents of universities 1 and 3 reveal similar views about graduates' skills and the criteria used to measure students' abilities to handle these skills, particularly in the workplace. The deans of the private colleges on the other hand could not confirm the level of the graduate skills due to the lack of feedback about graduates' performance in the workplace and the

inadequate evaluation techniques used to measure and evaluate these skills. They also expressed their opinion about the difficulties they face in ensuring the skills levels of the graduates because the students embed their skills during their academic studies.

The members of faculty strongly agreed on the importance of teaching students different types of skills such as critical thinking, computer skills and negotiating skills, with a rate of 88%. They held the view that the level of students' motivation was due to the management methods used to encourage them to study hard. This also rated 88%, similar to faculty agreement to enhance students' skill development, and that was a direct indication of the lecturers' concerns to enhance students' performance, whereas the employers and the graduates gave different responses to the views above.

The graduates explained the big differences between practical work and the study at the private universities and colleges, stating that, in basic terms, only 10% of the skills and knowledge they learned is used at their work. The course materials, according to them, did not match work requirements, and the students preferred to have practical and training sessions besides the literature they read.

The responses of the academic faculty showed their efforts to teach students different skills; however, the students negatively rated learning different skills, such as communication, computer and negotiation skills. The students who agreed and strongly agreed rated 67% (see Table 23). The human resource managers have different views from the presidents, deans and members of faculty. They, it is understood, look at the private higher education institutions in general as organisations accumulating their students' annual fees without giving enough thought to developing facilities like modern libraries and efficient Internet services. They were of the view that there is no real quality at the private universities and colleges, and that the Ministry of Higher Education strategy fails to respond to the market requirements. This is not completely in agreement with the second component of Saxena's framework on creating an enabling

atmosphere. As pointed out earlier, empowering individuals to deliver results is the second component to having an enabling environment in institutions where faculty, the administrative staff and students all have authority and are ready to carry out their responsibilities, produce effective results, and become loyal to their institutions.

The fifth question addressed to the presidents and deans was about the universities' and colleges' relationship with the private sector. The aim of such inquiry was to understand the current position of university/college industrial relationships and to analyse the future policy of their institutions.

The questions was in two parts:

**How do you build your relationship with industries and business organisations?**

**Are your research contracts between the university and companies?**

Analysing these responses, one can conclude from the above quotes (see Table 17) that the universities already have such relationships and encourage their members of faculty to build external relationships through their management, based on the agreement with the Ministry of Health to use their facilities, and the universities will provide services in return. The presidents admitted that there is no written policy set by these universities, specifically for their members of faculty's external relationships and contracting directly with different sectors to conduct research or short courses, but the members of faculty seek permission from their management, and such efforts will take into account in their annual evaluation. The universities encourage their members of faculty to build external relationships with different sectors in society as long as the faculty member obtains prior approval from the management and as long as such activities will not affect the core responsibilities of the lecturers. However, the relationship between the universities and colleges and the private sectors is not up to the required level of satisfaction.

The research contracts are very limited and only short courses are provided to banks and some companies. The universities do not have the required information about their graduates and their skills level. There is a need for government policy to extend the cooperation between higher education institutions and the private sector. The selected universities and colleges are willing to strengthen their relationship with the private sector, to encourage their members of faculty to conduct research, and to design training programmes. The universities and colleges have the research facilities and qualified members of faculty. Both the private universities and colleges will benefit from such relationships. Higher education institutions are required to carry out continuous assessment towards the development of employability skills (Cotton, 2001).

Building relationships through linkages with the private sector is one of the main components raised by Saxena (2013) for creating an enabling environment in higher education. The Triple Helix of university-industry-government relations highlights the growing collaboration between higher education institutions as innovation systems and the industry (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1998). Altbach and Wang (2012) supported the industry-university partnership as both share mutual benefits to promote educational research, publication and student employment benefits (Altbach and Wang, 2012). The interviews with the presidents and deans also covered other areas such as external relationship, research activities, social and academic working environments, faculty recruitment and financial status of the private institutions. The following section highlights the responses of the presidents and deans with regards to their internal management of their institutions in relation to the answers received from faculty and administrators in response to the survey, and views from the relevant literature.

### ***External Relationship***

It was noted from the responses that the private universities and colleges have

limited research contracts and only provide short courses to banks and some companies. The universities and colleges have the research facilities and qualified members of faculty and are ready to develop mutual relationships with the private sector to conduct research and to design training programmes. The private institutions have already started this strategy and encourage their members of faculty to build external relations with different sectors of society. The responses from the members of faculty attracted contradictory answers stating that the management of the universities and colleges are strict when it comes to encouraging their members of faculty to build external relations with different sectors of society, and to exchange different ideas or to conduct seminars and research without formal and routine processes. The response rate was 68% in support of the view that the university's management encourages its members of faculty to build external relations with different sectors of society; this rate is ranked as *acceptable*.

The presidents and deans desire to strengthen their institutional relationship with industry, and responses of the members of faculty did not match with Saxena's fourth component of an enabling environment at institutions; this is encouraging research and innovation and developing a research culture. The faculty needs full support from their institution such as time, reward and recognition of their research achievements (Saxena, 2013). An essential aspect of the financial resource is that the shortage of revenue available to cope with the greater costs of teaching and research will affect the quality of both areas, lead to limited access to needed resources, and indeed will influence economic and social development (Ález, 2013).

The cooperative relationship among legislators, educationists and business community can benefit the whole society particularly in the areas of children's education, the environment and health. Higher education institutions are regarded as the ideas-generating sources and can play a fundamental role in this respect, and the resulting external relationships will lead to a successful reputation of the universities and colleges locally, regionally and even

internationally as both the institutions and the society will mutually benefit from such cooperation (Wang, 2014).

### ***Research Activities***

The responses from the presidents and deans with regards to the research activities at the private universities and colleges in the Sultanate of Oman focused on running franchise programmes of other international higher education institutions as core activities. The private institutions provide facilities such as buildings, students' services and teaching faculties, but the curriculum is still offered by their international partners. The private institutions follow the policy of the Ministry of Higher Education to run franchise programmes and to continue collaborating and cooperating with international universities to ensure the quality of programmes. In addition, the students prefer to get their degrees from international universities than to study in Oman. The private universities do not have their own programmes or curricula and are planning to develop their own curricula based on the market needs and to extend professional and academic cooperation locally and internationally in the future.

Although the focus of private universities and colleges at present is on teaching, the management is encouraging its members of faculty to do research in order to progress in their careers with support such as creating a positive environment, availability of tools and communication facilities, and cooperation of the members of faculty. Management assists the members of faculty to participate in conferences either locally or internationally. The presidents and deans recognise the importance of research, and the members of faculty of their institutions are willing to conduct research besides their teaching load. However, they admit that their institutions are still too nascent to have developed a thriving research environment/culture, and they focus more on teaching and learning.

The members of faculty believe in doing research to improve their quality of teaching, but they are only interested in this if they have the support of the management. They confirmed their belief that the private universities and colleges are not yet research-oriented; they focus more on teaching and learning research-related activities, and do not encourage their members of faculty to conduct research activities. The members of faculty rated 91% extremely positive to conducting research if they were asked to do so. Studies (Altbach, 2007) have referred to strategies that include the retention of educationalists, recruiting highly skilled and talented faculty, focusing on research, and providing more facilities to the students with the best intentions of creating and sustaining the learning environment.

According to Saxena (2013), the first element for creating an enabling environment is the physical environment at higher education institutions to open communication channels to motivate students, faculty and the administration staff to exchange their experiences. It is also important to have an academic environment with presidents and deans who are able to maintain the required physical resources, and to provide a competent and research-oriented faculty.

The universities and colleges are also seen to encourage the academic departments and individuals to conduct research and to introduce new professional programmes to generate more income. This indeed will lead to the building of a strong culture and values and create an enabling environment for the members of faculty and students who contributed to the development and the progress of educational projects and industrial growth (Zaharia and Gibert, 2005).

### ***Social and Academic Working Environment***

The presidents and deans expressed their views on the importance of the culture of the work environments inside these institutions as they have multi-national

lecturers working and dealing with students who have strong traditional and cultural principles. They confirmed that they are maintaining a working academic environment in their institutions, by organising continuous workshops and orientation for the academic members from different nationalities to enlighten them about the Omani culture and the attitude of the students, and about ways to handle different problems (Siddiqui, 2011).

The private universities and colleges are also understood to encourage their members of faculty to build mutual relationships with different sectors of the society to understand the Omani culture and tradition and to develop channels of communication. The institutions also provide the necessary information to their staff relating to the tourist attractions, shopping malls, hotels and restaurants and traditional markets. One can infer from this and conclude that private universities and colleges handle the culture issues professionally, starting from instilling a general awareness and moving on to creating a friendly working atmosphere in their institutions.

The presidents and deans have similar views on the importance of extending their relationships with their societies through different social activities. Typical examples of these that were frequently mentioned were those of organising or sponsoring activities held at public schools. The holding of the Annual dinner during the holy month of Ramadan or the National Day Event were good examples of these activities.

The selected private colleges still need to develop their strategies to build their relationships with the private and the public sectors and to expand their social activities. One way is to introduce some programmes to train the public to run their activities more effectively. Within the Saxena framework, creating a similar environment will strengthen the relationships among employees and all are thought to be motivated to collaborate in the drive to achieve the vision of their institutions; thereby, presenting a unified image of the institution to external environment. Having contradictory views about an institution is contrary to the

desire to develop lasting relationships with society.

### ***Faculty Recruitment and Omanisation***

The responses of the three presidents reveal the focus on absorbing qualified Omanis to teach at these private institutions, but the recruitment policy and the requirement of their international partners hinder the process of recruiting Omanis as members of faculty. In addition, the delay in obtaining approval from the Ministry of Higher Education, and strong competition from higher education institutions from other Gulf countries due to competitive remuneration policies, are the main reasons not to attract qualified lecturers. However, the universities welcome qualified Omanis to work at their institutions. They also give priority to their graduates to progress to higher education and to give them chances to work at the university. In addition, the universities have their own plan to send top graduate students abroad to study for their Masters and Doctorates degrees and then recruit them as lecturers. The deans of the three colleges have provided similar answers and reaffirmed that the recruitment policy at the three private colleges is tending towards the recruitment of qualified Omanis in areas such as information technology, English, public and business studies, and management.

The qualified Omanis prefer to work at the public universities and colleges, particularly in Muscat, the capital of Oman. However, the private universities and colleges introduce several ways to attract positive qualified lecturers such as offering an attractive remuneration policy, creating an academic working environment for the academics, and introducing a family environment by providing entertainment programmes and sports facilities.

### **Financial Status of the Private Institutions**

Financial management of the private institutions was the last question raised during the interviews. It was clear that the university president has the academic

and the financial authority to run the university and present annual reports to the board of trustees about the university's activities. The three private colleges are also handling their financial resources through their board and the deans are still aiming to have more financial autonomy. The common understanding is that it is very important to ensure the financial stability of higher education institutions in order to assure continuing administration and academic development. The main income of the private universities and private colleges is generated from students' fees and government support. The presidents of two universities stated that their universities' financial situations are stable and their main income is from students' fees and university investment.

It seems that the universities and colleges are not overly concerned about their financial situation, and there are some other sources of income from various programmes such as continuous education, the Arabic language programme, future expected consultancy and research projects, and voluntary contributions. The Government of Oman supports private universities and colleges by giving them free land, funding for their infrastructure, and sponsoring students from low-income families.

It is understood from the responses that the presidents and the deans of the private universities share the opinion that the Ministry of Higher Education takes a long time to process the requirements of private higher education. They have expressed a strong opinion for the need to review the policies and procedures to meet the challenges facing the private universities and colleges. The private institutions management has shown a positive attitude to meet and discuss all the challenges with the Ministry of Higher Education. One of the major challenges is the current Ministry policies and procedures to release the funds granted by the government to build their facilities. The private universities need the government's financial support to assist these institutions to develop their infrastructure and to introduce other programmes.

The president of one of the private universities was of the strong opinion that the employees at the Ministry of Higher Education tend more towards holding the

private institutions accountable rather than contributing to the development of these institutions. The deans of the private colleges are of the opinion that the policies and procedures of the Ministry of Higher Education impose more control on the activities of private institutions; for example, the private institutions are facing difficulties with getting approval to release advertisements or to distribute marketing leaflets, to secure financial incentives, to introduce new programmes, and to approve the recruitment of new lecturers.

The second set of qualitative data from this study is the outcome of several interviews with the Director General (DG) of the Private Universities and Colleges at the Ministry of Higher Education, human resources managers of some public Ministries, such as the Ministry of Service, the Ministry of Housing, and the Ministry of Communication, and a few graduates from the selected universities and colleges already working in the public sector. The main reason for the interviews was to collect data and feedback from external parties on the performance of the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges, the quality of the programmes, and the skills of the graduates.

The first interview was conducted on 14 May 2008 with the Director General of the private universities and colleges, and took place at the Ministry of Higher Education. The data collected during the interviews with the presidents and deans contributed to develop the interview questions addressed to the DG and human resource managers.

First, the researcher introduced himself to the interviewee and presented the aim of the research topic, which is the performance of the presidents and deans of selected private universities and colleges to create an enabling environment to produce skilled graduates to meet the requirements of different sectors. In addition, the researcher explained the importance of having qualified academic leaders to run both public and private universities and colleges, and that their role is to offer quality programmes to meet the requirements of the society and to satisfy different interested parties such as parents and students, and the public and private sectors.

## 5.2.2 RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

The reasons for interviewing the Director General (DG) of the private universities and colleges at the Ministry of Higher Education and analysing the data separately was to understand the recruitment criteria set by the MoHE to appoint presidents, deans and lecturers at the private HEIs. The researcher wanted to know the process involved to evaluate the performance of the presidents and deans, and to understand the Ministry’s vision for the future to have Omani nationals as universities’ leaders. The interview was an open-ended semi-formal one designed to generate the relevant information required (see Appendix 6). Table 18 shows key quotes from responses to different issues raised during the interviews, followed by data analysis.

TABLE 18: RESPONSES FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Statement/ Question	Response
<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p>a) What are the criteria in your own opinion to appoint presidents and deans at the private universities and colleges especially if you are directly supervising both public and private higher education institutions?</p> <p>b) What criteria are set by the Ministry of Higher Education in order to approve such important appointments?</p> <p>c) Is it mandatory to provide guidelines for private universities and colleges to recruit for their senior academic positions?</p>	<p>“The Ministry of Higher Education has a policy and criteria to accept candidates with PhD, academic experience or those who have attained the level of professor and have had academic experience at higher education institutions.”</p>

Statement/ Question	Response
<p><b>Question 2</b></p> <p>What is the role of the academic leaders at private universities and colleges in the Sultanate of Oman?</p>	<p>“The roles of the president and deans are to run their universities and colleges effectively and to be responsible for the academic programmes, administration and the financial stability of their institutions.”</p>
<p><b>Question 3</b></p> <p>How do you evaluate the performance of the presidents and deans at the private universities and colleges in terms of quality of education and quality of their graduates?</p>	<p>“The performance of the presidents of the private universities in my opinion is good and I hope to see the same performance at the private colleges.”</p>
<p><b>Question 4</b></p> <p>a) Are presidents and deans qualified and experienced academic leaders or only managers to run the business activities rather than higher education institutions?</p> <p>b) Do you think private universities and colleges have qualified and experienced academic leaders who contribute towards human resource development?</p>	<p>“The success of the academic leaders at the HEIs depends on their levels of authority and the long-term vision of their board members.”</p> <p>“The Deans’ degree of authority varies from one college to another. The deans of some colleges have been given a great deal of authority to run their activities, but most of the private colleges still limit the authorities of their deans and administrations.”</p> <p>“The Ministry of Higher Education continuously advises the private universities and colleges, through its representatives at the board of these institutions, to grant much more authority to their presidents and deans.”</p>
<p><b>Question 5</b></p> <p>a) Do you have the right to ask private universities and colleges to look for another president or dean if their performance is not as expected or if the Ministry of Higher Education does not intervene?</p> <p>b) What is the role of the Ministry of Higher Education if it identifies that a president or dean is unsuitable in the post?</p>	<p>“If there are valid remarks or complaints about any president/dean at the private HEIs and the Ministry of Higher Education is convinced he/she is unable to lead such an institution, or has culture and loyalty problems, the Ministry immediately advises the board of the institution concerned to find a replacement.”</p>

Statement/ Question	Response
<p><b>Question 6</b></p> <p>Some students and parents prefer to see Omanis as university presidents and deans if they have the right qualifications and experiences even if they are less than those of non-Omanis.</p> <p>What is the role of the Ministry of Higher Education concerning the Omanis' senior academic posts at private higher education institutions?</p>	<p>"I support qualified Omanis to be leaders at private HEIs as they understand the tradition of the society and students' needs, and they are increasingly keen to ensure quality higher education."</p> <p>"Most qualified Omanis are working at the public universities and public colleges and prefer to continue at their present jobs."</p>
<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p>Why are there so few Omani lecturers working at the private universities and colleges?</p>	<p>"I support qualified Omanis to be leaders at private HEIs as they understand the tradition of the society and students' needs, and they are increasingly keen to ensure quality higher education."</p> <p>"Most qualified Omanis are working at the public universities and public colleges and prefer to continue at their present jobs."</p> <p>"The MoHE encourages qualified Omanis to work as lecturers at private institutions."</p> <p>"Qualified Omanis are working in the government institutions and only working on a part-time basis at the private universities and colleges."</p> <p>"The private universities and colleges are keen to send their top students to get higher qualifications and to become lecturers if the MoHE covers the fees."</p> <p>"Improving HE is costly and time-consuming and the government are trying to help the private institutions."</p>
<p><b>Question 8</b></p> <p>Do you approve of the advertisements of the private universities and colleges to match the required criteria of the Ministry of Higher Education before releasing them, and if so, why?</p>	<p>"The Ministry of Higher Education does not approve advertisements to appoint academic lecturers at private universities and colleges."</p> <p>"The Ministry must approve new programmes and requires details such as the general requirements of the programme, expected number of students, lecturers' qualifications, and the availability of facilities."</p>

The Director General stated that in policy set by the Ministry of Higher Education, the main requirement of the Ministry is to accept candidates with PhD qualifications and academic experience or those who have attained the level of professor and who have had academic experience at higher education institutions. The policy also states that the roles of the president and deans are to run their universities and colleges effectively and to be responsible for the academic programmes as well as the administration and the financial stability of their institutions.

Therefore if the candidates meet such requirements set by the MoHE to appoint presidents and deans at private universities and colleges, their role is to create an enabling academic environment at their institutions. The process to approve the releasing of advertisements prior to appointing lecturers for the private HEIs was another issue raised during the interviews with the presidents and deans. The Director General replied that the MoHE does not approve advertisements to appoint academic lecturers at private universities and colleges; however, the Ministry interferes if the private universities and colleges want to introduce new programmes and requires details such as the general requirements of the programme, expected number of students, lecturers' qualifications, and the availability of facilities.

The presidents and deans also raised the issue of the recruitment of qualified Omani lecturers at the private universities and colleges to meet the required percentage. The Director General gave assurance that the MoHE encourages qualified Omanis to work as lecturers at private institutions. However, the available qualified Omanis are working in the government institutions and only working on a part-time basis at the private universities and colleges. He added that the private universities and colleges are keen to send their top students to get higher qualifications and to become lecturers if the MoHE covers the fees. The Ministry encourages and supports this idea, but still, some financial constraints

hinder its implementation. He stated that improving HE is costly and time-consuming and the government is trying to help the private institutions.

One of the critical issues is the evaluation of the performance of the presidents and deans of the private institutions and the government's decision to take action if they fail to manage and lead their universities and colleges. The Director General replied that if there are valid remarks about any president/dean at the private HEIs and if it is established that he/she is unable to lead such an institution, or has culture and loyalty problems, the Ministry immediately advises the board of the institution concerned to find a replacement. He added that the success of the academic leaders at the HEIs depends on their levels of authority and the long-term vision of their board members. Therefore, the influence of the board on the administration of these institutions is a very critical issue. The presidents and deans must have enough academic and financial authority to enable them to take decisions on time and to run their institutions effectively.

The Deans' degrees of authority vary from one college to another. The deans of some colleges have been given a great deal of authority to run their activities, but most of the private colleges still limit the authorities of their deans and administrations. The Ministry of Higher Education continuously advises the private universities and colleges, through its representatives at the board of these institutions, to grant much more authority to their presidents and deans. The performance of the presidents of the private universities is positive according to the opinion of the Director General and he hopes to see the same performance at the private colleges.

With regard to recruiting Omani nationals to the positions of universities' presidents and deans, the DG supports qualified Omanis to be leaders at private HEIs as they understand the tradition of the society and students' needs, and they are increasingly keen to ensure quality higher education. However, most qualified Omanis are working at the public universities and public colleges and prefer to continue at their present jobs. The boards of the private universities and colleges hold the same views as the DG to appoint qualified Omani presidents and deans

with a PhD qualification in higher education, relevant experience and leadership skills.

The remarks of the DG contribute to the development of a framework to guide the decision makers in selecting the right candidates to fill the president’s or the dean’s position of their institutions; candidates who are able to create an enabling environment at the private HEIs. The next section examines the views of human resource directors on university leaders and on the level of graduates’ skills. It will also include the graduates’ interviews and their remarks.

### 5.2.3 RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS AT THE PUBLIC MINISTRIES

Four human resource managers (HRMs) were interviewed from different public Ministries. The questions were designed differently primarily to seek their views about the quality level of the graduates – mainly their general knowledge of their fields and skills and behaviours in the workplace. The questions posed to four HR directors, and their responses, are shown in Table 19, below. The responses are labelled as HRM1, HRM2, HRM3 and HRM4.

TABLE 19: RESPONSES FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTORS

Questions/statement	Responses from human resource directors of public Ministries
<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p>How do you evaluate the quality of private local universities’ and colleges’ graduates in term of their specialisations and their general knowledge?</p>	<p>“The graduates in general vary in their levels of general knowledge and their education. It depends on individual capabilities. We find the differences in terms of skills among graduates of the same qualifications from the same university. Skills development and familiarity with general subjects depend on individuals’ capabilities to gain such knowledge... There is a serious need to evaluate the monitoring strategies of the Ministry of Higher Education to assure quality of education and skills</p>

Questions/statement	Responses from human resource directors of public Ministries
	<p>development of students.” HRM3</p> <p>“We have few local colleges...Most of the employees are diploma holders and they complete their studies on their own during the evening without full concentration on their studies which affects the quality of the graduates. The public Ministries do not have enough budgets to train their employees and it takes time to get approval from the Ministry of Civil Services.” HRM1</p> <p>“We don’t have enough support from the Ministry and most of us join evening classes after a long working day. We don’t have enough time to study and our aim is to have a certificate for promotion purposes.” HRM3</p> <p>“The psychological willingness and clear objectives of the student are important to have quality graduates even if universities and colleges vary in their quality standards.” HRM1</p> <p>“The quality of programmes at the universities contributes to the quality of graduates. The Ministry of Civil Services advertises for job vacancies regardless of the reputations of the universities, and the selection of positive candidates depends on the results of interviews and exams.” HRM1</p> <p>“We find a positive quality of graduates from the University of Sultan Qaboos due to government support, positive lecturers and quality of programmes, and the quality of graduates varies between local universities and universities abroad.” HRM4</p>
<p><b>Question 2</b></p> <p>Students learned different skills beside their specialisations, which enable them to carry out their work immediately without additional</p>	<p>“The graduates have no skills in general; however, some individuals have additional skills beside their majors. Graduates need further training when recruited for a job.” HRM1</p>

Questions/statement	Responses from human resource directors of public Ministries
<p>training.</p> <p>a) How do you evaluate skills of the graduates?</p> <p>b) How long does it take university and college graduates to be ready to perform well at their jobs?</p>	<p>“The graduates’ skills depend on individuals and some of them are doing well ... The roles of universities and colleges are to upgrade the general knowledge of students in addition to the required courses.” HRM1</p> <p>“Students are responsible for developing different types of skills beside their specialisations.” HRM4</p> <p>“The Ministry of Civil Service developed an evaluation exam which counted as 60% of the final result to test the cleverness and self-assessment of the candidates, whereas interview committees test the personality and the general knowledge of the candidates concerning their subject areas.” HRM3</p>
<p><b>Question 3</b></p> <p>What are the important administrative and technical skills necessary to be taught to students?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Communication and computer skills</li> <li>- Presentation and linguistic skills</li> <li>- Behaviour skills and traditional principles</li> <li>- Writing skills</li> <li>- Business skills like companies operations, market and finance activities.</li> <li>- Internet and computer skills.” HRM1</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 4</b></p> <p>Have you faced any kind of problems with graduates unwilling to undertake certain basic duties, and who insist on implementing their own new ideas and projects?</p>	<p>“Yes, we have this problem; some graduates are showing off their social status after getting the jobs and look down on the employees with less qualifications and lower-level jobs... The universities need to coordinate with both the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Civil Services to introduce behaviour courses and to invite government officials to give lectures about the nature of work in the public sector.” HRM1</p> <p>“We select graduates for jobs based on their abilities and confidence and give them chances to enable them to prove their capabilities and confidence in the jobs. However, we do face a</p>

Questions/statement	Responses from human resource directors of public Ministries
	few difficulties with some graduates who intend to change from one job to another.” HRM3
<p><b>Question 5</b></p> <p>Is there any communication between management of private universities and colleges and government Ministries to exchange views and experiences to develop programmes or amend their current programmes to meet the real job requirements in the public sector?</p> <p>If such networks exist, do you think universities and colleges will adopt this approach?</p>	<p>“Effective communication channels are required to get the real requirements of different sectors”</p> <p>“Marketing of programmes is the main aim of universities. There is no direct communication between university management and the public sector and both communicate through formal letters and reports.” HRM4</p> <p>“There is no communication between the public sector and the universities and colleges, but there are representatives of some government Ministries at committees of the Ministry of Higher Education. There is a need to communicate with universities` management that they should open up such issues with the public sector.” HRM2</p>
<p><b>Question 6</b></p> <p>How do you see quality in higher education and quality of those graduating from private universities and colleges?</p>	<p>“Quality in programmes depends on the courses, qualifications and experience of the lecturers.” HRM1</p> <p>“Yes, some colleges have quality in their programmes due to their positive lecturers who are motivated to do well and play the role to educate and upgrade the general knowledge of the students. I suggested a unified recruitment and motivation system for all colleges.” HRM3</p> <p>“The role of the personnel department is to select and recruit graduates; however, the quality of the graduates should be evaluated at their work places.” HRM3</p>
<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p>What advice would you like to give to the management of private universities and colleges to have the best-qualified students?</p>	<p>“To provide more academic and business advice to students.” HRM1</p> <p>“Qualified Omanis are more suitable to lead higher education institutions and will give more attention to students...Students` behaviour should be a major aim of universities beside the quality of their programmes.” HRM1</p>

Questions/statement	Responses from human resource directors of public Ministries
	<p>“Preferred to have Omanis in colleges and universities as they are familiar with the culture and are more responsive to students` demands.” HRM3</p> <p>“Students` behaviour should be a major aim of universities beside the quality of their programmes.” HRM2</p> <p>“Universities need to know the market requirements of different areas.” HRM2</p> <p>“Universities should place emphasis on engineering and medical programmes.” HRMs 2,4</p> <p>“Universities should equip their students with different skills, and encourage and support them to do small to medium projects” HRMs 2, 3,4</p> <p>“Suggest having qualified Omanis to lead higher education institutions due to their awareness of the culture and society.” HRMs 2,4</p> <p>“Universities should put more effort into student behaviour and building their personalities.” HRMs1, 3, 4</p>

The human resource managers agreed that the universities and colleges are under pressure to respond to the market demands and to provide skilled and qualified graduates to solve the social and economic problems within their societies (Clark, 2003). However, they still believe that the quality of colleges' programmes depends on having positive lecturers who are motivated to do well and play their role to educate and upgrade the general knowledge of the students.

The responses may point to the fact that quality, skills and experience are important issues concerning parents and employers within both the public and the private sectors. Cotton (2001) supports this approach emphasising that employers are looking for skilled graduates and value generic employability skills over specific occupational (technical) skills. The role of the presidents and deans is to assure that their educational institutions develop graduate employability skills through different methods such as teacher attributes and student participation in different skills development programmes (Cotton, 2001).

Ita Richardson (2008) supported the approach to integrate the skills such as communication, information technology, numeracy literacy, problem solving, and team working and general knowledge of work within the curricula structure, and an effective practical application in the class environment to enable the graduates to acquire the skills required for the corporate sector.

The relationship between employer and graduates as mentioned by Saxena (2013) in the framework to create an enabling environment also stressed the importance of the employer-graduate relationships which can be improved by creating an enabling environment that provides the graduates with such skills, which the corporate sector needs for industry (Saxena, 2013). Mason *et al.* (2009) supported such an approach stating that the employer's involvement in course design and delivery contributes to an extremely positive outcome to develop employability skills in colleges and universities. Burkhalter (1996) held the view that many countries need to review their education policies and the institutions also need to evaluate graduates' employability skills levels to satisfy the employer and the community (Burkhalter, 1996).

#### 5.2.4 RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH GRADUATES

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Six graduates from the same public organisations as the human resource managers were interviewed. The graduates have different specialisations and graduated from different universities and colleges in Oman.

Quotes from the interviews are all provided in Appendix 11. These are not listed in the text, as the material was extensive. The graduates explained the big differences between practical work and the study at the private universities and colleges, stating that, in basic terms, only 10% of the skills and knowledge they learned is used at their work. The course materials did not match work requirements, and the students preferred to have practical and training sessions besides the literature they read. They suggested there should be a closer link between their curricula and the work requirements and that these should include civil service law and regulations, labour law and social law as part of the core courses for all majors (Dunne, 2000).

The graduates wanted additional awareness sessions about job requirements and the expected outcomes of their performance. They would like their private universities and colleges to organise field visits to both the public sector and private companies to expose students to real practical work.

One of the interviewees explained that the type of work determines the required skills and knowledge, and that his courses at the university helped him introduce different ideas that can be implemented at his work. He added that he benefited from some courses and he applied some ideas at work, but other subjects such as IT and finance were rarely applied. However, the graduates appreciated the concepts and ideas of some courses such as Operations Management and Organisational Behaviour as important, as they are required both in the public and the private sectors. The graduates explained that higher education offers additional knowledge to students to help them to be creative in their thinking; however, there is not a direct reflection of the students' abilities at their practical work and HE only develops personal abilities.

The second interview question raised was about the direct relationship between the courses at the universities and colleges and the current work of the graduates. The graduates' answers showed different views, and some of the graduates agreed on the relationship between the study materials and work requirements, which leads to graduates' satisfaction with the quality their private universities and

colleges are offering. Other graduates, however, felt that there was no direct relationship between the courses they studied and their work, with the exception of their English language and communication skills. The students learned only the basic IT skills as explained by one graduate, but other skills such as communication skills, negotiation skills, performing reports, computer skills, analytical thinking, and business writing are also important to help the graduates in their life and their practical work. The graduates appreciated their institutions that offered important courses in the field such as organisational theories (particularly organisational charts), human resources, accounting, electronic business, marketing and economics. Learning these subjects helps the graduates to gain an overall general knowledge about the important issues in the public and private organisations.

The graduates came up with some advice for the management of their universities and colleges; this includes implementing the necessary strategy to give more attention to practical training than to just theories. They wanted their universities and colleges to put more efforts into students' activities to build their skills and to separate skills development courses from the main courses requirements. The students need to be aware of their capabilities, skills and qualifications to meet their future job requirements. The graduates wanted to see the academic staff of their universities and colleges from different nationalities having qualifications and experience to enrich their general knowledge. Finally, the graduates wanted to see improvements in the quality of teaching and the study systems of their private institutions.

The graduates made other important remarks about what could enhance their skills, such as their practical training and their final year projects. For example, the selection of the right training places is a very important step to get the maximum benefits and most of the private companies are willing to cooperate with academic institutions as long as their students have positive practical ideas. The graduates felt that some private universities and colleges tend to concentrate more on advertising and marketing their programmes when they send their students for

training rather than achieving the main purpose of training – which is to build students' skills. Many studies explain the need for providing practical training and interactive sessions with various companies. A study by Gunesakara (2004) pointed to the challenge of classroom learning that is moving away from a mere linear model of imparting knowledge to becoming more interactive and experimental (Laurillard, 2013).

One of the important pieces of feedback from the graduates was the issue of relationships between the private universities and colleges. Universities should develop their relationships with both the public and the private sectors by organising seminars, committees and conferences to share their ideas and experience, which would help universities and colleges to choose the proper programmes, develop their quality of education, and produce skilled and qualified students. This strategy will minimise the graduates' difficulties and problems, which they are facing at their places of work. There are issues between the HEIs and the public and private agencies, which affect the perception of both sides and communicate the wrong message to the students. For example, most of the lecturers at the universities and colleges are trying to link theories and real work at government agencies by telling students about management problems at these agencies without checking their resources. The graduates accept these perceptions and want to implement their theories and knowledge immediately after getting their jobs. Therefore, they face difficulties with their new managers who have the experience, but who may not have the same qualifications as the graduates.

The researcher agreed with the graduates' remarks; that there is a need to strengthen the relationship between the universities and colleges and both the public and the private sectors. The universities and colleges should advise their lecturers to confirm the data that they present to students and avoid criticising the public and private sectors for their management and operations. The studies mentioned below support these views. Both Altbach (2002), Wang and Berger,

(2010) concurred that a university's main responsibility is to provide the required knowledge and skills through different programmes to produce qualified and competent graduates particularly in the developing countries, in order to compete with those in the developed world (Wang and Berger, 2010). Newman (2004) cited some of these challenges as globalisation, market forces and technology. It is also important to notice the challenges and imperatives being faced by community-university engagement, and university-government engagement. This can be contextualised within empowering individuals in the Saxena framework. When the graduates are ready to face the challenges, they will have the capabilities they have developed at the institutions of learning to support them.

In general, the graduates manage their work in the public sector, but they would like to have jobs that match their areas of specialisation and for their employers/managers to appreciate their new ideas and proposals to develop their jobs. The views raised by the graduates are important and will be taken into consideration in building the university leadership framework guidelines and the conclusion. Watson (2003) stated that feedback from students might lead to improvement in HEIs and become part of the students' role in university management, and students need to be aware of the actions resulting from their expressed observations.

### 5.3 Quantitative Data Analysis

Three sets of questionnaires were distributed to members of faculty, students and administrators of the selected private higher education institutions. The presidents and the deans of the selected universities / colleges expressed their personal interest in the research topic and agreed to distribute the questionnaires. They preferred to distribute the questionnaires among their members of faculty, students and administrators to motivate their staff to support the research. They were very cooperative and requested copies of the research on completion of the

project. Table 20 illustrates the total responses received from members of faculty, students and administration staff

TABLE 20: RESPONSES FROM FACULTY, STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Staff	Total Responses
Members of faculty	116
Students	235
Administrators	106

#### 5.3.1 FACULTYS' RESPONSES

The survey questionnaires were distributed among the members of faculty of six private HEIs and 116 responded out of 125 distributed. Each form has 31 questions ranging from broad inquiry, to more specific ones. The collected data do not include the biographical data as the questions were addressed to lecturers regardless of their ages or gender.

The researcher analysed the data of all members of faculty first then analysed the answers of each one separately and the answers were coded and analysed through SPSS. Table 21 explains the questions addressed to members of faculty and the percentage of their responses. The data analysis below is descriptive and the table summarises the number of responses and their percentages. The table also calculates the percentage of the positive responses (Strongly agree and Agree) in order to highlight the level of agreement of participants on each of the items.

TABLE 21: FACULTYS' RESPONSES AND THE PERCENTAGES

No	Question	Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
1	The university/college has a clear vision	Agree	74	59.2	97%
		Strongly agree	47	37.6	
		Disagree	3	2.4	
		Strongly disagree	1	.8	
2	I participate in setting up the mission statement	Agree	56	46.3	77%
		Strongly agree	37	30.6	
		Disagree	17	14.0	
		Strongly disagree	11	9.1	
3	The university/college has a strategic plan	Agree	96	76.8	87%
		Strongly agree	13	10.4	
		Disagree	12	9.6	
		Strongly disagree	4	3.2	
4	The university/college has a short strategic plan	Agree	60	49.6	73%
		Strongly agree	28	23.1	
		Disagree	30	24.8	
		Strongly disagree		2.5	
5	Students' motivation is the management methods to encourage students to study hard	Agree	56	48.7	88%
		Strongly agree	45	39.1	
		Disagree	12	10.4	
		Strongly disagree	2	1.7	
6	Lecturers always explain course objectives and hand out the course syllabus at the beginning of each course	Agree	37	29.8	99%
		Strongly agree	86	69.4	
		Strongly disagree	1	.8	
		Agree	37	29.8	

No	Question	Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
7	As a lecturer, I accept my teaching load, besides doing administrative tasks	Agree	63	51.6	74%
		Strongly agree	27	22.1	
		Disagree	22	18.0	
		Strongly disagree	10	8.2	
8	The university's management encourages teamwork between the academic and the administrative staff to share their experiences	Agree	65	52.8	68%
		Strongly agree	19	15.4	
		Disagree	33	26.8	
		Strongly disagree	6	4.9	
9	The university is providing the necessary educational tools such as overhead projectors, laptops, and smart boards to facilitate our teaching	Agree	55	44.4	89%
		Strongly agree	55	44.4	
		Disagree	10	8.1	
		Strongly disagree	4	3.2	
10	The university provides necessary support and training to use these tools. The university provides staff training	Agree	70	56.5	74%
		Strongly agree	22	17.7	
		Disagree	28	22.6	
		Strongly disagree	3	2.4	
11	The university's management encourages the academic staff to develop their own curriculum Encourages lectures to design curricula	Agree	64	53.3	76%
		Strongly agree	27	22.5	
		Disagree	20	16.7	
		Strongly disagree	9	7.5	

No	Question	Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
12	Books and study materials are always available before starting the academic year	Agree	65	52.8	64%
		Strongly agree	14	11.4	
		Disagree	37	30.1	
		Strongly disagree	7	5.7	
13	Academic staff should be requested to undertake both teaching and research	Agree	73	60.8	91%
		Strongly agree	36	30.0	
		Disagree	8	6.7	
		Strongly disagree	3	2.5	
14	The quality of teaching is enhanced if academic staff are actively engaged in research	Agree	56	44.8	94%
		Strongly agree	62	49.6	
		Disagree	7	5.6	
		Agree	56	44.8	
15	The university is encouraging the academic staff to do research beside their teaching responsibilities	Agree	58	46.4	70%
		Strongly agree	30	24.0	
		Disagree	30	24.0	
		Strongly disagree	7	5.6	
16	The lecturers use only the curriculum without referring students to online and library resources	Agree	17	14.2	18%
		Strongly agree	5	4.2	
		Disagree	72	60.0	
		Strongly disagree	26	21.7	
17	The lecturers encourage students to use the library resources	Strongly agree	5	4.2	92%
		Disagree	72	60.0	
		Strongly disagree	26	21.7	
		Strongly disagree	3	2.5	

No	Question	Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
18	The library has updated resources which are useful books and study tools	Agree	67	56.3	66%
		Strongly agree	11	9.2	
		Disagree	29	24.4	
		Strongly disagree	12	10.1	
19	We teach our students different types of skills such as critical thinking, computer skills and negotiating skills	Agree	73	60.8	88%
		Strongly agree	33	27.5	
		Disagree	11	9.2	
		Strongly disagree	3	2.5	
20	The university's management motivates us through moral and professional expectations as rewards for our teaching efforts	Agree	60	52.2	58%
		Strongly agree	7	6.1	
		Disagree	30	26.1	
		Strongly disagree	18	15.7	
21	The university's management motivates us through financial incentives, bonuses as rewards for our teaching efforts	Agree	36	32.1	38%
		Strongly agree	7	6.3	
		Disagree	52	46.4	
		Strongly disagree	17	15.2	
22	The university's management encourages its members of faculty to build external relation with different sectors of the society	Agree	63	53.8	68%
		Strongly agree	17	14.5	
		Disagree	33	28.2	
		Strongly disagree	4	3.4	
23	The administrators of the university always provide their maximum support to facilitate our teaching responsibilities	Agree	69	56.1	80%
		Strongly agree	29	23.6	
		Disagree	19	15.4	
		Strongly disagree	6	4.9	

No	Question	Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
24	The lecturers handle and solve students' problems without referring to the university management	Agree	28	22.8	56%
		Strongly agree	41	33.3	
		Disagree	49	39.8	
		Strongly disagree	5	4.1	
25	Both the administrative and the academic staff share experiences to achieve the university's objectives	Agree	75	61.0	74%
		Strongly agree	16	13.0	
		Disagree	27	22.0	
		Strongly disagree	5	4.1	
26	There is no cooperation between the academic and the administrative staff at the university	Agree	21	17.2	20%
		Strongly agree	3	2.5	
		Disagree	71	58.2	
		Strongly disagree	27	22.1	
27	The management of this university is task-oriented and only looking to get the job done without motivating its employees	Agree	40	34.5	43%
		Strongly agree	10	8.6	
		Disagree	51	44.0	
		Strongly disagree	15	12.9	
28	The management of the university has been following the same strategy for a long time and no changes have been introduced to compete with other universities  University Strategy of No Change	Agree	16	13.6	16%
		Strongly agree	3	2.5	
		Disagree	76	64.4	
		Strongly disagree	23	19.5	
29	We as members of faculty prefer to be independent to run our departments	Agree	46	38.7	56%
		Strongly agree	21	17.6	
		Disagree	44	37.0	
		Strongly disagree	8	6.7	

No	Question	Response	Number of responses	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
30	We as members of faculty prefer to be independent to run our own budgets	Agree	60	49.6	73%
		Strongly agree	28	23.1	
		Disagree	30	24.8	
		Strongly disagree	3	2.5	
31	The university's management motivates the administrative staff more than the academic staff	Agree	18	16.2	26%
		Strongly agree	11	9.9	
		Disagree	75	67.6	
		Strongly disagree	7	6.3	

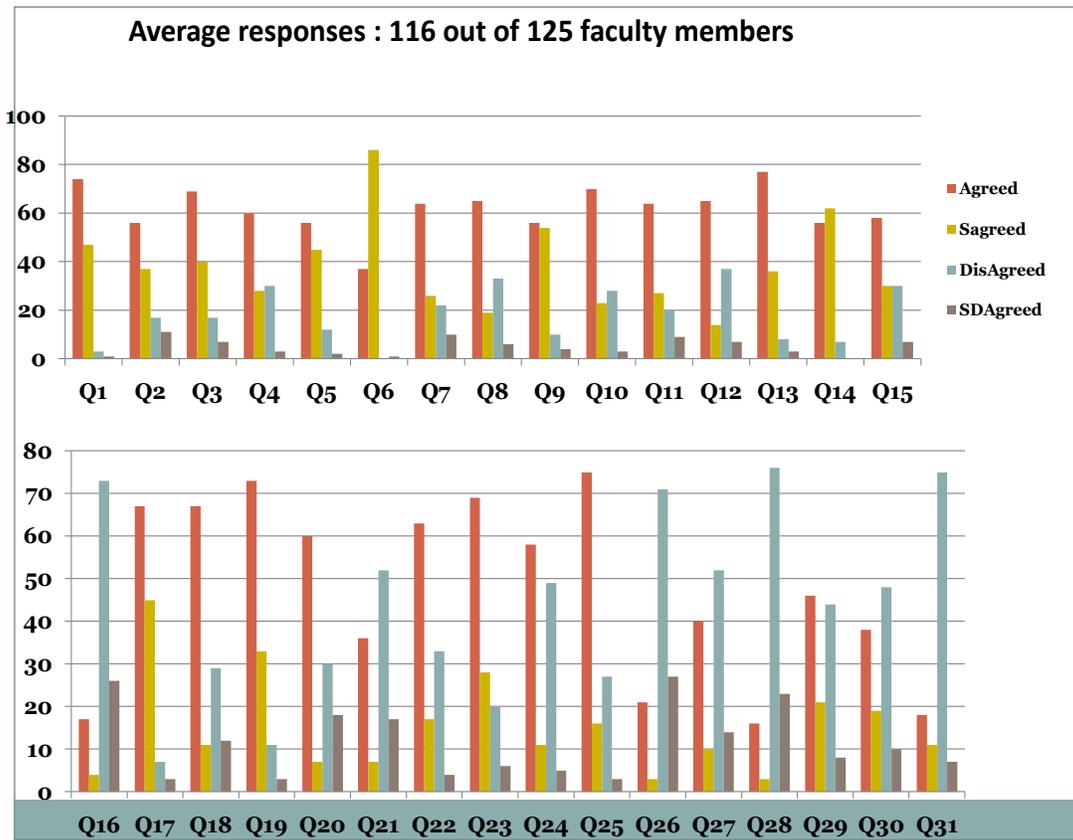


FIGURE 11: RESPONSE RATES FROM MEMBERS OF FACULTY

TABLE 22: RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE ADDRESSED TO FACULTY

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
University Vision	55.736	451.853	.867	.979
University Mission	55.396	439.099	.927	.979
University Long-term Strategic Plan	55.925	458.451	.622	.980
University Short -term Strategic Plan	55.396	437.137	.944	.979
Students' Motivation leads to Hard Work	55.481	444.214	.906	.979
Providing Course Syllabus	55.425	454.570	.736	.980
Teaching Load	55.434	437.791	.943	.979
University Encourages Team Work	55.396	435.784	.931	.979
Lecturers and Educational Facility	55.566	450.229	.871	.979
University Provides Staff Training	55.330	426.757	.415	.988
University Encourages Lecturers to Develop Curriculum	55.453	438.174	.942	.979
University Maintains Book on Time	55.349	434.267	.927	.979
University Requests Lecturer to Teach and do Research	55.764	452.563	.850	.980
Building Quality Teaching with Research	55.575	450.989	.867	.979
University Encourages Research and teaching	55.377	437.285	.945	.979
Lecturer Teaches Curriculum without External Resources	54.292	440.571	.749	.979

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Lecturer Encourages Students to use Library	55.321	431.287	.920	.979
University Updates Library Resources	55.679	448.087	.865	.978
Lecturer Teaches Different Skills	55.066	423.034	.948	.979
University Motivates Lecturer Professionally	54.651	428.667	.871	.979
University Motivates Lecturer Financially	55.340	434.531	.934	.979
University Encourages Lecturer to develop External Relations	55.566	442.400	.902	.979
Lecturer gets enough Support from Management	54.953	438.541	.905	.979
Lecturers Solve Students' Problems Without Management involvement	55.557	439.754	.880	.979
Administrators and Lecturers Share Experiences	54.358	438.651	.757	.979
Lecturers and Administrators do not have Positive Relationship	54.802	429.665	.880	.980
University Leaders are Task- oriented	54.264	442.730	.716	.979
No Change on University Strategy	55.085	433.850	.919	.979
Lecturers Manage their own Departments	54.877	431.575	.901	.980
Lecturer Depends on Management to Run their Departments	54.462	443.413	.720	

### Scale: All Variables

Case Processing Summary

	N	%
Cases Valid	116	92.8
Excluded	9	7.2
Total	125	100.0

Reliability Statistic

Cronbach's Alpha	No. Of Items
.980	31

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N. Of Items
57.085	469.736	21.6734	31

The reliability of the questionnaire is explained by Cronbach's Alpha =0.98 indicating high reliability.

### Data Analysis of Faculty Responses

The members of faculty disagreed that their private universities and colleges have followed the same old strategies, but their educational strategies have been modified to fit the new economic and social changes. Academics, particularly those working at the private universities, positively agreed that their universities and colleges have short- and long-term strategic planning. As stated above, the colleges tend more towards business planning than strategic planning from international standards. The details of the presidents' and deans' views have

already been explained earlier in the chapter. These views justify studies which state that the faculty needs full support from their institution such as time, reward, and recognition of their research achievements (Saxena, 2013).

Quality of teaching and research, quality of programmes, and student skills' development were the major issues of the questionnaires. They were covered through the survey and the members of faculties' responses were positively rated, as discussed below. They strongly agree on the importance of teaching students different types of skills, with a rate of 88%. These skills include critical thinking, computer skills and negotiating skills. This is a very positive indication to check skills abilities of students after getting feedback from the graduates and their managers in the workplace. The members of faculty held the view that the level of students' motivation was due to the management methods used to encourage them to study hard. This was also rated 88%, similar to faculty agreement to enhance students' skill development, and that was a direct indication of the lecturers' concerns to enhance students' performance.

There was an extremely positive response from the members of faculty on the importance of having a course syllabus, 99% of who 'strongly agreed', and this of course indicates quality teaching. The course syllabus explains the course objectives, outcomes and evaluation criteria. They believe that the quality of teaching is enhanced if they are actively engaged in research and strongly agree that they would undertake different types of research in addition to their teaching responsibilities if they were asked to do so by management. This confirms that the private universities and colleges focus their activities on teaching and learning because they are new and not yet research-oriented. Therefore, members of faculty were not asked to carry out research besides their teaching tasks; they feel that their institutions' management have directed their efforts towards teaching and learning and less towards research-related activities, and do not encourage their members of faculty to conduct research activities. The rated 91% is positive, to conduct research if they were asked to do so. Altbach (2007) stated that strategies that include the retention of educationalists, recruiting highly skilled and

talented faculty, focusing on research, providing more facilities to the students lead to creating and sustaining the learning environment (Altbach, 2007).

The members of faculty (lecturers) enhanced students' skills through supporting the curriculum with external resources. They disagreed with the idea of using only the curriculum without additional resources, and the survey showed 91% extremely positive response to encourage students to use the library resources; however, they stated that current resources and study materials available in their libraries are insufficient. The libraries must update their resources, advance electronic facilities and offer access to local and international libraries and electronic resources. Unfortunately only 65% of the participants agreed that their libraries have updated resources and study materials.

The members of faculty were not comfortable with the private universities' and colleges' management inefficiency when it came to ensuring the availability of textbooks before the start of the semester. This is one aspect of the physical environment in the Saxena framework. The responses of the staff point to dissatisfaction with the non-availability of the textbooks before classes begin, pointing to a deficiency in meeting the physical environment concerns.

The survey showed acceptable responses towards the availability of textbooks and study materials, which should be available before the start of the academic year. Only 64% rated as acceptable that the universities and colleges had the study materials and books on time. This suggests that the universities' and colleges' management need to plan earlier and to acquire students' books and materials on time. Failing to do so will result in an unacceptable situation, which will pose problems for both students and lecturers. Many colleges have committed to introducing the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority criteria for maintaining quality standards. Although most members of faculty are aware of the benefits of quality accreditations, the demand to pursue them poses challenges for their institution.

The members of faculty were against the interference of the universities' and colleges' management when it came to solving students' academic problems; they considered such interference unprofessional and that it created gaps between students and lecturers. They preferred to solve the students' problems themselves through direct communication with the students.

The lecturers seemed fine with their teaching load in general and rated 74% positive responses. They also 'agreed' to take on some administrative work, particularly when the management of the private universities and colleges provide the necessary educational tools such as overhead projectors, laptops, and smart boards to facilitate their teaching. The university management also provides positive training and IT support to the staff. This subsequently creates a working environment which the lecturers rated 76% positive that their institutions' management encourages the academic staff to develop their own curricula.

The management of the universities and colleges are not flexible when it comes to encouraging their members of faculty to build external relations with different sectors of society, and to exchange different ideas or to conduct seminars and research without formal and routine processes. The response rate was 68% acceptable to support the view that the university's management encourages its members of faculty to build external relations with different sectors of society; this rate is ranked at an acceptable level. The collaborative and extensive efforts among legislators, educationists and business community can make reforms work, particularly in the areas of children's education and health. Higher education institutions can play a vital role in this respect because they are regarded as the ideas-generating sources (Wang, 2014).

The staff policies, regulations and decision-making were the main concerns of the members of faculty and the administration staff. The survey showed that 87% disagreed that the management of their universities and colleges are considered to be more task-oriented and their main concern is to have the job done without motivating their employees.

The members of faculty seem somewhat disappointed with their universities' and colleges' staff policies and management systems; in particular the motivation aspect. From the survey exercise, there were acceptable responses; and 68% rated that the university's management motivates them through moral and professional expectations as rewards for their teaching efforts. The members of faculty responded negatively with 84% who 'disagreed' that their universities and colleges motivated them financially for their teaching efforts. This indicates that they might leave their universities or colleges, which will then affect the recruitment process. It appears that the universities and colleges do not have a policy to retain their positive lecturers. The members of faculty are aware that they are not getting any financial incentives, bonuses or rewards for their positive performance. They also did not feel that their management motivates the administrative staff more than the academic staff. Hence, the leadership of these institutions should change their motivation strategy to retain their positive employees. In addition, the members of faculty rated 56% acceptable with regard to running their departments independently, which they prefer to do; at the same time, their responses rated 91% extremely positive preferring to handle their departments' budget independently without referring back to the central management. This explains that the management of these institutions is not giving heads of departments enough authority and trust, but prefer centralised policies that in the end lead to dissatisfaction with their management and leadership.

Members of faculty had acceptable responses towards universities' and colleges' policies to encourage their employees to work as a team, particularly when this involves both academic and administrative staff. Only 68% of the members of faculty 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' that private universities' and colleges' management encourages teamwork activities. This indicates that there is a need to come up with a policy or strategy or to create a suitable working environment to motivate both sides to work together and share their responsibilities to develop the performance of their institution. It seems that there is a gap of communication between the presidents and deans of these institutions and the members of faculty. This is a highly critical issue and needs proper management strategies in

order to bring both sides of the institution to work together and cooperates to develop their institutions. Members of faculty and the administrative staff are willing to work together and share their experience if the universities and colleges create a positive working environment and put in place a positive institutional system.

The general situations of the members of faculty at both private universities and private colleges are acceptable for them to carry out their teaching responsibilities; however, they are still interested in having clearer staff regulations, motivation systems and full cooperation between members of faculty and academic staff.

Consequently, it was assessed that the key components that the graduates need to be equipped with are communication, information technology, numeracy literacy, problem solving, team working, and general knowledge of work. A sound integration of these components within the curricula structure, and an effective practical application in the class environment not only increases the employability factor but can also enable the graduates to acquire the skills deemed necessary by the leaders in the corporate sector (Ita and Briga, 2008).

### 5.3.2 STUDENTS' RESPONSES

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The second survey questionnaires were distributed randomly to students in their final years and from different specialisations at the three private selected universities and three private colleges; 235 students responded to the survey out of 280 students. The researcher analysed the responses to each question of all students instead of analysing the answers to each one. The responses were coded and analysed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as the following tables:

TABLE 23: STUDENTS' RESPONSES AND THE PERCENTAGES

No	Question/statement	Option	Total response	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
1	I knew about the university's programmes before applying.  Students' Awareness of University Programmes.	Agree	142	60.4	82%
		Strongly agree	50	21.3	
		Disagree	32	13.6	
		Strongly Disagree	11	4.7	
2	I knew about the university's fees before applying.	Agree	114	48.5	78%
		Strongly agree	70	29.8	
		Disagree	39	16.6	
		Strongly Disagree	12	5.1	
3	I applied to the university because I was aware of its reputation for high quality.	Agree	121	51.7	76%
		Strongly agree	57	24.4	
		Disagree	42	17.9	
		Strongly Disagree	14	6.0	
4	I applied to the university because I was aware of its positive faculty.	Agree	115	48.9	69%
		Strongly agree	46	19.6	
		Disagree	58	24.7	
		Strongly Disagree	16	6.8	
5	I applied to the university because I was aware of its positive staff.	Agree	94	40.0	53%
		Strongly agree	30	12.8	
		Disagree	72	30.6	
		Strongly Disagree	39	16.6	
6	The student orientation day helped me to know more about the university and its programmes.	Agree	95	40.6	63%
		Strongly agree	53	22.6	
		Disagree	57	24.4	
		Strongly Disagree	29	12.4	
7	I was given positive advice in choosing my courses and it was easy to choose my specialisation and to register on the right courses.	Agree	82	34.9	60%
		Strongly agree	60	25.5	
		Disagree	65	27.7	
		Strongly Disagree	28	11.9	

No	Question/statement	Option	Total response	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
8	The lecturers provide the syllabus at the beginning of each course introduction.	Agree	122	51.9	75%
		Strongly agree	54	23.0	
		Disagree	42	17.9	
		Strongly Disagree	17	7.2	
9	The lecturers provide the syllabus at the beginning of each course introduction. And explain objectives /outcome expectation at the end of the term.	Agree	46	43.0%	90%
		Strongly agree	21	19.6%	
		Disagree	9	8.4%	
		Strongly disagree	2	1.9%	
10	The lecturers have a positive relationship with the students and even help them outside their working hours.	Agree	120	51.3	74%
		Strongly agree	52	22.2	
		Disagree	41	17.5	
		Strongly Disagree	21	9.0	
11	The lecturers work hard to make our study enjoyable.	Agree	120	51.3	74%
		Strongly agree	52	22.2	
		Disagree	42	17.9	
		Strongly Disagree	20	8.5	
12	We receive helpful feedback on our performance after each assessment and the university maintains its quality of teaching.	Agree	104	44.4	69%
		Strongly agree	57	24.4	
		Disagree	56	23.9	
		Strongly Disagree	17	7.3	
13	The lecturers encourage us to work in teams and assign us to do group projects.	Agree	110	46.8	66%
		Strongly agree	44	18.7	
		Disagree	48	20.4	
		Strongly Disagree	33	14.0	
14	We learn different skills such as communication skills, critical thinking, and computer and negotiation skills, besides the required courses.	Agree	100	42.9	67%
		Strongly agree	55	23.6	
		Disagree	49	21.0	
		Strongly Disagree	29	12.4	

No	Question/statement	Option	Total response	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
15	My supervisors/group tutors always help to solve my problems and advise me to move forwards towards my education.	Agree	103	44.2	64%
		Strongly agree	47	20.2	
		Disagree	54	23.2	
		Strongly Disagree	29	12.4	
16	The registration department ensures that our records are up to date and that our information is available on time. University Job Fair Helps Students to Find Jobs	Agree	113	48.9	67%
		Strongly agree	42	18.2	
		Disagree	50	21.6	
		Strongly Disagree	26	11.3	
17	Students' services are very active and introduce a variety of activities such as sport competitions, scientific trips, and outdoor activities during the academic year.	Agree	107	44.8	55%
		Strongly agree	24	10.0	
		Disagree	77	32.2	
		Strongly Disagree	31	13.0	
18	The university is organising a job fair annually to encourage public and private organisations to recruit students.	Agree	114	48.5	64%
		Strongly agree	37	15.7	
		Disagree	60	25.5	
		Strongly Disagree	24	10.2	
19	The lecturers and the administrators are trying their best to help me to find a job.	Agree	111	47.2	68%
		Strongly agree	48	20.4	
		Disagree	56	23.8	
	Strongly Disagree	20	8.5		
	My lecturers teach mainly from textbooks.	Strongly agree	23	21.5%	
		Disagree	20	18.7%	
Strongly disagree		9	8.4%		

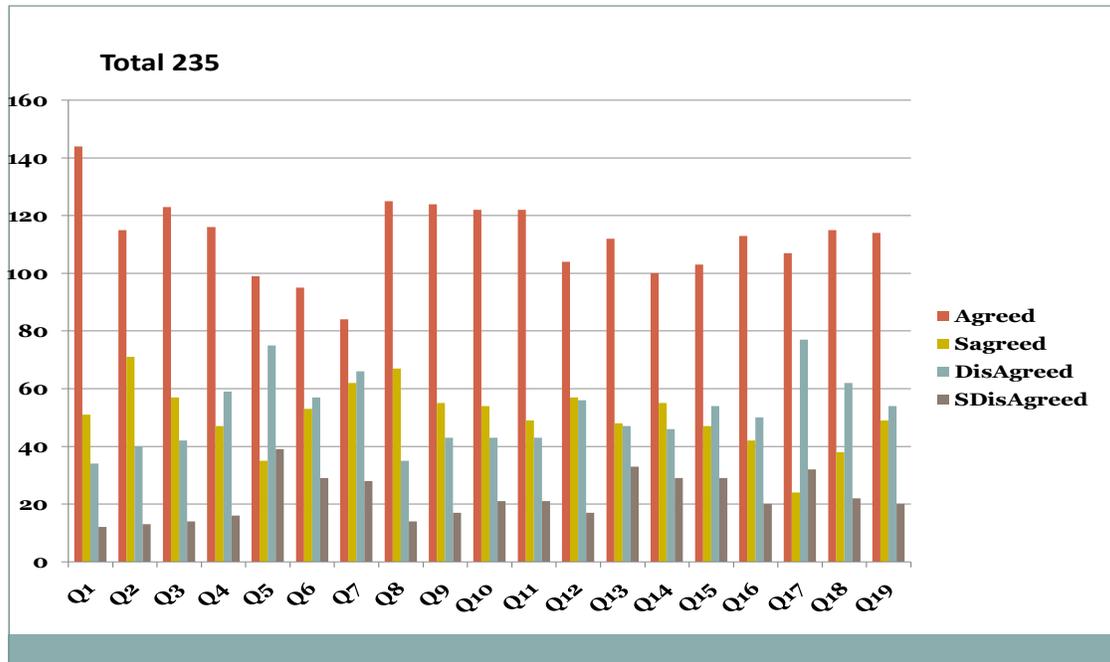


FIGURE 12: RESPONSE RATES FROM STUDENTS

TABLE 24: RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE ADDRESSED TO STUDENTS

	Mean	Scale Variance	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Students' Awareness University Fees	33.4036	272.881	.953	.995
Students' Awareness University Programmes	33.5695	275.120	.910	.995
Students' Awareness University Quality Programmes	33.4081	271.225	.954	.995
Students' Awareness Positive Faculty	33.2870	268.251	.968	.995
Students' Awareness University Positive Staff	32.9238	262.656	.947	.995

	Mean	Scale Variance	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Important University Students' Orientation Day	33.0762	265.134	.962	.995
Getting Students Academic Advice	33.0000	267.000	.934	.995
Getting Course Syllabus	33.4081	271.225	.954	.995
Lecturers Work Hard To Help Students	33.3812	269.805	.958	.995
Students and Quality Teaching	33.3318	267.799	.964	.995
Lecturers Encourage Student Teamwork	33.3363	268.071	.964	.995
Students Learn Different Skills	33.2287	268.420	.963	.995
Supervisor Solve Students' Problems	33.1570	263.448	.979	.995
Update Students' Academic Record	33.1256	264.840	.970	.995
Organising Job Fair	33.1166	264.149	.974	.995
University Job Fair Help Students Find Jobs	33.1883	263.964	.980	.995
Lecturers And Admin Staff Help Students Find Jobs	33.0673	263.982	.955	.995
Lecturers Use Text Book Only To Teach	33.2018	265.090	.975	.995
Lecturers Use Their Research To Teach	33.2422	267.103	.971	.995

### Scale: All Variable

Case Processing Summary

	N	%
Cases Valid	223	79.6
Excluded	57	20.4
Total	280	100.0

Reliability Statistic

Cronbach's Alpha	No. Of Items
.995	19

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	No. Of Items
35.0807	297.831	17.25779	19

The Cronbach s Alpha = 0.995 indicates that the questionnaire is highly reliable.

### Data Analysis of Students' Responses

The students' general knowledge of the higher education institutions and their programmes, quality of teaching, and reputation of their lecturers are very important for them to choose the right universities and colleges.

The general awareness of students at the three private universities and three private colleges rated 82%, which was very positive as an indicator of their

familiarity with the available programmes and fees at these institutions before applying. This is an important stage for the students as well as their parents when choosing the HEI. The students also rated 76%, which is positive in knowing the quality of the programmes of their universities and colleges before they enroll. They had heard about the institutions' reputations relating to the quality of the programmes, which is a positive indication of the success of the marketing plans of the private institutions. However, the students' perceptions have changed after joining these private institutions and their responses rated acceptable; only 69% with regard to their familiarity with the members of faculty and administrative staff at their institutions.

The universities' and colleges' orientation (or open) days help students to better understand the programmes, curricula, library and available facilities of institution concerned. The survey includes this inquiry to understand the benefits students gain on this day but, surprisingly, the responses did not seem encouraging; the percentage rate was acceptable and only 63% 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' that this day helped them to learn more about their universities and colleges.

The students responded positively – 75% – with regard to having the course syllabus at the beginning of each course. It seems that the students fully understand the course objectives and the outcome expectations at the end of the term. They also agreed that most lecturers work hard to create an encouraging classroom study environment to make students enjoy their studying. The lecturers made use of their own research to support the students' textbooks – this was supported by 74% of the students, which indicates that they received positive feedback of their performance after each assessment and expressed their happiness about the quality of teaching at their universities and colleges. The lecturers do engage students to work in teams and assign them to undertake group projects; however, the students rated this only 66% acceptable.

One of the most critical problems facing most of the students at the private higher education institutions in Oman is the academic advising system. The students' responses were 64% rated acceptable that students receive academic advice to

select their courses and to register in the right courses, which leads to some confusion when choosing their specialisations. The universities and colleges are weak in this area and do not have a proper academic advising system to guide their students to the right courses. The students rated advisors' efforts to help students solve their problems as acceptable. The academic advising system is an important and critical area within the academic institutions and the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges must restructure their strategies to develop such a system as is practiced at other successful institutions.

Another important area is the development of students' skills. The responses of the academic faculty showed their efforts to teach students different skills; however, the students rated acceptable to learning different skills, such as communication, computer and negotiation skills. The students who agreed and strongly agreed rated 67%, which is acceptable, but not up to the expectations of the students and the employers.

It is important for the registration departments at the universities and colleges to maintain and update students' records using an automated system. The institutions use a complete integrated system to run different academic and administrative activities. The results of the survey showed that the students had concerns about the registration departments of their universities and colleges. They faced difficulties in obtaining the required information on time and their responses rated as 67% satisfied; therefore, there is a need to improve students' services and automate students' data through a complete network system. The registration departments need to train their staff to bring their performance to an acceptable level as set by international standards.

To summarise, it appears from the responses that the presidents and deans of the selected private universities and colleges need to put more effort and time into evaluating the performance of different departments at their institutions to better deal with students' difficulties. There is a need for follow-up procedures to ensure there are a proper advisory system, student development strategies, and positive student services. There is a need to meet students' requirements through proper

communication channels among lecturers, management and registration. On the other hand, Lerner and Simon (2014) are of the view that community sectors, social and non-governmental organisations ought to be given opportunities to come up with innovative approaches through power sharing (Lerner and Simon, 2014).

### 5.3.3 ADMINISTRATORS` RESPONSES

Table 25 shows the question/enquiry, options, percentage, and total of the highest percentage and rank of the responses.

TABLE 25: ADMINISTRATORS` RESPONSES AND THE PERCENTAGES

No	Question/Inquiry	Option	Total response	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
1	The information available met my requirements in deciding to work at this university.	Agree	72	67.3%	89%
		Strongly agree	20	18.7%	
		Disagree	9	8.4%	
		Strongly disagree	3	2.8%	
2	I had an easy interview to join this university.	Agree	47	43.9%	65%
		Strongly agree	11	10.3%	
		Disagree	31	29.0%	
		Strongly disagree	6	5.6%	
3	I had an easy test and I passed and joined this university.	Agree	57	53.3%	95%
		Strongly agree	39	36.4%	
		Disagree	0	.0%	
		Strongly disagree	5	4.7%	
4	The personnel department explained to me the recruitment procedures.	Agree	57	53.3%	69%
		Strongly agree	16	15.0%	
		Disagree	28	26.2%	
		Strongly disagree	5	4.7%	

No	Question/Inquiry	Option	Total response	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
5	The personnel department updated me about my recruitment process.	Agree	52	48.6%	64%
		Strongly agree	16	15.0%	
		Disagree	27	25.2%	
		Strongly disagree	11	10.3%	
6	I have a clear job description and guidelines to assist me in doing my work.	Agree	39	36.4%	54%
		Strongly agree	17	15.9%	
		Disagree	29	27.1%	
		Strongly disagree	20	18.7%	
7	I was given a clear and detailed staff policy which helped me to familiarise myself with the staff regulations.	Agree	30	28.0%	39%
		Strongly agree	10	9.3%	
		Disagree	52	48.6%	
		Strongly Disagree	13	12.1%	
8	I was trained to do the job at this university.	Agree	46	43.0%	61%
		Strongly Agree	17	15.9%	
		Disagree	28	26.2%	
		Strongly Disagree	13	12.1%	
9	The employees in my department are supportive and helped me to do my work.	Agree	46	43.0%	90%
		Strongly Agree	21	19.6%	
		Disagree	9	8.4%	
		Strongly disagree	2	1.9%	
10	The personnel department keep me updated with regard to my skills development.	Agree	35	32.7%	54%
		Strongly agree	7	6.5%	
		Disagree	28	26.2%	
		Strongly disagree	21	19.6%	
11	The personnel department keep me updated with regard to my leave record.	Agree	47	43.9%	60%
		Strongly agree	16	15.0%	
		Disagree	31	29.0%	
		Strongly disagree	11	10.3%	

No	Question/Inquiry	Option	Total response	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
12	I have attended several courses to develop my skills and update my knowledge in my field. These courses have been helpful in my career development.	Agree	33	30.8%	48%
		Strongly agree	12	11.2%	
		Disagree	33	30.8%	
		Strongly disagree	22	20.6%	
13	My department is not encouraging me to develop my skills and never suggest or send me to training courses.	Agree	26	24.3%	43%
		Strongly agree	16	15.0%	
		Disagree	31	29.0%	
		Strongly disagree	29	27.1%	
14	Our finance department always releases our salary and leave allowances on time.	Agree	47	43.9%	83%
		Strongly agree	40	37.4%	
		Disagree	9	8.4%	
		Strongly disagree	9	8.4%	
15	The public relations department keeps us informed about new activities at the university.	Agree	47	43.9%	72%
		Strongly agree	26	24.3%	
		Disagree	21	19.6%	
		Strongly disagree	9	8.4%	
16	The public relations department at the university performs as a focal point between the university and the society	Agree	60	56.1%	74%
		Strongly agree	5	4.7%	
		Disagree	19	17.8%	
		Strongly disagree	9	8.4%	
17	We always have new office equipment such as computers, scanners, faxes, and printers, and updated systems to help us perform our work efficiency	Agree	48	44.9%	87%
		Strongly agree	39	36.4%	
		Disagree	10	9.3%	
		Strongly disagree	4	3.7%	
18	The university has a positive IT technician to help us fix our PCs and maintain our computing systems.	Agree	47	43.9%	84%
		Strongly agree	43	40.2%	
		Disagree	7	6.5%	
		Strongly disagree	3	2.8%	

No	Question/Inquiry	Option	Total response	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
19	The university has a clear mission and objectives.	Agree	51	47.7%	84%
		Strongly agree	31	29.0%	
		Disagree	14	13.1%	
		Strongly disagree	3	2.8%	
20	I participate in the initial stages to develop the university's mission and objectives.	Agree	48	44.9%	87%
		Strongly agree	39	36.4%	
		Disagree	10	9.3%	
		Strongly disagree	4	3.7%	
21	The university's management creates a healthy working environment and we all work in teams to achieve our objectives.	Agree	52	48.6%	74%
		Strongly agree	24	22.4%	
		Disagree	15	14.0%	
		Strongly disagree	13	12.1%	
22	We participate in different management committees to share our ideas and experiences.	Agree	52	48.6%	71%
		Strongly agree	15	14.0%	
		Disagree	24	22.4%	
		Strongly disagree	7	6.5%	
23	We work as a family and share information and decisions in flexible and respective manners.	Agree	53	49.5%	80%
		Strongly agree	24	22.4%	
		Disagree	12	11.2%	
		Strongly disagree	9	8.4%	
24	The university's management encourages new innovative ideas.	Agree	52	48.6%	76%
		Strongly agree	23	21.5%	
		Disagree	20	18.7%	
		Strongly disagree	6	5.6%	

No	Question/Inquiry	Option	Total response	Percentage	Percentage of SA & A
25	The university's management respects staff opinions.	Agree	49	45.8%	76%
		Strongly agree	26	24.3%	
		Disagree	22	20.6%	
		Strongly disagree	4	3.7%	
26	Staff skills development is one of the main priorities to develop human resources at the university.	Agree	31	29.0%	56%
		Strongly agree	13	12.1%	
		Disagree	37	34.6%	
		Strongly disagree	10	9.3%	
27	The university's management is fair to all employees in term of motivation and promotion.	Agree	29	27.1%	43%
		Strongly agree	10	9.3%	
		Disagree	32	29.9%	
		Strongly disagree	28	26.2%	
28	The university's management organises social activities for the staff and their families during the academic year.	Agree	45	42.1%	61%
		Strongly agree	16	15.0%	
		Disagree	31	29.0%	
		Strongly disagree	10	9.3%	
29	Our managers are task-oriented and are only concerned about doing and finishing the work without considering the human factors. Task-oriented	Agree	23	21.5%	40%
		Strongly agree	17	15.9%	
		Disagree	44	41.1%	
		Strongly disagree	19	17.8%	
30	Our managers are balanced between finishing the job and considering the human side. Task-relation oriented	Agree	55	51.4%	73%
		Strongly agree	22	20.6%	
		Disagree	22	20.6%	
		Strongly disagree	7	6.5%	
31	The university has a healthy environment	Agree	49	45.8%	73%
		Strongly agree	23	21.5%	
		Disagree	20	18.7%	
		Strongly disagree	9	8.4%	

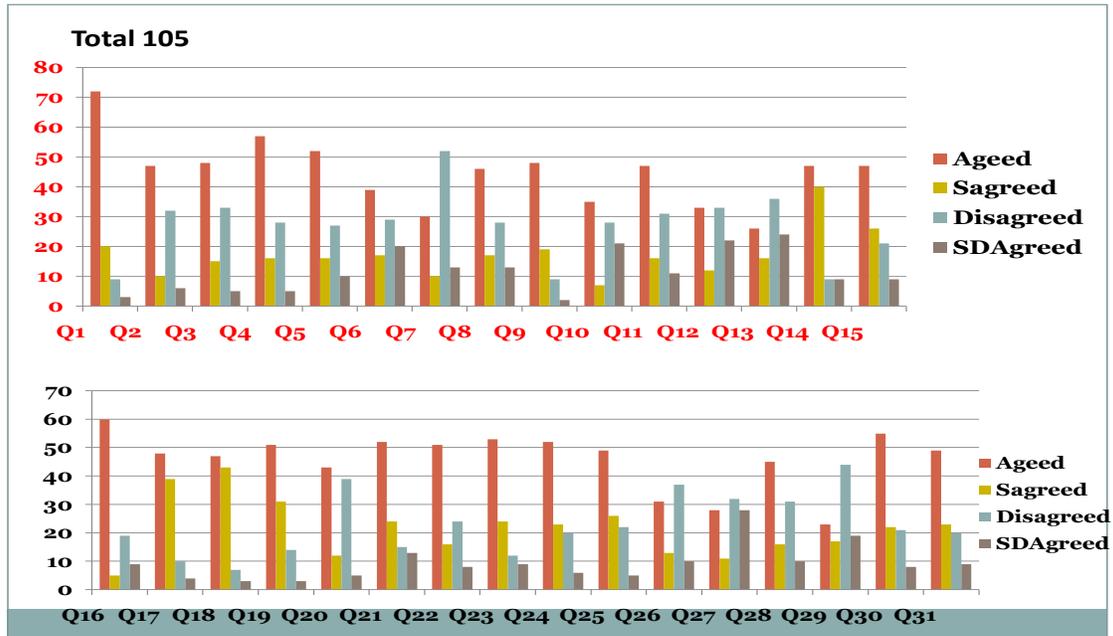


FIGURE 13: RESPONSE RATES FROM ADMINISTRATORS

TABLE 26: RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE ADDRESSED TO ADMINISTRATORS

	Mean	Scale Variance	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Staff Job Awareness	56.54	600.022	.577	.974
Has Easy Interview Test	56.21	585.099	.656	.974
Has Easy Writing Test	56.50	595.262	.700	.974
Personnel Explain Recruitment Procedures	56.14	590.313	.665	.974
Personnel Update New Recruiters	55.99	584.124	.722	.974
University Has Staff Job	55.70	573.013	.866	.973

	Mean	Scale Variance	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Description				
University Gives Staff Policy To Staff	55.53	582.461	.771	.973
New Staff Trained To Do Job	55.92	574.413	.875	.973
Old Employees Help New	56.80	622.846	-.015	.977
Personnel Department Update Skill Development Report	55.92	589.659	.461	.976
Personnel Department Update Leave Record	55.92	578.528	.823	.973
Staff Attend Skill Development Courses	55.66	568.341	.880	.973
Staff Never Attend Skill Development Courses	55.44	568.116	.906	.973
Staff and Performance Finance Department	56.17	590.923	.689	.974
Staff and Performance Public Department	56.09	578.067	.875	.973
Public Relations Department Links University With Society	56.42	589.847	.559	.975
Staff Have New Office Equipment	56.34	586.912	.842	.973
University Provides IT Support	56.40	590.565	.801	.973
University Has Clear Vision And Objectives	56.39	586.811	.808	.973
Staff Participate Setting Vision And Mission	56.34	586.912	.842	.973
University Encourages Team Work	56.10	578.970	.817	.973

	Mean	Scale Variance	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Staff Participate At Management Committee	56.25	579.330	.801	.973
Staff Work Professionally As One Family	56.33	582.147	.775	.973
University Encourages New Ideas	56.25	578.777	.888	.973
University Respects Staff Opinions	56.24	580.030	.899	.973
HR Main Job Staff Skills Development	56.00	595.943	.413	.976
University Fair Promotion	55.54	570.537	.808	.973
Motivation To Employees	55.98	572.647	.916	.973
University Organises Social Activities For Staff Family	55.46	576.784	.848	.973
University Managers Task-oriented	56.16	575.279	.906	.973

**Scale: All Variables**

Case Processing Summary

	N	%
Cases Valid	106	99.1
Excluded	1	.9
Total	107	100.

Reliability Statistic

Cronbach's Alpha	No. Of Items
.974	31

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
57.96	623.046	24.961	31

The questionnaire indicates high reliability with Cronbach Alpha = 0.97.

**Data Analysis of administrators' responses**

The questionnaires were categorised to cover the administrative staffs' awareness of the private institutions, staffs' perceptions of the visions of the institutions, the role of the administrative departments, and the public relations and social activities at the institutions.

The administrators' responses were very positive and rated 89% with regard to the data available about universities and colleges to enable the applicants to decide to work at these HEIs; thus, the administrators are aware of their

workplaces before they apply. This indicated that the universities' and colleges' management provide the necessary information about job vacancies and the working environment of their institutions. The new employees who joined the private HEIs rated 95% out of the total number who responded positively that they went through an easy test, but difficult interviews.

The administrative staff negatively rated the role of the personnel departments of the private universities and colleges in terms of explaining the recruitment procedures in full at the time of recruitment, or updating them about their recruitment process. This situation has led to unclear recruitment strategies within these institutions.

The private universities and colleges do not have clear staff policies as confirmed by the survey, and the rate was very negative with a score of 38% of the responses as to whether they receive staff policies from their institutions. This is extremely difficult to accept and the staff policies must be clear as part of the guidelines of these institutions. In addition, the administrators do not have clear job descriptions; as a result, their responses rated 53% acceptable. The administrators disagreed that they had clear job descriptions and guidelines to assist them in doing their jobs. They were not aware of any new staff policies and regulations as their management do not disclose such policies.

The new employees of the private HEIs were not familiar with their new jobs and did not have clear job descriptions, as mentioned earlier. The survey showed only 61% acceptable response to having in-house training and had to seek assistance from other employees who were willing to offer moderate help until the new employees had settled in at work. The managements of these institutions should restructure their strategies to train new employees until they adjust to their duties.

The administrative employees did not seem to show a positive attitude about the performance of the personnel and human resource departments at their HEIs. The result of the survey in this regard rated negatively with 48% responses that

they attended skill development courses and similar negative rating with 43% for attending training.

The administrators did not respond positively about their training and development at their institutions. The low percentage shows acceptable responses from the administrators who learned to do the required tasks by themselves; or were taught by other employees of the same department. Staff orientation and providing short training for new employees were ignored at these private universities and colleges, and the role of the personnel departments or human resources departments was not as effective as it should be. For instance, they did not have proper plans in place to train their employees to upgrade their skills, or keep records of their skills development. The administrators felt that the management of their universities and colleges was not considering staff development as one of their priorities to develop their skills. This explains the real need to improve the staff policies and the role of human resource departments at these institutions. Human resource departments were not able to develop proper plans to train their employees to enhance their performance. The members of the management of private universities and colleges have to develop the skills of their employees to achieve better performance and to compete with other institutions.

The administrators responded positively in terms of getting their salary and leave allowances on time due to the performance of their finance departments. They appreciated the new office equipment such as computers, scanners, faxes and printers, and updated systems. These are available at the selected private universities and colleges. These universities and colleges have skilled IT technicians to help the staff fix their PCs and maintain the computer system.

The responses were positive with regard to universities and colleges' working environments; it seems that the staff are encouraged by the management to share information and participate in the decision-making process. The administrators also agreed that their universities' and colleges' management encourage new innovative ideas and respect staff opinions. This is a positive indication of the management at these private institutions. Finally, the

administrators felt that the management of their universities and colleges were providing new facilities, offices, and office equipment to help employees perform their duties; however, they were still looking for a development of their motivation policies at their institutions. The findings indicate the views shared by members of faculty, students and administrators. So to create an enabling environment, it is very important to examine the views expressed by them. The conclusion is that the communication between the management and the three groups – viz., members of faculty, students and administrators – should be increased. Within the Saxena framework, creating a similar environment will strengthen the relationship among employees and all are thought to be motivated to collaborate in the drive to achieve the vision of their institutions; thereby presenting a unified force to achieve the institutional aims.

#### 5.4 Summary

According to the presidents' and deans' interviews, the aim is to provide quality programmes of international standards with less cost and to attract more students towards education. Emphasis should be on skilled graduates that employers need in today's market. The graduates should be trained with leadership skills and should display ethical behaviours. The colleges should concentrate on improving the English level of the students that in turn will help them to develop their communication skills. It is very important that the universities and colleges have a vision and mission so that the staffs are clear in what they are strategically supposed to achieve within a particular time frame, and most of the participants are well aware of their vision and mission.

The researcher agrees with the deans' and president's opinions regarding the situation and the structure of the committees at their colleges, but considered it better if the deans were given more authority to form small groups to deal with the different activities within their colleges. Both members of faculty and administrative staff may need to be more coherent and work together to develop

the performance of their colleges. Thus it is very important to empower individuals to deliver results where faculty and the administrative staff and students have authority to carry out their tasks and build their loyalty.

The findings indicate that it is very important to develop different types of skills among the students in the areas of critical thinking, computer skills and negotiating skills. It is also important to have graduate feedback about the skills. The graduates explained that there was a wide difference between their practical work and what they study in the private universities and colleges; they stated that, in basic terms, only 10% of the skills and knowledge they learned is used at their work. The course materials, according to them, did not match work requirements, and the students preferred to have practical and training sessions besides the literature they read. This would mitigate failure in their performance at work in the initial years. Further it is very important to embed the practical skills during their studies, and the courses should be designed based on the needs of labour market.

Research activity has also received relatively little attention in these institutions. Most of these institutions are teaching-oriented rather than combining the two dimensions, research and teaching. More theoretical aspirations were noticed during interviews. It is acknowledged that building a research environment is not an easy task, since it needs funding, qualified researchers and academics, and is time-consuming. Most interviewees declared that adequate research funding by government and private companies would undoubtedly enhance the research activity in these institutions. Findings, however, showed that there was a lack of efforts by private institutions to build stronger links with private enterprises in this domain.

Concerning other challenges and issues affecting these institutions, it was shown that quality and funding, in addition to issues addressed throughout this research, can be considered as key challenges facing private higher education. From the quality aspect, there is an ongoing question about the ability of these institutions

to provide higher education of adequate quality particularly if these institutions operate on a profit-making basis. Various criteria for ensuring quality were discussed in this study as well as obtained from the interview participants. However, in-depth investigation into the efforts of these institutions to show relatively adequate quality revealed that there were several factors that hindered quality improvement, such as lack of awareness of the investors and teaching staff of the theme of quality assurance, inadequate mechanisms for assuring such an approach, the financial rather than academic motivation of some investors, and so forth.

The findings on key sources of funding in these institutions revealed that most private institutions relied heavily on tuition fees in the first place, followed by scholarships and grants offered by the government. It also appeared that most institutions attempted to adopt the easier route to gaining returns; the abovementioned sources. This is really a critical challenge that would ultimately destabilise many of these institutions in the long term. Early preparation to diversify funding resources enables a given institution to compete and survive.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSIONS**

In this chapter I bring the findings from the earlier chapter together and discuss them. The discussion provides opportunity to develop ideas and insights and reflect them against those referred to in the literature. The findings have shaped the results into five themes. The discussion below is structured accordingly. These themes are vision and structures, graduate skills, research and external relationship, leadership and management, and social activities.

#### **6.1 Vision and Structure**

The finding in the present study indicated that, currently, private HEIs have similar visions developed with the participation of their staff. There is an emphasis on providing quality HE and special programmes, producing qualified skilled graduates, and offering affordable fees to attract more students. This can be regarded as strength of these institutions. As explained in the previous chapter, leaders' visions are inspiring for the staff of all those who are working under them (Shahid and Azhar, 2013). However, the institutional vision is still not covering other important areas such as research and development, expanding external relationships, and serving their communities.

The private institutions, particularly the universities, have a clear structure in place, and the presidents have financial power and the full support of their board. The colleges however still face difficulties with their boards, and the deans are

impeded by limited financial authority and flexibility to perform effectively in their colleges. The universities have their own plans and cooperate with their affiliated international partners, whereas the private colleges' plans are not developed professionally and many experience interference from their board members even in their daily operational activities. Such a practice is not helping the colleges' management to run their activities smoothly. This issue is not unique to the private colleges in Oman; it is also present in other colleges around the world. For example, Nash and Jones (2015) discussed the need for the creation of a community of research practitioners to help improve further education and training in Great Britain without the interference of politicians in college education operations (Nash and Jones, 2015). Also, in his second component to having an enabling environment at institutions, Saxena (2013) emphasised in the importance of empowering the heads of institutions, faculty and the administration in order to deliver results.

## 6.2 Graduates' Skills

The responses from the employers and the graduates revealed the same shared concerns with the general performance and the skills of the graduates. The presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges agreed with the concerns raised by the employers about the calibre of graduates. The graduate levels of knowledge and skills are still weak and the management of the private institutions is working to improve the quality of their graduates. The responses of the academic faculty showed their efforts to teach students different skills; but the students rated learning different skills negatively. Such improvement will happen only if the leadership of the private institutions works on their relationship with the public and private sectors to continuously discuss ways to improve the curricula and the need to conduct joint research for mutual benefit of both sides. Both human resource managers and the graduates support the initiatives to build such relationships to exchange ideas on how to improve HE services. They are looking forward to seeing complete facilities and students' services like modern

libraries and efficient Internet services. They also would like to see the graduates mastering different skills and the appropriate behaviours, which are needed for them to work effectively in the public and the private sectors. It is worth mentioning here that the advising policy will also help faculty and students to strengthen teamwork among the staff, and to encourage members of faculty to closely monitor student performance.

Higher education institutions have faced social and economic pressures due to many reasons such as the demand to increase access, apply new technology, knowledge development, changes in the global world economy, and financial difficulties. Therefore, the HEIs need to re-evaluate the skills and knowledge of their graduates to ensure the relevance of academic programmes to the labour market needs.

The same concern over the graduates' skills is important to the government in Oman; and the government has plans to collect information about the quality of the programmes of the private universities' and colleges' educational services to help the institutions and the Ministry of Higher Education to review their policies and strategies on higher education. To acquire such important data, the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman and the International Centre for Higher Education Research at the University of Kassel (INCHER-Kassel) conducted a graduate survey in 2008 and another one in 2015 to obtain reliable data on graduate employment, knowledge, skills and competencies required by the labour market. The survey in 2015 invited 2009/2010 and 2012/2013 graduates who studied in local HEIs and graduates of international universities, and invited graduates from all levels of qualifications (i.e. Diplomas, Bachelors, Masters, PhD).

The outcome of this survey is expected to help HEIs improve academic programmes, employability of their graduates, competencies required in the labour market and overall understanding of the transition period between study and work.

There are many initiatives taken by the Ministry of Higher Education in this

regard that are related to the findings reported above. In the context of creating an enabling environment there have been forays into development of a focused curriculum. This is aimed at improving students' achievement by focusing on specific student needs. Private colleges are classified into different areas for focused delivery of education like management, science, engineering and medical colleges. This has helped the development of strategies specific to the area of study, and has supported the colleges to pay attention to education in specific fields, thereby utilising resources in a more effective way.

Another allied initiative is student engagement that has come to the fore before. This is related to empowerment within the framework of Saxena in creating an enabling environment in higher education. Students' engagement may help them achieve better. Fostering an environment that encourages students to support one another may help improve overall student achievement.

Another aspect that the Ministry has taken the initiative in is on recruiting quality teachers. The Ministry of Manpower is also involved in this process. The importance of this was discussed above. The Saxena framework component on creating a learning culture is related to this. Motivated teachers transfer the passion to learn to the students. This can encourage better student participation in the learning process and, consequently, higher levels of performance. Recruiting teachers who show passion for the subject they teach may help encourage student achievement. The culture that the teacher creates in the classroom may directly result in student achievement.

To conclude the discussion above, it is worth noting that the presidents and the deans of the private universities and colleges are committed to providing a high-quality education and to meeting the government's requirements. It is also important to analyse whether an enabling environment based on the quality models is effective in the employment of the skilled graduates, or whether these graduates still lack key components deemed essential for employability in organisations. The concept of employability not only focuses on providing

opportunities to trained graduates but also puts pressure on government and private sectors to create economic opportunities for deserving and well-trained employees (Sarkar et al., 2016).

### 6.3 Research and External Relations

The current status of scientific research activities in most higher education institutions in Oman is minimal with the exception of Sultan Qaboos University. The reasons behind the problems of research activities in the private higher education institutions in particular as analysed in this study can be related to some elements such as the government policy, the management strategies at the private institutions, teaching load, and funding (Budhwar et al., 2002).

Regarding the government policy aspect, the Ministry of Higher Education only approves franchise programmes and has encouraged the private institutions to collaborate with international universities to ensure the quality of programmes. However, as confirmed by the presidents and deans, the private universities with the exception of the private colleges have started to introduce their own programmes or curricula, which were developed to meet the market needs. The private institutions in general have the facilities such as buildings, students' services and teaching faculties, but the curriculum is still offered by their international partners. In connection to the above, the private universities and colleges focus more on teaching and learning than they do on research-related activities, and do not encourage their members of faculty to conduct research activities. The deans of the private colleges stated that their institutions require more time to develop a research environment/culture. This hinders research activities, since most of the time will be assigned for teaching rather than research. However, the members of faculty – as explained in the previous chapter – are ready to conduct research. The deans admit that their institutions need more time to develop a research environment/culture, and currently they focus more on teaching and learning. Teachers' workload is another aspect

hindering lecturers from conducting research due to the shortage of lecturers if measured against student ratio in most private institutions. This indicates that the number of qualified lecturers does not meet students' numbers, which obstructs research activities, since most time will be allocated for teaching rather than research. At the same time, the management of the private universities and colleges encourage their members of faculty to build external relationships prior to obtaining written permission from the management of these institutions.

There is a need for a clear policy set by these institutions to allow their faculty to build external relationships and to contract directly with different sectors to conduct research and to generate income for their institutions. The private higher education institutions should exert more efforts to encourage private sector companies to improve their products through research projects directed by these institutions. Government also should increase its financial support on scientific research and monitor certain standards of facilities and resources to improve the research at these institutions. To achieve such objectives, private companies are expected to contribute actively in supporting research activities at the private higher education institutions which will result in improving the products and services offered by these firms and universities; colleges will become research- and teaching-oriented, and finally both will contribute in providing quality services to society as part of their social responsibilities. The future strategies of the private universities and colleges match with the third component to create an enabling environment according to Saxena (2013), which is building relationships with industry and the public government sector. Wang and Berger (2010) emphasised that such mutual relationships contribute to the development of educational research, publication and employability.

## 6.4 Leadership and Management

The selected private universities have well-qualified presidents and deans to the level required currently and accepted by the Ministry of Higher Education and the boards of these institutions; whereas the analysis of the collected data linked with the higher education literature strongly indicates the need to restructure and develop the level of performance of the leaders. For example, as leaders, the deans of the selected private colleges have the right qualifications; yet their boards have limited their financial authority, which has an immediate impact on their management of their colleges. Therefore, there is a pressing need to restructure the role of the boards and the roles of the deans. The human resource managers are keen to see qualified Omanis lead HEIs, as they will give more attention to the students. They also would like to emphasise the need to evaluate the monitoring strategies of the Ministry of Higher Education to assure quality of education and skills development of students. As a result, the contribution of the presidents and deans of the selected institutions demands careful consideration and further research in the future.

It is seen that a considerable amount of literature shows that the transformational leaders can generate some amazing results by structuring a vision of the future organisation, by providing a model compatible with the vision, and by providing individualistic support (Tucker and Russell, 2004).

Although the presidents and deans of the private higher education institutions in Oman have the qualifications and educational experiences, they are effectively still working as managers following all academic and administrative activities to respond to the requirements of their boards and those of the government. They are not yet performing as transformational leaders and only run their institutions as education providers without having independent strategies. Academic and

administrative members of staff expect better performance of their presidents/deans and their staff policies.

This research has underlined the common understanding that university presidents and deans can contribute to a great extent in creating an enabling environment. It has been observed that the private institutions where deans are taking initiatives to create enabling environment have been transformed into leading institutions. These posts have great potential to motivate people, integrate them, and utilise them effectively. The presidents and deans at private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman are trying to create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders at their institutions; but if such efforts are to be successful, they need amendments to higher education government policy and cooperation of the owners of the institutions.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter is the final one in the thesis. It provides a summary of the research and the findings; and it concludes the thesis with major remarks and insights. It also highlights the thesis' contribution to knowledge in the area of the enabling environment and the role of leadership. Based on the research results the chapter provides some recommendations; these are aimed at different levels, e.g., research and practice. The chapter ends by stating some limitations to the study and highlighting some future research directions.

#### **7.2 Research Summary**

The study investigated to what extent presidents and deans of the selected private universities and colleges in Oman create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders. The major challenges hindering this sector were addressed.

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken on several systems of higher education institutions in many countries to generate an understanding of the type of academic environment existing in these institutions. The literature is incorporated around the focal topic of an "enabling environment" with attention centred on Saxena's (2013) four components for creating an enabling environment at higher education institutions.

To acquire the information for this study, a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire were developed as data collection tools to investigate the role of presidents and deans in creating an enabling environment and the challenges faced by private higher education in Oman. The outcomes from this research have been highlighted and examined in the relevant sections of the former chapter. This chapter is intended to provide a general overview of what has been discussed in this research with cross-reference to Saxena's framework that underpinned this study. This is followed by a summary of the main findings from the interviews along with the analysis of survey data. The findings led to the developing of the leadership framework, highlighted some recommendations for creating an enabling environment at private higher education institutions in Oman, and proposed some topics for future research. The chapter ends by underlining the limitations of this research.

The Sultanate of Oman has invested heavily in its general education and has managed to make basic education obtainable to all Omanis during the last four decades. This has resulted in growing numbers of graduate students from secondary schools, which has led to higher demand for higher education that cannot be met by the current higher education institutions in the country. To meet the growing demand for higher education, the Omani private sector was allowed to establish private universities and colleges.

As mentioned previously in Chapter two, many factors have led to the development of private higher education in many countries such as the inability of public universities and colleges to meet these demands and the difficulties the governments face to finance public higher education institutions.

In the case of Oman, the public institutions are the first choice for students with best results in their higher national diploma to enrol in public higher education, whereas students with lower results will either seek education in the private sector, or enter the labour market as unskilled workers. The satisfaction of the four components of the Saxena framework comes up in all these aspects.

The roles of the presidents and deans of the private colleges and universities and their ability to create enabling environments become essential to the provision of appropriate programmes, and recruiting qualified lecturers and administrators. An enabling academic environment is required to help the private universities and colleges to produce graduates with sufficient skills to satisfy the private sector. The majority of the workforce in the private sector comprises non-Omani skilled employees, who dominate in technical and managerial positions with higher wages.

The challenges faced by private higher education were considered in Chapter two. Management and governance of private higher education is one of the main challenges of the private higher education institutions in Oman. The presidents and deans need to focus more on providing quality programmes to meet students' and parents' expectations and to assure implementation of the government's policies. To meet these challenges, there is a need to review higher education policies and strategies, and this requires further support from the government.

This study focused on management and governance of private higher education mainly looking at the role of the presidents and deans of some private universities and colleges and their ability to create an enabling environment at their institutions.

### 7.3 Answering the Research Question

Research Question: *To what extent do presidents and deans create an enabling environment and act as transformational leaders at private higher education institutions in Oman?*

The question above investigates the level of effort that presidents and deans of private higher education institutions exert to create enabling environments. The findings of this study highlight a gap in standards of leadership practice for these

high-ranking administrative people. The identified gap highlights the need for some international-level standards of leadership practices, and the findings highlight that such international standards have a major impact on empowering these people to be able to create an empowering environment for others within their institutions. The results showed some people within these higher education institutions to have more authority and power – e.g., a member of the board with strong financial influence.

Another issue to relate to the level of leadership empowerment and enabling is the relationship with industry. A huge gap is found in this as most of the private higher education institutions in Oman have affiliated programmes from foreign universities and educational agencies; this creates limited authority to introduce any change. There is a mismatch between the programmes offered and the labour market needs and demands. This has required providing further training for graduates. Universities' deans and presidents are aware of this; yet they believe they do not have enough authority to change curricula or study plans.

Private universities' deans and presidents are even more limited and restrained in their ability to create motivating work environments. The results highlight a high level of job dissatisfaction on the part of the members of staff. The university's boards have a much higher hand in making decisions, e.g., teaching loads and benefits. The boards' members are basically business people and normally profit-oriented.

#### 7.4 Research Contribution

There has been very little research on higher education in the Sultanate of Oman; even less research has used a theoretical concept such as transformational leadership. This research addresses this gap by contributing new knowledge on higher education relevant to Oman in particular and to the Arab world in general, which would contribute to the development of higher education studies in the Gulf region.

The results of this research increase the knowledge about the role of the academic and the administrative employees as part of the managerial system in higher education, particularly in relation to academic leadership. The potential academic leaders (presidents and deans) will become more aware of the complexities involved in managing and leading higher education institutions and be better able to create an effective enabling environment.

Apart from the contribution to knowledge states above, the study makes a substantial contribution to practice. This is because the results from this study will provide a relevant base of knowledge to develop leadership practices. The results from the study are also helpful in a practical manner for policy makers. The section below provides a list of relevant recommendations. Finally, and as this study is the first of its kind in the Omani context, it paves the way ahead for future studies and research in this area.

## 7.5 Research Recommendations

In light of the research findings about creating an enabling environment in the private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, the research presents a leadership framework and recommendations for the development of the private higher education institutions sector in the country to meet individuals' and society's needs. These recommendations may be transferable to Arab Gulf countries that have a similar political, social and economic situation. The research recommendations suggest a framework for leadership. This is explained and discussed below.

### *Leadership Framework for Higher Education Institutions*

The research recommends a leadership framework that may guide those concerned to achieve empowerment and an enabling leadership. The framework

specifies the six areas related to criteria, qualifications and skills to have more effective presidents and deans for higher education in Oman (see Figure 14 below).

An effective leader needs creative skills and attitudes to generate powerful ideas; analytical intelligence to determine whether they are positive ideas; practical intelligence to implement the ideas effectively and to persuade others to listen to and to follow the ideas; and wisdom to ensure that the ideas represent a common positive for all stakeholders, not just for some of them.



FIGURE 14: AREAS OF EFFECTIVE PRESIDENTS/DEANS IN HEIS

The study has resulted in the identification of six areas as major requirements for academic leaders (presidents and deans) to have, in order to successfully run private higher education in Oman and to be able to create an enabling environment at their institutions. Figure 13 illustrates the seven areas, and a brief explanation of each area follows.

The first area is *qualifications*. Universities' presidents and deans should have PhD or postgraduate qualifications in one or more of the following fields: leadership and higher education, higher education, and strategic management. These fields fit the requirements of the leaders of the HEIs in general.

The second area is *academic and management knowledge and skills*. The candidates for the positions should be knowledgeable about various important issues in higher education such as setting out the vision and missions of HEIs, strategic plans, academic programmes, and assuring the quality of teaching and learning; motivating skills and professional development, organisational charts for HEIs, building teams, and financing and funding higher education institutions.

The candidates (future university presidents and deans) should also be familiar with different higher education institutional strategies around the world to enable them to build an effective and comprehensive strategic plan for their institutions to meet the requirements of society, the government and the labour markets. Administration, finance and marketing experience has become one of the key requirements to select suitable presidents and deans for HEIs to enable them to manage the required funds for sustainable development, and the day-to-day administration and academic activities of the institutions.

The leader of the university or college should have a new academic and administrative system that responds to local, regional and international changes. In addition, they must have a modern, computerised system to help the academic and administrative employees perform their activities to very high standards. The major changes in HE require colleges and universities to reform their management practices and to change their traditional thinking about academic

leadership. The recommendations above are in line with the ones provided by Wang and Berger (2010), who stated that universities need effective academic leaders with particular knowledge, skills and capability to develop positive policies and to manage their universities successfully, while remaining competitive.

The third area is *a quality programme*. The presidents and deans of the private HEIs need to focus more on the quality programmes and skills development of their students. The Ministry of Higher Education, students, employers and the society as a whole desire to have the best quality programmes at the universities and colleges; thus, the leader should have the ability and willingness to work on the quality of the programmes and students' skills development. This can be monitored through having a unit or department to carry out the responsibilities for ensuring and following up quality assurance in addition to bringing in external experts every few years to evaluate the performance and the output of the institution. The leadership of the private HEIs should implement the procedures of the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA), the government body to assist the development of the Omani HE sector, through institutional quality audits and institutional and programme accreditation processes. The OAAA has responsibilities for establishing academic standards, and providing training and networking opportunities. Some private universities and colleges still need to improve the quality of their programmes to meet the needs of the market.

The fourth area is *academic environment*. The academic environment at the HEIs is another important responsibility of the president/dean; this can be effectively achieved if the institution has a clear policy, regulations, and job descriptions for the academic and administrative staff. The presidents and deans should have the ability to motivate the members of faculty and the administrators towards organisational loyalty, teamwork and cooperation.

The social activities are another important area to create a healthy and friendly working environment for all the staff; all employees will feel like one family working together. They should also be involved in academic activities such as developing

curricula, training staff, conducting meetings with the faculty, setting educational goals, and motivating students and faculty.

The fifth area is *cultural awareness*. The Sultanate of Oman is a Muslim country with strong traditional behaviour. Culture awareness is a main component of this criterion and the university presidents and deans should be familiar with relevant aspects to enable them to deal well with the complaints and inquiries of the students and their parents on cultural and attitude issues. To stress the importance of culture awareness, the Director General at the Ministry of Higher Education and human resource managers at the public Ministries agreed with the choice of having qualified Omani citizens to run universities and colleges, as they are more familiar with the traditions and culture of the society. If a non-Omani is appointed as president or dean at a public or private university or college, they need to be fully aware of and knowledgeable about religion, culture, and different traditions, and run a continuous programme to create awareness among the members of faculty. The culture and traditional knowledge experience will help the non-Omani leader to better deal with both students and their parents and to avoid unexpected circumstances.

The sixth area is *networking*. The external relationship with both the public and private sectors is one of the main tasks of the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges. The purpose of HEIs is to feed the different sectors with skilled graduates of different specialisations and to conduct research to help the development of the economy and the environment. Therefore, both society and the HEIs need to work together as both share mutual interests; however, the output of the research results indicated a weak relationship between the two. The universities and colleges put more effort into teaching and learning and try to absorb as many students as they can. However, it is the right time to establish a unit or a department at each private university and college which directly reports to the president of the university or the dean of the college to build relationships with the public and private agencies and to organise meetings, seminars and training courses. The private universities and colleges should conduct different

types of research to help the private and public organisations to develop their activities. It is the duty of the presidents and the deans to present the services of their institutions to the organisations and to society. Such relationships help the universities' and colleges' management to recruit their graduates from different sectors and to follow up their performance. In addition, the presidents and deans should also build external relationships and cooperation with well-reputed academic institutions worldwide.

In addition to the recommended framework, this study introduces a number of recommendations that relate to creating an enabling environment at the private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman and to enhance the presidents' and deans' capability to achieve such a goal:

- Private universities and colleges need to empower their relationship with industries and the communities in order to conduct applied research to serve the whole society.
- University and college boards need to grant more administrative and financial authority to their presidents and deans.
- It is recommended that the responsibilities of the boards and the presidents/dean are clearly specified and professional.
- Universities and colleges are advised to work more to upgrade the graduates' skills and to have a monitoring system.

The framework and its recommendations are expected to develop higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman to an international standard, and guide the universities' leaders to create an enabling environment able to produce well-qualified and skilled graduates.

## 7.6 Limitations and Further Research

There are a number of issues and limitations identified in this study. Firstly, as far as academic leadership is concerned, this research only focused on the roles played by the presidents and deans of the selected private institutions in Oman in creating enabling environments. In this regard, it ignored other factors of creating an enabling environment. For example, some literature (e.g., Jackson, 2005) on the enabling environment places a particular amount of significance on contextual cultures.

Another limitation was related to data collection. The researcher faced some challenges in data collection, including restricted and limited access to some government documents, the reluctance of many employees to release certain data, and the absence of bibliographical references on higher education in Oman and the Gulf region. However, the researcher's previous experience in the academic environment, public Ministries and appointment as an external reviewer has helped in taking the research forward.

There are some limitations to the research in relation to sampling; this research was limited to private universities in different geographic locations, of different sizes, and with different establishment dates to generate data from different perspectives. Besides, the sample size might be considered too small to generalise. It does not include institutions from the public sector. This, in fact, suggests that further research could conduct a study of similar style and nature on public higher education institutions and compare the results. There are believed to be significant differences, keeping in mind the point discussed above regarding the role of the board members.

The results make contributions to future generations who will have a practically proven and research-based analysis of an enabling environment, the prototype of which must be constituted in Oman at its higher education institutions. Moreover, the research opens some innovative avenues for upcoming researchers who

would add more to the previously achieved goals so that the sustenance of lifelong learning may also continue to develop and progress. The future researchers may search on topics such as universities and sector relationships; the influence of the board members on managing HEIs; and graduate skills and the labour market. In this regard, each of the areas of concern of this study deserves its own research. Another possible suggestion relates to replication. It is suggested that a similar research study is conducted in another Gulf country; this is believed to reflect on developing a GCC model in enabling leadership in higher education.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1: Letter from University of Southampton addressed to presidents and deans of private universities and colleges



### School of Education and School of Management

CHEMPaS  
Centre for Higher Education Management and Policy at Southampton  
Centre Director: Professor John Taylor

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The President  
Muscat University

16 July 2007

Dear President

#### Invitation to participate in Ali Hamdan Albalushi's research project

Mr. Ali Hamdan Albalushi is a PhD research student at the Centre for Higher Education Management and Policy at Southampton, University of Southampton, UK. He started his PhD programme in October 2006.

Ali's research focuses on the relationship between university leadership and the outcomes from higher education, especially the skills and knowledge gained by undergraduates and how they perform in their work after leaving university. Currently, Ali is doing his field study approaching university leaders, senior managers, faculty members, students and employers. The data collection methods include document study, interviews and questionnaire surveys.

Sohar University is selected along with other institutions for his fieldwork. We fully appreciate your kind contribution and support to facilitate his mission. The study is conducted in accordance with the University of Southampton ethics guidelines. All the information about your university and personnel during the course of research will be kept strictly confidential. All results will be anonymous and it will not be possible to identify individual participant's data.

In due course, once the research project has been finished, a copy of the complete thesis will be delivered to your University; hopefully it will be of benefit to yourself and to your University.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you require any further details, please feel free to contact me.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Taylor', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Professor John Taylor  
Director: Centre for Higher Education for Management and Policy at Southampton

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### Appendix 3: External Reviewers at Oman Academic Accreditation Authority



*Sultanate of Oman*

*Academic Accreditation Authority*

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Mr. Ali Al Balushi

Assistant Dean for Corporate Support

Language Centre College of Banking and Financial Studies

Muscat, Oman

16 August 2013

Dear Ali

Thank you once again for agreeing to join the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority's Register of External Reviewers.

I take great pleasure in inviting you to join the Audit Panel.

Omani higher education will benefit tremendously from your involvement, and we are hopeful that you can join with us in this important endeavour. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to have any further information.

Kindest regards

**Susan Trevor-Roper**

Quality Assurance Expert, Oman Academic Accreditation Authority

## Appendix 4: Interview schedule with the presidents and deans of private universities and colleges

### A. Private Universities

Institution	Date for Interviews	Confirmed date/time	General Remarks
University A	30/10/2007 3/11/ 2007	6/11/2007 4 - 4:45 PM	<p>Personal relationship to fix interview date. Cover all interview questions</p> <p>Full cooperation from staff at the president's office</p> <p>Agreed to distribute questionnaires to faculty, administrators and students and for them to be collected in two weeks, from 6 November 2007</p> <p>Interviews' points were written for future analysis</p> <p>Follow up on 4 December 2007 to collect the answer for the questionnaires, still to be filled in by the concerned employees and students</p> <p>Follow up: 5 and 6 January 2008 Received end of January 2008</p>
University B	3 /11/2007; 10 /11/ 2007	17/11/20 07 9-11 am	<p>Was very successful and covered all the questions</p> <p>Fully transparency to exchange and discuss the required information</p> <p>Agreed to distribute the survey questionnaires to students, members of faculty and administrators and for them to be collected two weeks after the interview date</p> <p>Notes were taken for future analysis</p> <p>Follow up on 27 November 2007 to send the Arabic version of students' questionnaires</p>

Institution	Date for Interviews	Confirmed date/time	General Remarks
			Follow up on 5 January 2008; confirmed ready to be collected
University C	9/12/20 07	9/12/20 07 9-11 am	The interview was successful and done in a professional way  All interview questions were covered in addition to other issues raised by the president to enrich the research  Agreed to distribute questionnaires to students, faculty and administrators  Received on 23 December 2007

## 2. Private Colleges

Institution	Interviews Dates	Confirmed date/Time	General Remarks
College A	27/10/2007	30 /10/2007 9-10 am 4 /11/ 2007 9-10 am	Covered all interview questions  Full cooperation from staff at the president's office  The dean agreed to distribute questionnaires to members of faculty, administrators and students
College B	30/10/2007 Visiting the college 3 /11/ 2007 Called again 10 /11/ 2007 confirmed on 11/11/2007 10 am		The interview was very successful and I covered all the questions  The dean was very cooperative and willing to distribute other questionnaires to members of faculty, students and administrators  Follow up: 25 and 27 November 2007, and ready to be collected this week

Institution	Interviews Dates	Confirmed date/Time	General Remarks
College C	Call on 11 /11/2007 and 12 /11/2007	12/11/ 2007  3 pm	<p>The interview was successful and covered all the questions</p> <p>The college has its own curriculum in coordination with affiliated partners.</p> <p>Communication with the private sector has been developed to inject the requirements during course designed</p> <p>Attractive salaries to recruit and retain faculty</p> <p>Full-time Omani lecturers in IT and Business</p>

**Appendix 5: Letter addressed to presidents/deans of private universities  
and colleges**

My name is Ali H. Al-Balushi; I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton, UK, under the supervision of Professor John Taylor, Director of the Centre of Higher Education Management and Policy at Southampton (CHEMPaS).

My PhD research topic is about the role of leadership in private higher education institutions. The key areas of my research are leadership, internal management, external relations with the public; and private organisations and university output.

Thank you for giving me the chance to meet you and your staff. The information I am gathering will be confidential and I will use it only for the research analysis.

Thank you

Ali

**Appendix 6: Interview questions addressed to presidents/deans of private universities and colleges**

Statement / Question	Justification for asking Question	Theme
<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p>Universities have clear missions, objectives and strategies to carry on their activities.</p> <p>Could you please set out the overall mission and objectives of the university in general?</p>	<p>The answer will give general ideas about the university, and key points to start the interview.</p>	<p>Vision and mission</p>
<p><b>Question 2</b></p> <p>Some universities prefer a horizontal structure to a vertical one.</p> <p>Vertical structures place an emphasis on hierarchy and strong central leadership.</p> <p>Horizontal structures are more flexible and tend to use more developed decision-making. Staff can communicate and share the responsibilities with the management. They discuss and share their experiences and their ideas through committees.</p> <p>a) Where do you see your university?</p> <p>B) Is it more inclined towards a horizontal or a vertical structure?</p>	<p>The answer to this question will indicate the type of communication between the management and the staff and decision- making process.</p>	<p>Organisational structure</p>

Statement / Question	Justification for asking Question	Theme
<p><b>Question 3</b></p> <p>University management often establishes committees to have collective opinions. Staffs who participate in these committees are willing to share in decision- making and in implementing the management's decisions. However, in some universities, the management feels committees are delaying issues and taking a long time to discuss matters without reaching conclusions.</p> <p>May I have your opinion please, and what are the roles of committees in your university?</p>	<p>The answer will include whether the leader manages the university through committees.</p> <p>The role of committees in the university.</p> <p>The existences of team work in the university.</p> <p>The role of the leader and the role of committees.</p>	<p>Committee</p>
<p><b>Question 4</b></p> <p>Strategic Planning is a very important route for successful universities, and the right process to build such a strategy is essential to ease its implementation.</p> <p>Could you please brief me on how you build your strategic plan, and is it a short- term or long-term plan?</p>	<p>The answer will indicate the current and the future status of planning the university.</p> <p>If there is strategic planning in the university, it will show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is responsible for preparing the plan?</li> <li>- Do staffs participate in preparing such a plan from the early stages?</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic Planning</p>

Statement / Question	Justification for asking Question	Theme
<p><b>Question 5</b></p> <p>The University Board/ Council is the main decision-making body with regards to universities' policies and missions. The positive relationship between the management of the university and the board members is a sign of their success.</p> <p>- How would you like to see the relationship between the management and the board, develop, especially if you want to have full autonomy and authority to run the university?</p>	<p>To examine the link between the roles of the board and the university management.</p> <p>To understand the leader's authority.</p>	<p>University Board</p>
<p><b>Question 6</b></p> <p>As you are aware, the government invests development projects mostly all over the country, which requires employees with various skills to do the work.</p> <p>a) Does your university offer the required programmes?</p> <p>b) Does the university train its students to acquire the necessary skills?</p>	<p>To know the link between government development projects and its strategies.</p> <p>To know if the university has positive programmes.</p> <p>To find out about the types of skills for students' development at the university.</p>	<p>Quality of Programme</p>
<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p>Thank you; this is very useful information and leads me to ask about the relationship between the university and private organisations.</p> <p>a) How do you build your relationship with industries and business organisations?</p>		<p>External Relationship</p>

Statement / Question	Justification for asking Question	Theme
<p>b) Does your university build relationships with the private industrial sector? If so, how is this process undertaken?</p> <p>c) Are there research contracts between the university and companies?</p> <p>d) Does the private sector cooperate with the university to design proper courses?</p>		
<p><b>Question 8</b></p> <p>- What are the benefits you are gaining now from such a relationship? What is your expectation about how such relationship might develop in the future?</p>	<p>To understand the current position of university-industrial relationships. To analyse the future policy of the university.</p>	<p>Relationship</p>
<p><b>Question 9</b></p> <p>Members of faculty and other professionals in their fields in some universities build their own external relations either to conduct short courses or to do applied research.</p> <p>These extra activities will add financial income to the institution or to the lecturers.</p> <p>a) Do you support this initiative, and if not, why?</p> <p>b) Do you have a policy for income earned in this way?</p>		<p>Faculty External Relationship</p>

Statement / Question	Justification for asking Question	Theme
<p><b>Question 10</b></p> <p>Since we are talking about research and development, members of faculty often complain because of their teaching loads especially if the university requires them to do research without incentives or rewards.</p> <p>a) How do you deal with such a situation?</p> <p>b) Do you believe that a lecturer should undertake both teaching and research?</p> <p>c) If the faculty member agrees to carry a full load and to do research, do you support such initiative?</p>	<p>To see how the leader deals with the lecturers' problems concerning teaching loads.</p> <p>To look at the university policy towards teaching and conducting research at the same time. The link between teaching load and research and quality.</p>	<p>Teaching load and research</p>
<p><b>Question 11</b></p> <p>Social activities are ways to build the university's relations with the public and to build or exchange ideas with different sectors in the society.</p> <p>a) What type of activities did your university host during the academic year?</p> <p>b) Do you require academic staff to participate in such activities as well as their teaching and research?</p>	<p>To understand how the university serves the society. To understand the type of activities run by the university or college.</p>	<p>Social Activities</p>

Statement / Question	Justification for asking Question	Theme
<p><b>Question 12</b></p> <p>Graduate skills and experiences have become an issue raised by the parents and the public. This means in particular skills such as communication skills, critical thinking, computer skills and negotiations skills.</p> <p>I am sure you agree about the importance of these skills. Would you like to comment, and would you kindly highlight the means at your university to assure that the graduates acquire these skills?</p>	<p>To understand the university's policies towards parents' and public concerns.</p> <p>To check if the university has programmes to train and develop skills of its students.</p>	<p>Graduate Skills</p>
<p><b>Question 13</b></p> <p>The Government's support for private universities and colleges in the Sultanate of Oman include incentives such as free lands, funds and scholarships. However, the Government through the Ministry of Higher Education has some policies and procedures to discourage the private universities and colleges from such incentives as it take a long time to be received.</p> <p>a) Do you share such concerns?</p> <p>a) Does it take too long to get such incentives from Ministry of Higher Education or other Ministries? What are the alternatives in your opinion please?</p>	<p>To examine the university's views with regards to the government policies and procedures.</p> <p>To check if the private university prefers to have their complete independence without government intervention To determine what the private universities want from the government.</p>	<p>Government</p> <p>Policies and Regulation</p>

Statement / Question	Justification for asking Question	Theme
<p><b>Question 14</b></p> <p>All private universities in Oman provide programmes of other international universities in order to assure the quality of these programmes. This is necessary and required by Ministry of Higher Education.</p>	<p>To look at the long-term plan of the university.</p>	<p>Strategic Planning</p>
<p><b>Question 15</b></p> <p>a) How do you evaluate such arrangement?</p> <p>b) What is your plan to introduce your own programmes and curriculum or do you prefer to continue depending on external partners?</p>		
<p><b>Question 16</b></p> <p>To maintain the financial stability is essential to sustain the university's survival.</p> <p>a) What are the university's sources of income currently?</p> <p>b) What are the future investments you think might help to keep the university financially strong?</p>	<p>To understand the university/college financial strategy.</p>	<p>Financial status</p>
<p><b>Question 17</b></p> <p>Organisational culture affects performance, especially of educational institutions.</p> <p>- How as a leader of this university do you create or maintain an acceptable culture especially if you have Omani employees and multi nationalities between both members of faculty and students?</p>	<p>To understand the view of the university about Omanis working as lecturers.</p> <p>To look at the financial strategy of the university To see if the leader is concerned about the culture issues, and how to deal with them.</p>	<p>Cultural and tradition</p>

## Appendix 7: Interview questions addressed to the Director General at the Ministry of Higher Education

Statement/ Question	Justification
<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p>As you are aware, the importance of academic leaders to run both public and private universities has become an important issue to satisfy different interested parties such as the Ministry of Higher Education, students, parents, communities, and the public and private sectors.</p> <p>The Ministry of Higher Education gives approval to the appointments of presidents, deans and lecturers at private universities and colleges. What are the criteria set by the Ministry of Higher Education in order to approve such important appointments? Is it mandatory to provide a guideline for private universities and colleges to recruit for their senior academic positions?</p>	<p>To understand the government policies and criteria to appoint presidents and deans at the private higher education institutions.</p>
<p><b>Question 2</b></p> <p>Do you approve of the advertisements of the private universities and colleges to match the required criteria of the Ministry of Higher Education before releasing them, and if so, why?</p>	<p>To look in detail at the role of the Ministry of Higher Education as regards releasing advertisements from private universities and colleges.</p>
<p><b>Question 3</b></p> <p>In your opinion what is the role of the academic leaders at private universities and colleges in the Sultanate of Oman? Do you think private universities and colleges have qualified and experienced academic leaders who contribute towards human resource development?</p>	<p>To check if the officials at the Ministry of Higher Education understand and follow up the role of the academic leaders at the private universities and colleges.</p>

Statement / Question	Justification
<p><b>Question 4</b></p> <p>How do you evaluate current presidents and deans at private universities and colleges? Are they really qualified and experienced academic leaders or only managers to run the business activities rather than higher education institutions? Do you have the right to ask private universities and colleges to look for another president or dean if their performance is not as expected or if the Ministry of Higher Education does not interfere?</p>	<p>To understand the evaluation policies and strategies of the performance of the presidents/deans of the private universities and colleges.</p> <p>To know the role of the Ministry of Higher Education if the presidents and deans of the private universities and colleges fail to fulfil their responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>Question 5</b></p> <p>How do you evaluate the performance of the presidents and deans at the private universities and colleges in terms of quality of education and quality of their graduates?</p> <p>Some students and parents prefer to see Omanis as university presidents and deans if they have the right qualifications and experiences even they are less than those of non- Omanis. What is the role of the Ministry of Higher Education concerning the Omanis' senior academic posts at private higher education institutions?</p>	<p>To understand the current views of the officials at the Ministry of Higher Education.</p> <p>To check the role of the Ministry of Higher Education to replace non-Omanis (expatriates) to handle senior academic posts at private higher education institutions.</p>
<p><b>Question 6</b></p> <p>What are the criteria in your own opinion to appoint presidents and deans at the private universities and colleges especially if you are directly supervising both public and private higher education institutions?</p>	<p>To know the opinion of the officials at the Ministry of Higher Education about the type of presidents and deans they want to have at the public and private higher education institutions.</p>
<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p>What is the role of the Ministry of Higher Education if it identifies that a president or dean is unsuitable in the post?</p>	<p>To understand the policies of the Ministry of Higher Education.</p>

**Appendix 8: Interview questions addressed to heads and directors of human resources departments at the government sector**

Statement/Question	Justification
<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p>As you are a key member of your organisation to interview and select graduates of different fields for training to fill different kinds of jobs, how do you evaluate the quality of private local universities' and colleges' graduates in term of their specialisations and their general knowledge?</p>	<p>To understand the quality types of different graduates.</p>
<p><b>Question 2</b></p> <p>nts learned different skills beside their specialisations, which enable them to carry out their work immediately without additional training. Do you agree, or how do you see universities' and colleges' graduates in terms of having the necessary skills? How long does it take university and college graduates to be ready to perform well at their jobs?</p>	<p>To understand how to evaluate graduates' skills..</p>
<p><b>Question 3</b></p> <p>What are the important administrative and technical skills necessary to be taught to students?</p>	<p>To understand the type of skills the graduate acquires.</p>
<p><b>Question 4</b></p> <p>Have you faced any kind of problems with graduates with regards to being reluctant to undertake certain basic duties, but who instead insist on implementing their own new ideas and projects?</p>	<p>To know the type of attitude of the graduates.</p>

Statement/Questions	Justification
<p><b>Question 5</b></p> <p>Is there any communication between management of private universities and colleges and government Ministries to exchange views and experiences to develop programmes or amend the current programmes to meet the real job requirements in the public sector? If such networks exist, do you think universities and colleges will adopt this approach?</p>	<p>To understand and evaluate the type of academic relationship between the Ministries and the universities/colleges.</p>
<p><b>Question 6</b></p> <p>How do you see quality in higher education and quality of those graduating from private universities and colleges?</p>	<p>To understand the perception of the human resource managers at the public Ministry on the quality of higher education institutions in general.</p>
<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p>What advice would you like to give to the management of private universities and colleges to have the best-qualified students?</p>	<p>To understand the future requirements of the human resource managers at the public Ministry from the universities and colleges.</p>

## Appendix 9: Interviews questions and justification addressed to the graduates working at the public sector

Statement/ Question	Justification
<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p>As you aware there are differences between studying and doing real work. Are you satisfied with your work and do you enjoy what you are doing?</p>	<p>To understand the graduates' satisfaction with their work and their work situations.</p>
<p><b>Question 2</b></p> <p>As you aware there are variances among universities and colleges with regards to quality of teaching, teaching materials and quality of members of faculty? Are there any relations between the courses you studied and your current work?</p>	<p>To check the link between what students learned at their universities and colleges and their practical work.</p>
<p><b>Question 3</b></p> <p>Students learned different skills beside their core courses during their studies at universities and Colleges. These skills include: communication skills, negotiation skills, performing reports and computer skills. The students need such skills to get a job and to compete with other students. Did you learn such skills while you were at university or college? Are these skills important for your work?</p> <p>Would you like to advise universities' and colleges' administration in this regard?</p>	<p>To check the graduates' opinions about the importance of skills at their work places and if they learned such skills at their universities or colleges.</p>
<p><b>Question 4</b></p> <p>The types of work you are doing are matching or close to your area of specialisation at your university or college. What are the important skills you wish you had learned at your university or college that will help you in your workplace?</p>	<p>To understand the types of skilled required for both the public and the private sectors</p>

Statement / Question	Justification
<p><b>Question 5</b></p> <p>Basic training is essential at the beginning of your work, and then gradually you are supposed to be offered more training courses to develop your work performance. Have you done any training courses up to this point? Was it possible to have such training courses at your university or college if there was a communication network between higher education institutions and both public and private sector?</p>	<p>To learn the type of training programmes provided at the workplace and if possible to inject them within university and college courses.</p>
<p><b>Question 6</b></p> <p>Some graduates face difficulties in dealing with their managers or supervisors due to different qualifications and experience between the two, and on occasion, some graduates try to impose their ideas and projects on their boss. Have you faced such difficulties with your managers and if yes what is the solution in your opinion? Do you think that universities and colleges can play a role to solve such problems?</p>	<p>To understand the relationship between university/college administration and the public and private sectors.</p> <p>To understand the difficulties between graduates and their supervisors from practical point of views and the role of universities and colleges.</p>
<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p>The difficulties between graduates and their managers and supervisors may be related to the educational gap between them and their managers; therefore some graduates start looking for other jobs that match their majors and their ambitions. Do you agree and are you looking for another job you think you could perform better?</p>	<p>To understand if the educational and experience gap between graduates and their managers can be reasons for work problems between the two.</p>
<p><b>Question 8</b></p> <p>Government jobs are more secure and have less pressure than jobs in the private sector that offer better salaries. Could you express your opinion and which sector you prefer?</p>	<p>To know the opinion of graduates of which sectors they prefer to work with.</p>

Statement / Question	Justification
<p><b>Question 9</b></p> <p>Quality in higher education and training is very important at higher education institutions to attract students' enrolment. Do you think your university or college has quality in their programmes? If yes please explain? If no, do you relate the problem to:</p> <p>- The president of the university or dean of the college - Curricula or lecturers, or both?</p>	<p>To check the graduates' opinion about quality at their universities/colleges.</p>
<p><b>Question 10</b></p> <p>What is the advice you would like give to presidents of private universities and deans of the colleges to provide qualified graduates for both the public and the private sectors?</p>	<p>To understand what is in the minds of graduates to see how their future universities' and colleges' administration look like.</p>

**Appendix 10: Names of the graduates with different specialisations from different universities and colleges**

Graduates' details

<b>Name</b>	<b>University/College</b>	<b>Year of Graduation</b>	<b>Area of Specialisation</b>
Adulhakeem Albalushi	Sohar	2008	Electrical Engineering
Alya Algafri	Modern College	2007	Accounting
Fayga Alzakwani	Modern College	2002	Accounting
Ahmed Alkindy	Sohar	2008	Business Administration
Sami Almushrafy	Majan College	2006	Business Administration
Salim Alharasy	Majan College	2007	Accounting

**Appendix 11: Interview questions addressed to graduates of different specialisations and from different universities and colleges**

Statement/Question	Responses
<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p>As you aware there are differences between studying and doing real work.</p> <p>Are you satisfied with your work and do you enjoy what you are doing?</p>	<p>“There is a big difference between practical work and study at the university and only 10% of the knowledge I learned and used at work, which is mostly basic. The university’s curriculum was not updated to match work requirements.”</p> <p>“Yes, satisfied with her work and she is doing taxation. Her skills are mainly in accounting reports and math.”</p> <p>“I am satisfied with my job and rated this as 95%; I am dealing with salaries and allowances, which I stated, are far removed from my specialisation, but I had previous experience in these previously. Also I am happy about the organisation system at work.”</p> <p>“I am satisfied with my work and have ambitions to do better in the future. My work is mainly registration and admission with limited authority and my manager does not take my new ideas and recommendations into consideration, but I am not facing work pressure and there is cooperation among the employees despite their low salary and long working day.”</p> <p>“Business administration includes courses such as Human Resources from which I benefited much in my work, but other subjects such as Finance and IT applied little to the workplace.”</p> <p>“Studying different courses influences the students` thinking and there are ideas and concepts which can be implemented at the workplace but most of such practices have been done in the private sector.”</p> <p>“Higher education provides additional knowledge to students to help them to be creative in their thinking. Higher education is not a direct reflection of the students’ abilities at their practical work and it only develops personal abilities.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
<p><b>Question 2</b></p> <p>As you aware there are variances among universities and colleges with regards to quality of teaching, teaching materials and quality of members of faculty.</p> <p>Are there any relations between the courses you studied and your current work?</p>	<p>“The students vary in their understanding and they learn more if the university conducts workshops to implement the literature side of the scientific courses.”</p> <p>“There is more focus on the literature side than the practical ones, which is known by the lecturers themselves.”</p> <p>“I suggested tying the curriculum with the work requirements and creating awareness among students with regards to job requirements and the expected outcome of the graduate.”</p> <p>“I agree that there is a link between what she studied and the work she is doing. I am happy about the quality in the college, both materials and lecturers.”</p> <p>“No direct relation between the courses she studied and her work, and the college only contributed to building her personality and how to handle issues. What she appreciates more is her English language and the skills to communicate with others.”</p> <p>“The most important subject applied to my work is organisational theory particularly organisational charts; also other subjects such as human resources, accounting, electronic business, marketing and economics.”</p> <p>“The college did not organise field visits to either public sector or the private companies, which are very important to enlighten students about the real practical work.”</p> <p>“Some courses that are considered important in the private sector such as Operation Management, and Organisational Behaviour.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
<p><b>Question 3</b></p> <p>A) Did you learn communication skills, negotiation skills, performing reports and computer skills while you were at university or college? Are these skills important for your work?</p>	<p>“Students learned only the basic IT skills. Other skills are essential for students for their life and their practical work.”</p> <p>“I learned some skills during field training at some companies.”</p> <p>“Students to participate in the college activities to build their personalities and their skills and to be more open towards society.”</p> <p>“Skills are very important and the college at this time does not separate teaching different skills, and students only learned through attending different courses.”</p> <p>“I did not learn any skills at the university, and only a limited range from different courses and agreed with regard to the importance of learning different skills.”</p> <p>“I am not happy about my English skills.”</p>
<p>b) Would you like to advise universities’ and colleges’ administration in this regard?</p>	<p>“The university must give full attention to its students more from the practical side than just the academic side only.”</p> <p>“The academic staff should not be from the same nationality, but a mix of lecturers with different experiences, and from different nationalities. Most of the lecturers are from Arab countries.”</p> <p>“The college needs to put more effort into student activities to build their skills.”</p> <p>“Students’ satisfaction is very important and the university should provide all possible facilities to the students.”</p> <p>“The university should not put so much pressure on students to pay their fees.”</p> <p>“The importance of coordination between students and registration department to ensure students’ settlement.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
	<p>“To include civil service law and regulations, labour law and social law as part of the core courses for all majors.”</p> <p>“There is no quality in its higher education. The college depends on cheap lecturers from Asia.”</p> <p>“The college accepts the minimum grade at high school with low English level.”</p>
<p><b>Question 4</b></p> <p>Are the types of work you are doing matching or close to your area of specialisation at your university or college? What are the important skills you wish you had learned at your university or college that would have helped you in your workplace?</p>	<p>“I wish I had learned all types of skills. I wish I had undertaken more field studies and I had no practical experience in my final semester.”</p> <p>“The most important skills were how to deal with companies, meeting skills either as a member or chairman, time management and communication skills.”</p> <p>“I prefer to separate skills development courses from the main courses and I think this will be more enjoyable for the students.”</p> <p>“Communication, interviews and presentation skills Report- and memo-writing skills. Using new technology. Computer skills.”</p> <p>“Upgrade general knowledge for students through different presentations.”</p> <p>“English language is very important. Computer, information technology and electronic business communication. Business writing and reporting. Writing formal letters.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
<p><b>Question 5</b></p> <p>Basic training is essential at the beginning of your work, and then gradually you are supposed to attend more training courses to develop your work performance.</p> <p>Have you done any training courses up to this point?</p> <p>Was it possible to have such training courses at your university or college if there is a communication network between higher education institutions and both public and private sectors?</p>	<p>“Most of the private companies are willing to cooperate with academic institutions as long as their students have good practical ideas. Also the university management should support its students.”</p> <p>“I had three months training to do different types of work.”</p> <p>“I had basic training to familiarise myself with different types of work and also I attended other training courses related to my job.”</p> <p>“I joined my work directly without any training. I attend different training courses and felt most of them were not practical.”</p> <p>“I did not learn any skills while I was in the college and I had preferred to learn different skills as separate programmes.”</p> <p>“I am working as an auditor and did not study auditing during my study. I learned accounting.”</p> <p>“Colleges need to conduct different specialised courses. Different sectors require different types of training.”</p> <p>“Students are assigned to practical training at different Ministries, but do not have full cooperation from government agencies.”</p> <p>“There is a need to have formal contact between universities and both public and private sectors to assure good training for students and to create an awareness of the importance of practical training.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
<p><b>Question 6</b></p> <p>Some graduates face difficulties in dealing with their managers or supervisors due to different qualifications and levels of experience between the two, and sometimes graduates try to impose their ideas and projects on their boss.</p> <p>Have you faced such difficulties with your managers and if yes what is the solution in your opinion?</p> <p>Do you think that universities and colleges can play a role to solve such problems?</p>	<p>“Yes, I had three months training when I joined work and then the companies provided training courses to develop its employees` skills.”</p> <p>“The university intends to advertise and market itself when it selects training places for its students. The university should select practical training places very carefully.”</p> <p>“The relationship between higher education institutions and both public and private sectors is important to share the experience and to discuss the qualifications and the training needs of both sectors.”</p> <p>“Yes, she prefers to have direct communication between public and private sectors and higher education institutions to have a better arrangement to enroll the graduate easily to do both short training and work in these sectors in the future.”</p> <p>“I strongly agreed with the need to strengthen the cooperation and communication between higher education institutions and both public and private sectors to share mutual needs in terms of quality education and skilled labourers.”</p> <p>“More workshops are required. To put more efforts towards students` skills in the English language. To teach students how to write letters, reports and emails.”</p> <p>“I do not face difficulty with my supervisors and I advise new graduates to be patient in order to appreciate the efforts done by the employees and the manager who are already running their department.”</p> <p>“Yes there are difficulties with the Civil Service Law and regulations, which limit the implementation of new ideas. She recommended changing such law and regulations to be more flexible.”</p> <p>“I am not facing any difficulties with my supervisors and all the managers at his work place are educated and cooperative.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p>The difficulties between graduates and their managers and supervisors may be related to the educational gap between them and their areas of expertise; therefore some graduates start looking for other jobs that better match their majors and their ambitions. Do you agree and are you looking for another job you think you could perform better?</p>	<p>“Yes, some graduates face such difficulties especially with experienced managers and other employees. The graduate students have to motivate themselves to cope with managers and other employees.”</p> <p>“Full cooperation should be built with private companies – this is required to conduct workshops and seminars which should be held for mutual interest.”</p> <p>“The university should benefit from its top and distinctive students who are successes in their work.”</p> <p>“The university should have a students’ affairs unit/department with a clear strategy to serve students and to care about their future. He felt that the university is focusing more on marketing than caring about their students.”</p> <p>“I agree that I will look for another job in which I could perform better, and have better opportunities.”</p> <p>“I did not face any problems and am doing the required jobs. She added that the communication between the employees and their managers is limited.”</p> <p>“I faced no difficulties with my managers and there is communication and encouragement for training.”</p> <p>“The problem with graduates is that they feel that they have knowledge and want to implement it as soon as possible. They need to benefit gradually from such knowledge.”</p> <p>“Most of the colleges are trying to link theories and real work at Ministries and inform students about mismanagement at these agencies”</p> <p>“There is a need to create awareness among lecturers to make sure of their examples and to be responsible about the data they are communicating to students.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
	<p>“Follow up students training programmes with government Ministries through having a special department or unit in each college.”</p>
<p><b>Question 8</b></p> <p>Government jobs are more secure and experience less pressure than jobs in the private sector, which offer better salaries.</p> <p>Could you express your opinion and which sector you prefer?</p>	<p>“I prefer to work in the private rather than the government sector which has more routine work and which means I cannot develop my skills.”</p> <p>“I am not thinking about moving from the private sector to the public sector. The only difficulty is the length of working time.”</p> <p>“Yes, I am looking for another job to satisfy my ambition. I prefer government jobs and only big companies are good in the private sector.”</p> <p>“The relationship between university and students ends after graduation, but sometimes some students go back to their lecturers to get help in the workplace.”</p> <p>“Salary is not always the motivation to shift from one job to another. The private sector gives a chance to its employees to be creative and to advance in their careers.”</p> <p>“The public sector is a good place to work if you hold Masters and PhD.”</p> <p>“There is a good working environment. She is not thinking about changing her work or looking for another job.”</p>
<p><b>Question 9</b></p> <p>Quality in higher education and training is very important at higher education institutions to attract students’ enrolment. Do you think your university or college has quality in their programmes? If yes, please explain. If no, what do you relate the problem to?</p>	<p>“I am not happy about quality at this university and I relate the problems to the management, curriculum and the lecturer. The university focused on the literature/academic on literature part of the courses and practical training still needs further development. I believe that the university has to develop and the market needs play a major part to motivate students to learn better.”</p> <p>“I feel the college has quality in its programmes. Students have a good command of the English language and most graduates are smart in their jobs.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
	<p>“There is quality in higher education and the modern college is providing excellent education.”</p> <p>“A quality of education exists at Majan College, but it is rated at the middle level. Lecturers are not always qualified. English speakers should teach the English language.”</p> <p>“Unequal salary among colleges.”</p> <p>“The common understanding of the lecturers is that the students are looking for degrees rather than good qualifications.”</p> <p>“Lack of follow-up from the Ministry of Higher Education to maintain quality at the private colleges.”</p> <p>“Lack of qualified staff at the Ministry of Higher Education.”</p> <p>“Students are sent from other public agencies to pursue their higher education in the evening.”</p> <p>“Students should maintain a good level of English before enrolling in academic study.”</p> <p>“Direct follow up from the dean of the college and direct contact with students.”</p> <p>“Assure the quality of the lecturers and retain good ones”</p>
<p><b>Question 10</b></p> <p>What is the advice you would like give to presidents of private universities and deans of the colleges to provide qualified graduates for both the public and the private sectors?</p>	<p>“The university should concentrate more on the practical training particularly on the scientific majors such as the engineering and electronic fields.”</p> <p>“Encourage the recruitment of lecturers of different nationalities on the academic side. Provide more skills programmes to help students in their studies and their practical life. Motivate Omani lecturers to enroll as lecturers in different fields.”</p> <p>“I recommended more training courses and to diversify students’ fields of work.”</p>

Statement/Question	Responses
	<p>“Course quality was excellent as she stated.”</p> <p>“The only concern from my point of view was the college management which focused a great deal on students` fees.”</p> <p>“I recommended having one orientation event/activity to familiarise students with the college laws and regulations, courses and the study system, rather than just giving students a tour of the college.”</p> <p>“The college should have qualified academic leaders to be fair to all students, and not to look after students from a social status point of view.”</p> <p>“The college management should be transparent with the students.”</p> <p>“The college should concentrate on quality of education rather than the financial profit.”</p> <p>“Students need good treatment.”</p> <p>“To strengthen the communication and cooperation between higher education institutions and different sectors.”</p> <p>“To feed students with different practical training to qualify them with skills.”</p> <p>“The college has to give more attention to its students than their fees, and profit should be a long-term objective.”</p> <p>“More attention to the practical side especially during summer time To conduct additional short courses during the summer break.”</p> <p>“To invite government employees to give presentations about their work at the government sector.”</p> <p>“To continue to communicate and cooperate with the private sector.”</p> <p>“The main problem at the colleges is that it is the council that chooses the lecturers, not the deans.”</p>

**Appendix 12: Survey questionnaires addressed to the faculty members at the Private Universities and Colleges in the Sultanate of Oman**



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My name is Ali H. Albalushi; I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton, UK, under the supervision of Professor John Taylor, Director of the Centre of Higher Education management and policy at Southampton (CHEMPaS)

My PhD research topic is about the role of leadership in private higher education institutions. The key areas of my research are leadership, internal management, external relations with the public; and private organisations and university output.

Thank you for answering the questions. The information I am gathering will be confidential and I will only use it for the research analysis.

**Please tick the correct answer**

1) The University/college has a clear vision.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

2) I participate in setting up the mission statement.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

3) The University/college has a strategic plan.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

4) The University/college has a short strategic plan.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

5) Students' motivation is the management methods to encourage students to study hard.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

6) Lecturers always explain course objectives and hand out the course syllabus at the beginning of each course.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

7) As a lecturer, I am happy about my teaching load, besides doing administrative tasks.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

8) The University's management encourages teamwork between the academic and the administrative staff to share their experiences.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

10) The University is providing the necessary educational tools such as overhead projectors, laptops, and smart boards to facilitate our teaching.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

11. The University provides necessary support and training to use these tools.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

12. The University's management encourages the academic staff to develop their own curriculum.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

14) Books and study materials are always available before starting the academic year.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

15) Academic staff should be requested to undertake both teaching and research.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

16) The quality of teaching is enhanced if academic staff are actively engaged in research.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

17) The University is encouraging the academic staff to do research beside their teaching responsibilities.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

18) The lecturers use only the curriculum without referring students to online and library resources.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

19) The lecturers encourage students to use the library resources.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

20) The library has updated resources are useful books and study tools.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

21) We teach our students different types of skills such as critical thinking, computer skills and negotiating skills.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

22) The University's management motivate us through moral and professional expectations as rewards for our teaching efforts.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

23) The University's management motivate us through financial incentives, and bonuses as rewards for our teaching efforts.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

24) The University's management encourage its faculty members to build external relations with different sectors of the society.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

25) The administrators of the university always provide their maximum support to facilitate our teaching responsibilities.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

26) The lecturers handle and solve students' problems without referring to the University management.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

27) Both the administrative and the academic staff share experiences to achieve the University's objectives.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

28) There is no cooperation between the academic and the administrative staff at the University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

29) The management of this University is task-oriented and only looking to have the job done without motivating its employees.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

30) The management of the University has been following the same strategy for a long time and no changes have been introduced to compete with other universities.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

31) We as faculty members prefer to be independent to run our departments.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

31) We as faculty members prefer to be independent to run our own budgets.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

32) The University's management motivate the administrative staff more than the academic staff.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

Thank you .....

**Appendix 13: Survey questionnaires addressed to the students at the  
Private Universities and Colleges in the Sultanate of Oman**



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My name is Ali H. Albalushi; I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton, UK, under the supervision of Professor John Taylor, Director of the Centre of Higher Education management and policy at Southampton (CHEMPaS)

My PhD research topic is about the role of leadership in private higher education institutions. The key areas of my research are leadership, internal management, external relations with the public; and private organisations and university output.

Thank you for answering the questions. The information I am gathering will be confidential and I will only use it for the research analysis.

Please tick the correct answer

1) I know about the University's programmes, before applying.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

2) I know about the University's fees before applying.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

3) I applied to the University because I was aware of its reputation for high quality.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

4) I applied to the University because I was aware of its good faculty.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

5) I applied to the University because I was aware of its good staff.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

6. The student orientation day help me to know more about the University and its programmes.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

7) I was given good advice in choosing my courses and it was easy to choose my specialisation and to register for the right courses.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

8) The lecturers provide the syllabus at the beginning of each course introduction. and explain objectives /outcome expectation at the end of the term.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

9) The lecturers work hard to make our study enjoyable.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

10) We receive helpful feedback on our performance after each assessment and we are happy about the quality of teaching at the University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

11. The lecturers encourage us to work in teams and assign us to do group projects.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

12) We learn different skills such as communication skills, critical thinking, computer and negotiation, skills, besides the required courses.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

13) My supervisors/ group tutor always help to solve my problems and advise me to move forwards towards my education.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

14) The registration department ensures that our records are up to date and that our information is available on time.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

15) The University is organising a job fair annually to encourage public and private organisations to recruit students.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

16. The job fair is helpful in sharing opportunities for my employment after University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

17) The lecturers and the administrators are trying their best to help me to find a job.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

18) My lecturers teach mainly from textbooks.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

19) My lecturers use their research in their teaching.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

Thank you.....

## Appendix 14 : Survey questionnaires addressed to the administrators at the Private Universities and Colleges in the Sultanate of Oman



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My name is Ali H. Albalushi; I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton, UK, under the supervision of Professor John Taylor, Director of the Centre of Higher Education management and policy at Southampton (CHEMPaS)

My PhD research topic is about the role of leadership in private higher education institutions. The key areas of my research are leadership, internal management, external relations with the public; and private organisations and university output.

Thank you for answering the questions. The information I am gathering will be confidential and I will only use it for the research analysis.

[Please tick the correct answer](#)

1) The information available met my requirements in deciding to work at this University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

2) I had an easy interview to join this University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

3) I had an easy tests and I passed and joined this University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

4) The personnel department explained to me the recruitment procedures.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

5) The personnel department updated me about my recruitment process.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

6. I have a clear job description and guidelines to assist me in doing my work.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

7) I was given a clear and detailed staff policy which helped me to familiarise myself with the staff regulations.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

8) I was trained to do the job at this University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

9) The employees in my department are supportive and helped me to do my work.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

10. The personnel department keep me updated with regard to my skills development.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

11) The personnel department keep me updated with regard to my leave record.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

12) I have attended several courses to develop my skills and update my knowledge in my field. These courses have been helpful in my career development.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

13) My department is not encouraging me to develop my skills and never suggests or sends me on training courses.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

14) Our finance department always releases our salary and leave allowances on time.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

15) The public relations department keep us informed about new activities at the University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

16) The public relation department at the University performs as a focal point between the University and the society.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

17) We always have new office equipment such as computers, scanners, faxes, and printers, and updated systems to help us perform our work efficiently.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

18) The University has a good IT technician to help us fix our PCs and maintain our computing systems.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

19) The University has a clear mission and objectives.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

20. I participated at the initial stages to develop the University's mission and objectives.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

21) The University's management creates a happy and healthy working environment and we all work in teams to achieve our objectives.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

22) We participate in different management committees to share our ideas and experiences.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

23) We work as members of a family and share information and decisions in a flexible and respective manner.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

24) The University's management encourages new innovative ideas.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

25) The University's management respects staff opinions.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

26) Staff skills development is one of the main priorities to develop human resources at the University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

27) The University's management is fair to all employees in terms of motivation and promotion.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

28) The University's management organises social activities for the staff and their families during the academic year.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

29) Our managers are task-oriented and are only concerned about doing and finishing the work without considering the human factors.

Task-oriented

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

30) Our managers are balanced between finishing the job and considering the human side. Task-relation-oriented.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

31) We work in a happy and healthy environment at this University.

Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

Thank you very much for your time to answer the questions