

# OER in Oman

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## 1. Partners and experts in Oman

None.

## 2. Oman in a nutshell

Oman, officially the Sultanate of Oman (Arabic: عُمان سلطنة), is an Arab country in southwest Asia on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It borders the United Arab Emirates on the northwest, Saudi Arabia on the west and Yemen on the southwest. The coast is formed by the Arabian Sea on the south and east and the Gulf of Oman on the northeast. The country also contains Madha, an exclave enclosed by the United Arab Emirates, and Musandam, an exclave also separated by United Arab Emirates territory.

Oman is a very ancient word and appears on very old maps. Little information exists regarding the origin of the word Oman: opinions of Arab geographers and historians differ greatly as to the origin of the name, some sources ascribing it to the Qahtani tribe of Oman and others linking it linguistically to a word meaning "settling" or "staying". Ibn al-Qabi says that Oman means "those who occupy a place", as in the adjective aamen or amoun (settled man), and that the word "Oman" was derived from this.

Others say that Oman was named after Oman bin Ibrahim al Khalil who built the city of Oman. Yet others believe the name to be taken from that of Oman bin Loot. A further explanation is that the Azd, a tribe migrating from Yemen to Oman in pre-Islamic times, labelled Oman "Omana" because they came from a valley in Ma'rib in Yemen which went by the name of Oman, and they likened it to this place.

Chief of state and government is the hereditary sultān, Qaboos Bin Said Al-Said, who appoints a cabinet called the "Diwans" to assist him. In the early 1990s, the sultan instituted an elected advisory council, the Majlis ash-Shura, though few Omanis were eligible to vote. Universal suffrage for those over 21 was instituted on 4 October 2003. There are no legal political parties nor, at present, any active opposition movement. A State Consultative Council, established in 1981, consisted of 55 appointed representatives of government, the private sector, and regional interests.

The Sultanate is divided into nine governorates and regions. Each governorate consists of states which share common cultures, habits, Arabic dialects, history, traditional clothing and traditional occupations.

The Governorate of Muscat is the most densely populated region in the Sultanate with a population of more than half a million. It is Oman's political, economic, and administrative centre.

The Governorate of Dhofar is in the far south of the Sultanate and borders on the Wusta Region the east, the Arabian Sea to the south, the Republic of Yemen to the west and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the north and north-west.

### **Population**

The Ministry of Economy estimates that in mid 2006 the total population was nearly 2.6 million. Of those, 1.8 million were Omanis. The population has grown from 2 million in the 1993 census to over 2.3 million in the 2003 census. In Oman, about 50% of the population lives in Muscat and the Batinah coastal plain northwest of the capital; about 200,000 live in the Dhofar (southern) region, and about 30,000 live in the remote Musandam Peninsula on the Strait of Hormuz. Some 600,000 expatriates live in Oman, most of whom are guest

workers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, India and the Philippines.

Of the total population, about 55% are Ibadi Muslims who are related to the early Kharajites. Sunnis account for 35% of the population while Shia Jaffaris are 7%. The remaining 3% of the population are Hindus, Christians and other minorities, most of whom are expatriates.

### 3. Education in Oman

#### **Policy**

Since the early 1970s when Oman's Renaissance began, a major concern of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has been to provide Education for all. In January 1994, Royal Decree 2/1994 separated the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) from the Ministry of Education; and gave the MoHE an independent mandate and a new organizational structure. It was at this time that six Colleges of Education under the jurisdiction of the MoHE were converted into Colleges of Education offering Bachelor degrees in Education. In the academic year 2005-06, and consistent with the planning imperatives of the MoHE, the Teacher Training Colleges were converted into degree-granting Colleges of Applied Sciences. The number of private universities and colleges in the Sultanate has increased dramatically and now stands at twenty-six. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of scholarships awarded to students to study in-country, as well as abroad.

The Ministry of Education undertakes many central functions, such as: designing and executing the educational policies through Ministerial and administrative decrees and circulars, stating the educational goals and setting up the strategies, plans and projects which are necessary for achieving the objectives of education in the country. These decrees and circulars translate the general policy into actions which should be taken by the employees of the different departments of the Ministry<sup>1</sup>.

The teaching of English has assumed increasing importance in recent years. Children start to learn English as a first second language from entrance level in many schools; however, government-run schools start at around 7 years. Acquiring a good level of the English language is necessary particularly in higher education colleges where science-based courses are conducted in that language.<sup>2</sup>

Oman has a very strong Omanisation policy and the government was aiming for 100% Omanisation of the teaching force by 2005. The following table represents the percentage Omanisation from 2006-2010<sup>3</sup>

<b>Private Schools</b>					
Academic	9	10	11	12	15
Non Academic	50	50	54	56	58
<b>Private Universities &amp; Colleges</b>					
Academic	8	10	12	14	16
Non Academic	62	65	68	71	74
<b>Private Training Centres &amp; Institutes</b>					

<sup>1</sup> Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>) World Data on Education. 7th edition, 2010/11

<sup>2</sup> Oman Cultural Office Washington DC. <http://www.omani.info/education.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.manpower.gov.om/en/omanisation\\_sector.asp](http://www.manpower.gov.om/en/omanisation_sector.asp)

Management & Finance	55	60	70	80	90
Technicians & Assistant Trainers	15	20	25	30	35
Trainers	15	20	25	30	35

### ***Overview of all sectors (schools and post-secondary)***

At present there are three stages of juvenile education: primary, preparatory and secondary. Primary school education usually begins at the age of six. Having passed the sixth primary grade examination between the ages of twelve and fourteen the pupil moves on to preparatory education. Students passing the general preparatory certificate examination are then admitted to the first grade of secondary school between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. On completion of their secondary education successful students can go on to advanced training at specialist colleges or enter Sultan Qaboos University.

The Ministry of Education makes special arrangements for the education of some 600 children who are blind, deaf and dumb or have other learning difficulties and are therefore unable to attend normal school. The Ministry is keen to increase the number of special needs schools of which there are currently only three in the entire Sultanate. Some are sent to an appropriate establishment in neighbouring countries.

### ***Laws***

Education policies in the Sultanate are based on the Basic Statute issued by Decree No. 101/96 which states that education is the fundamental basis for social progress sponsored by the State<sup>4</sup>.

Within this framework a new department, the Department of Regulations and Performance Evaluation, was created. Its functions are the enforcement of rules organizing the work of schools in the public sector, to supervise guidance counsellors in educational regions, and to evaluate the performance of schools.

Amendments have recently been completed on the regulations regarding Parent Councils in order to improve their role.

The Royal Decree No. 104/2005 established the Higher Education Admission Centre, affiliated to the Ministry of Higher Education. The Ministerial Decree No. 8/2011 issued by the Ministry of Higher Education on 29 January 2011 details the procedures for admission to higher education institutions.

Education is provided free of charge to all children from grade 1 to grade 12 (MOE, 2008). As at 2006 there is no set age in Oman for the end of compulsory education.

### ***Statistics***

Education and training in the Sultanate of Oman have developed at a staggering pace since the accession of Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970. At that time there were only three rudimentary schools in the entire country, with a total of 909 pupils and not more than thirty teachers. There are now over 1000 schools in Oman, 90% of them government-run (the remainder being private) providing education at primary, preparatory and secondary levels.

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<sup>4</sup> Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>) World Data on Education. 7th edition, 2010/11

The illiteracy rate in Oman, 9.1% in the age group 15 to 45 years, according to statistics of the final year of the census of population and housing facilities conducted in 2003. The most recent indicators imply that the rate of illiteracy by the end of 2006 is expected to decline to 7.2% in the same age category.

The strategic objective is to improve by 50% the levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and to reduce the current number in the Sultanate by half by 2015. Oman committed to these objectives by signing a UNESCO agreement at sponsored international conferences, including the Conference on Education for All, held in Dakar in 2000, which recommended the percentage of literacy by 2015<sup>5</sup>.

The total number of students in State education is around 560,000 of whom nearly half are female. There are presently 132 private schools in Oman, educating some 25,000 students.<sup>6</sup>

In 2003/04, there were 33 nurseries in Oman, 28 of which were located in the Muscat area, with a total enrolment of 1,400 children. In addition, there are 30 low-cost childhood day care centres which also fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Development. Care assistants attend to children aged between 6 months and 3 years, with 3-year-olds and above receiving kindergarten classes. There are also 36 'children's corners', of which 21 are run by Oman Women's Associations and 15 are affiliated with Women Rehabilitation Centres. Government units that provide preschool facilities for the children of their employees include the Royal Oman Police and the Royal Navy of Oman. A total of 39 home care centres were in existence in 2005, some of which were linked to Women's Development Centres.

The Qur'anic schools cater to children aged between 3 and 6. These fall into two categories, one supervised by the Ministry of Auqaf and Religious Affairs and the other by the private sector. In 2004, it was estimated that there were 105 schools supervised by the Ministry and that over 7,300 students were enrolled in these schools.

Between 1995 and 2005, the rise in enrolments in kindergartens made this the fastest growing sector of the education system, achieving an average annual growth rate of 7.3%. In 2003/04 the gross enrolment ratio was 6.5%. In 2005/06 there were 529 kindergarten classes in the private sector with 9,429 children enrolled (of whom 2,768 in KG1 and 6,661 in KG2) and 529 teachers.

In 2006/07 there were 37,469 children enrolled in preschool institutions, representing 28.4% of the total eligible population in the age group 3.5-5.5 years. (UNESCO, 2008). According to the Ministry of National Economy, in 2009/10 a total of 24,432 children were enrolled at the kindergarten level in private schools. (MONE, 2010).

In 1995/96, the average number of pupils per class was 34 for the elementary level and 31 for the preparatory level. The teacher-pupil ratio was 1:26 for the elementary level and 1:19 for the preparatory. In 2000/01 the teacher-pupil ratio was 23.7. In 2006/07, the net enrolment ratio for primary education (grades 1 to 6) was estimated at 89.7%, and the proportion of grade 1 pupils reaching grade 6 was 98.4% (UNESCO, 2008). In 2005/06, the gross enrolment ratio in grades 7-9 was estimated at 96.7% (99.8% for boys and 93.5% for girls), and the net enrolment ratio at 74.8% (73.9% for boys and 75.6% for girls). (MOE, 2008).

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.moe.gov.om/portal/sitebuilder/sites/EPS/English/MOE/literacy.aspx>

According to the Ministry of National Economy, in 2009/10 there were 802 basic education schools (of which 430 co-educational) and 238 general education schools (of which 56 co-educational) in the government sector. The total enrolment in basic education schools (grades 1-10) was 331,262 students; as regards general education schools (grades 1-12), the total enrolment was 200,131 students, of whom 28,628 in grades 1-6, 48,382 in grades 7-9 and 123,121 students in grades 10-12. There were 30,856 teachers (including 2,884 expatriate teachers) in basic education schools (of whom 21,206 were female teachers) and 5,685 administrative staff. In general education schools there were 13,650 teachers (including 1,935 expatriate teachers; the number of female teachers was 6,595), of whom 1,108 in grades 1-6, 2,560 in grades 7-9 and 9,982 teachers in grades 10-12. There were three special education schools with 214 teachers and 643 students enrolled; some 542 students were enrolled in 71 special education classes in 65 regular education schools. In the same year, there were 342 private schools with a total enrolment of 56,204 students, of whom 24,432 children at the kindergarten level, 30,070 students in grades 1-10 and 1,702 students in grades 10-12. There were 4,489 teachers (including 2,509 expatriate teachers) in private schools and 1,087 administrative staff. Finally, there were 33 foreign community schools in the Sultanate, with a total enrolment of 41,113 students (including kindergarten) and 1,620 teachers. (MONE, 2010).

In 1995/96, the average number of students per class was 31 and the average teacher-student ratio was 1:16. In 2000/01, the teacher-student ratio was 17.6:1. In 2005/06, the gross enrolment ratio for grades 10 to 12 was estimated at 83.7%, and the net enrolment ratio at 62.9% (62.4% for boys and 63.6% for girls). (MOE, 2008).

According to the Ministry of National Economy, in 2009/10 in the government sector the total enrolment in grades 10-12 of general education schools was 123,121 students. There were 9,982 teachers (including 1,431 expatriate teachers) in grades 10-12 of government general education schools. In 342 private schools, out of a total enrolment of 56,204 students (including 24,243 children at the kindergarten level) 1,702 students were enrolled in grades 10-12. (MONE, 2010)<sup>11</sup>.

### ***Ministries and Agencies***

Since its establishment in 1994, the Ministry of Higher Education has been dedicated to building a quality higher education system capable of serving the Sultanate's growing population. The Ministry's first priority was access and the number of Higher Education Institutions has rapidly increased to meet the demand for seats. At the same time, program offerings have been diversified in alignment with the requirements of the job market and national economic development.

Oman's system of higher education currently includes 27 private universities and colleges with an enrolment of some 35,000 students.

The Ministry of Higher Education encourages private HEIs to choose highly reputable universities as partners in academic affiliation agreements for the purpose of monitoring and improving quality, diversifying program offerings, and increasing the prestige of the degrees awarded by private HEIs.

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<sup>11</sup> Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>) World Data on Education. 7th edition, 2010/11

Male and female teachers are equal in salaries, employment conditions and other facilities offered by the Ministry. In-service training is a right for all teachers.

The Ministry recruits qualified supervisors to help teachers perform their duties. It also makes available references and guidebooks for all subjects. The Ministry organizes workshops and seminars to develop teachers' skills and abilities.

The Ministry also carries out different in-service training programmes such as:

- Short programmes: these include innovation courses, workshops and seminars of one week's duration.
- Mid-term programmes: one of these programmes is conducted for elementary teachers who obtain a university degree during their service as a teacher. The programmes aim to prepare teachers to teach at the preparatory level.
- Specialized courses: organized to meet the training needs of directors, deputy directors, teachers, librarians, laboratory technicians and other Ministry employees.
- The School Administration Diploma: school headmasters and their deputies are trained through an in-service course.
- The Advanced Educational Supervision Course: this is an in-service training course given to supervisors of the three levels.

### *The Ministry of Higher Education Vision Statement*

To ensure quality Higher Education that meets the requirements for sustainable development.

### *Mission Statement of the Ministry of Higher Education*

To promote a Higher Education system that: a) keeps pace with developments and changes in today's world; b) meets the requirements of sustainable development in the Knowledge Era, while preserving the cultural identity of Omani society; and, c) contributes to the progress and development of humankind

### *Strategic Objectives*

- To develop an overall administrative framework and increase its efficiency ensuring an effective response to ongoing changes and developments;
- To meet the ever-growing demand for seats in Higher Education from increasing numbers of qualified General Education Diploma graduates, as well as from the general public;
- To increase the efficiency of Oman's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in order to achieve high quality standards aligned with economic and social development requirements and national and global trends;
- To enhance the capacity of Oman in research and development;
- To promote Higher Education and keep the public informed of the Ministry's mandate and responsibilities.

Organisation structure of the MOHE is available at

<http://www.mohe.gov.om/OrganizationalStructure.aspx>

Major programmes include

- **The Graduates Survey System**

The Graduates Survey System is an instrument that allows the Ministry to collect data on graduates' whereabouts and their competency to enter the job market.

The survey has already covered graduates from private universities and colleges of the academic years 2002/2003, 2004/2005, and 2007/2008. The survey is now launched for the graduates of the academic years 2009/2010, and 2010/2011. For more details, visit [www.ogss.gov.om](http://www.ogss.gov.om)

- **Higher Education Statistical System**

The Higher Education Statistical System is managed by the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC); it is an electronic system designed to collect and disseminate detailed data about students, academics and administrators in all Higher Education Institutions in the Sultanate about Omani students who (will) study abroad, financial data on each Higher Education Institution, as well as data on graduated students.

- **The Omani American Summer Students Exchange Program 2012<sup>7</sup>**

#### *Ministry of Education Vision*

The Ministry of Education is determined to deliver the highest level of standards for the learning environment on all measures, focusing principally on education processes and its key elements such as administration and supporting services<sup>8</sup>

#### *Ministry of Education Vision Mission*

The Ministry of Education leads the mission to prepare a generation capable of carrying the nation's economic and social development duties. It gears all facilities, curricula, evaluation systems and high quality working force to serve all pupils in various education sectors along with deployment of modern technologies proportionate to Digital Oman Community Strategy.

Terms of reference are to be found on the MoE web site<sup>9</sup>

The MoE is further divided geographically into eleven regions<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://mohe.gov.om/InnerPage.aspx?id=e21b0883-632f-478f-b1c7-ad00bedca511&culture=en>

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Education home page

<http://home.moe.gov.om/english/showpage.php?CatID=22&ID=190>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.moe.gov.om/portal/sitebuilder/sites/eps/english/ips/right\\_menu/ministry/ektsas.aspx](http://www.moe.gov.om/portal/sitebuilder/sites/eps/english/ips/right_menu/ministry/ektsas.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Oman Educational Portal

[http://www.moe.gov.om/portal/sitebuilder/sites/eps/english/ips/right\\_menu/ministry/region.aspx](http://www.moe.gov.om/portal/sitebuilder/sites/eps/english/ips/right_menu/ministry/region.aspx)



## 4. Schools in Oman

The overall objectives of the school stages: Consistent with the general objectives of education in the Sultanate of Oman, have been to derive the overall objectives of the study phases, as follows:

(A) The general objectives of the basic education stage (grades 1 to 10): Overall basic education aims at the development of various aspects of personality of the learner in a comprehensive and integrated framework of the principles of the Islamic faith and Omani cultural identity.

(B) The overall objectives of grades (11-12): Seeking education in grades (11-12) to complete the objectives of Education, which start in grades (1-10 statute):

1. Promote loyalty to the homeland and to His Majesty Sultan.
2. Confirmation of belonging to the community and the Gulf Arab and Islamic world.
3. Reaffirm faith in the principles of the Islamic religion, creed and the consolidation of spiritual values in the minds of learners its application to life and make it a standard of conduct.
4. Pride in Arabic and its extension into education, arts mastery and to a standard sufficient for the adequate international communication.
5. Awareness of global trends and all aspects of the experiences of others in the light of Islamic values.
6. Development of thinking of all kinds, and the ability to solve problems employing science in practical life and related decision-making.
7. The composition of positive trends towards productive work of all types, levels and volunteer work, saving and maintaining the property.
8. Use active learning skills for self and continuous learning and the search for knowledge, production, communication, investment, and benefit from information technology appointed to achieve growth cultural, scientific and vocational learner.
9. The ability to interact with others peacefully, and social participation players based on an enlightened awareness of the rights and social obligations and the spirit of high responsibility.
10. Raising awareness of health, population, environmental, and the formation of positive trends in the environment, recognize the value of artistic and aesthetic taste.

Apart from the schools for Omani nationals, various other schools are present in Oman that accommodates children of the large expatriate population of Oman. These include Indian Schools, Bangladeshi Schools, Sri Lankan Schools, Pakistani Schools, The American School in Muscat, The American British Academy and the Philippine School Muscat<sup>10</sup>.

### 4.1 Pre-primary

Until recently, only private institutions, some government agencies and voluntary organizations provided preschool education. Five different types of early child care and education services exist, namely nurseries, day care centres, home care centres, Madrassas or Qur'anic schools and kindergartens. Nurseries cater for children aged between 3 months and 3.5 years. Day care centres cater for children aged between 6 months and 3 years, with 3-year-olds and above receiving kindergarten classes. Qur'anic schools provide services to children aged between 3 and 6. Kindergartens which cater to children in the age range 3.5

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<sup>10</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oman>

years and 5.5 years are the most formal of preschool services<sup>11</sup>.

Kindergartens are available in all private schools. Nurseries and kindergartens are available in some public establishments. The main objectives and aims of preschool education can be summarized as follows:

- promoting a balanced intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and moral development of the child's personality;
- strengthening Islamic principles, consolidating the Arabic language and developing children's sentiments towards their country and its various symbols and traditions;
- teaching the child to adopt positive attitudes and behaviour and enhancing the spirit of co-operation among children;
- developing the child's attitude towards the arts;
- acquainting the children with certain aspects, activities and social events characteristic of the Sultanate of Oman, and giving them the opportunity to participate therein;
- providing the child with the opportunity to exercise intellectual and social processes and skills that are supposed to be developed through the kindergarten curriculum, such as the ability to classify, compare and establish chronology;
- providing the children with the opportunity to exercise the maximum amount of activity and allowing them to express their sentiments, ideas and questions;
- preparing children for school education.

The curriculum at the kindergarten level is based on five modules: *Who am I?*; *My Kindergarten*; *My health and safety*; *People at work*; *Communication*. In addition, there is a sixth module entitled: *My country Oman*.

The notion of teaching periods, as understood in general education, does not apply at the preschool level. Attendance extends from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., the teacher being free to organize this period as she deems appropriate between school skills and artistic and leisure activities.

## 4.2 Primary

Elementary education lasts six years and children are accepted from the age of 6. According to the new system, which runs in parallel to the old one, basic education lasts ten years and is organized into two cycles—the first cycle covering grades 1 to 4 and the second consisting

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<sup>11</sup> Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>) World Data on Education. 7th edition, 2010/11

of grades 5 to 10. Basic education is provided free of charge<sup>11</sup>.

The elementary level aims at helping children to develop in a healthy and integrative manner, to acquire skills, competencies, knowledge and attitudes which will enable them to understand and appreciate social, environmental and economic relations within their community. The preparatory level aims to develop and direct students' aptitudes and abilities, to provide them with the appropriate knowledge, skills and key competencies and to assist them to progress to secondary education.

The main objectives of the curriculum (grades 1 to 10) are the following:

- developing the personality of the learner balancing physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional, according to the characteristics of growth;
- consolidating the principles of the Islamic faith in the minds of learners, and raising the practice of worship and commitment to the correct Islamic behaviour;
- raising the learners' pride in Arabic, and the development of his/her ability to use it diligently;
- instilling pride and the development of viable and elements of the cultural identity of the Omani learner;
- developing awareness of the importance of social controls, and respect public and private property;
- developing students' communication skills using a foreign language (English);
- developing the skills of the learner towards continuous self-learning;
- developing the use of the scientific method of thinking;
- providing the learner with basic skills needed to deal with contemporary science and technology;
- fostering the ability to develop creativity and innovation and deal with the future;
- providing the learner with basic skills necessary for life, and preparing him/her for work;
- teaching the learners the values and practices of preserving the environment;
- developing awareness of contemporary problems;
- developing learners' habits and behaviours of savings, consumption good;

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<sup>11</sup> Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>) World Data on Education. 7th edition, 2010/11

- developing awareness of the importance of leisure time, and how to organize it;
- developing creativity and aesthetic taste;
- fostering the values of tolerance, understanding, peace and coexistence with others.

The weekly lesson timetables for the elementary and the preparatory levels, as well as for the new basic education programme, are presented in the tables below:

#### Elementary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Islamic education	6	6	6	5	5	5
Arabic language	11	11	9	6	6	6
English language	–	–	–	4	4	4
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5
General science	2	2	3	3	3	3
Social studies (*)	1	1	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Art education	1	1	1	1	1	1
Music education	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vocational activities (*)	–	–	1	1	1	1
Practical activities	1	1	–	–	–	–
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>

*Source:* Information provided by the Gulf Arab States Educational Research Center (GASERC), November 2004. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes.

(\*) Social studies include: geography, history and civics. Vocational activities include home science for girls and agricultural activities for boys.

#### Preparatory education (lower secondary): weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form		
	I	II	III
Islamic education	4	4	4
Arabic language	6	6	6
English language	4	4	4
Mathematics	5	5	5
General science	4	4	4
Social studies	3	3	3
Physical education	1	1	1
Art education	1	1	1
Music education	1	1	1
Vocational activities	1	1	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>

*Source:* *Ibid.* Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes.

## New basic education programme: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade									
	First cycle				Second cycle					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Islamic education	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
Arabic language	12	12	10	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
English language	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mathematics	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
Sciences	3	3	3	5	5	5	6	6	6	8
Social studies	–	–	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Fine arts	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–
Environmental life skills	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Information technology	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>

*Source:* Information provided by the Gulf Arab States Educational Research Center (GASERC), November 2004. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes.

Arabic is the approved language of instruction for all subjects, except for English language classes.

### 4.3 Secondary

Preparatory education lasts three years and is an intermediate level between elementary and secondary school. Upon completion of this level, students sit an examination which entitles them, if successful, to enter the first year of secondary education. Islamic Institutes are similar to preparatory schools and the students follow the same preparatory courses; the main focus is on Islamic studies and the Arabic language. Vocational training centres offer three-year programmes to grade 9 graduates; upon successful completion of the training programme, trainees are awarded a certificate which specifies the specialization and vocational level attained. General secondary education lasts three years. At the end of this level, students sit a national examination to obtain the general secondary certificate. Technical and artistic education is parallel to the secondary level and lasts three years. Only boys are accepted to technical schools. In addition, there are two commercial schools and one industrial school. According to the new system, the ten-year basic education programme is followed by two years of post-basic secondary education<sup>11</sup>.

Until 1988/89 when the two-semester system was introduced, the assessment system emphasized end-of-year examinations. Currently, assessment for promotion to the next class at the end of each year of the preparatory and the secondary levels is done through four tests: two mid-semester tests and two at the end of the semester.

<sup>11</sup> Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>) World Data on Education. 7th edition, 2010/11

### General secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form				
	I	II		III	
		Arts	Science	Arts	Science
Islamic studies	4	4	4	4	4
Arabic language	7	9	5	9	5
English language	5	6	6	6	6
Mathematics	5	2	7	2	7
Chemistry	2	–	3	–	3
Physics	2	–	4	–	4
Biology	2	–	3	–	3
General science	–	2	–	2	–
History	2	3	–	3	–
Geography	2	4	–	4	–
Civics	1	–	–	–	–
Economics	–	2	–	2	–
Physical education	1	1	1	1	1
Fine arts	1	1	1	1	1
Home science (for girls)	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>

*Source:* Information provided by the Gulf Arab States Educational Research Center (GASERC), November 2004. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

### New general secondary education programme: weekly lesson timetable (draft)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	XI		XII	
	Arts	Science	Arts	Science
Islamic education	4	4	4	4
Arabic language	10	6	10	6
English language	7	7	7	7
Mathematics	3	8	3	8
Sciences	2	12	2	12
Social studies	9	–	9	–
Physical education	1	1	1	1
Economics/administrative sciences	2	–	2	–
Art education	1	1	1	1
Environmental life skills	1	1	1	1
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>

*Source:* Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes.

## 4.4 Private schools

The Government has encouraged the growth of private schools in the Sultanate and welcomes the contribution made by the private sector to the education system. In the year

2000 there were 132 private schools and kindergartens in the Sultanate providing pre-school, primary, preparatory and secondary education. Private school owners must be of Omani nationality and have at least a secondary school certificate. Private schools follow the same curriculum as Government schools and hold the same examinations<sup>11</sup>.

## 4.5 Homeschooling

Homeschooling is extremely rare but additional tuition is common as entry to reputable universities is very competitive<sup>12</sup>

## 4.6 Adult Education for school qualifications

Adult education operates in parallel with the regular education system allowing advanced courses and examinations to be taken. Great importance is attached to allowing those who, for one reason or another, have been unable to complete their education to continue with their studies<sup>13</sup>.

Literacy has been a key objective of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, so since the beginning of the blessed Renaissance in 1970, there were the adult literacy alongside the spread of education among young people. Literacy activity began in the academic year 73 /74 At the beginning of this activity, the duration of the study was two semesters; at the end student awarded a certificate granted freedom from illiteracy, which is equivalent to the level of success in the fourth grade (formal education). Free from illiteracy, he can join adult education classes, which held in the afternoon because it fits with the living conditions of students who are present in the morning in their work.

In the academic year 2005/2006 the schools extend the literacy phase from two to three years before joining the seventh grade in public education in educational centres devoted to adult education. The illiteracy rate in Oman is 9,1% in the age group from 15 to 45 years, according to final statistics for the Census of Population and Housing Censuses conducted in 2003, The most recent indicators are not final yet; indicate that the rate of illiteracy by the end of 2006 is expected to decline to 7.2% for the same age group, which is moderate compared with living conditions similar to the circumstances of the Sultanate.

### **Literacy curriculum:**

Plan of the current study in literacy extends to three years of study and consists of (7.5) months. For the first academic year, the plan consists of (15) study lessons per week for males and (16) for females (including the classes of family education that is taught to females only). As for the second year it is (18) lessons per week for males and (19) lessons for females. The school plan for the third year consists of (25) periods per week for all students, male and female and the lessons time (40) minutes. Literacy classes, first and second grades has four core subjects, a book allocated for every subject, as for the third grade literacy learners study six subjects .

### **Qualitative expansion in literacy programs:**

Next to the open classes for students in literacy centres, the ministry introduced a number of teaching programs for literacy of certain social segments, but that, whatever the social strata that have been targeted for literacy, has been freed from illiteracy, to be provided with a set of books carried the name of the adult library, the books varied in different areas of education aimed at stimulating freed from

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<sup>12</sup> Various forums such as <http://www.omanforum.com/forums/showthread.php?28761-Homeschooling>

<sup>13</sup> Oman Educational Portal

[http://www.moe.gov.om/portal/sitebuilder/sites/eps/english/ips/right\\_menu/edu\\_system/edusystem/litrcy.aspx](http://www.moe.gov.om/portal/sitebuilder/sites/eps/english/ips/right_menu/edu_system/edusystem/litrcy.aspx)

illiteracy to continue reading habit.

#### **Special programs for the women education:**

This was done in collaboration between the Ministries of Education and Social Affairs and Labour and Vocational Training, and specifically (National Program for the development of local communities – and women’s associations) in order to provide places of study and preparation of programmes for literacy in remote villages away from schools and, in particular, nomadic areas and aims at Women’s Education. After reading and writing the women students learn everything about her life as a girl, a wife, a housewife and is reflected in the celebrated crafts in the surroundings such as sewing, embroidery and palm tree leaves crafts, cooking, and housekeeping.

#### **Fruits of the efforts of literacy:**

From the above we can say that the activity of literacy in the Sultanate could also be expanded to reach all regions of the Sultanate, as it was able to develop the quality and quantity through various programs that have been applied and materials that have been taught, since the Ministry of Education has spared no effort in mobilizing the energies and harness potential through the integration of efforts and experience in coordination with relevant parties where there are many achievements, which gave the march literacy momentum forward to the quantity and quality. The best evidence of this is an award won by the Sultanate for cultural literacy among Arab countries in 1997 which is a trophy from the Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science and a certificate of appreciation and a cash prize in recognition for outstanding effort in the Sultanate of Oman in the field of literacy and adult education.

## **4.7 List of Schools**

An incomplete list of [schools](#) in [Oman](#)<sup>14</sup>:

Most of these schools are located in [Muscat](#), the capital of Oman.

- [Ahmed Bin Majid Private School](#)
- [A’ssafwah Private School \(al-Khoud\)](#)
- [Al-Huda Private School](#)
- [Al Ibdaa Private School](#)
- [Apple Green Private School](#)
- [Al Sahwa School](#)
- [Al Muhana bin Sultan School](#)
- [American British Academy](#)
- [The American International School of Muscat \(TAISM\)](#)
- [The Supreme Private School \(TSPS\)](#)
- [Azzan Bin Qais International School- Bausher \(ABQIS- Bausher\)](#)
- [Azzan Bin Qais International School- Seeb \(ABQIS- Seeb\)](#)
- [Bangladesh School](#)
- [Egyptian School](#)
- [British School Muscat](#)
- [Indian School Al Ghubra](#)
- [Indian School Ibri](#)
- [Indian School Ibra](#)
- [Indian School Muladha](#)
- [Indian School Muscat](#)
- [Indian School Darsait](#)
- [Indian School Salalah](#)
- [Indian School Wadi Kabir](#)

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<sup>14</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_schools\\_in\\_Oman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_schools_in_Oman)



- Indian School Al-Seeb
- Indian School Nizwa
- Itlalat Al-Majd Private School
- The International School Of Choueifat, Muscat (Formerly "The Modern Education School")
- Muscat International School
- National Private School (NPS)
- National Nursery Montessori
- Pakistan School Muscat
- Qurum Private School
- Royal Flight School
- Shatti Al-Qurum School
- Sri Lankan School
- The Sultan's School
- TLC International School Nursery & Primary (children aged 1 to 11 years old) (www.tlcoman.com)(info@tlcoman.com)
- French School, Muscat
- International School of Oman-Muscat
- Beaconhouse School
- Sohar International School in Sohar
- Al Batinah International School in Sohar
- omar bin al khattab School Al Buraimi
- Tawam International School, Al Buraimi

## 5. Further and Higher education in Oman

Higher education is offered at the Sultan Qaboos University and several post- secondary specialized colleges and institutes. On the basis of the Oman National Qualifications Framework at the undergraduate level one-year programmes lead to a certificate, two-year programmes to a diploma (including associate degree), and three-year programmes lead to an advanced diploma. The duration of bachelor's degree programmes is normally four years (five years in the case of architecture and engineering; a minimum of five and a half years in the case of medicine). At the postgraduate level, a postgraduate diploma requires one year of study, and a master's degree normally takes two years to complete. The duration of doctoral degree programmes is two to four years.

The teacher training programme consists of 75 credit hours distributed over two years (four semesters). Each semester is 18 to 21 credit hours, plus some other hours for practical lessons in laboratories and other sports and arts activities. The programme consists of three major groups of courses divided into minor groups as follows:

- *General culture programme:* it consists of several theoretical and practical courses which are required from all students who join these colleges. This programme is common for all higher education students.
- *Behavioural culture programme:* this is a general requirement in the teacher training programme. All trainees should pass the courses of this programme. The courses consist of educational and psychological studies and of theoretical and practical units.
- *Specialization programme:* this programme trains the student teacher in two different specializations: a) Elementary education specialization: this specialization prepares trainees to teach all subjects in the first three grades of elementary school.

b) One subject specialization: the student teacher is specialized in one subject of the upper elementary classes.

List of tertiary education establishments in Oman<sup>15</sup>

- Sultan Qaboos University
- College of Banking and Financial Studies
- Ibri College of Applied Sciences
- Sur College of Applied Sciences
- Rustaq College of Applied Sciences
- Salalah College of Applied Sciences
- Sohar College of Applied Sciences
- Nizwa College of Applied Sciences
- Higher College of Technology
- Al Musanna College of Technology
- Nizwa College of Technology
- Salalah College of Technology
- Shinas College of Technology
- Ibra College of Technology
- Ibri College of Technology

## 5.1 Universities in Oman

The Ministry encourages the private sector to establish colleges and institutes of higher education. There are 14 privately owned Colleges of Higher Education which operate under license from the Ministry of Higher Education and are at different stages of development. Three of these are designated University Colleges: Caledonian College of Engineering, Majan College and Sur University College. All 14 are affiliated to Universities in the UK, USA, Australia or India. There are at least 20 Further Education colleges and institutes in the Sultanate. The diplomas awarded at the end of one to three year courses qualify the students to enter overseas universities. The first women's college in Oman, the Mazoon College for Management and Applied Sciences, opened during 1999. This was followed by Al Zahra College for Girls.

The German University. The German University is now prominent <http://www.gutech.edu.om> The Constitution of the University provides the framework for orderly academic association within the German University of Technology in Oman (GUTech).

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). Since its establishment in 1986, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has developed into a prestigious university, offering enlightening programs that meet high standards of quality. The University has become an established centre of knowledge and expertise in fields that relate to Omani culture and national development, as well as a wide range of academic disciplines. The University's pre-eminence has been achieved by excellence in the enactment of the University's four main responsibilities: teaching; research; community engagement; and, cooperation with other Higher Education Institutions in and outside the Sultanate. The University currently has nine colleges:

- Arts & Social Sciences
- Commerce & Economics
- Science
- Education
- Agriculture & Marine Sciences
- Engineering
- Medicine & Health Sciences
- Nursing
- Law

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<sup>15</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_universities\\_and\\_colleges\\_in\\_Oman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_and_colleges_in_Oman)

The total number of students enrolled at Sultan Qaboos University during the academic year 2009/2010 was approximately 17,000. For more information, For more information, see [www.squ.edu.om](http://www.squ.edu.om)

For information on other Government Higher Education Institutions in the Sultanate, consult the section on the Colleges of Applied Sciences on this website, as well as the websites for the Ministries of Health, Manpower, Defence, Aqaf & Religious Affairs; and the Royal Oman Police

The 500-bed teaching hospital, which opened in 1989, has a staff establishment of over one thousand. There are 200 academic staff and some 800 supporting staff.

An approved list of Universities abroad can be found at <http://eservices.mohe.gov.om/Student/FindExtUniversity.aspx>

Sohar University, Sohar University was opened in the academic year 1997 – 1998 under the name of 'Sohar College for Applied Sciences'. In the academic year 2000 – 2001, it was made the first private university in the Sultanate of Oman. This was a remarkable step taken by the Board of Directors of the Omani Company for Educational and Training Investments that followed the vision of His Majesty the Sultan Qaboos, the founder and the leader of Modern Oman<sup>16</sup>.

Dhofar University, Dhofar University (DU) is a private, not-for-profit institution of higher education in Salalah, Sultanate of Oman, established by Ministerial Decree No. 5/2004, issued in January 2004. It has a Board of Trustees that represents its highest policy making body. The students were allowed to continue their studies under the umbrella of Dhofar University; their program of study became known as the Yarmouk University Program (YUP) in order to distinguish it from the new curriculum known as Dhofar University Program (DUP). The YUP was phased out in 2007<sup>17</sup>.

Nizwa University, The University of Nizwa was established in 2002 by the Decree of His Majesty the Sultan Qaboos as the first non-profit university in the Sultanate of Oman; it remains the only institution of its kind in the nation. On 16 October 2004, the University of Nizwa opened its doors to its inaugural class of 1,200 students, 88% of whom were Omani women<sup>18</sup>.

Buraimi University, The University of Buraimi-UOB is committed to quality education ensuring its students will enrich the workforce of the Sultanate of Oman, the region and the global markets. Uob is academically affiliated with IMC Fh-Krems, University of Applied Sciences-Austria, University of Vienna-Austria, University of Technology-Austria, University of Applied Sciences FH Campus Wien-Austria and University of Bradford-United Kingdom<sup>19</sup>.

Sharqiyah University. A'Sharqiyah University (ASU) is a private institution of higher education located in the north of the A'Sharqiyah region of the Sultanate of Oman. It is located in Ibra 150 km from Muscat, the capital. It was established in 2009 by the Ministerial Decision (78/2009) issued by Ministry of Higher Education. The University co-operates with Oklahoma State University and Texas Technological University in the U.S.A, in areas such as design of academic programs and their implementation according to best

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.soharuni.edu.om>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.du.edu.om>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.unizwa.edu.om/index.php?contentid=1>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.uob.edu.om/Home.aspx>

international standards<sup>20</sup>.

Teacher training colleges are planned.

For men at :

Nizwa, Sur, Sohar Salalah

For women at :

Rustaq and Ibri

## 5.2 Polytechnics in Oman

The Institute of Health Sciences, under the Ministry of Health, was founded in 1982. Muscat Technical Industrial College (later renamed the Higher College of Technology), founded in 1984, has departments of computing and mathematics, laboratory science, and electrical, construction, and mechanical engineering<sup>21</sup>.

The Oman Natural History Museum, founded in 1983, includes the national herbarium and the national shell collection. All of these organizations are located in Muscat<sup>22</sup>.

## 5.3 Colleges in Oman

Teacher training colleges are planned.

For men at :

Nizwa, Sur, Sohar Salalah

For women at :

Rustaq and Ibri

## 6. Education reform in Oman

The reforms got under way only recently, so it may be too early to measure their impact. We conclude by highlighting what will be gained by making policy evaluation an integral part of the reform process, including the benefits that will accrue in the form of lessons learned and knowledge gained from the extensive changes under way<sup>23</sup>.

It is also too soon to make an accurate evaluation of the degree to which changes in curriculum content have responded to expectations. There is no doubt that some of the proposed changes correspond to best practices in developed countries such as making students the centre of education, encouraging them to investigate, find answers to questions themselves, promulgating experiential learning, work in co-operative groups, and inviting students to express their views and engage in participatory learning. It is legitimate to ask how successful teachers and administrators have been in introducing these recommended practices. One can say that teachers are not well prepared and trained to

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.asu.edu.om/asuedu/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.hct.edu.om>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/natureplus/blogs/micropalaeo/tags/oman?fromGateway=true>

<sup>23</sup> Salha A. Issan, Nariman M. M. Gomaa Post Basic Education Reforms in Oman: A Case Study Faculty of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman , Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ), Volume 1, Issue 1, March 2010

implement the new programme.

Constraints and obstacles facing the implementation of the reforms still lie ahead since the majority of Omani job-seekers are secondary school leavers. Most of them have no professional or vocational qualification, which prevents their integration into the labour market or, positions or jobs offered may prove to be unsuited to the competencies of individuals, and some positions and jobs may require skills, competencies, or specific knowledge that the applicants do not possess <sup>24</sup>. Additionally, seeking the academic route is still predominant by the majority <sup>25</sup>.

The new vocational courses are still theory based. Furthermore, the school buildings and facilities such as labs, workshops, are not well developed to cope with the new demand of implementation. The school plan, until now, is spent within the school premises.

Educational reforms responded to computerization and access to the internet and all schools are equipped with computers and labs, but are teachers prepared to cope with the new technology and exchange knowledge? The majority are not aware of applying strategies of teaching and learning vocational skills. The in-service training applied was designed for short periods known as 'hit and run', with no time for application. Strengthening, collaboration, and partnership between the MoE. and labour sectors and the expansion of technical-vocational education could be a solution.

As the reforms have not been fully implemented and the old system and the new one (basic education) are co-existing, an overall summative evaluation is left to the future. The evaluation work that is being done now relates more to the implementation process (formative evaluation) than to the whole philosophy of the reform.

The concepts and principles of school-based management are strictly implemented and they concentrate on execution of rules and regulations approved by the MoE. As a result, school administrations as well as teachers have a limited role in decision making concerning curriculum, evaluation, and other aspects relating to post-Basic Education reform.

To face such obstacles, the application of the applied courses needs to be fully implemented in a real world. Therefore, the principle of partnership and the application of working experience outside the school should be introduced. Full implementation of school-based management is essential in managing change and development of curriculum, evaluation, and in-service training for teachers.

Understanding accountability measures and applying quality indicators throughout the reforms are very important issues. Establishment of measurement and criteria can improve implementation, and increase students' achievement. Finally, partnership and effective engagement with economic sectors plays an essential role in the success of the Post-Basic

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<sup>24</sup> Rassekh, S., The challenges facing education and curriculum development at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in *The management of curriculum change and adaptation in the gulf region*. Shapur Rasseh and Geannine Thomas (eds) final report of the seminar held in Muscat, 17-21 February. IBE, Unesco, Geneva, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Al Nuemi, S.S., *Developing secondary in Oman*, retrieved from <http://reference.ksu.edu.sa/pdf>,

Education system.

To conclude, Oman in many of its declared strategies is entering the global economy, to achieve these strategies, Oman needs to transform itself into an innovative economy in which competitiveness is no longer based on hiring unskilled labour with low wages to continue to prosper in the decades ahead. Post- secondary education should continue to emphasise the developing of individual needs through curriculum where science and technology are integrated. Oman needs an education system where creativity, imagination, and economy knowledge are embodied in well educated knowledge workers who are the main source of national prosperity and welfare.

## 7. Administration and finance in education in Oman

### *Introduction*

The Government of Oman provides education free of charge at all levels, from grade one through university in government institutions. The Government also provides books and transportation for children in the school system. Students in government HEIs do not pay tuition fees and are provided with books, supplies, and accommodation or allowances<sup>26</sup>.

All public HEIs are fully funded by government revenues which cover all capital and operating expenditures as well as tuition, and include student allowances generous enough at the high end (students at Sultan Qaboos University) to cover books, accommodation and living expenses. At the same time, Government subsidizes private colleges through scholarships, land grants and tax exemptions. In addition, qualifying private universities receive a grant of RO 17 million for quality improvements directly related to the classroom and learning resources and a matching grant of RO 3 million, totaling RO 20,000,000, or approximately 52,000,000 US\$<sup>27</sup>

New avenues for funding are opening up, as, for example, Sultan Qaboos University seeks to generate new sources of revenue through independent entrepreneurial ventures. Business and industry are largely untapped as sources of investment. A new private-public partnership model has been developed with the growth of tourism and following the success of the Sohar industrial project, as evidenced in the creation of the International Marine College of Oman and the Oman Tourism College

Performance-based funding, while desirable, is probably not a possibility for the immediate future, although there are informal mechanisms for rewarding performance in the allocation of more scholarships to better performing institutions and fewer to poor performers.

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<sup>26</sup>[http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Policy\\_Forums/2009/Alshmeli\\_Oman.pdf](http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Forums/2009/Alshmeli_Oman.pdf)

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[http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Policy\\_Forums/2009/Alshmeli\\_Oman.pdf](http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Forums/2009/Alshmeli_Oman.pdf)

## 7.1 Schools

School Name	Contact Details	Curriculum	Level	Annual Tuition Fees for 2012-2013 in Riyals Omani (RO)
American British Academy	<b>Location:</b> Madinat Qaboos, Muscat <b>Tel:</b> +968 24603646 <b>Website:</b> www.abaoman.edu.om Email: admin@abaoman.edu.om	American Curriculum	KG- Grade 12	<b>KG1:</b> 2,720 <b>KG2:</b> 3,280 <b>KG3-Grade5:</b> 3,600 <b>Grades (6-8):</b> 5,050 <b>Grades (9-10):</b> 5,470 <b>Grades (11-12):</b> 6,590
The American International School of Muscat (TAISM)	<b>Location:</b> Azaiba <b>Tel:</b> +968 24595180 <b>Website:</b> www.taism.com <b>Email:</b> info@taism.com	American Curriculum	ECY- Grade12	<b>Early Childhood Years:</b> 4,165 <b>Kindergarten- Grades (1-5):</b> 6,580 <b>Grades (6-8):</b> 7,835 <b>Grades (9-12):</b> 8,300
The British School Muscat	<b>Location:</b> Madinat Qaboos, Muscat <b>Tel:</b> +968 24600842 <b>Website:</b> www.britishschoolmuscat.com <b>Email:</b> admin@britishschoolmuscat.com	British Curriculum	Nursery- Year 13	<b>Nursery:</b> 2,910 <b>Reception:</b> 3,540 <b>Years (1-2):</b> 3,810 <b>Years (3-6):</b> 3,990 <b>Years (7-9):</b> 5,340 <b>Years (10-11):</b> 6,060 <b>Years (12-13):</b> 7,110
Muscat International School	<b>Location:</b> Qurum <b>Tel:</b> +968 24565550 <b>Website:</b> www.misoman.org	English National Curriculum	Pre KG- Year 12	<b>Pre KG:</b> 1,500 <b>KG (1-2):</b> 1,700 <b>Years (1-2):</b> 2,400 <b>Years (3-4):</b> 2,550 <b>Years (5-6):</b> 2,750 <b>Years (7-8):</b> 2,950 <b>Years (9-10):</b> 3,250 <b>Years (11-12):</b> 4,000
Sultan's School	<b>Location:</b> A'Soroor St, Al Hail South, Seeb <b>Tel:</b> +968 24536777 <b>Website:</b> www.sultansschool.org <b>Email:</b> admissions@sultansschool.org	English National Curriculum	KG- Year 13	<b>KG:</b> 1,900 <b>Years (1-2):</b> 2,600 <b>Years (3-4):</b> 2,700 <b>Years (5-6):</b> 2,850 <b>Year 7:</b> 2,900 <b>Years (8-9):</b> 3,200 <b>Years (10-11):</b> 3,500 <b>Years (12-13):</b> 3,900
International School of Chouifat – Muscat	<b>Location:</b> Seeb <b>Tel:</b> +96824534000 <b>Website:</b> www.iscoman-sabis.net	The SABIS® Educational System	KG- Year 12	Fees not available online; contact the school admissions directly.

*\*Last updated June 2012.*

Most schools divide annual fees into three, each payable at the start of each semester. The tuition fees listed here do not include registration or application fees, books, bus transportation, sports, music, or any other miscellaneous fees.

## 7.2 Post-secondary

[[divide into universities, polytechnics and colleges if need be  
for colleges, describe the student fees regime if colleges charge student fees]]

## 8. Quality assurance, inspection and accreditation

### 8.1 Schools

Several steps have been taken by the Ministry in the field of evaluation and examinations, including the creation of a Higher Committee of Examinations formed to supervise the evaluation system in all its aspects. The aim of this committee is to upgrade the standard and the efficiency of evaluation. The committee consists of several specialists from Sultan Qaboos University and the Teacher Training Colleges, beside experts from the Ministry of Education.

Within the framework of this Committee, other specialized committees for different school subjects have been formed. These specialized committees have studied the contents of the curricula during the period 1993-1996. They have also revised the educational objectives and have designed the behavioural objectives and the objectives of evaluation of the third year of secondary education. The committees have also set up specifications for examination questions. Local technical committees have been formed in the regions to be concerned with procedural and technical aspects of evaluation.

Between 1993 and 2001 the country participated in four UNESCO/UNICEF- sponsored Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) studies, one each for grades 4, 6, 9 and 10. In grades 4, 6 and 9 achievement levels were tested in Arabic, mathematics, science and life skills, while in grade 10 students were evaluated in Arabic, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. The findings indicated low students' achievement levels in all four of the subjects considered—particularly mathematics in grade 6.

Another study has been carried out in 2003/04 at the level of the first cycle of basic education (grade 4 pupils). Tests were administered in Arabic, English, mathematics and science to some 7,700 grade 4 pupils in all regions. The results indicated that pupils were on average approximately one year behind international standards. Compared to international norms, there were approximately three times as many pupils with difficulties in reading. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, with girls doing much better, especially in Arabic. Oman agreed to participate in the fourth cycle of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 2007. Concerning the Year 8 mathematics test, the Oman score (372) was significantly low; as regards the Year 8 science test, the Oman score (423) also was below the average.

In addition to international testing the Ministry of Education adopted national tests in four main subjects: Arabic, English, mathematics and science. The implementation started in the academic year 2006/07 and targets students in grades 4, 7, and 10. (MOE, 2006 and 2008)<sup>28</sup>.

### 8.2 Quality Assurance in higher education

The most significant event in capacity-building for quality assurance in the Sultanate was

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<sup>28</sup> Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>) World Data on Education. 7th edition, 2010/11



the institution of an accreditation mechanism in the year 2001. It was then that the Oman Accreditation Board was established by Royal Decree as an independent body reporting to the Council of Higher Education<sup>29</sup>.

The Accreditation Board is now incorporated in an entity consisting of a governing board and an operational staff or secretariat. Together, the Board and Secretariat are called the Oman Accreditation Council (OAC). The Board consists of ten members appointed from among senior academic staff in the higher education system and from among high level professionals in the private and government sectors.

The Board is charged with assisting in the development of the country's higher education sector through institutional accreditation (which includes quality audit) as well as through the program accreditation processes. In collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), the Board also has responsibilities for establishing academic standards, and providing training and networking opportunities.

## 9. Information society in Oman

### 9.1 Internet in Oman

Information Technology Authority (ITA) works with a vision to transform the Sultanate of Oman into a sustainable Knowledge Society by leveraging Information and Communication Technologies to enhance government services, enrich businesses and empower individuals.

ITA is pioneering the implementation of eOman. eOman comprises of a wide range of initiatives and services that are designed and created to improve the efficiency of government services, enhance the activities of businesses and empower individuals with skills and knowledge, to meet society's needs and expectations and to direct Oman towards becoming a sustainable Knowledge-based Economy<sup>30</sup>.

ITA is working towards transforming Oman through the following key initiatives:

Setting up a unified e-Government architecture Availing broadband communications Creating an ICT infrastructure Simplifying and streamlining all government processes Enabling customer-centric e-Government services Enabling easy access to timely and relevant public information accessible Developing plans and policies for training and development of human resources in IT Empowering consumers with IT skills and knowledge through awareness and training campaigns Deploying ICT education and training programs suitable for various segments of the society Creating formal and informal communication channels
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In 2005, Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM) was established to support technology-oriented businesses in the Knowledge Era. KOM brings together a diversity of enterprises from industry, including e-commerce, e-security, and software development to international airline call centres. The Knowledge Oasis is now home to over sixty companies, including

<sup>29</sup>[http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Policy\\_Forums/2009/Alshmeli\\_Oman.pdf](http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Forums/2009/Alshmeli_Oman.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.ita.gov.om/ITAPortal/ITA/ITA\\_initiatives.aspx?NID=5](http://www.ita.gov.om/ITAPortal/ITA/ITA_initiatives.aspx?NID=5)

HP, Oracle, Microsoft, NCR, Motorola and Huawei. Also on the property are two IT Colleges – Waljat Colleges and the Middle East College of Information Technology<sup>31</sup>.

The Ministry of Higher Education has undertaken major initiatives in offering e-Services to the public, including the development of a Higher Education Admissions Centre (HEAC), designed to organise and streamline the admissions and scholarship allocation processes. Through the HEAC system, students use home computers, or access a computer lab at one of 500 centres located throughout the country, where trained staff help them apply on line.

While not everyone has a home computer, most people have access to a mobile phone; and now, through an innovation that won a prestigious international award, students can also apply by SMS text on their mobile phones. This innovative use of mobile phone technology in a centralized application process was apparently a first world-wide.

Oman's HEAC system has virtually revolutionised the once cumbersome and time-consuming application process, streamlining it and making it highly efficient and effective. It also makes the selection process more transparent.

Technology is becoming an increasingly relevant part of students' lives. This article discusses ways to best utilize technology and multimedia elements in the classroom.

Today's students feel comfortable with technology because they have grown up with it as a major part of their lives. Most have acquired the ability to use multiple technologies at once.

The Sultanate's strategy to fully liberalize the communication sector has provision to allow private operators of internet services. Oman Telecommunication Company (Omantel), the government agency in-charge of communications in the Sultanate, was privatized in March 2002. It currently provides the countries fixed-line and internet services. It has completed several fibre optic projects in the interior regions of the Sultanate and linked the remote islands with microwave link<sup>32</sup>.

Wireless connectivity for broadband services is available for adoption in Oman. Currently the mobile communication service providers offer a wireless connectivity for accessing the Internet. Such a service connects to the Internet, using a WiFi enabled laptop, PDA or mobile device to make it possible to conduct remote meetings and tele-presentations as well as process emails (ITA, 2007). Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) is a governmental agency established in 2002 to regulate telecommunication activities at the national level (TRA, 2006).

Other regulatory bodies and strategies were formed to introduce e- Government and create a 'digital society'. In 1998, the National Information Technology Committee was set up to oversee the development of the Sultanate's information technology sector and to work towards an e- government initiative. This committee set up the 'Information Technology Task Force' as the technical action group comprising representatives of the competent departments and bodies and the National Information Technology Strategy was launched in

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<sup>31</sup>[http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Policy\\_Forums/2009/Alshmeli\\_Oman.pdf](http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Forums/2009/Alshmeli_Oman.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> CASES ON CHALLENGES FACING E-LEARNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Institutional Studies and Practices VOLUME: II, Editor Ugur DEMIRAY

November 2002.

E-Oman, the digital society plan of action, incorporated a range of initiatives towards provision of government services through electronic channels, building ICT capacity within various segments of corporate sector and the common public. E-Oman comprises of a wide range of initiatives and services that are designed and created to improve the efficiency of government services, enhance the activities of businesses and empower individuals with skills and knowledge, to meet society's needs and expectations and to direct Oman towards becoming a Knowledge-based Economy.

The implementation of the strategy began in May 2003 with the following focus areas: streamlining government services to citizens and business, creating and nurturing knowledge-based industries developing a local ICT sector, supporting a better competitive environment, providing employment for Omani youth, enabling better healthcare, improving educational opportunities, supporting tourism sector, enhancing social development using IT, making Oman a more attractive destination for foreign investment and conducive for business. Knowledge Oasis is the Information Technology park of Oman.

It is a public-private sector led initiative committed to creating a multi- stakeholder environment. In such an environment, entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises as well as established multi-nationals can innovate and nourish the ICT sector within the region. The park now hosts two dedicated technical colleges to groom and nurture future talents and upgrade the manpower skills required for various businesses. The National Information Technology Training and Awareness Initiative is a nation-wide initiative aimed at developing ICT skills capability and increasing ICT awareness within the government and the community. The Government Information Technology Training project aims to train and certify all civil service employees during the three year period 2007-2010. The Community Information Technology Training project aims to set up community technology learning centres throughout the country. The primary purpose of these centres will be to reduce computer illiteracy and bridge the digital divide by providing free or low cost information technology education to the community. ITA launched pilot programs in the first and second quarter of 2007 in order to prepare a framework for national implementation of community information technology training (ITA, 2007).

In response to academic and training needs, Omani specialists in educational and information technologies have formed a professional society, the Omani Society of Educational Technology (OSET). As an ICT in education expert group, OSET, which was formally inaugurated in 2006, aims to: (1) conduct research on educational technology impact on education in Oman and the Gulf states; (2) present the society role and emphasize its contribution to the socio-educational developments; (3) form a niche to the Omani/Gulf specialists and develop their experiences; (4) keep abreast of the technological innovation in education and disseminate their applications within the Omani society; and (5) link with similar associations in the Gulf and other parts of the world. OSET has conducted many workshops and seminars and plans to have its first international conference in March 2010. It also plans to issue a specialized reviewed journal of its own (OSET, 2009).

Internet World Stats<sup>33</sup> provides statistics on rankings, technology and uptake

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm>

## 9.2 Internet in education in Oman

### ***The Digital Oman Strategy***<sup>34</sup>

In summary:

- Streamlining Government services to citizens and business
- Creating and nurturing knowledge-based industries
- Developing a local ICT sector
- Supporting a better competitive environment
- Providing employment for Omani youth
- Enabling better healthcare
- Improving educational opportunities
- Supporting tourism sector
- Enhancing social development using IT

Making Oman a more attractive destination for foreign investment and conducive for business

### ***E-Oman***

e-Oman will leverage ICT for economic and social gain to enrich the lives of the people of Oman. Integrating government departments to provide better and more efficient public services, helping people acquire ICT skills required to live in a knowledge society, helping businesses save more time and money through smart electronic services, developing local ICT industries, building a secure foundation for e-Commerce transactions and minimizing the Digital Divide are some initiatives undertaken by e-Oman.

Some eOman services presently under development are: Government Convergent Network, Government Nervous System, Government e-Services Gateway (UBAR portal), Institutions Data Bank, People Data Bank (National Registration System), e-Payments Infrastructure (EFT, RTGS etc.), Geographical Information Systems (GIS), and E-Mail Services.

Resource: -

[http://math-and-reading-help-for-kids.org/articles/Tips\\_for\\_Incorporating\\_Technology\\_and\\_Multimedia\\_into\\_Lesson\\_Plans.html](http://math-and-reading-help-for-kids.org/articles/Tips_for_Incorporating_Technology_and_Multimedia_into_Lesson_Plans.html)

### ***Educational internets in Oman***

Via OMANUNA one can access the following services<sup>35</sup>:

- Educational Portal Services
- Electronic Learning and Training System
- Exams Results for Basic and General Education

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<sup>34</sup> <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan046472.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.oman.om/wps/portal/!ut/p/c1/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3hjA3cDA39LT1\\_vEF9HAYPjMDcvSx8zYxcXE\\_3g1Dz9gmXHRQAjzGYv/](http://www.oman.om/wps/portal/!ut/p/c1/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3hjA3cDA39LT1_vEF9HAYPjMDcvSx8zYxcXE_3g1Dz9gmXHRQAjzGYv/)

- Register new students for grade1 in basic education system
- School Management System
- SMS service from the Ministry of Education
- Transfer of Students
- Update Student's Information
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Within the Educational Portal Service the following are available:

- newsletters
- general information
- search services (engine Afterwards)
- participate in the voting
- declarations
- guide
- articles and news.

There are other services are limited to users / subscribers of the gate, including:

- Service written and audio chat service
- SMS service .
- acoustic interaction IVR
- technical fax machine to sending
- mobile phone service
- In addition to services available to visitors at the front page.

### 9.3 Copyright law in Oman

The Omani copyright law, issued by Royal Decree No.65/2008 dated May 4, 2008, became effective on May 18, 2008.

The law grants protection to authors of literary, artistic and scientific works whatever the value, kind or purpose or way of expression of the work is. Generally, the protection will be provided for works whose means of expression is writing, sound, drawing, image or motion picture. It will also include creative titles and computer software, which are published, acted or displayed for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman or abroad.

The term of protection is the lifetime of the author plus 50 years following his/her death.

Copyright works may be deposited at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and shall be considered a presumption of ownership.

Oman is a member of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.

Distance learning materials and software used in traditional and electronic formats are copyrighted. Copyrights in Oman are protected under Royal Decree 37/2000. Protection continues for (50) years after the author's death. Financial rights such as royalties are afforded under this law. The authors enjoy the right to have their work published in a pen name. Infringement of copyright is punishable by the Omani law. Ministry of Commerce and Industry in association with World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) organized an International Seminar discussed the theoretical framework of intellectual property and its

role in trade and commerce within the Arab world (ITA, 2007)<sup>36</sup>.

Key resources include:

- <http://www.nct.edu.om/ooer/>

## 10. ICT in education initiatives

The Oman Educational Portal<sup>37</sup> is a means of communication between the databases of the Ministry and the Ministry teaching staff or management staff in all positions such as the Ministry of education cabinet or at schools in different areas or between student and guardians and community members interested in this sector; targeting provision of electronic services, administrative and educational, where these can be accessed either by browser and e-mail at the Ministry's website or by voice interface.

The educational portal is an important project not only to the Ministry of education, but also to the whole society as it is one of the future pillars of this nation, as the ministry carry core responsibilities burdens in preparing future generations and actively contribute to its progress and development.

### 10.1 Virtual initiatives in schools

The educational portal project connects the objectives of the Ministry of Education to the objectives of the community, which is the gateway to link the widest possible audience, through the provision of electronic services and update their statements, and the promotion of quality in the educational process , providing an attractive education using interactive tools and innovative techniques. This in turn will lead to improved assessment and evaluation, better curriculum development ,better teaching methods and promote the quality of education. At the same time, the Ministry will merge within the framework of e-Government in Oman, the Ministry will be able to supply other ministries with the required data electronically within minutes and in return receive data.

#### 10.1.1 OER initiatives in schools

No information found apart from hosting of conferences

### 10.2 Virtual initiatives in post-secondary education

Recently, most of the Omani educational institutions at all levels have adopted the concept of electronic learning in which educational and training programs are presented to the students over the internet. Students who are part of this scheme either study alone or with the assistance of a teacher. These programs depict some of the early adopters of distance learning systems in the Sultanate<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> CASES ON CHALLENGES FACING E-LEARNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Institutional Studies and Practices VOLUME: II, Editor Ugur DEMIRAY

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.moe.gov.om/portal/sitebuilder/sites/EPS/English/MOE/portal.aspx>

<sup>38</sup> CASES ON CHALLENGES FACING E-LEARNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Institutional Studies and Practices VOLUME: II, Editor Ugur DEMIRAY

The Ministry of Education holds the view that distance education is bringing new types of learning to isolated students and, where trained teachers in specialized subject areas do not exist, distance education represents a lifeline of hope. However, one of the most crucial aspects of the implementation of sound plans involves the development of trained teachers who know not only how to operate computers and other technology, but also are experts at how to use technology to help students to learn more easily and more effectively. Planning for ICT must be carried out in a responsible way to ensure that its implementation is not short lived, but sustainable over a period of time. While young students in Oman are encouraged to build virtual worlds, older students learn to create animations, web pages and to program what the computer does using advanced programming languages (MOE, 2008).

On the other hand, some Omani higher education institutions are affiliated with overseas universities in India, USA, UK, and Australia through which some provide their students with distance learning courses and programs. For example Virginia Tech act as educational adviser, and a partner to establish a new university that will focus mainly on science, business, and engineering, but once it gets off the ground, there are hopes for a liberal arts curriculum outside of the core course that it's currently prepared to offer (Prendergast, 2008).

The Omani branch of the Arab Open University is a full-fledged distance learning higher education institution. Its case will be discussed later. The Ministry of Higher Education has also approved several accredited distance/online universities for Omani students to study through. Those include a list of Arab, regional and international universities. Yet, with the increase of students' numbers graduating from the secondary schools, access to higher education is indeed one of the main difficulties that must be actively dealt with (Al Musawi, and Abelraheem, 2004)<sup>39</sup>.

This online service improves the experience of the students seeking admission into over (50) different public and private higher education institutions in Oman. Apart from increased efficiency in processing student applications, the system also ensures fair and equal treatment for all applicants while enabling secure electronic data transfer for better accuracy and transparency. Many higher education institutions have equipped their campuses with office and portable computers, LCD data shows, Internet and Intranet links, e-mail facility, plasma screens, multimedia laboratories, and learning management systems (LMS) (Al-Musawi, 2007).

For example, the Ministry of Higher Education has initiated recently a restructuring program aiming to provide the existing six colleges of applied sciences with more applied information technology.

A particular emphasis is directed towards improving the learning methods by developing and implementing a unified LMS which serves the new form of these colleges. Such system is particularly intended to improve the e-learning skills in the six colleges (Gattoufi, Al-Naabi, and Gattoufi, 2007). Some of these institutions own their videoconferencing facilities.

They usually have their own service centres of educational and information technologies with skilled technical staff to provide the required maintenance of hardware and systems. Some of these centres have trainers and designers, and run in-house training programs for

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<sup>39</sup> CASES ON CHALLENGES FACING E-LEARNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Institutional Studies and Practices VOLUME: II, Editor Ugur DEMIRAY

the faculty members and students. In this regard, Al Musawi (2007) study's findings showed a tendency for future expansion with less expensive technologies and the need for training.

The study found that there is a need to support higher education institutions with technical and human resources to increase and activate the use and number of new instructional media and equipment.

Through a project with UNESCO, a virtual library of learning materials is being developed to aid blind and deaf students.

Students who cannot attend one of the special schools will be able to access this bank of voice and image enhanced materials over the Internet. Secondary students who have not come through basic education are learning basic computer skills through the International Computer Drivers' License (ICDL) program to learn basic IT skills before entering a collegiate study program. As of date approximately (370) accredited school-based training centres have been established with ICDL certified teachers. Over 100,000 students have been trained and tested at about (18) ICDL accredited testing centres (MOE, 2008). In addition, a comprehensive educational portal has been designed by the Ministry of Education and it is currently at the pilot stage. The portal facilitates a centralized electronic archive of information about students studying under the

Omani educational system at both public and private schools. Interactivity between administrators, teachers, students, and parents occurs through the Internet, email and SMS. Due to the integrated data management, students shall be able to transfer the classrooms as well with improved quality of learning experience (ITA, 2007; Al Shanfari, 2007).

#### *Case: Huda Private School*<sup>40</sup>

Huda Private School (ITA, 2007) is the first electronic school in the Sultanate which is completely networked with about (50) wireless access points. Both the teacher and the students use multimedia laptops which are connected to the school's intranet website and to the Internet. The school's intranet hosts e-books and other software which enable the students to use their e-pens to write on their monitor and transfer these to their electronic exercise books. Student registrations, attendance recording, exam scheduling, grading, annual results compilations, etc. are centrally managed and information is made available to both teachers and parents. In addition the SMS technology is used send alerts to parents about the progress of the student. The inter-connectivity also enables ministry circulars, internal bulletins, correspondences between teachers and students and activity photographs are exchanged through electronic networks thus saving time and increasing efficiency dramatically.

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<sup>40</sup> CASES ON CHALLENGES FACING E-LEARNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Institutional Studies and Practices VOLUME: II, Editor Ugur DEMIRAY



### **10.3.1 OER initiatives in post-secondary education<sup>41</sup>**

#### *Case 1: Sultan Qaboos University<sup>42</sup>*

At Sultan Qaboos University, the centre for information systems has issued the university computing policies and security, equipment and information protection rules to guide the clients on how to use on-campus information technology and systems (SQU, 2002A and 2002B). They regulate the use and abuse of the resources including hardware, software, networks and any other support facilities.

#### *Case 2: Arab Open University, Oman<sup>42</sup>*

The Omani branch of the Arab Open University (AOU, 2009) is a full-fledged distance learning higher education institution attempting to promote an open system of higher education that provides open opportunities of studies for professional development and lifelong learning and to produce graduates who are capable of embracing current and emerging technologies, and who are competent in working in a global economy. The AOU with its emerging information technology platforms has opened new learning opportunities. It offers bachelors degree programs in business, English language, and in information technology for those in the upper age group, in employment, and belonging to the lower and middle income strata of the society. The university used an open system, good quality subsidized higher education, and a flexible mode of learning. Recent research shows that AOU students and workers are aware of the use of the distance learning system and that they are highly satisfied with the flexible methods of delivery (Al Khadouri, Al Rajhi, Al Nasri, et al., 2009; Al Balushi, Al Suleimani, Al Jahwari, et al., 2009).

## **11. General lessons**

The following key points are given:

- Considerations of economies of scale are not of key relevance to a small country with a dispersed population.
- While the majority of private HEIs offer programs of general interest, the number of specialist colleges has increased.
- With the continuing demand for seats in Higher Education from the local population, low enrolment is not a concern.
- Teaching staff come predominantly from Oman and the region – mainly from the Arab states and India. Most administrators are Omani.
- Access has been accelerated through increasing seats in government HEIs, with Sultan Qaboos University showing the most dramatic increase, and though the establishment of many new private colleges and universities as well as increasing seats in existing private HEIs.
- The development of innovative technology-based models is not a major factor. There is currently an emphasis on e-learning.
- Integration of the system of Higher Education has been managed to date though

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<sup>41</sup> Online Guide to Educational Systems Around the World , Susan Whipple, Editor May 2011, [https://www.nafsa.org/\\_/File/\\_/ges/Oman.pdf](https://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/ges/Oman.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> CASES ON CHALLENGES FACING E-LEARNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Institutional Studies and Practices VOLUME: II, Editor Ugur DEMIRAY

- selective licensing and through the oversight of the Council of Higher Education.
- National strategic planning has emerged and is in process. Governance reforms are included.
- Qualifications frameworks and quality assurance systems are a major thrust.

Akinyemi (2003) examines the perspectives of some Omani students on web based learning and possible cultural interference and found that results are yielding evidences of the need for further research in this area as the interactivity factor in web based learning poses an obvious threat to the Arab culture and religion in view of some of the foregoing learner reactions and the uncontrollable inevitable potential of virtual learning. Hall (2009) reported that if online learning is to be used in Oman then the effect of cultural values and preferences must be considered in the way that learning is designed; this emphasizes the necessity of using design principles that account for culture and enable the challenges of quality and access to be met more effectively. Al Musawi, and Abelraheem (2004) concluded that e-Learning standards must be set before it can be used widely in Oman. An increase in the human and technical resources should be sought and more technical staff is required for employment. Omanis should be sent abroad on scholarships in order to be able to run bachelors and masters' programs preparing young Omanis in the field of e-Learning<sup>43</sup>.

This means graduate and post-graduate programs should be opened locally (Al Musawi, 2010). Al Gharbi, Al Hatali, and Hatem (2004) supported these conclusions and called for greater cooperation and coordination between higher educational institutions and other government and private agencies to help fill the gap between demand for information technology specialists and their supply by higher educational institutions. Higher educational institutions should also benefit from the expertise of the Sultan Qaboos University academic and information technology technical staff.

Within the past two and a half decades, the Sultanate of Oman has developed an independent system of Higher Education consisting of over sixty HEIs with a workable balance between government and private provision. All qualified secondary school graduates, regardless of the socio-economic circumstances of their families can find places in a wide range of universities and colleges offering a broad range of programs through a centralized, fair and transparent system of admission and scholarship allocation<sup>44</sup>.

Increasingly, mature students are taking advantage of opportunities to upgrade their skills and engage in life-long learning through both core and continuing education courses. Adults are offered the opportunity to complete the GSC in secondary schools as well as to take courses to improve their literacy. It is fair to say that the Sultanate offers universal access to all academically qualified applicants regardless of their means.

The Sultanate has taken advantage of opportunities available in the global era by utilizing international expertise without compromising Omani identity, integrity and independence or the traditional values in which the culture is rooted. With the exception of the Arab Open University, all private HEIs operating in the Sultanate are dominantly Omani-owned and Omani-governed.

Government policy through licensing by the Ministry of Higher Education ensures that new

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<sup>43</sup> CASES ON CHALLENGES FACING E-LEARNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Institutional Studies and Practices VOLUME: II, Editor Ugur DEMIRAY

<sup>44</sup>[http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Policy\\_Forums/2009/Alshmeli\\_Oman.pdf](http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Forums/2009/Alshmeli_Oman.pdf)

HEIs are not established without screening to meet the rigorous criteria set out in the standards for feasibility studies. This mechanism is also designed to ensure that new provision is in fields required by the nation as set out in the Five Year Plans.

The policies of the Oman Accreditation Council are designed to assure the integrity of national standards, the quality of provision at international standards and the adaptation of curriculum from outside sources to the local context.

The goal of attaining quality at international standards is shared by government, private providers and the HEIs themselves. A number of quality initiatives at all levels have been underway for the past decade, and considerable progress has been achieved, especially through the Oman Accreditation Council.

The current state of Higher Education in the Sultanate is also characterized by a growing number of e-Initiatives, from the creation of a central admissions facility and a national higher education database, to e-learning on a centralized and institutional basis.

The major challenges, centred around quality and student outcomes aligned with national economic goals in circumstances of rapid growth, are on-going; and solutions that are practical and innovative are continuously sought. Through the sharing of best practice, this forum will no doubt contribute to increased success in our on-going quest for quality.

As the number of students enrolled increases at Omani educational system, the need to offer additional resources and facilities increases too. Academic programs could be offered through e-learning in addition to the traditional education. Research findings show that there is awareness among Omani teachers and faculty members to expand on new e-learning and digital multimedia technologies and that their perceived values of the technology are tangible. However, the Omani concern for comparability of standards with the traditional system is a genuine one which must be attended to before e-learning can be developed, disseminated and diffused on a large scale. This addresses one of the most important questions faces the implementation of e-learning: the question of quality. E-learning quality issue need to be resolved as the continuing rapid growth in students' number graduated from Omani secondary schools poses major strategic challenges for the higher education system<sup>45</sup>.

## 11.1 Notable practices

Striking a balance between nationalism (issues of identity, control and independence) and regionalism versus globalism (issues of integration, and collaboration) are not issues for Oman and the Region, as the Gulf States have long had a strong sense of their Arab-Islamic identity and have an effective mechanism for cooperation in the GCC<sup>46</sup>.

A strong sense of nationalism balanced within the context of the regional and wider Arab world is particularly true of Oman, a nation which consciously maintains its roots in an enduring traditional culture, and which, through the wise guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, plays a strong and constructive role in the GCC. Oman has a few programs that are unique to the Gulf which attract GCC nationals and the Sultanate has a policy of

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<sup>45</sup> CASES ON CHALLENGES FACING E-LEARNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Institutional Studies and Practices VOLUME: II, Editor Ugur DEMIRAY

<sup>46</sup>[http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Policy\\_Forums/2009/Alshmeli\\_Oman.pdf](http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Forums/2009/Alshmeli_Oman.pdf)

encouraging graduates to seek employment both in Oman and the Gulf region. The GCC culture can fairly be characterized as dominantly cooperative.

The matter of contextualizing education in the face of global and multilateral agendas with their preference for sameness and homogeneity is not applicable in this case, as Oman has preserved its traditional identity within the global context; and, as a matter of policy, imported curriculum is adapted to the Omani context.

International recognition of qualifications acquired in Omani HEIs is achieved through the system of academic partnerships with reputable international universities.

With respect to the technology dilemma, and whether it is a panacea for increasing access or results in a widening of the digital divide within the country itself – for the Sultanate, it is neither. While there is naturally a digital divide between Muscat and the regions as well as between socio-economic groups, this is being addressed through major initiatives of Government through the ITA (Information Technology Authority), a dynamic organisation charged with implementing the national Digital Strategy. One of the main objectives of the ITA is to 'bridge the digital divide' in all sectors of society.

As a critical step in that direction, ITA undertook an interactive marketing campaign to increase awareness of Oman's world class e-governance initiatives throughout the land. e-Oman road shows were implemented as a far-reaching, face-to-face method of bringing e-awareness to all corners of the country.

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- Oman Accreditation Council: <http://www.oac.gov.om/> [In English. Last checked: August 2011.]
- Sultan Qaboos University: <http://www.squ.edu.om/> [In English. Last checked: August 2011.]
- For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>
- UNESCO: [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=4318&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=4318&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) UNESCO: [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=40150&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=40150&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) ALECSO:

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