

Leadership Practices Among Primary Private School Principals and Its Impact on Their Performance in Muscat, Oman

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Abstract- This study explores the current perspectives, leadership practices, role integration, and systemic needs of principals in primary private schools in Muscat, Oman. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through interviews with sixteen school principals to investigate four key research questions: (1) principals' current perspectives of educational leadership, (2) their existing leadership practices, (3) areas for improvement in balancing administrative and educational leadership roles, and (4) educational system needs to enhance leadership development and overall school quality. The findings revealed that principals increasingly embrace inclusive, collaborative, and emotionally intelligent leadership styles, supported by structured operational systems. Leadership practices emphasized transparency, respect for cultural traditions, empowering staff, and prioritizing continuous professional development. Principals also highlighted the need to integrate visionary leadership with daily management tasks, guided by ethical values and emotional resilience. Furthermore, systemic needs were identified, including capacity building, fostering inclusive environments, promoting system responsiveness and innovation, and reinforcing ethical practice and accountability. This study contributes to the understanding of educational leadership within the Omani private education sector, offering insights into the evolving leadership landscape amidst national reforms and global educational shifts. The findings provide practical implications for leadership development programs, policy design, and future research aimed at supporting school improvement and elevating Oman's educational standing globally.

Keywords –; Primary Private Schools, Principal's performance, Leadership Practices, Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence

I. INTRODUCTION

The late Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said once imparted a profound vision, declaring, "We will educate our children even under the shade of trees" (Ministry of Education, 2023). This statement underscored his acute recognition of the pivotal role education plays in navigating the swift currents of evolving knowledge and technology. Emphasizing the imperative to cultivate awareness and responsibility among students, His Majesty advocated for the acquisition of experience and skills propelling individuals toward higher cognitive levels. Demonstrating his commitment, His Majesty directed a comprehensive evaluation of education in the Sultanate of Oman, aligning with the overarching goal of achieving these lofty aspirations.

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Recognizing the urgency to address existing gaps in the educational landscape, His Majesty highlighted the significance of ensuring the quality of education outputs across various institutions, aligning with state policies to collectively realize our shared aspirations (The Education Council, 2023).

Continuing the legacy of the late Sultan, His Majesty Sultan Haitham steers the nation towards the objectives outlined in Oman's vision 2040. His Majesty's impactful address on education on 23rd February 2020 echoed a commitment to prioritize the education sector, at all levels, fostering an environment conducive to research and innovation. His pledge included providing comprehensive support and empowerment to fortify the foundation upon which our children will actively engage in the developmental landscape. His Majesty Sultan Haitham highlighted the pivotal need to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire education system, emphasizing transparency through the dissemination of reliable performance data. The provision of reference standards based on best practices was underscored as a strategic tool for education leaders to make informed decisions, fortifying the quality of the education system. Amidst the complexities faced by school principals, leaders in primary private schools are confronted with escalating demands in the 21st century (Ministry of Education, 2023). The National Strategy for Education 2040 (2021) underscores that leadership practices for these principals are critical in building confidence and motivation to address multifaceted challenges and deliver high-yield educational outcomes. Addressing the identified gaps in educational leadership is imperative to achieve the overarching goals of educational excellence and innovation.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In contemporary educational landscapes, the role of school principals extends far beyond administrative tasks; it is pivotal that they are not just managers but inspirational leaders. A robust body of research within the field of education consistently underscores the paramount importance of effective leadership in nurturing thriving and successful schools (Chavarria, 2022). Leadership, as opposed to mere management, plays a pivotal role in steering schools towards improvement. However, there appears to be a prevalent inclination among many principals to lean towards management practices rather than embracing the transformative potential of leadership.

As Oman aspires to achieve ambitious educational goals, there exists a compelling need to understand and enhance the leadership practices among primary private school principals in Muscat. Recognizing a substantial gap

in the existing literature pertaining to the impact of Oman's leadership practices on the enhancement of principals' performance (AlDuhli, 2023), this qualitative research is poised to be a pioneering contribution. By delving into the intricacies of leadership practices, the study aims to offer nuanced insights that not only bridge the existing knowledge gap but also inform strategic decisions aligned with the broader vision for the educational landscape in Oman.

The following are highlighted research problems that can provide a clear understanding of the key challenges that the research aims to address.

Principals' Leadership Practices Discrepancy

According to AlSiyabi (2021), the challenges in leadership for primary private school principals indicates that there is a necessity of developing leadership capacity for school principals in form of practicing leadership rather than administrative work in order to aspire excellence in performance and improvement. The result of the study shows moderate levels of leadership practices for school principals which is not the desired level as it requires further development and improvements to reach high level of performance.

Lack of Leadership Training

The joint study conducted by the Ministry of Education and the World Bank in 2012 stated that a significant number of individuals in leadership positions within the Ministry of Education lack the required training for their roles. The absence of adequate training highlights a need for the development of leadership skills, especially for school principals.

Gap in Literature Regarding Oman's Leadership Practices

The existing body of literature on leadership practices in Oman, particularly within school settings, remains noticeably deficient. AlAmri (2022) highlighted this gap in his study, emphasizing the scarcity of research dedicated to understanding the intricacies of leadership within Omani educational institutions. This gap in research represents a significant challenge, as it inhibits our ability to fully comprehend the dynamics of effective leadership in Omani schools. Without a thorough understanding of how leadership practices influence principals' performance, it becomes challenging to implement strategies that align with Oman's Vision 2040 goals. These goals, which outline the nation's aspirations for educational development, necessitate a nuanced understanding of leadership's role in driving progress. Addressing this gap in the literature is not only academically important but also essential for practical purposes. By filling this gap, researchers can provide valuable insights that inform policy decisions and educational practices tailored to Oman's specific context. Ultimately, bridging this gap will contribute to fostering effective leadership within Omani schools, thereby facilitating the realization of Oman's Vision 2040 objectives (AlAmri, 2022).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a comprehensive review of the educational theory, specifically transformational leadership. To gain more understanding of the transformational leadership in primary private schools, the literature review is organized as follows: the philosophy of education and the Sultanate of Oman, Oman's educational statistics, principals: managers or leaders?, principals' leadership practices, transformational leadership practices, educational quality, theoretical framework: emotional intelligence, models of EI, transformational leadership, applying emotional intelligence into transformational leadership, emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, the four elements of emotional intelligence, the four domains of the transformational leadership, conceptual framework, and the summary (Chavaria, 2022).

The Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman

The philosophy of education in the Sultanate of Oman is derived from essential sources on current international developments relating to educational improvement and preparing generations of students for the future. It considers current developments and the present status and future aspirations of Omani society (Board of Education, 2017).

Oman's Educational Statistics

According to the latest Annual Educational Statistics Book (2023), the structure of schools in Oman is as follows: government schools, special education schools, private schools, and foreign schools. The total number of students enrolment in education is (963579) students that are spread into different types of schools and they are: government schools, special education schools, private schools and foreign schools. The type of school concerning this research is private schools and the total number is 994 private schools, 321 of them are in Muscat Governorate, accommodating 150506 students including preschool. For primary schools alone, there are 33823 students.

Educational Leadership

According to Chavarria (2022), leadership is important in all parts of our lives and has always been around, in every society, from the past to now. Some experts say leadership is something that affects everyone. It's just as important today as it was hundreds or even thousands of years ago. Experts also say that we can find written ideas about leadership going way back in history. For example, there are writings about leadership from over 5,000 years ago in Egypt. They talk about the qualities a pharaoh should have. Other ancient thinkers like Confucius and Lao-tzu also had things to say about leadership around 2,500 years ago. Even more, philosophers like Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch wrote about leadership around 2,300 years ago. These old writings about leadership had a big impact on later times too. They influenced people during the Renaissance and even played a part in the ideas of America's founding fathers in the late

1700s. This shows that leadership has always been important and still matters today (Chavarria, 2022).

Additionally, Chavarria (2022) gathered leadership definitions themes by decades as follows:

TABLE I: LEADERSHIP DEFINITIONS BY DECADES

The year	The Leadership Definition
1920s	The definition of leadership was focused on the will of the leader on those led and inducing obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation.
1930s	The definition of leadership was considered a process through which the many were organized to move in a specific way by the leader.
1940s	The definition of leadership was the ability to persuade and direct beyond the effects of power, position, or circumstances.
1950s	Leadership was focused on what leaders did in groups and the authority accorded to leaders by the group members.
1960s	The definition of leadership was focused on the influence to move others in a shared direction.
1970s	Leadership was associated with the leader's influence seen as discretionary and as varying from one member to another.
1980s	Leadership was considered as inspiring others to take some purposeful actions.
1990s	The definition of leadership encompassed the influence of the leader and the followers who intended to make real changes that reflected their common purpose.
2000s	The definition of leadership focus on the leader being seen as the person most responsible and accountable for the organization's actions.

Adapted from Chavarria (2022)

This research includes a comprehensive definition of leadership that contains both the inspirational aspect of inspiring others to take purposeful actions, as emphasized in the 1980s, and the contemporary perspective that highlights the leader's responsibility and accountability for the organization's actions, as seen in the 2000s. This combined definition shows leadership as the process by which a leader motivates and guides others towards a common goal, while also bearing the ultimate responsibility for the outcomes and actions of the schools. In the context of this research, the definition holds significant relevance. Educational leadership in this setting requires not only inspiring and motivating teachers, staff, and students towards educational objectives but also involves a strong sense of accountability and responsibility for the school's performance and outcomes (Chavarria, 2022).

Principals: Managers or Leaders?

Everything that happens or does not happen in schools shapes the organization: students' and teachers' behaviour s, interaction among the school community members, expectation and the type of leadership that exhibits the principal. The school principal is the officer, most times one may say the main officer, in charge of administering all aspects of the operations. But not only this, he or she assumes a leadership role. It is vital in shaping the school culture, with their values, attitude, expectations and behaviours(Camacho, 2023). Lunenburg and Ornstein (2021) differentiate two types of roles of the principal:

managerial and leadership. The principal leader, the effective one, exhibits the capacity to balance his personality with the daily tasks and operation, but at the same time works as a source of motivation for others.

Principals' Leadership Practices

Principals' leadership practices are crucial for school improvement and student success in school. Their role and functions are complex, being of mixed nature. On one hand, there is the managerial aspect of the role, such as serving as a linkage between the school and the district by managing material resources and supervising the school's overall functioning. On the other hand, an effective school principal is a leader in teaching (Dulebogn et al., 2022).

The role of principals has become more complex since they are expected to lead, guide, and create sustainable school improvement. In response to the shift in workers' needs, leadership models have progressed to adapt to people's desire to drive and connect emotionally to their work. Transformational leadership is based on the leader's ability to induce followers to transcend self-interest for the sake of the organization. Transformational leadership is chosen to be the center of the ideal leadership style (Reese-Penn2022).

According to AlAmri (2022), the amount of research available related to principals' leadership practices and their impact on their performance that leads to a better educational quality is limited, research in the Sultanate of Oman is needed concerning the correlation between principal leadership practices and their impact on their performance.

Educational Quality

Educational quality encompasses various factors that contribute to the effectiveness, relevance, and impact of an education system. Evaluating educational quality involves considering multiple dimensions that influence the learning experience and outcomes for students. Related to educational quality: a curriculum that is up to date, relevant to real-world needs, and aligned with national or international standards, in addition to the integration of innovative teaching methods and pedagogical approaches that engage students and foster critical thinking. Well-qualified and trained teachers with expertise in their subject areas and professional opportunities for continuous professional development to keep educators abreast of the latest teaching methods and educational research. Active participation of parents in the children's education is essential as well as cooperation with the local communities, businesses, and organizations to enrich the learning environment. Education must be exposure to a global perspective, multicultural education, and understanding of international issues (Freeman, 2020).

IV. METHOD

Effective leadership is recognized as a linchpin for the success or failure of school improvement initiatives, with school principals playing a pivotal role in shaping the cultural fabric of an educational institution. Reese-Penn

(2022) underscores the transformative influence of school leaders in fostering an environment geared toward teacher and student learning, teaching efficacy, and operational structures of support. At the heart of this leadership paradigm is the concept of transformational leadership, a practice intricately linked to school improvement efforts. The impact of school leaders on teacher and student performance cannot be overstated, making the cultivation of transformational leadership qualities a strategic priority. This research seeks to delve into the contemporary landscape of leadership practices among primary private school principals in Muscat, examining the profound implications of these practices on the performance of school leaders.

Adopting a qualitative phenomenological research approach, this study employs in-depth interviews as the primary instrument for data collection. The qualitative method is chosen for its inherent capacity to delve deeply into the intricacies of leadership practices, capturing the essence of experiences in the natural setting. As we embark on this exploratory journey, the research paradigm unfolds, offering a nuanced understanding of the qualitative research process.

Research Paradigm

The research design for the study is a qualitative phenomenological research approach. Qualitative method is a type of research that refers to the in-depth and detailed study of issues using face to face interviews. Qualitative methods “or ways of finding out what people do, know, think, and feel” (Chavarria, 2022, p.68).

Population and Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The population for the study is 16 primary private school principals, located in Muscat. Purposive sampling is used for the study in order to receive the rights and relevance information, knowledge, and experience corresponding to the research questions. Primary private school principals are selected as participants for the study to join the interviews of the study (Crossman and Bordia, 2021). According to Daher (2023), researchers were interested in the types of saturation used in qualitative research papers, in addition, there are two types of saturation: code saturation which was reached at nine interview and meaning saturation which needed 16 to 24 interview to reach meaning saturation. There are six Wilayat in Muscat, among those, 3 most populated Wilayat are chosen to select the top-rated schools.

Data Collection Method (Instrumentation)

This section will explain in depth the data collection method used in this research. In the realm of educational leadership, the efficacy of transformative leadership practices in fostering positive organizational change has been a subject of considerable interest and scrutiny. Central to this discourse is the integration of emotional intelligence (EI) within leadership frameworks, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping leaders' abilities to inspire and empower others. Qualitative method is utilized for this study. This qualitative research delves into the intersection of transformative leadership and emotional intelligence within

educational settings, aiming to elucidate the mechanisms through which leaders harness emotional intelligence to enact transformative changes.

Interview Instrument

Interviews will be conducted to gather data about the research topic. It is the most widely used instrument for collecting qualitative data and is most used when researchers want to examine a topic deeply (Chavarria, 2022).

According to Munir (2017), interviews serve as a crucial method for researchers to engage directly with individuals, fostering discourse and generating ideas of mutual interest. This interactive process involves oral questioning by the interviewer to prompt oral responses from the interviewee. In research interviews, it's essential for the researcher to identify potential sources of information and structure the interaction to extract relevant data from respondents.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are formal, employing predefined sets of questions presented to each interviewee, with responses recorded on a standardized schedule. This approach is characterized by a closed interview situation, where the interviewer adheres to a predetermined sequence of questions. Maintaining a congenial atmosphere is crucial for establishing rapport between the interviewer and interviewee.

Interview Protocol

The researcher took the following steps to schedule and conduct the interviews for private primary school principals in Muscat (Taherdooset, 2022):

Firstly, their contact information are retrieved from the district and school websites. Then, an email was sent to the chosen principals to invite them to participate in the study. After receiving confirmation via e-mail from the participants, the researcher made personal phone calls to each principal explaining the study in detail. After that, the researcher followed up the phone conversation with an email to provide the researcher's contact information. In addition, the following documents will be included in the email: the consent forms and interview questions.

After receiving the complete informed consent form from the participants, the researcher coordinated the schedule in interviews with each principal. Prior to each interview, the researcher emailed the interview questions to each principal and the interviews had been conducted face to face. The researcher followed the same interview protocol as all the participants. Additionally, standard probing questions used one necessary for clarification or for going deeper into a response. The interviews are recorded and this point is mentioned in the consent form. Following each interview, the researcher emailed the principals to thank them for their participation. The researcher transcribed each interview, and the transcribed notes are sent to each principal for accuracy. Lastly, the

digital recording and transcript notes are stored on a secure computer under pseudonyms.

Document analysis

Document analysis is a valuable research method employed in investigating educational leadership in primary private school principals. This method involves the systematic review and interpretation of various documents, such as school policies, strategic plans, communication materials, and reports, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the leadership landscape within educational institutions. In the context of this research, document analysis serves as a crucial tool to unearth formalized structures, policies, and institutional expectations that shape the role of primary private school principals in Muscat.

Expert Review of Interview Protocol

The interview protocol has been reviewed by an expert (Dr. Hamad AlYahmadi, Assistant Professor at the Arab Open University in the Sultanate of Oman).

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative phenomenological research, the following strategies have been employed, aligning with the key criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility has been prioritized through several approaches aimed at ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data. First, triangulation has been employed by utilizing multiple data sources, including face-to-face interviews and document analysis. This allows for the cross-verification of data and strengthens the richness of the findings.

Transferability

Transferability has been considered through the provision of thick descriptions. Detailed accounts of the research setting, including the context of primary private schools in Muscat, participant selection through purposive sampling, and the use of structured interviews, are provided to enable other researchers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. By offering rich, context-specific insights into educational leadership, this study opens the possibility for findings to be applied in other educational settings with similar characteristics.

Dependability

To ensure dependability, an audit trail has been maintained throughout the research process. This audit trail details the steps taken in data collection, including the structured interview process, document analysis, and the methods used for data interpretation. The standardized approach to conducting interviews, including the use of

probing questions and maintaining a consistent interview protocol, has helped to ensure consistency in data gathering. Additionally, all interviews were audio-recorded and accompanied by detailed field notes, capturing both verbal and non-verbal cues to allow for a comprehensive analysis. The pilot study also served to fine-tune the interview process, ensuring that it is repeatable and robust.

Confirmability

Confirmability has been ensured by implementing strategies to minimize researcher bias. Reflexive practices were incorporated throughout the research process, with the researcher actively reflecting on their role and potential biases. The use of triangulation, comparing data from interviews with document analysis, further supports the objectivity of the findings. Moreover, the maintenance of an audit trail allows external reviewers to trace the steps of the research, confirming that the findings are based on the data provided by the participants rather than the researcher's assumptions or preferences.

By addressing these four dimensions of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; this study ensures that its findings are both reliable and meaningful within the context of principals' educational leadership in primary private schools in Muscat.

Ethical Consideration

Permission to conduct the research interview are obtained from the participants of two different primary private school principals' email and letter correspondence. Permission is obtained from the ministry of education to conduct the study.

Integration of Data

The integration of interviews' data will be a key strength of this research. Through a triangulation approach, researchers will cross-reference findings from both methods to validate and corroborate the emerging themes. This comprehensive data integration aims to provide a nuanced understanding of educational leadership among primary private school principals in Muscat, shedding light on the complex interplay between leadership styles, decision-making, and emotional intelligence within the unique context of private primary education in the region.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the qualitative data analysis from 16 semi-structured interviews conducted with primary private school principals in Muscat, Oman. The study explores how primary private school principals perceive and enact educational leadership, examining their lived experiences, leadership practices and the challenges they face within the local educational context. NVivo (version 15) software was used for coding and thematic analysis, revealing a comprehensive understanding of leadership perspectives, practices, and system needs.

As part of the research preparation, two pilot interviews were conducted with primary private schools in Muscat. The preliminary interviews served multiple purposes and were ultimately included in the main data collection and analysis due to their relevance and richness. The pilot phase was instrumental in clarifying and refining the research questions, ensuring they were both understandable and aligned with the study's core objectives. It also provided an opportunity to test the effectiveness and flow of the semi-structured interview format, confirming its suitability for eliciting in-depth, reflective responses from participants. Additionally, the pilot interviews helped identify areas where the interview protocol could be optimized, such as rephrasing questions for clarity, adjusting the order of prompts, and managing time efficiently during interviews. Overall, the pilot stage contributed significantly to enhancing the coherence, reliability, and depth of the data collection process.

The findings of the study highlight a significant gap in the current educational leadership landscape within primary private schools' principals in Muscat. While school principals demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting and enacting effective leadership, they often struggle with insufficient training opportunities and limited access to essential resources needed for implementing leadership practices effectively. Additionally, many principals face challenges in balancing their leadership roles with the heavy demands of managerial and administrative responsibilities.

Despite these barriers, the principals show resilience and adaptability in navigating the evolving educational landscape. They employ various strategies to cope with the ongoing changes and challenges, such as fostering inclusive decision-making processes, engaging all relevant stakeholders, and maintaining open and transparent communication. These efforts reflect their dedication to sustaining a positive school environment and driving continuous improvement, even in the face of limited systemic support. The following table show the demographic profiling of all the 16 primary private school principals that participated in the interviews.

TABLE 2: THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILING OF THE INTERVIEWED PRIMARY PRIVATE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serial Number	Participant's ID	Age	Gender	Nationality	Qualification	Years of Professional Experience
1	P1	50	Female	American	Master	20
2	P2	58	Male	Jordanian	Master	35
3	P3	50	Male	Jordanian	Bachelor	22
4	P4	47	Female	Egyptian	Bachelor	21
5	P5	45	Female	Omani	Master	15
6	P6	57	Female	Indian	Master	36
7	P7	53	Male	Pakistani	Bachelor	32
8	P8	53	Female	Egyptian	Bachelor	36
9	P9	55	Male	Omani	Bachelor	30
10	P10	58	Male	South African	Master	30
11	P11	45	Female	Egyptian	Bachelor	10

12	P12	51	Female	Egyptian	Master	25
13	P13	57	Female	Iraqi	PhD	33
14	P14	39	Female	Omani	Bachelor	10
15	P15	55	Female	British	PhD	24
16	P16	49	Male	Egyptian	Master	28

The sample comprised 16 primary private school principals, with a notable predominance of female participants (11 females and 5 males). The age of respondents ranged from 39 to 58 years, with the majority over the age of 45, reflecting a mature and experienced cohort. Nationality-wise, Egyptians were the most represented (5 participants), followed by Omanis (3), Jordanians (2), and one each from American, Indian, Pakistani, South African, Iraqi, and British backgrounds. In terms of academic qualifications, the participants held diverse degrees: 6 held Master's degrees, 6 held Bachelor's degrees, and 3 held PhDs. Professional experience ranged from 10 to 36 years, with several participants reporting over 20 years of service in education.

The high representation of female principals may reflect broader social trends in the education sector, where women are often found in leadership roles at the primary school level, possibly due to perceptions of women as nurturing figures suited for young children's development. The predominance of respondents above 40 years of age suggests that school leadership positions are typically attained after significant professional experience, highlighting the value placed on maturity and long-term commitment in educational administration. The substantial presence of Egyptians and other expatriate nationalities indicates a reliance on international expertise in Omani private schools, likely due to the global nature of education and the demand for diverse educational backgrounds. The variety in qualifications—with a significant proportion holding postgraduate degrees—demonstrates a high standard for educational leadership, further emphasizing the importance of both academic credentials and professional experience in securing principal roles within primary private schools.

Findings for RQ1- Principals' Current Perspectives of Educational Leadership

To address Research Question One—What are the principals' current perspectives of educational leadership in primary private schools in Muscat? The study focuses on understanding the concept through the lens of the principals' own perspectives. The data revealed four main themes. The theme offers insight into how principals define, experience, and practice educational leadership within their unique school environments. The following section showcase the four themes, drawing on rich narratives and direct quotes from the participants to illustrate their views, experiences, and interpretations.

Findings for RQ2- Principals' Leadership Practices

The findings for Research Question 2, What are the current principals' leadership practices in Oman's primary private schools? which explored the leadership practices of primary private school principals, revealed a comprehensive understanding of leadership as both a concept and a practice rooted in daily school life. Principals described leadership not merely as a management role, but as a purposeful, values-driven approach that directly influences school performance and culture. The concept of Principals' Leadership Practices is reflected through four core themes that emerged from the study. These include Transparency and Communication, Respect of Traditions, Empowering Staff and Delegating Responsibilities, and Development Focus. Principals emphasized the value of open dialogue and inclusive communication strategies to build trust within their communities. They also recognized the importance of honouring cultural values and long-standing practices while navigating school leadership. Many principals described how sharing responsibilities and empowering staff fosters ownership and collective improvement. Finally, there was a consistent focus on professional growth—supporting both student learning and teacher development through structured efforts and continuous engagement. Together, these themes reflect a strategic and culturally responsive approach to school leadership that promotes school-wide growth.

Findings for RQ3 – Integrated Leadership Balance

The findings addressing Research Question 3- What are the areas of the principals' potential improvement in balancing between administrative aspects and educational leadership in primary private schools in order to boost principals' performance? - revealed that one of the most significant areas for potential improvement among primary private school principals in Muscat is achieving a sustainable balance between administrative responsibilities and educational leadership. This concept, explored under Integrated Leadership Balance, is supported by four key themes: Vision-Focused Guidance, Task-Centered Operations, Value-Driven Influence and Dual-Focused Engagement. Several principals described themselves as both leaders and managers, highlighting a conscious effort to integrate both roles. These themes reflect a range of leadership orientations, from those who prioritize strategic vision, to those anchored in procedural efficiency, to those who blend emotional intelligence with managerial capability. The findings suggest that while many principals are striving to strike a meaningful balance, others still lean heavily toward one end of the leadership-management spectrum. The following sections explore each theme in detail, using direct participant quotes to illustrate how school leaders perceive and practice integrated leadership in their local context.

Findings for RQ4 – Educational System's Needs

The concept of Educational Systems Needs in Oman, as revealed through the perspectives of school principals, highlights the multifaceted demands facing the nation's

evolving educational landscape. This section directly answers Research Question 4: What are the educational systems needs on the quality of education, specifically on developing leadership skills for primary private school principals in order to develop Oman's global educational ranking? This section presents the findings related to the concept of Educational System's Needs, which explores the structural, professional, and cultural improvements required to strengthen the quality of education in Oman's private primary schools. The data collected from principals highlighted four major themes: Capacity Building and Professional Growth, Inclusive and Supportive Environment, System Responsiveness and Innovation, and Ethical Practice and Accountability. These themes reflect a collective call for a more dynamic, well-equipped, and values-driven educational landscape. Principals emphasized the need for structured training programs and leadership development pathways to enhance their competencies and those of their staff. They also expressed the importance of fostering emotionally supportive school environments that address student well-being and social inclusion. At a systemic level, there was a strong emphasis on the need for flexibility and innovation—particularly in adapting to technological change, evolving educational expectations, and global trends. Finally, ethical conduct, transparent governance, and greater accountability emerged as foundational requirements for sustained school improvement. The following sections detail each of these themes, supported by direct quotes from participants, offering insight into the key areas where Oman's educational system must evolve to align with both local priorities and international standards.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the perspectives, practices, leadership balance, and systemic needs of principals in primary private schools in Muscat, Oman. Through qualitative inquiry, guided by four research questions and supported by thematic analysis of interviews with sixteen principals, the research has generated in-depth insights into how school leaders understand and enact educational leadership in the context of Omani private education.

The findings revealed that principals are progressively shifting toward a more inclusive, collaborative, and emotionally intelligent style of leadership. Their perspectives highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement, structured systems, and the emotional dimensions of school culture. Leadership practices demonstrated a strong commitment to transparency, cultural respect, staff empowerment, and continuous professional development—reflecting a blend of traditional values and modern leadership expectations. When examining the balance between administrative and educational roles, principals emphasized the need to integrate strategic vision with operational efficiency, supported by ethical values and a dual-focus mindset. Finally, the study identified critical needs within Oman's educational system, including leadership capacity building, fostering inclusive and supportive environments, promoting responsiveness and innovation, and ensuring ethical accountability.

Together, these insights suggest that school leadership in Oman is undergoing a meaningful transformation. Principals are navigating a complex landscape that requires them to be both visionary and pragmatic, culturally grounded and globally aware. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational leadership in non-Western contexts and provides practical implications for leadership development programs, policy reforms, and systemic support in private education.

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