

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

To provide adequate background for this research study, chapter II generally organized into four major topics under the heading: the concept of quality and TQM, TQM in higher education, leadership and TQM and quality management system in Omani higher education. It starts by defining quality and moves on to explaining the development of TQM, followed by background of TQM and its definition. After a review of TQM principles, quality management from Islamic perspective is discussed. A review of the literature pertaining to the implementation of TQM principles in academic settings is organized into specific categories namely: advantages of TQM for higher education, requirements for applying TQM in HEIs, and challenges of TQM implementation in higher education. Moreover, after the different definitions and concepts of leadership found in the literature are investigated, the Islamic perspective on leadership will be discussed. Also, the chapter includes a discussion on leadership roles in higher education and their role in the implementation of TQM. In addition, this chapter looks at the development of quality system within HEIs in the Sultanate of Oman. In order to fully understand the research topic, the chapter discusses the background of higher education in Oman followed by a discussion of the private higher educational institutions and its development. In particular; this chapter will focus on the introduction of quality system in higher education, as well as steps for developing a quality system in Oman. The institutions and bodies that are directly responsible for introducing quality system in Oman will be discussed. This discussion is divided into five major segments related to: the Ministry of Higher Education, the Council of Higher Education, the Oman Accreditation Council, the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority and the Oman Quality Network in Higher Education. Finally, this chapter concludes with conceptual framework of the study.

## 2.2 The Concept of Quality and TQM

### 2.2.1 The Concept of Quality

Throughout all of human history, quality is a virtue which has remained important, whether it is the quality of a product, the quality of time spent, the quality of education/training received or the quality of management (Solanki, 2004). After World War II, due to an increasingly competitive market, quality becomes a vital issue in determining the economic success of manufacturing companies. According to some, the demand for quality is emerging as the single most critical factor for companies to survive in the ever-expanding global market place (Lakuan et al. 2007; Jalil et al., 2010). Consequently, the notion of quality has become one of the most popular words of the twenty first century (Jalil et al., 2010).

The word *quality* has been derived from the Latin word *qualis* which means “what kind of” (Sahney et al., 2004; Ali & Shastri, 2010). Quality has a wide variety of connotations and meanings, and because it is such a difficult and elusive term to define, Pfeffer and Coote (1991) described it as a “slippery concept”. Thus, it has been defined from different perspectives and orientations according to the person, the context and measures applied. Based on the wide range of such definitions, there seems to be no consensus definition. The common threads being that all these definitions deal with products and/or services (Sahney et al., 2004; Solanki, 2004; Jalil et al., 2010).

Crosby considers quality: “conformance to standards or requirement” and “fitness for use or purpose” is Juran's definition, while Solanki (2004) defines quality as “something which passes a standard or something which is consistently good with no defects” (p.109). Deming (1986) adds a market perspective to this by defining it as, “a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to market”. The focus was once on the quality of operation, but more recently organizations have tended to focus on their customers' needs (Venkatraman, 2007, p.94). De Jager and Nieuwenhuis (2005) support this shift of focus, stating that quality is “fulfilling a customer's requirements, needs or desires” (p.252).

As has been pointed out in the introductory chapter, the use of the term quality began in manufacturing and was then transplanted to the service sector, and more

specifically, education. It has gradually become an essential element in each and every field imaginable (Jalil et al., 2010; Tasar & Çelik, 2011). In educational affairs, because of the intangible nature of its processes, there is considerable discussion on the concept of educational quality (Venkatraman, 2007). The World Declaration on Higher Education defined quality in higher education as, “a multidimensional concept, which should encompass all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programs, curriculum, research and scholarship, qualification of faculty, management and administration, government, facilities student characteristics, buildings, facilities, equipment, infrastructure and the academic environment” (UNESCO, 1998). Some researchers viewed higher education in terms of a degree or academic program, which they considered products. Thus the students are considered users of products, and the graduates are treated as output with job providers as their consumers. Students are also seen by some as clients, and their grades are used to evaluate the quality of their performance (Jalil et al., 2010).

### 2.2.2 The Development of Quality Management System

During the last couple of decades, four stages leading to TQM application have been used as monitoring opportunities in quality management; these are inspection, quality control (QC), quality assurance (QA) and TQM (Abdullah, 2010). Inspection activities are relevant to examination, measurement, and testing or assessment, and ensure the product or service corresponds to certain requirements. For quality control, methods and systems are used as a means of self-inspection, as are instruments and techniques (Abdullah, 2010).

The idea of Quality Control (QC) first emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; its most important focus, according to Luna (2008), is reducing defects and errors in products and services. To achieve this, modern manifestations of QC such as Total Quality Control (TQC) have multiple stages. Feigenbaum described five steps, which are: operator quality control, foreman quality control, inspection quality control, statistical quality control and total quality control. He stated that each step takes about 20 years from inception to realization (Xue, 1998).

Quality control is based on statistical analysis; it is performed at the end of the process used in developing systems, and ensures products or services are designed and

produced to meet or exceed customer requirements (Mitra, 2012). A QC system is designed to:

- Provide routine and consistent checks to ensure data integrity, correctness, and completeness;
- Identify and address errors and omissions; and
- Document and archive inventory material and record all QC activities (Brandes et al., 2004).

Quality Assurance (QA) is defined as *“all the planned and systematic activities implemented within the quality system, and demonstrated as needed, to provide adequate confidence that an entity will fulfill requirements for quality”* (Lundqvist, 1997, p.27). It stresses continuous improvement through systematic planning and avoiding errors by determining their root causes (Abdullah, 2010). According to Lundqvist (1997) the concept of quality assurance has four main elements, which are:

- Everyone in the organization has a responsibility for maintaining the quality of the product or service;
- Everyone in the organization has a responsibility for enhancing the quality of the product or the service;
- Everyone in the organization understands, uses and feels ownership of the systems that are in place for maintaining and enhancing quality; and
- Management (and sometimes the customer or client) regularly checks the validity and reliability of the systems for checking quality.

In higher education, ‘quality assurance’ has become a salient feature of all activities related to quality of learning. Within any system, the idea that the quality of these activities must meet certain requirements has been established as an inherent part of higher education since its early years (Lundqvist, 1997). The role of quality assurance in education is to ensure that interrelated processes are effectively coordinated to achieve predetermined goals. Quality system must be created with clear ideas regarding mission statement, a set of learning outcomes, and core values; while always taking into account the needs of stakeholders (Gattoufi & Craig, 2008). Globally, numerous countries have established organizations responsible for the

management of quality in HEIs. For instance, the aim of the Quality Assurance Agency in the UK is to inspect, audit and report on the quality procedures within institutions. In Australia, the Australian Universities Quality Agency is mandated with monitoring, auditing and reporting on quality assurance in higher education. The main role of such bodies is managing quality and academic standards by identifying changes in practice that might lead to enhancement (Becket & Brookes, 2008).

Over the years, several institutions have developed their own Quality Assurance or Quality Control capacities in order to accomplish high levels of quality (Luria, 2008). A far lesser number have developed competence in TQM, the stage arguably considered most important. TQM includes the application of quality management principles to all aspects of the institution involving customers and suppliers, and their integration within an organization's major processes (Abdullah, 2010).

### 2.2.3 Background of TQM

During the second half of the last century, the advancement and rapid growth of information technology, paired with globalization has driven industrialized countries toward a new view of management, essential for competing successfully in global markets. For this new vision, quality management was considered an apt solution to address the problem of production in industrial countries, so in the past few decades practically every industry has embraced the need for an increased focus on managing quality (Aly & Akpovi, 2001; Delmonte, 2011).

The roots of Total Quality Management can be traced back to 1949, when a committee composed of scholars, engineers and government officials was formed by the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers, in order to improve Japanese productivity and enhance their postwar quality of life. This committee was based upon the ideas and efforts of two American quality pioneers: Dr. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran (Powell, 1995; Allotey, 2003). During the fifties, quality experts such as Deming, Juran and Crosby began to teach the ideas of quality, but without using the term "total" (Sahney et al., 2004). In 1961, Feigenbaum devised the term TQM, first calling it total quality control (TQC) (Ali & Shastri, 2010; Sahney et al., 2004). Scholars have, over the years, formulated numerous frameworks for quality

improvements including Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), Strategic Quality Management (SQM) and Total Quality Management (TQM). Despite the differences amongst these frameworks, the TQM approach is considered to be more general and better able to capture the essence of quality improvements (Venkatraman, 2007).

It was not until the 1980s that TQM programs were introduced to US companies, in order to respond to global competition, and especially to the highly competitive Japanese industrial firms, which at the time accounted for 20% of the automotive industry market (Winn & Green, 1998; Farmer & Paris, 2000; Beer, 2003; Quinn et al., 2009; Ali & Shastri, 2010; Lunenburg, 2010). Studies reported that during the eighties, 93% of American's largest 500 firms had adopted TQM in some form (Powell, 1995; Winn & Green, 1998). These companies saw quality principles as an ideal method of addressing the shortcomings in their managerial practices, which related to efficient leadership, innovation, product quality, adequate training and authority structures. Companies such as Ford, Xerox, Federal Express and Motorola were early TQM adopters among American firms (Powell, 1995). By the end of 1980s, due to wide ranging success throughout the world, a large number of other manufactures had embraced TQM as a management philosophy (Powell, 1995; Aly & Akpovi, 2001; Beer, 2003; Sirvanci, 2004; Farazmand, 2006; Zakuan et al., 2007; Ali & Shastri, 2010; Quinn et al., 2009 Lunenburg, 2010). At the same time, many service organizations expressed interest in adopting the principles of TQM, because of increasing customer pressure to improve their services quality (Powell, 1995). TQM's supporters believe that this philosophy can be applied in various organizations, including: manufacturing; services such as banking, healthcare and education; nonprofit; and government (Powell, 1995; Venkatraman, 2007), leading to improving products and services, reducing costs, more satisfied customers and employees, and improving performance (Powell, 1995; Evans & Lindsay, 2008). The details of TQM applications in educational sector are discussed in section 2.3

#### 2.2.4 Definition of TQM

In spite of widespread support for the adoption of TQM philosophy, there is little agreement on what is actually meant by TQM. Different researchers have given various definition of TQM (Yosof & Aspinwall, 2000). According to Sahney et al. (2004) Witcher defines the term TQM by dividing the phrase into three terms, "total"

means every person is involved (including customer and suppliers), while “quality” implies customer requirements are met exactly, and “management” refers to committed senior executives. Deming (1986), however, emphasizes that quality is a never-ending cycle of continuous improvement. He stated clearly in his book *Out of the Crisis* that “improvement of quality transfers waste of man-hours and of machine time into the manufacture of good products and better service. The result is a chain reaction- lower costs, better competitive position and happier people on the jobs” (p.2). With a similar focus on constant improvement, Dahlgaard et al. (2002) concluded that TQM is “the way of life of an organization committed to customer satisfaction through continuous improvement. This way of life varies from organization to organization and from one country to another but has certain principles which can be implemented to secure market share, increase profits and reduce costs” (p.14). A number of researchers have focused on pushing everyone involved within an organization toward continual effort to improve quality and customer's perceptions. These researchers affirm that having everybody invested in TQM results in long term success and benefits for all members of the organization, and even society (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Nikolova-Jahn, 2008; Abdullah, 2010). Also, TQM has been viewed as a management system driven by top leadership to obtain total commitment and involvement of every member of the institution in order to focus on meeting customer requirements (De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005). Whereas, Nikolova-Jahn (2008) sees TQM as a collection of principles, techniques, processes and best practices that, over time, have been proven effective.

In education contexts and especially higher education, there is no agreed definition for TQM. According to Hills and Stewart-David (2001) and Quinn et al. (2009), precisely defining the concept of quality in higher education is difficult, due to education's nature and the diversity of its covered aspects. For example, educational TQM is broadly defined as, “educational cultures characterized by increased customer satisfaction through continuous improvements in which all employees and students participate actively” (Sahney et al., 2004, p.148). While Venkatraman (2007) takes a slightly different view; considering TQM in higher education, “a process-oriented approach to increasing productivity, decreasing costs and improving quality of service” (p.95). A third and final example of the range of definitions for TQM in

higher education sees it described as, “a management philosophy that puts systems and processes in place to meet and exceed customer expectation. It is a relentless quest for continuous improvement through documentation and the use of tools in a problem solving atmosphere that features team action and good leadership” (Hills & Stewart-David, 2001, p.410). From the above definitions it is clear that TQM focuses on three major areas whether implemented in business or higher education, continuous improvement, the tools and techniques used, and a customer centered approach (Venkatraman, 2007).

### 2.2.5 The TQM Principles

The principles of TQM have been described by many different researchers in various ways, but, ultimately, their application is a way of managing an enterprise towards achieving business excellence (Yosof & Aspinwall, 2000). Total quality stresses teamwork, finding better ways to do things, sharing responsibility and dramatically improving institutional cultures (Venkatraman, 2007). Quality scholars have identified a number of essential principles that are required for successful TQM implementation, such as strong leadership, teamwork, customer focus, training and education, total employee involvement, and continuous improvement (Matejka, et al., 1993; Babbar, 1995; Sirvanci, 2004; Lakshman, 2006; Mehralizadeh & Safaemoghaddam, 2010). Zairi (1991), Khosrowpour (1997) and Nikolova-Jahn (2008) add to these factors another set of substantial principles, including commitment, total customer satisfaction, ownership of problems, reward and recognition, and error prevention. In addition to these, others studies have identified management by fact, participatory management, professional development, and long-term planning as key elements of total quality culture (Goldberg&Cole, 2002; Quinn et al., 2009). Whilst Powell (1995), Yosof and Aspinwall (2000), Venkatraman (2007) and Kumar and Kumar (2011) describe the basic tenets of TQM as follows: long-term perspective, thinking in terms of systems, providing training and tools for improving quality, development of a measurement and reporting system, improved communication between management and labor, supplier quality management, product innovation, benchmarking, and product quality.

According to Solanki (2004) the TQM philosophy depends on several major principles, such as:

- all employees of an organization have important roles to play;
- TQM requires both empowerment and Involvement;
- everyone is made to identify oneself with the institution;
- TQM requires a new set of values such as openness, transparency, trust, patience, respect and discipline; and
- there is a need for long-term thinking and emphasis on long-term objectives.

In addition to what has been reported previously, the TQM literature reveals several practices for TQM implementation which can be summarized as follows: employees' encouragement, continuous innovation, teamwork structures, operational quality planning, quality culture, information and communication, benchmarking, recognition, and problem analysis (Talib et al., 2011).

Working within an education setting, Ngware et.al (2006) identified three TQM principles to be the most salient, including empowerment of workers/employees, leadership and training. While some studies mention other factors to be of importance in educational quality management, for example, scientific methods and tools, and problem-solving through teamwork (De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005). These characteristics are all interconnected, and constitute a complete a system that contributes to the culture of efficient organization, purposeful education and training, meaningful data provision, and at the core of it all, customer service. Of course in education, this focus on customer service, a core principle of TQM especially in higher education, results in institutions that understand the need to stress the individual development of each learner (De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005).

Customer service adapted to education, according to De Jager & Nieuwenhuis (2005), is one of the fundamental principles of TQM; they assert that institutions should listen to those they serve, continually assess how well they are responding to the customers' needs, and begin change to fulfill the requirements and expectations of their clients. Moreover, because TQM is composed of continuous improvement activities, institutions which apply the TQM system should include every member in a completely unified effort towards improving performance and better meeting clients,

or learners, needs at each stage (De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005). According to Deming's fourteen points for quality management, it is also important to have the support of top leadership for successful quality programs (Deming, 1986). As can be seen by the many different overlapping principles mentioned by different researchers in this section, a core number of agreed upon TQM principles are required for implementing TQM successfully and effectively.

Additional evidence for the importance of these principles comes from the numerous Quality Awards presented around the world, many of which have relied on essential elements of TQM as their award criteria. The most well-known of these awards are the Deming Prize in Japan; ISO and EFQM Excellence Award in Europe, Australia and US; and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the US. Indeed, these prominent quality awards reflect the growing interest in the quality movement and the adherence to its principles (Sirvanci, 2004; Nikolova-Jah, 2008; Ali & Shastri, 2010; Mehralizadeh & Safaeemoghaddam, 2010). From the discussion above it would seem that there are a number of major TQM principles which must be borne in mind in order to implement a TQM system successfully in higher education sector. Selected seven TQM principles will be adopted as a basis for this study in order to identify leadership practices in implementing quality management system in Omani private HEIs. These principles are leadership, strategic plan, teamwork, reward and motivation, training and education, total employees involvement and empowerment, and continuous improvement.

#### 2.2.6 Quality Management from Islamic Perspective

Islam provides a framework that shapes the moral and ethical behavior of its followers through the application of Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) to all aspects of Muslims lives. It was more than 15 centuries ago that Muslims first received all their teachings from two primary sources: the Qur'an (Islamic holy book), and the Sunnah (the teachings of Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam, Peace be upon him) (Oukil & Ayar, 2006; El Garah et al. 2012). Islamic conceptions of quality stemming from the Holy Qur'an and Sunna have always been at the core of the Islamic teachings (Hammoudeh, 2012). Even though the concept of a quality management system is a recent phenomenon in the West, the principles involved in stressing quality in a system have been emphasized and practiced from the very beginning of Islam

inception (Nasrullah, 2009). The Islamic perspective is quite unique as it views all aspects of an individual's daily activities as part of their worship (*Ibadah*) of God (Hammoudeh, 2012).

The Islamic idea of quality can be found in the Holy Quran, where many different words are used synonymously to refer to the concept of quality. Particularly, many Quranic verses stress the importance of improvement, mastery, good deeds, honesty, credibility, taking responsibility, following good models, and calling for goodness (Al-Khasawneh et al., 2013). Surveying the Quranic verses reveals many valuable insights relating to quality from the Islamic perspective. For instance, The Holy Quran includes the term *Artistry* which means doing a correct, complete, and perfect work with no defect. The Holy Quran says: "...*(such is) the artistry of Allah, who disposes of all things in perfect order: for he is well acquainted with all that ye do*" (Al-Quran. An-Naml 27:88). Also, there are several Quranic verses that stress improvement, for example; "... *do good; for Allah loves those who do good*" (Al-Quran. Al-Baqarah 2:195), "*Thus indeed do We reward those who do right?*" (Al-Quran. As-Saffat 37:121) and "*If ye did well, ye did well for yourselves; if ye did evil, (ye did it) against yourselves*" (Al-Quran. Al-Isra 17:7). (Al-Khasawneh et al., 2013). In addition, there are many citations from the Quran that indicate completion, perfection, and best performance such as "*We have indeed created man in the best of moulds*" (Al-Quran. At-Teen 95:4).

Furthermore, the Islamic interpretation of quality is eloquently addressed by Hadith (sayings by the Prophet) that urged Muslims to adhere to good manners through quality practices as a way of life, and a method of dealing with self and others (Al-Khasawneh et al., 2013). For example, the Holy Prophet said "*Allah loves that if one of you is doing something to do it masterfully*" (Hadith. Muslim, 1989). Also, the Prophet Mohammad, may Allah bless him, said "*whoever cheats us will never be among us*" (Hadith. Muslim, 1989).

In addition to these examples, there are many more Islamic values and principles (listed below) that emphasize a number of prerequisites and dimensions of the concept of quality; all of which are supported by contemporary management principles.

- Leadership: in the Islamic quality management system there is a fundamental need for efficient leadership to ensure that the management in social, economic, political and administrative fields runs smoothly (Mohamed et al., 2013).
- Participation: typically, participation is stressed by contemporary managerial theorists concerned with quality, and this principle is cited as a vital requirement for organizational success. Similarly, the Quran stressed this concept through using the word *Al Shura* (consultation) in decision-making, signifying the importance of participation, and praising those "*who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation*" (Al-Quran, Ashura, 42:38). One definition of *Al Shura* is - negotiation and dialogue to reveal what is right (Hammoudeh, 2012; Al-Khasawneh et al., 2013). According to Mohamed et al. (2013) *Shura* can be defined also as a management process or a tool to reach a collective decision.
- Taking Responsibility: responsibility has been emphasized in Quranic verses as a basic rule in Islam. The Quran says: "*Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds*" (Al-Quran, Al-Muddethir 74:38). Additionally, in the Hadith sayings, the Prophet said: "*All of you responsible and everyone is accountable for his responsibility*". (Hadith, Al-Bkhari, 1980). The Prophet explains that we all have responsibilities, whether to the family, to the workplace, or to society as a whole (Hammoudeh, 2012; Al-Khasawneh et al., 2013).
- Teamwork: Islamic values encourage humans to work cooperatively towards achieving their best (Al-Khasawneh et al., 2013). The Quranic texts urged cooperation and teamwork, as shown by the following verses: "*Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour*" (Al-Quran, Al-Maida 5:2), and "*And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you)*" (Al-Quran, Al-Imran 3:103).
- *Muhasaba* (Self-criticism) and *Muraqaba* (Self-supervision) are two of the important basics of quality control and management in Islam. According to Qakil and Ayar (2006) *Muhasaba* means reckoning and self-interrogation, while *Muraqaba* has been defined as watching, supervising, controlling, and living in the consciousness of being controlled (by God). This means that the

individual will be able to perform their work with high quality, and without much external control (Hammoudeh, 2012).

- *Itqan*: which mean to have excellence, mastery, or perfection. The principle of *Itqan* stresses the quality of work performance as well as quality of life. (Hammoudeh, 2012). Texts contained in the Holy Quran and Hadith sayings urge Muslims to do their work masterfully, without imperfections or defects, and call on them to be honest and trustworthy in the work they do (Al-Khasawneh et al., 2013; Mohamed et al., 2013). As Prophet Mohammad stated: "*Do the best as if you see Allah, if not, Allah sees you*" (Hadith. Al-Bkhari, 1980).

Comparing quality concepts from contemporary management theories to quality from an Islamic perspective, Al-Khasawneh et al. (2013) concluded that the focus on quality issues is a relatively new approach in contemporary management, which arose as a response to market challenges and competition. In comparison, *the Islamic thought more established and deep-rooted that seeks to strengthen the most spiritual and humanistic ties and lay the basis for rights of everyone, establish justice, and support the humanistic values and ethics of honesty, truthfulness, and trustworthy on a permanent basis*" (p.281). Moreover, the Westernized management system has produced hypothesizing, and multiple theories and principles that continue to change over time or from place to place. Comparatively, the Islamic management system presents firm principles that are valid, irrespective of time or place (Al-Khasawneh et al., 2013).

In closing, through reviewing Quranic verses and Hadith sayings, it is clear that Islamic teachings paid great attention to the concept of quality, just as the contemporary quality system now advocates. However, despite the importance of adopting and establishing quality systems from an Islamic standpoint in Islamic countries, the Islamic perspective in today's global business market is still largely ignored by researchers. The literature review shows a general lack of published Islamic perspectives on the various aspects of management knowledge in general, and quality management systems in particular.

### 2.3 TQM in Higher Education

Education is a service industry of vital importance in the public sector of all nations. Considering the importance of this sector, governments are obliged to ensure that high-quality education is effectively provided in various educational institutions such as schools, universities and other specialized centers. To maintain this high quality, education leaders are constantly looking for methods to make education more efficient and significant (Babbar, 1995). Fundamentally, the education system can be considered a transformational process consisting of inputs from students, teachers, administrative staff, physical and financial resources and processes. These processes involve teaching, learning, administration, research and knowledge transformation, while outputs comprise of examination results, employment, earnings, and satisfaction (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Ali & Shastri, 2010). Put succinctly, higher education can be thought of as having the following functions:

- To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life by helping individuals develop their potential;
- To provide society with competent men and women trained in all professions, who, as cultivated individuals, are imbued with a sense of social purpose;
- To strive to promote equality and social justice and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education;
- To foster in teachers and students, and through them society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing a 'good life' in individuals and society; and
- To bring the universities closer to the community through extension of knowledge and its applications for problem solving (Ali & Shastri, 2010, p.10).

According to many experts, the decision to use the TQM approach to guide change in education is made for a diverse range of reasons. At present there are significant challenges facing institutions of higher education attempting to carry out their duties. There is extensive recent evidence in the literature which discusses the continuing low performance of educational institutions in general, and the connection between poor educational performance and quality in education institutions (Smith & Meier, 1995). During the last few decades, the higher education sector has

encountered several pressures which have been considerably increased due to increasing community awareness, as well as quality of life. Additionally, globalization, along with a rapid influx of new technologies, has created more pressure to learn how to manage changes quickly and successfully. As a result of these diverse demands and expectations of students as customers, there a need to introduce fast paced innovation in services and achieve high quality standards, while maintaining competitive prices (Mirvis, 1993; Jaideep, 1995; Quinn et al., 2009). In addition, the following factors of economic growth, a growing climate of increased accountability by accrediting associations, increasing levels of national and international competition in relation to student enrolments, and more demands for greater faculty expertise and research accomplishment have led to an urgent need to ensure quality within HEIs (Venkatraman, 2007; Becker & Brookes, 2008). Neware et al. (2006) suggests that there are several rationales that force HEIs to emphasize quality:

- pressures from industry for continuous upgrading of academic standards with changing technology;
- government schemes with allocation of funds, which encourage research and teaching in the field of quality;
- increasing competition between various private and government academic institutions; and
- a reduction in the pool of funds for research and teaching, implying that only reputable institutions will have a likely chance of gaining access to various funds.

To address such problems an urgent need has arisen for radical and effective change and reform in the educational system, instead of looking for quick and immediate fixes. This change must address the behaviors, culture, and structures which target development and improvement (Goldberg&Cole, 2002; Venkatraman, 2007). There is no doubt that change is needed, however, the important question in this context is how can educational institutions be made more effective? During the 1990s, in response to the pressure for change and reform, many higher educational institutions, both public and private, began to study and implement quality initiatives such as TQM in one or more forms.

As has been pointed out previously, total quality management is one of the emerging philosophies of management which has received wide acclaim in various sectors. TQM is an effective and successful instrument for achieving quality, improving productivity and enhancing performance in industry (Babbar, 1995). Due to its recognition and acceptance increasing in different organizations, educators and administrators have started to investigate the possibility of applying the TQM philosophy to education (Babbar, 1995). In spite of several researchers stating support for the implementation of quality management in academia (Vazzana et al., 1997; Winn & Green, 1998; Crawford & Shutler, 1999; Meirovich & Romar, 2006; Venkatraman, 2007) others insist that because this program was borrowed from the industrial and business sector its implementation in the core higher education processes remains very doubtful (Koch, 2003; Mehrizadeh & Safaeioghaddam, 2010).

Many educational researchers believe that TQM principles can make a significant and positive difference in education institutions (Venkatraman, 2007; Tasar & Çelik, 2011). One of the most famous quality experts, Deming (1982), supports this idea when he mentioned that TQM principles can be practically applied in both manufacturing and service organizations. Even though the interest in TQM has increased rapidly during the last few decades, a number of studies have postulated that the TQM approach could only be applied to profit-making organizations (McCulloch, 1993; Meirovich & Romar, 2006; Lutzenburg, 2010). However, many more recent studies have illustrated that the TQM philosophy can be applied to different sectors such as service organizations, universities, and elementary and secondary schools (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Venkatraman, 2007). According to Jalil et al. (2010) although the educational and industrial organizations are different in nature from a business perspective, they have some shared features, such as the need for flexible customer focused environments. Since the concept of quality is determined by whether a product or service meets its intended purpose, if the education provided by an institution fulfils its purpose, then it is said to be one of quality. They do, however, caution that the significant differences among commercial and educational parties need careful concern.

As a result of growing widespread support of the TQM philosophy among educators, according to Entin (1992) and Quinn et al. (2009), it has been applied to higher education domains in ever greater numbers, reaching historic highs over the past two decades. With an ever wider range of educational institutions embracing the need for an increased focus on quality management transformation (Farmer & Paris, 2000; Delmonte, 2011). Numerous studies have examined TQM efforts in the education sector located around the world, and many of these have shown tangible results for TQM in HEIs. For instance, in order to improve educational processes and services, to satisfy customers and gain competitive advantages a number of British and American public and private higher educational institutions have adopted TQM principles (AL-Ghanboosi, 2002). By the middle of the 1990s approximately 50% of American HEIs had established some sort of quality-oriented council (Koch, 2003).

Despite these successes, research into Arab countries compared to other areas of the world revealed that adoption of quality management practices in education has been remarkably slow, and knowledge of the implications of TQM is not common among leadership (Abd Rahman et al., 2011). In Oman, there were some studies found in the literature concerning use of TQM in educational institutions carried out prior to the research in this study beginning. Despite their limited number, they conclude that Omani HEIs are willing to accept and apply the principles of TQM whether in the public or private sector (Al-Nabhani, 2001; Al-Ghanboosi, 2002; Al-Kiyumi, 2002; Al-Hassani, 2003; Al-Ghaithi, 2007; Al-Yafi, 2010).

### 2.3.1 Advantages of TQM for HEIs

Nowadays, higher education is playing a more active role in nourishing the socio-economic development of countries, and this requires a qualitative change in quality management of HEIs. Therefore, HEIs must become more creative in order to fulfill their potential as quality institutions of knowledge production and dissemination. In order to improve the performance of this vital sector, many creative experiments are being carried out; the implementation of TQM concepts is one of these actions, and is expected to go a long way in enhancing the higher education system (Ali & Shastri, 2010).

Ali and Shastri (2010) see TQM as a fundamental investment, necessary to improve the general quality of life. There are several benefits of properly implementing TQM, that can be gained by any institution, whether profit or service, as summarized by Abd Rahman et al. (2011):

- Improving product quality for customers;
- Improving the working environment;
- Improving operational performance;
- Improving teamwork and problem solving procedures;
- Improving customer and employee satisfaction; and
- Increasing organization's profits.

A strong link between the development of the economy and the development of tertiary education has been established. The importance of education for the development of excellence, expertise and knowledge as well as leadership cannot be denied (Ali & Shastri, 2010). Thus TQM has the potential to be a critical factor in shaping the strategies of HEIs in their effort to satisfy different stakeholders, including, students, parents, industry and society as a whole (Ali & Shastri, 2010). One of the future challenges in higher education is changing the education provided to meet employer's requirements. The use of TQM has been suggested, in order to address this challenge for promoting change in higher education. It will not only enable graduates to acquire skills and characteristics which will qualify them for their future working life, but also make graduates of more benefit to their employers (Hills & Stewart-David, 2001).

Becket and Brookes (2008) argue that globally, of the many available, TQM is the most frequently drawn upon quality program in higher education. This is due to educators discovering that this relatively new and visionary management technique can provide the formula for improving and enhancing the educational sector (Entin, 1992; Lunenburg, 2010). Goldberg and Cole (2002) emphasize that "*education can be improved through quality management*" (p.10).

Many educational leadership have already looked to the philosophy and principles of TQM as a means for achieving and maintaining excellence in the higher education sector (Tuttle, 1994). Tuttle (1994) and Al-Ghanboosi (2002) state that

many public and private higher educational institutions in the world have adopted a TQM approach to improve their educational process and services, to satisfy their customers, and to gain competitive advantages. While Becket and Brookes (2008) mention that successful TQM implementation will result in improving education systems by enhancing the learning process and improving student's results. Mehralizadeh and Safaeemoghaddam (2010) suggest that *"TQM is another management theory that could be considered as an essential source of good ideas that may be of great value to colleges and universities"* (p.176).

To investigate the results of implementing TQM in organizations, or institutions, many studies have been conducted (Samuel & Katrina, 1996; Winn & Green, 1998; Kanji et al., 1999; Venkatraman, 2007). Kanji et al. (1999) found that the institutions that use TQM perform significantly better than those that do not. TQM has been proven to aid not only development, but to solve problems and to satisfy customers or stockholders. Jaman (1997) strongly recommended that principals in the Malaysian education system explore total quality management, in order to become more effective. It is thought that due to its contribution in improving higher education in western countries, the application of quality systems is the way to improve and develop higher education in developing countries (Basom, 1993).

TQM started as isolated experimental applications in some western HEIs. Since then, this new managerial approach has gathered a lot of momentum globally, resulting in the concept of "quality" being debated in many HEIs throughout the world. As a result of pressure from different stakeholders such as students, local and central government, academic staff, and society, numerous higher educational institutions have attempted to apply quality management principles in order to become more sustainable, competitive and profitable. These applied quality programs have either produced limited effect and/or have been aborted. By the mid-1990s, many HEIs around the world, including education providers in the USA, Europe, Canada, Asia, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, had attempted to adopt one or more components of quality management systems (Mehralizadeh & Safaeemoghaddam, 2010). However, studies report that TQM is practiced far more in educational institutions in the US than in Europe. For instance, in 1996, reports recorded that at least 160 universities in the United States adapted TQM activities while; other reports

highlight 146 universities and 66 community colleges involved in TQM efforts (Quinn et al., 2009). While more recently, there are thought to be more than 300 American colleges and universities that are actively following the total quality philosophy in their academic and/or administrative areas (Venkatraman, 2007).

Across the globe, the U.S. is considered the first country to implement TQM in universities, but others are now following. Some of the success stories in implementing quality management in higher education were recorded by the Northwest Missouri State University, Oregon State University of Texas, University of Westminster, Sheffield Hallam University, and Aston University (Hills & Stewart-David, 2001). Indeed, international experiences in application of TQM have proved its effectiveness in improving and developing university quality, increasing confidence in its management, and improving program quality. Based on these well-documented, successful experiences in the application of TQM and resulting excellence, the broadest lesson to be learned is that the change process goes through a series of phases which typically require a considerable length of time. Therefore, skipping steps only creates the illusion of speed and will hamper desired results long term. Furthermore, significant mistakes in any of the phases can have a devastating influence, slowing momentum and eliminating achieved results (Kotter, 2007). According to Jalal (2011) even though there has been call for quality improvement in universities and colleges in developing countries, studies that have attempted to investigate TQM in HEIs showed that this philosophy received little attention, and little research has been conducted to aid successful implementation. Consequently, he adds, after successful international experiences in applying TQM within educational organizations, it is now the appropriate time to implement TQM principles in developing countries.

On the other hand, despite the existence of successful case studies regarding the application of TQM in HEIs, the literature indicates the presence of unsuccessful experiences as well. It is these problematic experiences that are dealt with section 2.3.3 of this chapter, where the most significant challenges faced in the past by some universities and colleges in adopting quality initiatives will be highlighted.

### **2.3.2 Requirements of Applying TQM in HEIs**

According to experiences with TQM, it is understood that the successful application and introduction of TQM principles requires three major components,

planning, time, and effort (Venkatraman, 2007; Talib et al., 2011). In the TQM system work flows horizontally across jobs and departments, including all workers, top to bottom, and extends backwards and forwards. Several studies have pointed out that the core ideas of TQM lie within the context of process management, and the improvement of this is the basis of total performance improvement (Lakshman, 2006). However, there are many components which contribute to the successful implementation of TQM, for instance, culture, leadership commitment, long term versus short term thinking, systems knowledge, strategic planning processes, human resource management, training, and organizational structure. As mentioned previously, Feigenbaum (1991) argued that there were nine factors affecting quality; he termed them the “nine m’s”. These factors are markets, money, management, men, motivation, materials, machines and mechanization, modern information methods, and mounting product requirements. So, it is accepted that from a TQM perspective, involvement and participation of leadership and employees at all levels is important to the successful management of quality within organization. Ishikawa (1985), the Japanese quality expert, emphasizes the importance of management by saying “*whenever mistakes accrue, two-thirds to four-fifths of responsibility rests with the management*”. Consequently, the belief of many quality experts is that the key to successful management of quality begins at the top of the organization. They state that ineffective leadership can obstruct and even destroy efforts to implement TQM in any organization (Gaucher & Kratochwill, 1993). In order to achieve quality management, Handfield et al. (1999) listed a set of points such as the presence of top leadership commitment, clear communication of goals, employee training, careful selection of team members and delegation of decision making authority.

In the education sector, there are three common approaches to TQM, which are customer focus, staff focus, and service agreement stance (Jie & Idris, 23 March 2013). However, the dimensions of quality for higher education can be elaborated as:

- quality as exceptional (for example, high standards);
- quality as consistency (for example, zero defects);
  - quality as fitness for purpose (fitting customer specifications);
  - quality as value for money (as efficiency and effectiveness); and

- quality as transformative (an ongoing process that includes empowerment to take action and enhancement of customer satisfaction) (Ali & Shastri, 2010; Becket & Brookes 2008).

Based on successful experiences in the application of quality management there are several strategic phases for implementing TQM in higher education, including:

- Obtain senior leadership commitment;
- Establish a quality steering committee and implementation teams;
- Assess the current quality system situation to identify all the existing good practices;
- Create a documented implementation plan;
- Provide training so that staff are fully aware of the changes;
- Create and update quality management documentation; and
- Monitor progress as part of the quality processes (Quinn et al., 2002).

The literature related to quality in higher education has demonstrated that the key factors that influence the quality of higher education are, “*the quality of faculty, curriculum standards, technological infrastructure available, research environment, academic culture, accreditation regime, leadership and the administrative policies and procedures implemented in institutions of higher education*” (Jalil et al., 2010, p.139). It has been stated that the main objective of educational communities is to satisfy its customers (students) by offering quality educational programs and by providing adequate teaching and learning. Thus there is a need for HEIs to consider the issue of implementing TQM as an effective way to enhance continuous quality improvement (Ibekwe, 2006).

In addition to what has been mentioned above, for institutions of higher learning to achieve and maintain their quality, they must ensure that the following critical elements are in place: (1) effective leadership; (2) a sound financial base; (3) effective fund-raising strategies; (4) adequate financial management; (5) effective enrollment management; (6) faculty/staff participation role in program evaluation, and in governance; and (7) good student programs and activities (Ibekwe, 2006). Furthermore, achieving quality in educational institutions requires internal cultural and institutional changes. Senior leadership of any organization must work to promote a culture of quality at all levels of management and practice it with all employees in

the organization (De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005). The three pillars which must be focused on by educational leadership in order to achieve effective results of TQM implementation are the customers, the staff and the services (Sahney et al., 2004). Additionally, each institution of higher education should be a learning institution emphasizing the individual development of the learner besides the empowerment of all employees. If these discussed elements are taken into account, effective results can be obtained by adoption of TQM programs within educational institutions (De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005). However, Venkatraman (2007) concludes that outcomes resulting from the implementation of TQM in HEIs require careful planning, followed by at least three years to see measurable improvements in the graduating students.

### 2.3.3 The Challenges of Applying TQM in HEIs

To provide sufficient background for this research study, this section will discuss the difficulties of quality initiatives in higher education; reasons are provided to clarify why some higher education institutions are hesitant to use quality techniques, and why others fail. It is important to understand the obstacles that appear in educational systems when the TQM philosophy has been applied, in order take them into account when planning successful and effective TQM implementation within HEIs. According to *Cambridge Dictionary online* an obstacle is “something that blocks you so that movement, going forward or action are prevented or made more difficult” (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 20 February 2013).

In the services sector overall, Abd Rahman et al. (2011) indentified eight barriers for unsuccessful TQM implementation, namely:

- Lack of quality leadership;
- Lack of recognition for employee involvement;
- Lack of management and staff commitment;
- Increased complex paperwork;
- TQM is not part of organization's vision and mission;
- Difficulties in change of culture;
- Inadequate knowledge and understanding of quality; and
- Lack of governmental support, human and financial resources and technological facilities.

In the education sector, studies have revealed several potential obstacles to TQM. In recent years, there has been much discussion about the reasons for failure of TQM, particularly in higher education (Mehralizadeh & Safaeemoghaddam, 2010). Most of the educational researchers agree with other researchers in different fields that lack of quality leadership is one of the top reasons for the failure of the application of a quality management system (Mauro & Mauro, 1999; Sirvanci, 2004; Ali & Shastri, 2010; Jalil et al., 2010; Zakaria & Yusoff, 2011; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012). Many studies conducted on failed quality programs in the United States and Europe have proved that the reasons for failure were largely attributable to the factor of leadership. This is because leadership has a major influence on organizational performance as well as their fundamental role being that of change facilitator (Zakaria & Yusoff, 2011). For example, quality management researchers found that the 66% failure rate of American TQM programs was due to lack of leadership commitment (Norris, 2005). Juran (as cited in McCulloch, 1993), supports this idea by claiming that 85% of an organization's quality problems are rooted in systems which are the responsibility of management.

According to Horner (1997) there is not much research on why leaders fail. However, it can be concluded that there are some negative characteristics possessed by leaders which prevent their success, including arrogance, untrustworthiness, moodiness, insensitivity, compulsiveness, and abrasiveness. Research conducted by Jalal (2011) in Iranian Medical Sciences Universities revealed that the most important obstacles that prevented TQM implementation were: leaders had too many tasks, and were non-accountable to the ministry. In a similar study carried out to investigate the success of implementation of TQM in Isfahan University Hospital, researchers determined that the reasons for failure of TQM was due to the absence of consistent senior leadership commitment and support, and the manager's style of leadership was too top down or too laissez faire (Mosadeghrad, 2006). Adebanjo and Kehoe (1998) in their evaluation of quality culture problems in the UK, attributed these problems to senior leadership failing to insist on systematic measuring of customer's satisfaction levels, and/or training programs.

To summarize and build on the previous discussions, despite the presence of many adherents to the philosophy of quality management, some studies have

identified obstacles to implementation (Hills & Stewart-David, 2001). The obstacles that were discussed prevented effective and successful implementation of various TQM strategies within these organizations (Beer, 2003). In view of that, Hills & Stewart-David (2001) point out that *"today the TQM movement is in need of TQM"* (p.411). It is important for higher education to learn from the experiences of these organizations who have struggled with TQM. The long-term success of TQM in higher education lies in how to take advantage of the lessons from the field in the application of this philosophy.

From this review of the TQM literature it is apparent that TQM activities, if effectively implemented, will lead to significant benefits, such as improving educational processes and enhancing an institution's output to cope with the requirements of the labor market, both locally and internationally. However, those outcomes do not occur overnight, they require investments of effort, patience, and time.

## 2.4 Leadership and TQM

### 2.4.1 Definition of Leadership

Based on the leadership literature, this section will expound on the diverse definitions of leadership which have been proposed by several scholars and authors. In fact, leaders and leadership are much debated topics that have produced a large variety of studies in terms of styles, competencies, effectiveness, attributes, principles, traits and behaviors (Richardson, 1997; Furvey, 1993; Barbour, 2001; Hirtz, 2002; Ehigie & Akpan, 2004; Osseo-Asare, 2007; Trivellas & Dargenidou, 2009; Antonaros, 2010). Muhammad et al. (2009) describe the theme of leadership as being one of social science's most examined phenomena. Burns (1978) wrote that *"Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on the earth"* (p.2).

Historically, the word *"leadership"* first appeared in the English language in literature referring to the British Parliament at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the principles of leadership have been traced back long periods before this, for example, mention of it has been found in Egyptian hieroglyphics (2300 B.C.), work by Chinese and Greek philosophers, the Bible and the Icelandic tales of Viking

heroes and villains (Harkins, 1998; Schalkwyk, 2011) as well as in Islam (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). For many centuries, the concept of leadership has obviously existed, but was not formally researched and studied until the 1930s; meaning that the main body of significant research on leadership has been accumulated over a period of less than a hundred years (Harkins, 1998; Schalkwyk, 2011).

Over this time, numerous scientific studies pertinent to the field of leadership have been conducted. As a result of such studies, several traditional leadership concepts have been explored and many new leadership theories and approaches have been discovered. These researchers advocate that the word *leadership* conveys a modern and sophisticated concept (Burtis & Turman, 2010). Although knowledge of the concept of leadership has become widespread, there is still disagreement as to its meaning. The concept of leadership remains mysterious and varied, and accurately defining it has proven to be an elusive problem; over the years it has become an indefinable term, defined and redefined multiple times (Harkins, 1998; Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011). Stogdill (1974) described leadership concepts as being very complex; meaning different things to different people. As many researchers have attempted to examine the concept of leadership, several definitions have emerged (Jaman, 1997). Stogdill reported and identified over 70 definitions of leadership (Armstrong, 2005), whilst researchers such as Burns (1978) have pointed out that there are 300 or more definitions of leadership. Defining leadership concepts has been challenging and the primary task for researchers and social scientists overall. Researchers commonly define the concept of leadership based on their individual perspective and the areas of the phenomenon of most interest to them (Yukl, 2004). As Stogdill (1974) noted "*there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept*" (p.7).

Perhaps one of the most basic of the many definitions comes from Rost (1991), who states that the "*verb to lead comes from Old English word **Leden** or **Loedan** which meant to make go, to guide or to show the way, and the Latin word **ducere** which meant to draw, drag, pull; to lead, guide and conduct*". (p.38) According to Harding (1987) leadership in the simplest of terms is the ability to persuade others to seek defined aims and objectives enthusiastically. Cohen and Roueche (1969) define leadership as "*the initiation of a new structure or procedure for accomplishing or*

*changing an organization's goals or objectives" (p.11). Sergiovanni and Elliott (1975) conclude that leadership "involves introducing something new or helping to improve present condition" (p.100), while Page (1996) believes that leadership should induce new, more activist tendencies in their followers, arouse in them hopes, and aspirations and expectations. Yet another definition of leadership is offered by Burns (1978), he indicated that leadership involves "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations-the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations-of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations" (p. 19).*

In short, based on the plethora of examples found in the literature of different leadership definitions, as detailed above, it can be clearly observed that there is no agreed definition of the concept of leadership (Harkins, 1998; Burns & Tushman, 2010; Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011). Hence, as Bass and Stogdill (1990) postulates, leadership meaning might depend upon the type of organization in which it is found. However, overall, it seems clear that all leadership definitions share common denominators; a focus on specific aspects and elements involve leading, goal setting, and influencing the behavior of other people. A clear majority of definitions on leadership focused on a leadership influence on their followers. One cannot lead without followers, so leadership is concerned with how the leadership influences or affects followers (Fiedler, 1967; Koontz et al., 1980; Lippman et al., 1985; Tannenbaum et al., 1987; Bryman, 1992; Cook, 2011; DuBrin, 2012). As pertaining to this study, leadership can be identified as a group of processes whereby leadership impact followers in an organization and direct their efforts toward the achievement of organizational objectives (Boles & Davenport, 1975; Bass & Stogdill, 1990).

#### **2.4.2 The Islamic Perspective of Leadership**

In Islam, the topic of leadership is critical. Islam, and more specifically the teachings of *AL-Qur'an* and *AL Hadith* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad), view leadership as a task to practice authority (Abd. Manaf, 2000). According to Beekun and Badawi (1999) leadership in Islam is a trust (*amanah*). It represents a psychological contract between the leaders and their members, that they will try their best to guide them, to protect them, and to treat them justly. Consequently, the focus

of leadership in Islam is on doing well. Throughout a Muslim's life, in most situations and group activities they are required to choose their leader. Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, "*When three are on a journey, they should appoint one of them as their commander*" (Hadith. Abu Dawud, #2602). In addition, leadership in an Islamic system *Ummah* (the Islamic social order) is the basis of the leadership. Leader's legitimacy requires two main elements parish (followers) approval and *Shari'ah* sovereignty (Moten, 2011).

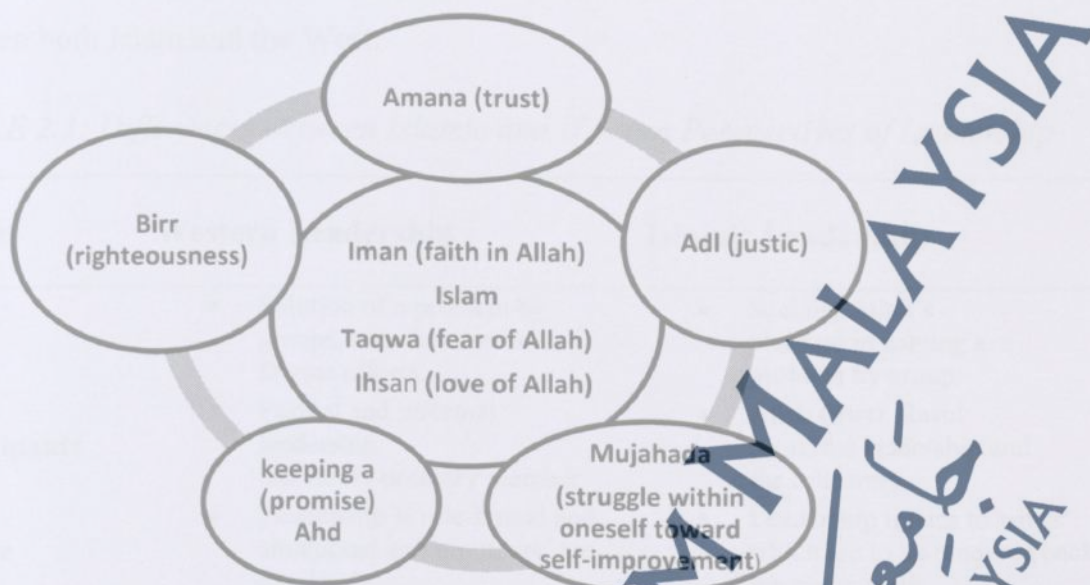
From an Islamic perspective, there are two major roles of leadership, including servant-leader and guardian-leader. The leader is servant of his group members. He seeks their happiness and leads them toward what is good. In the second primary role of Islamic leadership, Prophet Muhammad (saw) explained that to his community when he said "*all of you are guardians, are responsible for your words*" (Hadith. Al Bukhari, 1980). He mentioned to the *AL Imam* (the ruler) as the first one among them (Beekun & Badawi, 1999).

According to Islam, a leadership behavior should be bound by values that are in line with principles of Islam. For instance, when an individual has accepted the role of leadership, his or her attitude should be as: speak the truth, keep one's promise, fulfil one's trust, avoid sexual transgression, practice modesty and behave justly (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). In the Qur'an, Prophet Musa has been described as, "*Al-qawi Al-amin*", which mean strong and trustworthy and Prophet Yusuf is described as one who is truthful. Prophet Muhammad (saw) was known in Mecca as *Sadiq* (truthful) and *Amin* (trustworthy) (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). According to Abd.Manaf(2000), Islamic leaders must be trustworthy and skilled, strong and loyal. The absence of one of these pillars in a leader can almost certainly lead to negative consequence for the organization. The Qur'an distinctly addressed this issue in the following verses: "*Truly the best of men for you to employ is the man who is strong and trusty*" (Al-Quran. Al-Qasas 28:26), and "*I have full strength for the purpose, and may be trusted*" (Al-Quran. Al-Naml 27:39). An Islamic leader must possess important attributes in order to enable him to perform his responsibilities and duties towards the community, such as *adalah* (justice), *ilm* (knowledge), *salamah* (physical and mental fitness), *ra'y* (sound judgment), and *shaja'ah wa najdah* (courage and determination) (Moten, 2011). The following verse from the Qur'an stresses that

instead of criticizing, leaders should be patient, understanding and consultative when dealing with followers, *"it is part of the mercy of Allah that you do deal gently with them. Were you servers or harsh-hearted they would have broken away from about you; so pass over (their faults) and ask for Allah's forgiveness for them; and consult them in affaires (of moment). Then when you have taken a decision put your trust in Allah for Allah loves those who put their trust (in him)"* (Al-Quran. Al-Imran 3: 159).

One of the most important Islamic documents on leadership is a letter which is written by The fourth Rashdun Caliphs Ali including instructions to his Governor of Egypt Malik al Ashtar; in it, he recommends the following: *"Infuse your heart with mercy, love and kindness for your subjects. Be not in face of them a voracious animal, counting them as easy prey, for they are of two kinds: either they are your brothers in religion or your equals in creation. Error catches them, unaware, deficiencies overcome them, (evil deeds) are committed by them internationally and mistake. So grant them your pardon and forgiveness. For you are above them, and he who appointed you is above you and God is above him who appointed you"* (Khan, 2006 p.188). Moral foundations in Islam are very central and leadership is no exception. A Muslim leader needs to act in accordance with the injunction of Allah and his Prophet (saw), and maintain a strong Islamic moral character. The more turbulent the environment in which the leaders functions, the more unshakeable their conviction must be (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). A number of ethical foundations of Islamist leadership will be clarified in figure 2.1.

FIGURE 2.1: Moral Bases of Islamic Leadership



Source: Beekun and Badawi (1999), p.17.

Based on the text and context of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, Islamic leadership relies on fundamental values, for instance the unity and sovereignty of Allah (*tawhid*), trust (*amanah*), vicegerent (*khilafah*), continuous worship (*ibadah*), knowledge (*ilm*), justice (*adl*) and participatory decision-making (*shura*) (Moten, 2011).

Leadership is characterized by Islamic principles, including consensus-building-traits such as '*shura*'. The Islamic leader should manage through mutual consolation (*Shura*) which means people participate in governing themselves (Moten, 2011). The paragraph quoted below helps explained what *Shura* means in Islam: "*a method, the system of Shura provides the procedure whereby Muslims sit together and deliberate upon important matters to arrive at and be bound by conclusion in the light of the philosophical concerns of justice. If the issue under consideration does not concern justice but a case of preferring one to the other, there is no harm in adopting measures such as voting, abiding by the point of view of the minority, etc. the same measures could be restored to if the discussion reached a deadlock in the absence of an authentic analogy. But even here, no decision should be taken until everybody has the chance to express his or her opinion and cite relevant evidence*" (Abu Sulayman, 25 September 2103).

Of course these views do not operate in a vacuum and different perspective need to be addressed. The following table 2.1 shows a comparison of leadership between both Islam and the West:

**TABLE 2.1: Differences between Islamic and Western Perspectives of Leadership**

Points	Western Leadership	Islamic Leadership
<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solution of a problem by groups, no reference to Divine efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking Allah's pleasure in solving a problem by group.</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal and informal leadership, and rarely ordinary member</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allah (SwT), Rasul (Sm), the leadership and the followers</li> </ul>
<b>Nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership is rule-bound and situational and no 'trusts' are involved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership relates to 'trusts' which are to be rendered back to the participants.</li> </ul>
<b>Methodology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings, conference, study reports, file orders etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with the followers especially with those with relevant knowledge, memoranda, notifications.</li> </ul>
<b>Traits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mundane knowledge, skill, values as prescribed by organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of Islamic Shariah, individual judgment, justice and competence</li> </ul>
<b>Decision making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With reference to rules of business and no reference to any Divine Law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After consulting, the leader must decide, but put trust on Allah (SwT)</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations of leader</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders seek leadership without waiting for leadership to come to them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders must not seek leadership; it must come to them.</li> </ul>
<b>Limitation of followers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Followers usually have a passive role.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Followers have an active role to advise and warn leadership of consequences of policy/ action.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership style</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authoritative, democratic as necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A combination of authoritarian and democratic styles.</li> </ul>
<b>Followers style</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to the leader's call for advice and cooperation with the leader, but no acceptance of partial responsibility. Both the leaders and the followers are primarily accountable to organization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to the leader's call for advice and cooperation with the leader, and acceptance of partial responsibility for action. Both the leaders and the followers are primarily accountable to Allah (SwT) and organization.</li> </ul>

Source: Ather & Sobhani, 2007, p.10

Based on table 2.1 it is clear that there are numerous significant differences between Western and Islamic perspectives of leadership in terms of objectives,

participants, methodology, traits, decision making, leader limitations, subordinate limitations, style of leadership and style of subordinates. By way of comparison, the Islamic style of leadership is different from authoritative leadership, where the leaders are the centre of all authority, it is also different from the laissez-faire style whereby there is no direction or supervision and guidance, and subordinates make all of their own decisions. However, it can be considered an intermediary style, located between individual sovereignty and preponderance of the group, in terms of decision-making. *Shura* is considered as the process and system in Islam whereby the leaders consult with their group and hear their views before making a decision on any matter (Abd.Manaf, 2000).

Through the above discussion, it is clear that an Islamic leadership viewpoint indicates the importance of leaders possessing character traits and abilities, while never ignoring the acquisition or learning of necessary knowledge (Abd.Manaf, 2000). Prophet Mohammad (saw) illustrated that the leaders are servant of *AL Jama'ah* (organization, community, and nation) therefore; leaders should be serving and helping their followers towards progress and success (Ather & Sobhani, 2007). Ather and Sobhani (2007) conclude that "*Islam as a complete code of life has a set of principles, guidelines for managers to lead the human resources in an organization*" (p.7).

#### **2.4.3 The Role of Leadership in Higher Education**

Leadership is considered a pivotal factor in sustaining, developing and enhancing the quality and performance of institutions (Parrish, 2010). Although the theme of leadership has been studied for a long time, in the early twentieth century researchers began to study leadership as a part of academic and organizational disciplines (Khan et al., 2011). Leadership in the higher education context has been widely studied for long periods (Bolden, 2004). However, Muhammad et al. (2009) stated that comparatively very little research has been conducted on academic colleges and departments. The studies have taken a number of different perspectives and focused on a variety of areas to answer specific research questions related to aspects, styles and practices of leadership. For instance, transition from research and teaching to academic management, dilemmas and stress in leadership, position of conflict,

management skills, and decision making (Harkins, 1998; Anyamele, 2004; Mescht, 2004; Osseo-Asare, 2007; Trivellas & Dargenidou, 2009; Parrish, 2010 Amin, 2012).

Since there is debate on the definition of leadership in general, as indicated earlier in section 2.4.1 in higher education there have also been many various perspectives of leadership. For instance, Ramsden (2003) defined leadership in higher education as the *"everyday process of supporting, managing, developing and inspiring academic colleagues"* (p.4). Leadership functions in HEIs includes setting strategic planning, managing resources, giving academic direction, teaching and research, setting an example, consulting with students and building teamwork (Osseo-Asare et al., 2005).

Nowadays, the world has become more complicated, and higher education around the world faces several external and internal challenges which could negatively or positively affect leadership; these dynamic times require dynamic, driven leaders (Bottery, 2004). Ogunsola (2004) stated that these challenges include globalization, the intelligence explosion, scientific and social change, and the dissemination of information technology. The most significant challenge facing the higher education sector is government and community expectation towards the quality, and as a result accountability is rising. Stockholders such as faculty, staff and students desire high quality services at affordable and reasonable costs (UNESCO, 1998; Lerner, 1999; Leveille, 2006). This has been occurring simultaneously with increased competition between universities and colleges for students and funding, alongside the expectation that the private sector can produce highly qualified graduates (Ameijde et al., 2009).

Further challenges include; an increase of private HEIs; declining government funds versus increasing cost; changing and increasing public expectation of accountability; and of course the growth of distance education cannot be overlooked (Leveille, 2006). Sriyanalugsana's (2008) study concluded that Thai university leadership face great challenges, including limited resources, new levels of academic freedom, and public perceptions of flexibility and accountability. In the near future, educational leadership will face these, and more challenges than ever before, due to new rules, regulations and quality assurance systems. Another source of pressure is the fact that leadership will have to be able to apply themselves in both administrative

and academic departments. Because of all of these issues, higher education providers must be willing to accept change and be more flexible in responding to evolving requirements and pressures (Sriyanalugsana, 2008; Trivellas & Dargenidou, 2009). Yield and Codling (2004) and Crippen (2005) believe that due to transformation of the educational organizational structure, leadership in higher education has become increasingly uncertain, therefore, a shift in educational leadership has become essential, especially in their roles, relationships, and responsibilities towards responding to challenges. This has also led private HEIs to function according to requirements of the market and other external pressures in order to protect their existence (Newman et al., 2004).

For any institution to achieve its objectives and standards, they must have the power to control its resources, such as employees, money and materials (Jackson & Schuler, 1995). In HEIs, there must be a drive to direct the activities of subordinates as well as students towards the accomplishment of stated institutional goals, and according to Anyamele (2004), leadership supply that desired drive. Another well supported opinion is that higher education requires charismatic leadership which results primarily from the leader's significant personal appeal (Hoy & Miskel 1991).

There is a strong belief that even though the role of leadership might vary from one educational institution to another, there is an all important role, previously mentioned, that all leaders must face: dealing with change. Researchers have found that in order to work towards newly implemented change, subordinates have to be empowered so that they are willing to work to face new challenges (Jones & Rudd, 2007). Yelder and Codling (2004) classified roles of higher education leadership into three categories: (a) face increased influence of external stakeholders, (b) a strong focus on strategic planning, and (c) the embracing of corporate techniques and characteristics. Ramsden (2003) points out that good leadership in HEIs " *helps create an environment for academics to learn continually, to make the best use of their knowledge, to solve problems in research and teaching collaboratively as well as individually and to feel inspired to overcome the obstacles presented by change and upheaval in university life*" (p.106).

Studies indicated that the most significant differences between successful and unsuccessful leadership is the capacity to deal with others. Turvey (1999) found that

75% of successful leadership had the ability to deal with others efficiently, while only 25% of unsuccessful leaders were efficient in their dealings with people. Therefore, in the higher education context, the personal qualities of the higher educational leadership play an essential role in the success of an organization. The community places expectations on these leaders in this respect, requiring them to play an active and important role in several areas, which include (a) wholeness incorporating diversity, (b) developing a share culture, (c) good internal communication, (d) caring, trust and teamwork, (e) group maintenance and government, (f) participation and the sharing of leadership tasks, (g) development of young people, and (h) links with the outside world (Muhammad et al., 2009). From the discussion above it would seem that leaders play a critical role in the success of higher education, therefore success or failure of higher education initiatives is viewed to be the leader's responsibility (Keup, 2012).

#### 2.4.4 Leadership and Implementation of TQM

A plethora of papers have been published on leadership in HEIs. Yet, according to Luria (2008) little is known about the role of leadership in the quality movement, and few empirical studies have investigated the leadership-quality relationship. Generally, most of the studies have the same opinion that leadership is a key to success in applying quality management.

Transformation programs and managing quality in particular cannot be carried out successfully without leadership that is effective (Zakaria & Yusoff, 2011). Effective leadership has been identified as the ability to promote a spirit of cooperation within a group of people to direct the collective of these people for a specific target (Chase & Federle, 1992). On the other hand, Gaucher and Kratochwill (1993) assert that "*ineffective leadership can hinder and even destroy efforts to implement total quality management*" (p.10).

Leadership is of critical importance in terms of the introduction and implementation of TQM (Chase & Federle, 1992; Caudron, 1993). Quality philosophers such as Deming (1986) and Juran (1995) emphasized that management played a significant role in achieving quality. Both of them believe that it is leadership's true responsibility to ensure quality throughout the organization.

Repeatedly, Juran (1989) strongly stressed how important leadership is in effective quality management transformation, stating, "*upper managers must personally provide leadership in managing for quality*" (p.12). Feigenbaum concluded that "*quality today has become the foundation for constant management innovation and leadership*" (Leonard, 2 May 2013, p.1). While Clayton (1995) and Kanji and Tambi (2002) pointed out that leadership is the most crucial element for success or failure of TQM application in a higher educational organization. Added to the researchers in agreement are Sullivan and Siggins (1993), who report in their study the most important factor in the success of TQM is the quality of its leadership.

Quality management and its relation to leadership, especially at the top levels, have been studied by several researchers (Klocinski, 1999; Al Zamany et al., 2002; Prajogo & Sohal, 2004; Sirvanci, 2004; Osseo-Asare et al., 2007; Jalal, 2011). Ali and Shastri (2010) report that "*top leadership is the key to any TQM program and the driving force behind success and failure*" (p.11). In a study on instituting TQM within an organization, Klocinski (1999) concluded that 37% of targeted educational organizations in his study were suffering from lack of administrative support and weakness in leadership, both considered by the researcher to be major obstacles in the application of TQM. In contrast, institutions that have achieved success in application of TQM were supported by administrators, they had a good and clear vision as well as strong leadership working as a part of one team within the organization. Klocinski does not stand alone in providing evidence that, commitment and support of leadership is one reason for the success of application of TQM principles. Other researchers concurs that absence of top leadership commitment is one of the major barriers to implementing TQM ( Prajogo & Sohal; 2004). Similarly, Al Zamany et al. (2002), stressed a lack of chief executive officer commitment was considered a key reason for the failure of such programs. Furthermore, resistance by traditional management to new systems such as TQM is one obstacle of implementing TQM, as discovered by Jalal (2011) in an investigation of TQM implementation in the Iranian Medical Sciences University. This discovery is also confirmed by Osseo-Asare et al. (2007); their study revealed that effective leadership and efficient senior leadership in UK HEIs are necessary for higher education institutions to accomplish their general objectives of providing the skilled workforce required for development. In another

study, Sirvanci (2004) found that the president and chancellor of higher educational institutions do not have final authority in either hiring or firing of personnel or resources allocation. He believes that as presidents and chancellors of a University can obviously set goals, performance expectations and institutional values. However, because of the absence of necessary authority, it is difficult for them to spread these expectations and values within their institutions of higher education. In another negative example regarding quality implementation, Huang (1994) emphasized that university presidents have exercised quality leadership behavior only in a limited degree. And finally, Longan (1998) pointed out that poor leadership was one of the most factors that affected team performance.

In the Sultanate of Oman, studies related to leadership roles in the application of TQM are rare, but in line with most findings by Western, Asian and Arab researchers they clearly indicate the pivotal role of educational leadership in the application of any new initiative. For instance, Al-Ghanboos (2002) argues that only the leadership of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has the decision-making powers to choose whether or not to adopt TQM principles at SQU. In a similar vein, Al-Nabhani's (2001) study was also carried out at SQU and found that the most important requirements for the application of TQM within the SQU Postgraduate Studies Administration department include the availability of leadership that can promote a quality culture among employees as well as senior leadership commitment to quality improvement processes.

It is evident from the above debate that leadership is an essential requirement for successful quality efforts; consequently, the fundamental question now is what the role of leadership in implementation of TQM is? According to Daft and Marcic (2012), in any organization or institution, leadership roles are telling, selling, participating and delegating, in other words, the primary function of leadership is namely establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring personnel (Lopez, 2010). The following quote below helps illustrate the aim of leadership *"The aim of leadership should be to improve the performance of man and machine, to improve quality, to increase output, and simultaneously to bring pride of workmanship to people. Put in a negative way, the aim of leadership is not merely to*

*find and record failures of men, but to remove the causes of failures: to help people to do a better job with less effort" (Deming, 1986, p.248).*

In terms of total quality management, there are a set of five qualities that quality leadership cannot ignore if they wish to respond to developmental and transformative changes. For instance, Deming (1986) indicated that in order to implement TQM within any organization, top leaders must do more than just personally accept the philosophy of quality management; it is a leader's job to train employees to access the principles, and they must follow philosophy of quality management through striving for efficient leadership in the quality transformation process. Omachonu and Ross (2004) believe that to make total quality a reality, leadership must be the driving force behind the success or failure of TQM. They assert that effective leadership should be (a) involved and committed to total quality, (b) able to determine an organization's direction and expectations for quality, (c) responsible for establishing a culture for quality, (d) supportive of the total quality initiative through the implementation of a management systems, and (e) involved in the implementation of control mechanisms needed for proper measurement and analysis. Implementation of a TQM program has become the preferred style to improve quality and productivity in institutions. Therefore, to ensure that this approach will be applied successfully it requires leadership to establish quality goals and serve on the quality council. Furthermore, because TQM movement is a continuous process striving for excellence, an organization's senior leadership needs to provide the needed resources (personal and financial), review progress, stimulate quality improvement, revise the reward system and give recognition (Juran, 1995). Darling (1992) concluded that *"to be a successful leader in quality management requires from each one the very best which that person has to give, and a constant awareness of one's own capabilities and a commitment to oneself and to others to fulfil quality expectations"* (p.7). To gain the benefits of TQM, Groth (1995) suggested quality leadership adopt the following guidelines:

- The TQM philosophy must be specific and definable;
  - The leadership of the organization must commit to the philosophy;
  - The leadership must provide visible signals of her/his commitment and expectations with regards to the philosophy and resultant TQM;

- The leadership must rank TQM within the other goals of the organization. TQM is not always first and sometimes should not be the first goal; and
- The leadership must provide clear signals about the expected commitment of members of the organization to TQM.

In essence, implementation of TQM is done in stages. The organization's leadership needs to be able to figure out when each TQM stage is complete, and then be ready to transfer the organization to the next stage. There are vital leadership roles permeating these phases which cannot be neglected, such as:

- Increase followers motivation ;
- Increase problem-solving capability;
- Serve as a “good example”;
- Propagate mission, vision and values;
- Frequent formal and informal contacts with all co-workers;
- Stimulate participation; and,
- Empower people (Deming, 1986; Juran, 1989, 1995; Jayaram, 1999).

However, along with effective leadership, good HEIs require motivated qualified staff in numbers commensurate with the task they have to undertake. Without motivated staff these institutions cannot hope to accomplish excellence (Muhammad et al., 2009). This staff, leadership and quality management are interconnected, and cannot be separated from each other. The quality process should be considered a necessary part of a leaders' and worker's task and cannot be considered as isolated activities from the rest of their roles (Deming, 1986; Juran, 1995).

Finally, the fundamental question now is *how do we measure the role of leadership in achieving quality management in any institution?* According to Lakshman (2006), it can be measured through an investigation into (1) the extent to which leaders' value focusing on customers (external and internal) satisfaction, (2) the extent to which they value teamwork and the participation process, and (3) the extent to which they value systematic experimentation for continuous improvement.

To sum up this discussion, it is no surprise that TQM literature has involved leadership and commitment as key elements to the success of the TQM journey (Zairi, 1994; Ugboro & Obeng, 2000; Buch & Rivers, 2001). Most the studies regionally and internationally indicated clearly that the failure of leadership in understanding the

TQM philosophy is considered one of the most significant factors that prevent the success of TQM initiatives in HEIs. Winn and Green (1998) point out that if management is not completely sold on TQM, it is unlikely that an implementation effort will be successful. In view of these results, there is still a need for generalized research in the field of educational leadership to shed light on the importance of its role in implementing quality initiatives such as TQM. Therefore, the present study is designed to investigate leadership practices in the application of quality management at private HEIs in the Sultanate of Oman.

## 2.5 Quality Management System in Omani Higher Education

### 2.5.1 Background of Higher Education in Oman

Worldwide, higher education plays a significant role in the development of human resources. Because of its great importance, governments are motivated to pay great attention to the development of both the quantity and quality of higher education. One of higher education's main tasks is to supply societies with a professional labor force that is highly specialized to work in occupations that require a high degree of practical and theoretical skills and knowledge (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). HEIs are expanding very fast in the Arab world, not only because of increases in social demand for education, but also priority being given by governments to produce efficient and effective human resources according to the requirements of their economies (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). In the six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the higher education sector, as elsewhere, is undergoing rapid expansion and transformation (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). Omani experience in the field of higher education started late compared to both other Arab countries and also GCC countries (Issan & Osman, 2010).

However, Since 1970, a number speeches by H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said show how much the development of all Omanis as human capital has received his full support. *"We firmly believe that the development of human resources is the cornerstone of the development process in any society, because the human being is the ultimate goal and aim of development as well as being its means and its producer"* (HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said, 2005). One of the Omani strategies for human resource development up to 2020 is substituting expatriate labor with highly qualified Omani

labor, in order to shift the economy from a low value-added to a high value-added one (Rassekh, 2004). There is no doubt that if this goal is to be achieved, it will be through the gate of higher education.

An overview of higher education development in the Sultanate reveals that there have been several key phases in the development of higher education in Oman. Prior to 1970, there were no colleges or universities offering higher education services (Carroll et al., 2009). Since the seventies, higher education in Oman has received increasing attention as a strategic resource; able to provide communities with educated citizens to meet development needs in all aspects of life (Issan & Osman, 2010). The period from the 1970s-1980s witnessed the establishment of public colleges and institutes with an emphasis on vocational education and training, particularly in teaching and health (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). Specifically, the actual beginning of higher education in Oman is said to have begun in 1985, when the first teacher education institutions were established, in order to Omanize the schools in the country instead of relying on non-Omani teachers. These institutes offer a two-year program, which are attended by graduates of secondary education to prepare them for teaching in elementary schools. The Ministry of Education was supervising these institutions, but in 1994 supervision moved to the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). This coincided with the establishment of six colleges for teachers in main areas of the country outside Muscat; offering bachelor's degrees covering specialized subject knowledge as well as pedagogy. Two colleges were allocated for males and two for females, while two are coeducational (Al Bandy, 2005). As time went on, the government began a program to develop and establish local post secondary institutions in Oman. Efforts culminated in 1986 with the opening of the first university in the country, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) (SQU, 25 March 2013). In addition to this university, Oman has developed a relatively diverse system of public higher education. This diversity includes six Colleges of Applied Science, five Technical Colleges, fourteen Health Institutes, one Institute of Islamic Studies, one Oman Academy of Tourism & Hospitality, one Royal Guard College, and one Institute of Bankers. These institutions offer different diploma and bachelor degrees in a variety of programs (Al-Lamki, 2006).

It should be noted that due to the lack of higher education institutions, the option of studying abroad was available to Omanis (Al-Lamki, 2006; Alshmeli, 2009). The government, or more specifically the MoHE, has a scholarship program that offers scholarships and grants for undergraduate and graduate studies. These academic programs are provided to outstanding students, and are based primarily on academic achievement and merit. In addition, there are special provisions made for students of low-income families (Al-Lamki, 2006). Over the past two decades, the number of students opting for overseas studies has increased substantially, and now stands at more than 13,000. There is a growing trend of students preferring to study in the UAE and other Gulf countries, Jordan, Egypt, Malaysia, and India. Students looking to study in Western countries such as the UK and USA remain the most popular choice, while countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and continental Europe are attracting increasing numbers of students as educational destinations (Alshmeli, 2009).

### 2.5.2 Private Higher Educational Institutions

Oman has been one of the fastest growing higher education systems in the world over the last three decades (Al-Balushi & Chugh, 2008; Lajinian-Magarian et al., 2011). By 2020, Oman is seeking to increase participation of the 18-24 year old age cohort in higher education from approximately 20 percent to 50 percent, in order to keep up with the growing demand for seats in HEIs (Alshmeli, 2009). It also aims to provide graduates which are equipped with the occupational and overall skills and knowledge necessary to replace the expatriate work force (Baporikar & Shah, 2012).

According to Al-Lamki (2002, 2006) there were a large number of secondary school graduates competing for limited numbers of higher (post-secondary) public education places in Oman until the beginning of the new millennium. Table 2.2 illustrates the growing numbers of public education outputs.

TABLE 2.2: *Numbers of Students Enrolled in the General Education in Oman*

Academic-Year	1970/71	1980/81	1990/91	2010/2011
Students	6,941	10,632	387,289	522,520

Source: MoE, 2011

The rapid and dynamic expansion of primary and secondary education has had a large impact on the demand for higher educational services in the Sultanate, and represents a clear challenge for the government in allowing access to all. On the other hand, the capacity of public HEIs to absorb these annually increasing numbers was limited. Hence, the Omani government has successfully solicited the participation of the private sector in contributing significantly to the development of higher education in the Sultanate. The country is counting on the private sector to play an increasing role in creating more opportunities and improving access to the higher education system in Oman, side by side with government (Al-Lamki, 2006).

Private higher education in Oman is considered relatively new, but very dynamic, and has expanded rapidly since the appearance of the first private two-year college in 1995 (Al-Lamki, 2002, 2006; Baporikar & Shah, 2012). The establishment and development of private HEIs in Oman has been formalized and regulated by a number of Royal Decrees and Ministerial Decisions, especially Royal Decrees 18/94, 41/99 and 42/99. To further regulate private HEIs and to encourage effective and positive contributions Royal Decree 67/2000 was announced (MoHE, 2013).

In the mid 1990s, in order to meet the needs of a youthful and growing population, and serve the needs of the labor market, Oman started implementing a major strategic shift through establishing privately owned local colleges and universities, offering mainly imported diploma and degree programs. These programs were sourced from various countries such as the UK, the USA, Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, India, Jordan, Lebanon, New Zealand, The Netherlands, and Portugal (Carroll & Palermo, 2006; Razvi & Carroll, 2007).

Private sector institutions in the Sultanate can be classified into two types:

1. **Private Sector Colleges:** There are various colleges and University Colleges, run and controlled by the private sector, which offer programs to the level of diploma, Bachelor and Master degree. Some of these institutions are providing locally made programs and others have imported programs. Some of them offer multiple academics programs such as humanities, social sciences, English language study, IT etc. While others are specialist institutions, offering

programs in one or two professional fields such as nursing, engineering, and business. The head of such an institution is usually called a Dean.

2. **Private Sector Universities:** There are five universities in various locations in the Sultanate which are run independently by the private sector. They have programs offering both Bachelors and Masters Degrees. The head of University is usually designated as President, Rector or Vice Chancellor (Baporikar & Shah, 2012).

All these private HEIs are under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education through the Directorate General of Private Universities and Colleges. Admission to these private higher academic institutes is based on successful completion of the secondary school system. In the past they ranged from two-year colleges offering diplomas to four-year colleges and universities offering Bachelor's degrees, however, recently some of them are able to award a masters degree. Some private universities and colleges provide full-time and part-time programs, with the percentage of full-time students being around 91% of the total enrolled (Al-Lamki, 2006). Some of these private post-secondary institutions have academic affiliation agreements with international universities abroad, especially with Western universities in the USA and Europe, whilst others operate independently (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). Primarily, English is the medium and language of instruction in all these colleges, as most of the academic programs follow the American Credit/Unit system. A one-year foundation year including English Language training is available to students graduated from the public Arabic school system in order to assess readiness and prepare students for their studies (MoHE, 2013).

In the Sultanate, the number of private HEIs has increased dramatically over the past few decades. As a result, these institutions have made considerable progress in absorbing secondary school graduates. Currently, there are over 200 diploma and degree programs on offer in Oman, sourced from over a dozen countries, in addition to local diploma and degree programs (Carroll & Palermo, 2006; Razvi & Carroll, 2007; Carroll et al., 2009). More and more programs are being offered through a growing number of private universities and colleges, of which currently there are 27. Of these, Oman's system of higher education includes 7 private universities in operation and 20 colleges (MoHE, 2013). The number of students in these institutions

is growing annually at different rates. According to statistics for the 2008/2009 academic year, the total number of students in post-secondary private institutions in Oman was approximately 33, 521, which represents 43, 3 percent of the total enrolled in higher education in the Sultanate. Females represented about 58% of the total enrolled in these institutions, and the percentage of students who are non-Omani was 4% of the total enrolled (ONO, 2013).

In order to strengthen their partnership with the private sector and to play its role in the development of higher education, the government has taken several measures. These include, tax exemptions and provisions for easy term loans, and allocation of government developed lands for the construction of educational institutes. Moreover, in 2001 the government offered financial grants to private universities. The maximum in the terms of the grant is set at 50% of the paid capital of the private university, which includes a land grant, certain customs exemptions, as well as a matching grant of 50% of the capital contribution to a maximum amount of three million R.O. The grant recently changed and now offers a one-time 17 million R.O grant (approximately 44,155,268 million \$US) for each Omani-owned private university, in order to improve their quality in terms of learning resources, construction of the building and other installations, and equipment needed for the launch of HEIs (MoHE, 2013).

Furthermore, in order to support this emerging sector financially, the government bears the cost of tuition fees through internal student scholarships. For instance, the government provides full scholarships annually (tuition fees and monthly allowances for students) to those in families receiving social welfare, and other partial scholarships (75% of tuition fees only) for those in low-income families. According to the directives and orders of His Majesty, there are also internal scholarships available for female students only. Moreover, others parties such as the private sector provide a number of full and partial grants (MOHE, 27 March 2013). In the 2010/2011 academic year the number of internal scholarships provided by the government was about 9,634 scholarships, while the private sector contributed to 307 grants. This financial aid has been distributed to eligible students in all private HEIs in the Sultanate (HEAC, 22 May 2013).

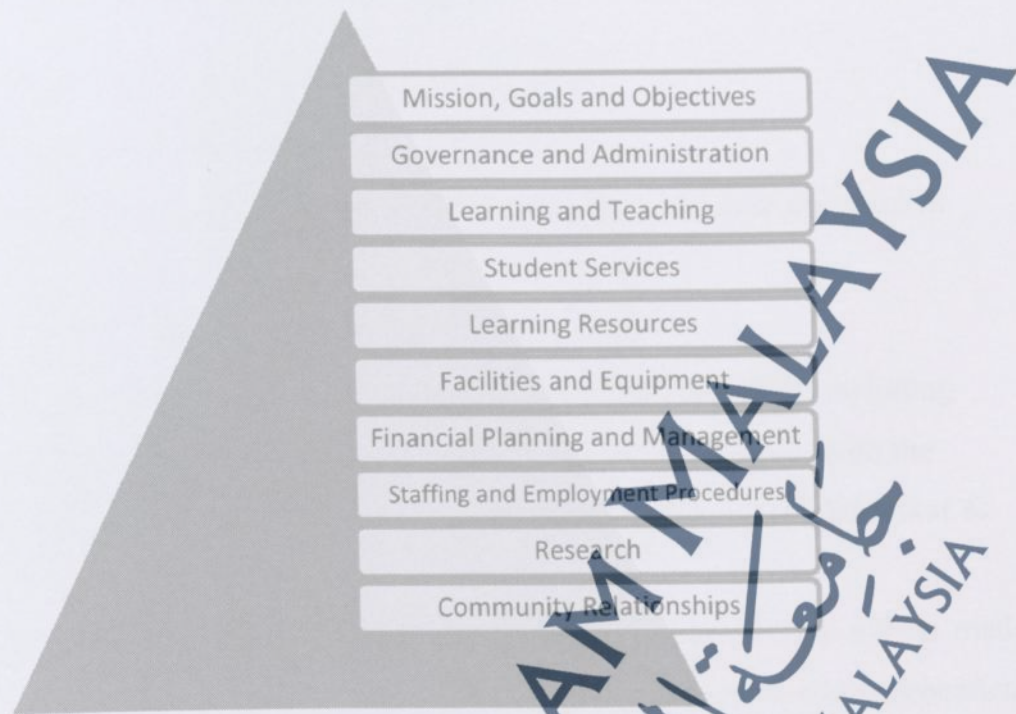
### 2.5.3 Introduction of Quality System in Higher Education

Despite the concept of “quality” being a new phenomenon among HEIs in Oman, it is one which is keenly sought. The government realized early the need to pay attention, and improve the quality of higher education services for better academic performance in both public and private sector colleges and universities. Oman has embarked on a process of education reformation by adopting quality approaches, because it recognizes quality as the significant educational trend operating in the world today (Carroll & Palermo, 2006).

During the last decade, there has been an attempt to consolidate gains by implementing effective and efficient quality assurance, and quality enhancement processes in Omani educational system. Therefore, in order to determine the quality within these institutions, various types of accreditation institutions have been developed (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). A system which has been introduced in Oman is called The Quality System. This system passes through three stages and evolves over time. The first phase of this system is comprised of the licensing of new institutions and programs by their sponsoring Ministry (MoHE); this is followed by regular supervision from the MoHE, usually through the Directorate General. In 2001 with the establishment of the Oman Accreditation Council (OAC), the third stage of Omani quality system started. The OAC developed the first version of the External Quality Assurance (AQA), which is known as the Requirements for Oman's system of Quality Assurance for Higher Education (ROSOA) (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011).

The guidance given to Omani higher education institutions in quality assurance activities are framed by the ROSOA and the National Qualifications Framework. These quality practices include planning, self review, quality improvement, and assisting external panels in implementing independent reviews of institution's performances (UNECCO, 20 May 2013). The guiding document contains standards of good practice in HEIs, and calls for institutions to identify specific indicators that are appropriate for their particular circumstances. All institutions will be expected to implement indicators and benchmarks that provide evidence of performance at levels comparable to recognized international institutions, taking into account the elements which illustrated in the following figure 2.2 (UNECCO, 20 May 2013).

**FIGURE 2.2:** Standards of Good Practice in Higher Education Institutions



Source: UNECCO, 20 May 2013, pp.53-56

Despite these efforts, by 2006 it had become obvious from external review and higher education sector feedback that this system failed to achieve the desired influence. Hence, a need has become apparent for an alternative system governing quality (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011).

In the area of academic accreditation in both public and private sector, Oman is still in the initial stages. Currently, institutions' program curriculum and self-assessments are sent to one or two international academic institutions for review. The review operations consist of a site visit and interviews with staff and students. Outcome of the assessment is a report with recommendations for improvement of the program and a decision about the accreditation status of the program (Carroll et al., 2009).

Regarding the private educational sector, currently, private colleges and universities are increasing their emphasis on quality improvement as they prepare their students for global competition in the workplace. Consequently, in order to achieve an international standard in higher education, and to provide quality national

human resources equipped with necessary skills and knowledge, Omani private HEIs have taken a number of steps. These steps include:

- Importation of curricula from western countries;
- recruitment of native English teachers;
- recruitment of qualified and experienced faculty from all over the world in various disciplines;
- provision of excellent facilities to the students; and
- arrangements of one / two year foundation courses by each HEI, including English language study, mathematics and IT to provide students with the fundamentals to study advance curricula at the university level (Baporikar & Shah, 2012).

Based on the explanations above, in Oman there have been serious efforts made toward improving quality of higher education, both by government and independent organizations. These efforts will be clarified separately in some detail in the section below.

#### **2.5.4 Institutions and Bodies Relevant to Quality System**

##### **2.5.4.1 The Ministry of Higher Education**

Previously, both general and higher education was under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education, but since January 1994, by Royal Decree 2/1994, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) became an independent ministry with its own structure and functions to provide all services related to higher education for the public (MoHE, 2013). One of the major functions of the MoHE is direct supervision of some public institutions of higher education such as the Colleges of Applied Sciences, and all private colleges and universities in the Sultanate. In addition, it is responsible for all coordination and supervision of scholarships awarded to students to study in-country or abroad (MoHE, 2013).

The Ministry's first priority was rapidly increasing the number of HEIs and places within them, to meet the demand for seats. At the same time the MoHE sought to diversify academic programs for the purpose of alignment with the requirements of the job market, and national economic development (MoHE, 2013). Its main stated goal is to establish well respected higher education institutions in the Sultanate with

international standards that prepare Omanis for the labor market (Al-Mamari, 2012). Alshmeli (2009) points out that, *“The task is not merely to get Omani graduates into work locally – but to give them the skills to make them global players”* (p.9). Dr. Rawya Al Busaidi, Minister of Higher Education, Oman, asserts that assessing higher education graduates quality in terms of acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies that prepare them for the labor market is one of their priorities. She said, *“Higher Education in Oman has witnessed spectacular growth in recent years. This is evidenced by a dramatic increase in the number of institutions as well as in the number of students enrolled. The Ministry of Higher Education is taking measures to ensure that this tremendous increase in access to Higher Education is complemented by an equal emphasis on quality, in order to ensure that the Higher Education system meets high standards with outcomes that are competitive both regionally and internationally”* (MoHE, 2013).

In order to achieve this goal, the issue of quality in higher education in Oman has been firmly on the agenda of the MoHE. Since the establishment of the MoHE in 1994, it has been dedicated to building a quality higher education system capable of serving the Sultanate’s growing population (MoHE, 2013). The Ministry’s commitment to quality higher education is illustrated clearly by its vision statement, which stipulates that, *“To ensure quality Higher Education that meets the requirements for sustainable development”*. In addition, one of the many strategic goals of the Ministry is increasing the efficiency of Omani higher education institutions, in order to achieve high quality standards aligned with economic and social development requirements, and national and global trends ( MoHE, 2013).

Therefore, the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the MoHE, has recognized the need to monitor the quality of all its institutions and their programs (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011). During the mid-millennium, the MoHE has launched a quality assurance process in six public Colleges of Education (currently called Colleges of Applied Sciences) under its umbrella; this process is based on a four-step repeating cycle of self-assessment, external review, feedback, and monitored change/development (Al Bandary, 2005).

Since the MoHE is the body that oversees all private colleges and universities in Oman, a separate General Directorate was established in 2001, called the General

Directorate of Private Universities and Colleges. It was created to supervise, guide and support the development of private higher education in the Sultanate (MoHE, 27 March 2013).

With regard to quality assurance in these institutions; since the founding of the MoHE, which coincided with the emergence of private education in the mid-nineties, it has requested that all private educational institutions adopt quality procedures through academic affiliation agreements with reputable academic institutions (Al Haribi, 2005). The aim behind this decision is to monitor and improve quality, offer diverse programs, and increase the prestige of the degrees awarded by these private HEIs (MoHE, 2013). In addition, all programs offered in private HEIs must be licensed by the Ministry of Higher Education before accepting student enrollments whether these programs are developed and awarded locally or through foreign providers (Carroll et al., 2009).

As an example of the attention paid by the ministry toward the quality of private education graduates, in 2010 the MoHE conducted a survey, in order to assess how well private HEIs programs are suited to the current requirements of the labor market. Additionally, this project aimed to ensure that massive increases in higher education are complemented by an equal emphasis on quality. Findings of the study provide data and indicators to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education system, which can aid policy-makers in upgrading private higher education quality programs (ONA, 2013).

Continuing with the quality efforts of higher education services, the MoHE assigned the Higher Education Admissions Centre (HEAC) the task of offering e-Services to the public. Development initiatives included organizing and streamlining the admissions and scholarship allocation processes. Whereby, through the HEAC system, students can apply online or by text message (SMS) on their mobile phones. The HEAC also works to provide statistics on the number of students who are accepted within local institutions, and outside the Sultanate. In addition it conducts studies and makes suggestions regarding the admission process, access to places, and support for students in HEIs (Alshmeli, 2009; Shah et al. 2008). Undoubtedly, this mechanism may save both time and effort and make the process more efficient and effective. It also makes the selection process more transparent (Alshmeli, 2009).

#### 2.5.4.2 The Council of Higher Education

The Council of Higher Education (CHE) was established on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1998 by Royal Decree No. 65/98 to consider issues related to standards and quality, and to play a major role in planning and coordination between the various institutions of higher education. Its role includes coordinating admission to HEIs, in addition to coordinating certain aspects of the operation relevant to these institutions (Shah et al. 2008; Alshmeli, 2009). Also, listed among the functions of the CHE is developing public policies for higher education and scientific research in higher education institutions, in order to harmonize Omani educational institutions to ensure they are in line with the country's needs and its cultural, social, economic and scientific goals. Moreover, the council regulates student numbers and intake procedures, evaluates the performance of existing institutions, as well as approves proposals for new private universities (Rassekh, 2004; Shah et al. 2008). Besides these duties mentioned, there are other CHE tasks such as carrying out studies and drawing conclusions on any issues topics requested by His Majesty, the Council of Ministers, universities, or relevant government departments. The council also submits annual reports and recommendations to the Council of Ministers on the state of higher education and its progress in the Sultanate (Shah et al. 2008).

To ensure that the CHE is achieved its objective towards aiding HEIs, the Council's membership consist of the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court as Chair (Shah et al. 2008), the Minister of Higher Education as Deputy Chair and the Ministers of Social Development, National Economy, Education and Manpower as members, as well as seven other members selected from Oman's intelligentsia and from the private sector (Alshmeli, 2009).

The most important achievements of the Council in fulfillment of its mandate include the commission in 2005 of a Strategic Plan for all of Education to 2020, initiating legislation to encourage private sector investment in new private universities, establishing the Accreditation Board, increasing scholarships for male and female students needing financial assistance, increasing the number of secondary school graduates admitted to public educational institutions, initiating a project for a Centralized Admissions Office, and a project for the establishment of a Career

Guidance Centre under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (Alshmeli, 2009; Rassekh, 2004).

#### 2.5.4.3 The Oman Accreditation Council

Due to the significance to be placed on quality in the higher education sector, and due to the spread of HEIs of all types, with diversified programs, across the Sultanate, an urgent need arose for the establishment of unified body to monitor the quality in each HEI (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). Based on this need, in 2001, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said established the Oman Accreditation Council (OAC) with Royal Decree No. 74/2001 (Shah et al. 2008; Carroll et al., 2009). The OAC is composed of ten members selected from among senior academic staff in the higher educational system, and from amongst high level professionals in the private and government sectors (Alshmeli, 2009).

The OAC was created as an independent body reporting to the Council of Higher Education. The establishment of this body as an accreditation mechanism is considered the most significant event in building the capacity for a quality assurance system in the Sultanate (Razvi & Carroll, 2007; Alshmeli, 2009). This is clear evidence regarding how much emphasis the Omani government wishes to place on ensuring the quality of higher education meets the requirements of the twenty-first century (Baporikar & Shah, 2012).

The OAC has been established as an external quality assurance agency in order to reassure the public that the HEIs in Oman, and the programs they offer, are in line with international standards (Al Habsi & Carroll, 2007; Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011). To achieve this purpose, OAC's responsibilities are, inter alia; accrediting institutions and programs through the use of standards, information, reviews and quality improvement processes; and with maintaining the national qualifications framework (Razvi & Carroll, 2007; Shah et al. 2008; Carroll et al., 2009; Lajinian-Magarian et al., 2011). The OAC also sets the principles for accreditation based on the Higher Education Council's policies, and lays down the procedures for evaluating and reviewing the performance of the HEIs (Shah et al. 2008).

During the 2003/2004 academic year, the OAC developed and implemented a national quality assurance system which was internationally benchmarked and went

through comprehensive review (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011). However, in the light of international experiences, the system is still in the process of continuous review to ensure its suitability for the Omani education system and its environment (Alshmeli, 2009; Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011). Additionally, in 2006, OAC adapted the Plan for Omani Higher Education Quality Management System, which is commonly known as the Quality Plan (Razvi & Carroll, 2007; Alshmeli, 2009; Carroll et al., 2009; Lajinian-Magarian et al., 2011). This plan includes four key elements; (1) infrastructural policies and frameworks; (2) institutional quality assurance; (3) program quality assurance; and (4) quality enhancement and capability development (Carroll et al., 2009). Razvi & Carroll (2007) state that *"The Quality Plan aims to reduce Oman's reliance on imported programs and put more emphasis on the development of home grown programs that are nationally accredited and internationally recognized"* (p.3). Each country is different in its requirements for a national quality management system. The Quality Plan stressed the importance of involving HEIs in adopting a sustainable, collaborative approach to quality enhancement and sharing of good practice (Lajinian-Magarian et al., 2011).

However, because there are a large number of foreign programs being provided through the Omani higher education sector, the OAC is looking to develop an alternative quality assurance system named 'program recognition'. This program has been brought to Oman expressly because it is valued and has already been quality assured by a credible external quality agency according to the standards in their place of origin. Therefore, the quality assurance process in Oman involves examining the extent to which the program is appropriate to Omani context (Carroll et al., 2009). In addition, Carroll et al. (2009) suggest that any attempt by the government to improve the national quality assurance system must involve collaboration by institutions of higher education to enhance quality strategies within local institutions.

#### **2.5.4.4 Oman Academic Accreditation Authority**

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) replaced the Oman Accreditation Council in May 2010. The OAAA is an independent body tasked with contributing to the development of the higher education sector in the Sultanate through institutional quality audits and institutional and program accreditation processes. Moreover, it is responsible for the establishment of academic standards,

and providing training and networking opportunities in collaboration with the MoHE (OAAA, 2013). In order for local colleges and universities to enhance productivity, the OAAA helps them attract investments in the higher educational sector as well as advising universities and colleges on upgrading their academic and scientific activities. Thereby enabling them to facilitate development and boost the national economy, while competing with foreign universities (Al Matani, 2013).

In order to support HEIs in the Sultanate of Oman with their continued quality improvement efforts, and provide a means of holding HEIs accountable to society, the OAAA has developed a two-stage institutional accreditation system, called the Quality Audit and Standards Assessment (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2012). This system is considered the third generation in the march towards quality for Oman's higher education following the failure of the ROSQA system which was mentioned previously (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011). This new system took into account several additional factors when it was developed, in order to make it more comprehensive and mutually supportive. For instance, some of these factors include a standards classification for higher education, a process for recognition of foreign programs, a process for developing program standards, and an appeals process (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011).

In the Sultanate of Oman, the Quality Audit system was built based on a fitness for purpose, in other words, to assess institutional quality assurance, as well as quality enhancement towards its stated goals and objectives. There is no pass or fail, instead Quality Audit relies on institutional self-review, in addition to the OAAA's site visit and interviews. In the end, there is an evaluative, or formative, report commending good practice, and making recommendations in the areas where there is opportunity for improvement. The introduction of Quality Audit within the Omani higher education context requires a transformation of the quality assurance culture. This means HEIs must move from a compliance-focused culture to take on responsibility for the development of a quality management system and improving effectiveness (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011).

In 2008 the first quality audit was conducted. Since then, more than twenty six public and private institutions in the Sultanate have been through the quality audit process, in addition to dozens of Quality Audit reports being published on the OAAA

website (Goodliffe & Razvi, 2011). Findings of the Goodliffe and Razvi (2012) study concluded that the quality audit process and the resulting audit reports were helpful in assisting the institution to build their internal quality management systems. Through this system the authority was successful in the development of an accurate estimation system which helped improve the quality of both public and private HEIs to a large extent in the country (Al Matani, 2013).

#### 2.5.4.5 Oman Quality Network in Higher Education

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006 under the patronage of the Minister for Higher Education the Oman Quality Network in Higher Education (OQNHE) was officially launched (OQNHE, 20 May 2013). Obviously, this high-level endorsement provides the legitimacy essential for such initiatives in Oman, and it sends a clear signal that the OQNHE is a collegial rather than hierarchical entity (Al Habsi & Carroll, 2007; Carroll et al., 2009). It was created as an independent, not-for-profit network focused on quality management, and quality enhancement practices in the higher education sector; it is the first of its kind among the GCC countries (Lajinian-Magarian et al., 2011). The establishment of this network was among the main objectives of the quality enhancement segment of the National Quality Plan (Carroll & Palermo, 2006; Al Habsi & Carroll, 2007). The OQNHE is led by an executive committee selected from among two representatives from each higher education institution (Carroll et al., 2009; Lajinian-Magarian et al., 2011).

The purpose of the OQNHE is to provide an informal network in the higher education sector to facilitate communication, the exchange of ideas, and effective practices (Carroll & Palermo, 2006). Furthermore, it aims to meet, share problems and solutions, and to overcome the obstacles that face Omani HEIs, particularly those with specific responsibilities for coordinating quality assurance processes or promoting collaborative quality enhancement activities, (Razvi & Carroll, 2007; Alshmeli, 2009; Carroll et al., 2009; Lajinian-Magarian et al., 2011). According to guidelines of Oman quality network *“it is concerned with developing a strong and vibrant higher education sector by improving quality in higher education within the Sultanate of Oman. It aims to build a quality-conscious and knowledge-rich higher education sector through the sharing of ideas, strategies, research, and practices that ensures the pursuit of quality enhancement”*(OQNHE, 20 May 2013).

Over the past decade the OQNHE has had several notable duties. It has assumed full responsibility for the National Quality Training Program workshops in order to maximize the potential for pan-sectoral collaboration (Al Habsi & Carroll, 2007; Alshmeli, 2009; Carroll et al., 2009), to ensure the development of a comprehensive national quality assurance system will be successful (Razvi & Carroll, 2007), and to raise the capacity and capability of the higher education sector (Carroll & Palermo, 2006; Al Habsi & Carroll, 2007).

Naturally, no board can operate without practical and cultural challenges, and the OQNHE is no exception; especially given its unique informal structure and legal status in a country unaccustomed to such an arrangement. In fact, Oman has a deep-rooted system that prefers formalities, hierarchical structure, bureaucracy, and top-down decision making process. Moreover, the competitive nature of local HEIs, the lack of an information sharing culture, and no representatives willing to use online resources for communicating, all represented major challenges to this nascent body (Al Habsi & Carroll, 2007; Lajinian-Maganan et al., 2011).

Despite these challenges, the OQNHE has succeeded in occupying an important place on the higher education sector map in Oman (Al-Habsi & Carroll, 2007). In 2006, for instance, in collaboration with the OAAA and the MoHE, a national quality training program has been delivered, targeting both public and private HEIs, and covering topics such as strategic planning, risk management, benchmarking, consulting stakeholders, and documenting policies. It has also run a number of "Learning by Sharing" workshops in order to facilitate the sharing of experiences within the sector (Lajinian-Maganan et al., 2011).

Besides these initiatives, in order to provide an opportunity for member institutions to showcase a wide range of good practices, share ideas, and find new solutions, the OQNHE held the inaugural Oman National Quality Conference in 2008 and 2012 (OQNHE, 20 May 2013). The conferences were attended by a number of national, regional and global delegates; therefore such meetings gave a golden opportunity for educators and academics of Oman to share their expertise and experiences with colleagues inside Oman, within the GCC region, and throughout the international community. This international representation highlights the fact that Omani institutions of higher education share the same challenges and opportunities as

their regional and global peers. Ultimately, these meetings provided a platform for policy makers, institutional representatives, and stakeholders to share ideas and best practices in quality system management, and quality enhancement in order to meet the challenges of higher education (Heming, 2008; Lajinian-Magarian et al., 2011).

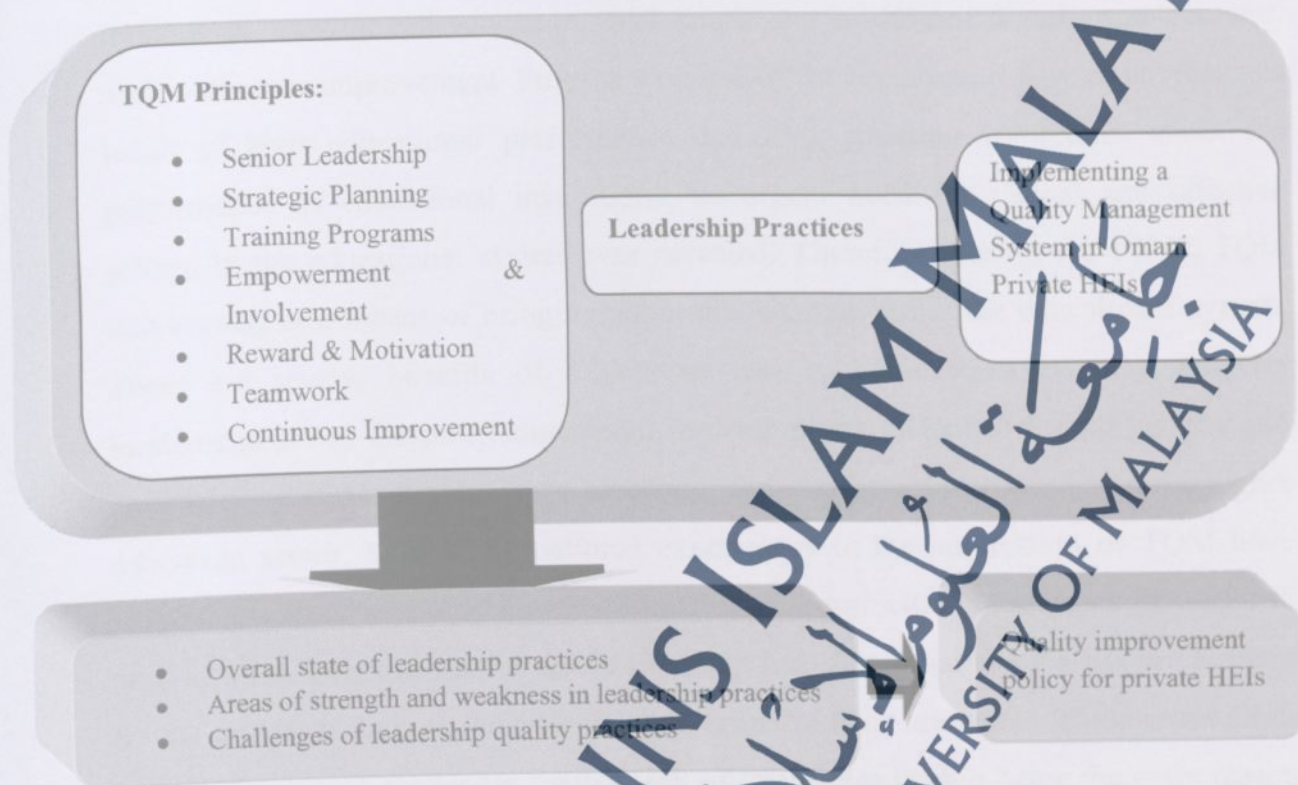
Based on the above discussion, it can be argued that, efforts are being made from several bodies in order to insure quality assurance and quality enhancement within private HEIs. During this current phase, the state of quality matters for HEIs, particularly private institutions, is reasonable and acceptable (Al Hartney, 2011). According to Carroll et al. (2009) "*evaluating the effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance and quality enhancement processes against its own stated goals and objectives, as well as requirements set by government and other external sources (such as professional bodies or affiliate institutions)*" (p.22) is useful. It is also important because it determines the institutional capacity and capability to achieve its aspirations and to continually improve (Carroll et al., 2009).

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

Based on the extensive literature reviewed in this chapter and the purpose of the study, the conceptual framework was developed for the present study as depicted in figure 2.3. TQM literature has shown that senior leadership play critical role in the TQM implementation process, as they have the power and responsibility to guide higher education institutions. Related studies and research emphasize that there is a strong correlation between success of implementing quality management system and leadership practices. In addition, although private HEIs in Oman have affiliation agreement with Western academic institutions to ensure that their academic activities meet international quality standards, and as a result they applied a quality management system, however, local studies have confirmed that there is a need for academic studies that fill the gap of limited researches related to implementation of quality management system in higher education sector. To do so, both leadership and TQM principles are studied. Seven TQM principles have been selected to assess leadership's administrative practices in implementing quality management system within Omani private HEIs. These include senior leadership, strategic planning, training programs, empowerment & involvement, reward & motivation, teamwork and

continuous improvement. In this research study, 20 private universities and colleges in Muscat were identified as participants. In order to answer study's questions, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative research.

**FIGURE 2.3:** *Conceptual Framework of the Study*



As shown in Figure 2.3 the conceptual framework of the study consists of three major themes shown, including leadership practices, TQM principles, implementing a quality management system in Omani private HEIs, which lead to achievement of study objectives (identifying the overall state of leadership's administrative practices, exploring areas of strength and weakness in leadership practices, analyzing the challenges of leadership quality practices and proposing quality improvement policy for private HEIs).

## 2.7 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter has confirmed that quality has a wide variety of connotations and meanings, as a result of it being defined from different perspectives and orientations according to the person, the context and the measures applied. The quality movement has gone through four stages: inspection, quality control (QC), quality assurance (QA) and, for now, TQM. Although TQM was

originally applied in the business sector, its supporters believe that this philosophy can be applied in various organizations including: manufacturing, and services such as banking, healthcare and education. In order to implement a TQM system successfully, quality scholars identified a number of essential principles which must be taken into account. These fundamentals include leadership, strategic plan, teamwork, reward and motivation, training and education, total employees involvement and empowerment, and continuous improvement. From this review of the literature, it is apparent that as a result of poor educational performance and long standing complaints about the performance of educational institutions, an urgent need for radical and effective reform in the educational system was revealed. Therefore, during the 1990s, TQM was chosen as a means of bringing about this change within the educational system. There are several benefits of TQM that can be achieved when it is properly implemented. For instance, educational leadership has looked to the philosophy and principles of TQM as a means of achieving and maintaining excellence in the higher education sector. Varied international experiences in the application of TQM have proved its effectiveness in improving quality of administrative services of HEIs. In spite of these benefits, this available literature has stated that some HEIs are hesitant to use quality techniques and others have failed in their attempts. These institutions faced a number of challenges, with a lack of quality leadership being the main reason for the failure of a quality management system. Other reasons factor in, such as employees' resistance to change, lack of sufficient funds and resources, and lack of the necessary knowledge about TQM. From the unsuccessful cases, the most straightforward lesson, that is often forgotten, is that quality does not come quickly. The successful application and introduction of TQM philosophy requires the three major components of planning, time and effort. Educational institutions which intend to apply the principles of TQM can hopefully learn from the mistakes committed by the industrial and service sectors.

The chapter has also reviewed literature relating to leadership and TQM with an emphasis on the role of leadership in TQM. The literature review revealed that there is no agreed upon definitions of leadership because it varies from one scholar to another and therefore there is no single-best definition. In addition, due to external and internal challenges faced by educational leadership in the 21st century, a review

of the literature indicates clearly that success of HEIs is dependent on effective competent leadership. These challenges, such as globalization, scientific and social change, dissemination of information technology, stockholders demand for high quality services and increased competition between private universities and colleges to provide quality programs, have the potential to impact leadership positions negatively or positively. Moreover, a significant number of studies from the quality management literature confirmed quality and leadership are closely aligned. Consequently, leadership commitment, lack of administrative support and weakness in leadership are considered the major challenges to implementing total quality management in HEIs. Therefore, TQM leadership is a crucial factor in the failure or success of such an initiative.

Furthermore, by discussing the literature review on higher education in Oman, it is clear that this sector is undergoing rapid expansion and transformation. However, before 1970 there were not practically any adequate opportunities available for higher education. In light of this, the only real option available to Omanis was to study abroad. During the seventies and eighties many colleges and institutes were established for the public, with an emphasis on vocational education and training, particularly in teaching and health. Additionally, in 1986 Oman witnessed the birth of the public university.

However, due to inability of the public post-secondary institutes to accommodate increasing outputs of general education, the Omani government solicited the participation of the private sector to play a vital role in creating more opportunities, and increase access in the higher educational system in Oman, side by side with the government. Accordingly, in 1995 Oman launched the first private institution of higher education. Since that time, the number of private HEIs has increased dramatically in the Sultanate, until the number reached 27 universities and colleges at the present time. These institutions offer Bachelor's degrees, Higher Diploma and Diploma in various programs and some of them provide Master's degrees.

The government realized the need to pay attention to improve the quality of higher education services for better academic performance. Overall, in Oman there are serious attempts and good attention toward quality issues of higher education through

the efforts of several governmental organizations or independent bodies. For instance, The Ministry of Higher Education, the Oman Accreditation Council currently, the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority, The Council of Higher Education, and the Oman Quality Network in Higher Education. Also, literature reviewed has demonstrated that there are serious challenges facing this emerging sector, particularly relating to quality and accreditation. Indeed, many of the private HEIs in the Sultanate relied on foreign curricula and programs which use diverse range of quality assurance systems. Therefore, all private HEIs in Oman have their own standards of quality set by an external university. Also, dependence of private sector institutions on governmental subsidizing, which is not sufficient to provide institutional and program quality at international standards creates another challenge to these institutions.

It is clear from the TQM literature review that the role of leadership in implementing this approach successfully still needs to be examined. Moreover, the literature highlighted the need for additional research to develop a better understanding among leadership of how to apply a quality management system effectively, and how to overcome the challenges that faced implementation in such initiatives. In addressing failing quality systems, it is an intention of this research study to provide an investigation of leadership practices in implementing quality management system within Omani private HEIs, the strengths and weaknesses, and the main challenges that faced educational leadership during the stages of the process of implementation.