

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter presents an overview of the study, including the purpose, specific objectives, and methodology. Moreover, the main findings of the study are presented. These provide insights into private Omani HEIs policy and practice, and are followed by recommendations. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

5.2 Overview of the Research Project

As indicated in the literature review, the importance of leadership in successful quality management practices is significant. For this reason, the present study was carried out to: identify the overall state of leadership practices in implementing a quality management system for administrative affairs at Omani private higher education institutions, explore areas of strength and weakness in current leadership practices at Omani private HEIs, evaluate the differences in leadership practices based on participants gender, nationality, age, educational qualification, job classification and work experience in HEIs, analyze the challenges and possible impediments that face leadership during their quality management, and propose quality improvement policy for private HEIs.

Quality management gurus' efforts, a literature review, and quality awards have been used to formulate general principles of TQM implementation. In order to evaluate current leadership practices, this study defined TQM principles for the higher education sector and concluded that seven principles are seen to be important for the successful implementation of a quality management system within Omani private HEIs. These principles are: (1) Senior Leadership, (2) Strategic Planning, (3) Training Programs, (4) Empowerment & Involvement, (5) Reward & Motivation, (6) Teamwork, and (7) Continuous Improvement.

This research involved considerable amounts of secondary data from various sources, with the aim of viewing leadership from a quality management perspective.

Moreover, primary data collection was carried out to support the collected secondary data, ensuring more accurate and relevant information was obtained for this research.

Two methods of research were used to collect useful data. In the methodology chapter, the reason behind using a mixed methods approach is explained. The quantitative component of the study addressed research questions 1, 2 and 3, and investigated the current state of quality management practices among leadership in seven areas of TQM, as perceived by administrative and academic staff. Furthermore, in this section of the study, areas of perceived strength and weakness in leadership practices were identified. Additionally, differences in leadership practices was analyzed based on some demographic characteristics of study participants (as mentioned previously) to determine the extent that these factors influenced the views of the respondents. The qualitative component dealt with research questions 1 and 4. It was carried out to examine the overall situation regarding leadership practices at HEIs, and analyze the main challenges and possible impediments that face leadership during their quality management. Finally, based on findings of the study a quality improvement policy for private HEIs will be proposed.

The study focused on 19 private universities and colleges in Muscat, and nearly 700 administrators and faculty members of these institutions were included in the quantitative data sample, for which 468 responses were obtained. Also, interviews with 8 senior leadership from five colleges and one university were conducted to generate qualitative data. The quantitative data was collated using the Survey Monkey website, and the qualitative data was generated by following the semi-structured interview protocol. To analyze the quantitative data, multiple statistical methods, along with descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), were used, for example, the Independent sample T-Test, One-way INOVA, and Post Hoc Tests. To analyze the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used. The main results of the study are presented below.

5.3 Summary of the Research Findings

There were some important results to emerge from this study. The key findings of the research were as follows.

- The analysis results of the literature revealed that in the past, some leadership of higher education have been skeptical about adopting industrial practices in the higher education arena, but others have tried the quality management system and noted much success from its implementation. According to Dell (2007), the need to embrace quality system in educational institutions will continue to increase over the next few years. He stated that *"the use of quality principles and methodologies is becoming more popular, and they are being adopted at all levels of higher education. From community colleges to private colleges, from regional universities to major research universities, higher education is seeing an upswing of interest in and the application of quality management"* (p. 45). Due to this interest, there are now many of examples of successful application of TQM principles and methods in many colleges and universities worldwide. This study shows that the adoption of the quality management system is fundamental for higher education institutions to remain competitive in light of the rapid political, economical, and social changes. It appears that the use of the quality management system will better serve Omani Higher Education to increase quality, improve effectiveness, reduce costs, and conserve resources. Furthermore, senior leadership at the institutions sampled for this study commented that a quality management system is a necessary foundation for building quality administrative practices in private higher education.
- The results of this study revealed that almost all the private HEIs in Oman had a quality management system in place and had implemented a quality assurance system to achieve its quality goals. However, despite the majority of these institutions including sections or units responsible for quality, according to the results of the study these units were found do not play their role as required in their functioning, and quality implementation was found to work differently from one institution to another, and even from one department to another.

- Results of the research data indicate that, despite the fact that the Omani government has been supportive towards achieving quality goals through the provision of administrative and financial support, Omani private HEIs are still struggling to provide quality services for their clients.
- Both the literature review and empirical results indicate that quality management implementation efforts must include a strong emphasis on senior leadership support, which is considered a key factor in the success of quality management practices. From all the collected data, it has been consistently demonstrated that leadership plays a crucial role in sustaining and enhancing the quality of management within HEIs.
- In spite of modern trends towards increased application of quality management systems, many differences persist among higher education leadership in practicing quality management. The quantitative findings revealed that many educational leadership in Oman are still using traditional approaches in managing their institutions. These management methods are not regarded as a professional way to lead institutions in the modern era, and are incompatible with the principles of quality management. Consequently, this study stresses the need for Omani private HEIs leadership to view quality principles as institutional transformation tools.
- The analyses have shown that regarding leadership practices in Omani private HEIs, strategic planning and continuous improvement appear to have the highest level of positive perceptions among staff. While the participants of the study ranked leadership practices related to teamwork as the third best quality element being practiced. Moreover, leadership practices linked to senior leadership, empowerment & involvement, training programs, and reward & motivation came in descending order.
- In connection with areas of strength and weakness in leadership practices, the findings from the analysis of the questionnaires are summarized in the following table 5.1:

Table 5.1: Areas of Strength and Weakness in Leadership Practices in Omani private HEIs

No.	TQM principles	Areas of strength	Areas of weakness
1	Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The private institutions have a strategic plan including vision, mission, and objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objectives of the institution plan are not related to the expectations and needs of the staff.
2	Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is continuous improvement within private HEIs through updating its own quality management system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions' efforts towards updating administrative procedures not in line with quality management.
3	Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in teamwork encourages staff to understand administrative work and procedures. Participating in teamwork helps staff cooperate with their university/college leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team leadership is not appointed on the basis of their interest and passion for matters of quality.
4	Senior Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior leadership provides effective communication channels between themselves and staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no periodical meetings to discuss issues regarding the quality management system. Senior leadership does not make organizational changes that agree with quality requirements.
5	Empowerment & Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and administration have a shared vision regarding the quality management system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The administration system does not allow all staff to participate in the decision-making process. Leadership does not include staff opinions when taking work decisions.
6	Training Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership encourages staff to attend training programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training programs do not match the latest quality management system trends.
7	Reward & Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff members are always respected and appreciated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff members are not rewarded materially or personally for distinguished work.

- Moreover, the statistical analysis showed that no statistically significant difference related to gender exists in the perceptions of administrative staff and faculty members towards leadership practices. However, the findings of the

study indicated that that there was statistically significant differences in respondents' perceptions in terms of nationality, age, educational qualification, job classification, and work experience.

- Finally, although private HEIs in Oman are increasingly adopting quality management practices, there is evidence that many institutions are struggling with implementation challenges. According to an analysis of the interview questions, a number of significant challenges to successful quality management implementation in Omani private HEIs were identified by senior leadership. The five key challenges, found at different stages of the quality management process, were: (1) lack of qualified human resources, (2) lack of quality training, (3) increasing administrative and academic burdens, (4) focusing on paperwork, and (5) ineffectiveness of academic partnerships with foreign HEIs. Based on these findings, it can be postulated that if educational institutions do not overcome these challenges, quality management efforts will falter, and expected outcomes will not be achieved.

In closing, although there is a large amount of literature on leadership and quality management available, the contributions of this study differ from the existing literature in that previous studies have not examined the relationship between leadership and quality management system in higher education, and more specifically, the Omani private higher education sector. This study has added a new finding that reveals the impact that leadership practices have on quality management system in the private higher education environment in the Sultanate of Oman.

Furthermore, this study provides a very useful starting point for gaining insights into current leadership practices and quality management implementation within Omani private HEIs, which can save both money and time on present and future quality implementation efforts. Moreover, this study has helped in creating awareness and a clear understanding of the advantages of quality management system implementation in the educational sector. It has also provided better understanding of leaderships' role in sustaining and enhancing the quality of management within HEIs, and insight into their role in the success or failure of quality management initiatives. The findings may assist new leadership in the education sector to understand more about best practices in the application of quality management system in the future.

Understanding the current status of leadership practices in implementing a quality approach can help institutions make better management decisions and enhance leadership practices when dealing with quality management system.

Additionally, this study provides up-to-date evidence of the main challenges behind the implementation of a quality management system in private HEIs in the Sultanate of Oman. Thus, this study can be utilized as a start point or background reading for further studies by other researchers, in the Arab world and specifically GCC countries on the quality management system and its implementation challenges in the educational sector.

Also, the decision makers in the education sector could find the outcomes of this study helpful for improving practices in line with current trends of modern management. Trends that are compatible with quality management philosophy, and able to transform educational institutions' performance and services. Furthermore, private HEIs themselves can use these outcomes directly to review their current quality policy, and develop plans and activities in line with quality management principles in order to ensure effective leadership practices and subsequently achieve high institutional performance.

Finally, these results and findings are beneficial in making some policy recommendations (discussed in the next section) in order to improve the quality performance level of Omani private HEIs in general and managerial quality in particular.

5.4 Recommendations

This section offers policy recommendation for best practice in the implementation of a quality management system. In light of the study findings, and the local and international literature review, the researcher offers some recommendations on how the administration of Omani private HEIs can achieve success by utilizing a quality management system in order to gain steady quality improvement and enhance the educational process. Implementation of the study recommendations may develop practices of higher education leadership, and enhance the quality of administrative systems, so that they can work more effectively - making

the vision, mission, and objectives of the institution easier to achieve. Moreover, policy makers in higher education and quality practitioners can use these recommendations in their efforts for improving HEIs performance in general and for the development of a uniform quality system within Oman's higher education in particular. For best quality practices, the following recommendations are made for the Ministry of Higher Education, private HEIs, and senior private HEIs decision-makers.

5.4.1 Recommendations for the Ministry of Higher Education

The recommendations for the Ministry of Higher Education are as follows:

- The Omani government, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), should continue its efforts to maintain quality system within both public and private higher education institutions, and encourage them to continue adopting and achieving quality, which increases the effectiveness, and competitiveness of the institution.
- The role of MoHE should not be limited to providing institutions with a framework to improve their quality services; rather, the government should be involved and support institutions to improve their managerial, technical and operational processes to achieve higher quality performance.
- The local authorities, the MoHE, and above all the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority should work on establishing a national training center specializing in quality personnel working in the higher education sector, including leadership and staff at different levels. This centre could carry out quality assessments for both public and private HEIs performance, and grant quality certificates. The function of this center is to prepare the trainees based on global developments in the field of higher education, especially quality issues, and provide them with necessary skills, particularly skills of the 21st century such as decision making, communication, problem solving, team building and critical thinking.

The MoHE is advised to work in conjunction with The Council of Higher Education, the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority, Oman Quality Network, and Higher Education Institutions to build an appropriate Omani National Quality Award in Higher Education that could be applied to both the

public and private higher education sector. This proposed award would be granted annually to institutions that have the highest performance according to predetermined criteria. In order to develop the standards of this national award, Oman can benefit from examining international quality award criteria from awards such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, EFQM Excellence Award and the Deming Prize. However, it is essential that the chosen criteria fit with the academic environment in the Sultanate of Oman. It is hoped that the establishment of this award will help in improving HEIs' performance, foster continued improvement and promote the provision high-quality services.

- Since the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) acts as a safety valve to ensure quality in Omani higher education, it is recommended that the MoHE should seek to provide more power to the OAAA as an independent body in order to continue its efforts in regulating the quality of higher education in Oman to ensure the maintenance of a level that meets international standards. Also, the contribution of the OAAA must be made more effective. This can be done by clearly defining the role of the OAAA to people, and activate its role in monitoring and improving the quality of higher education institutions.
- Because the Omani government is committed to Omanization – a policy enacted in order to replace expatriates wherever possible with Omanis – it should be systematically planning to train young Omani people to eventually fill senior positions.
- Finally, the MoHE has to work in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to incorporate basic quality issue awareness and encourage responsibility for quality as part of the school curriculum. Including quality concepts in school curricula will save governmental and institutional resources in the long run.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Private HEIs

The recommendations for private HEIs are as follows:

- Form a Council for Quality consisting of members from all private HEIs who have previous experience in quality management system implementation. The primary function of the proposed Council would be to discuss quality issues and challenges related to implementing a Quality Management System within the private higher education community; additionally, they would follow global developments in the higher education sector and quality field.
- The managerial performance in private HEIs does not currently satisfy the expectations of the staff, particularly regarding empowerment & involvement, training programs and reward & motivation, therefore, it is recommended that more effort should be taken to create an attractive and supportive work environment to meet staff needs, and allow institutional and individual goals to be achieved.
- In order for Omani private HEIs to achieve objectives efficiently and effectively, they must ensure that adequate human resources are available and highly qualified. This is could be achieved by revising the current staffing by increasing the number of competent staff in various units and sections to cope with the increased number of tasks and ensure equitable distribution of work. Moreover, private HEIs should develop a structure for managing quality which involves every administrator and faculty member.
- A quality management system involves a work culture change, a change that has a strong and close relationship with improved institutional performance. Instead of regarding change as only a response to labor market forces and economic, social and technological pressures, the change should be seen as an essential requirement in order to continue competing in the educational sector both nationally and globally. Changing institutional culture toward quality requires huge effort and time. Failure to change an institution's culture means that the quality system may not garner any tangible advantages. First, before introducing any change into Omani private HEIs, the change should be driven by shifts in the institutional core strategy plan, and redefining the vision, mission and objectives of the institution. Second, if any institution hopes to

move in new direction, staff must accept change. Therefore, management has to involve staff in the culture change. HEIs need a culture change which cannot be achieved without changing workers' beliefs and values. Employees should have a clear understanding of the reasons behind the change, and be aware of the possible benefits of the quality management initiative. In order to develop a quality culture, management need to continuously promote, encourage, and organize staff development conferences, seminars, and workshops on quality management philosophy and its practices. Establishing and cementing a quality culture among employees, and using the same ideas and language associated with quality may bring success more quickly.

- The reviewed literature revealed that there is no single best strategy for implementing quality management system. Implementation of quality system cannot be copied in its entirety because each institution has different characteristics that affect its vision and policies, hence, educational institutions need to consider their specific contexts and conditions. Investigating other institutions' experiences with quality system implementation, both locally and internationally, is important, not only to discover what they did well, but also to attempt to understand the difficulties that they face during implementation stages and learn from their mistakes. So, basically HEIs should try to improve their quality system in their own way, and utilize their own resources and capabilities to suit their circumstances and fit the Omani context. Private HEIs need to decide which quality approach appears to be most suitable to their situation and adopt it as their own method or practice. Then, they should determine what process should be used in implementing the approach within the institution. It is important to ensure that any quality system used is realistic, workable and affordable.
- In conjunction with affiliated institutions, Omani private institutions need to review the nature of current academic affiliation agreements to ensure more effective partnerships, particularly in relation to the quality arrangements. Also, private HEIs should seek more collaboration and networking opportunities with other institutions to acquire and exchange knowledge regarding quality management system.

- Teamwork is beneficial for institutions in all phases of quality system implementation. This is because teams have more far-reaching connectivity than individuals, and can solve problems deep within the institution, improve practices, and produce positive change. Thus, it is recommended that administrations of private institutions should seek to develop a Quality Steering Committee. The Committee should include members from various departments, staff from the Quality Department, and some faculty members. It is important that members of the quality team are highly trained and educated. Not only must they possess technical knowledge and management skills, but also the ability to spread quality principles among the rest of the staff within the institution. The Quality improvement team will be responsible for implementing institutional quality goals, as well as checking progress throughout the process, and evaluating of results. The role of the quality team must be made clear, and they must have well-defined aims and objectives. The quality team should hold sessions on a regular basis which include brainstorming, question and answer sessions, and feedback related to the stages of quality management implementation and its progress. Of course adequate time, resources, and encouragement should be given to the committee to carry out their tasks in order to achieve quality objectives.

- In order for a quality management system to be implemented fully and properly, a suitable budget and sufficient resources must be utilized effectively. Nowadays, it is impossible for private universities and colleges to continue to provide quality services and compete at the local, regional or international level by relying on either tuition fees alone or financial support from the government. This should encourage private HEIs to learn from successful experiences elsewhere by looking at alternative financial sources of funding, such as investment, to make up the shortfalls.

A reward and recognition system is a significant dimension in quality management success, and important for optimal support of quality initiatives. Therefore, in order for private HEIs to continue to make steady progress, and to reinforce positive behavior, greater attention should be given to developing a clear reward system for staff who demonstrates high levels of performance. Creativity and innovation can be encouraged effectively through a good

system of rewards and recognition. Staff initiatives in developing their work place and improving quality should be recognized constantly. Recognition should be delivered to individuals and teams at all levels.

- Various sources report that a quality management system requires considerable time and effort to implement. This approach also requires comprehensive training and education for all staff members, and particularly for decision makers (senior and middle leadership). An institution's vision and strategies would not work without giving staff the required training to improve their skills and overall job performance. Therefore, to enable workers to acquire new knowledge, improve their abilities and skills, and carry out quality activities effectively, all of them should have continuous well-structured training on quality management concepts, including its stages and implementation processes, and benefits. Also, staff should be trained on specific topics such as teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking. Based on interviewees suggestions, for harmonization between provision of training and ensuring presence of staff in his/her workplace, two private institutions in Oman have developed in-house workshops. They invited experts from around the world to conduct internal workshops on the latest developments in quality approaches, and these were scheduled with employees' circumstances in mind. Another institution signed a contract with a training institute to set up training courses based on the requirements of staff. Thus avoiding a "one size fits all" approach to training, rather it should be tailored to the needs of individuals. Also, attending professional development events related to quality such as seminars, conferences, meetings, and workshops domestically or abroad are highly recommended. When individuals have received the required training on a quality technique, they can be authorized to take decisions and make suggestions to improve quality services in general. Institution's management must put much care and thought into initiating development programs, and provide the trainees with opportunities to implement what they learn, so as to encourage better leadership practices.
- In order to implement a quality management system successfully, rather than concentrating on formalities, attention must be focused more on content and practical implementation. This can be done by cutting red tape or

unnecessarily excessive paperwork, and reducing delays in administrative procedures.

- Finally, the effectiveness and efficiency of an implemented quality system should be regularly internally and externally evaluated by experts who are aware of current developments in the field of quality management and its techniques. Regular feedback based on local continuous quality improvement criterion is essential to correct unhelpful practices, and to encourage successful implementation. Greater emphasis should be placed on measuring all aspects of institutional performance. Therefore, each institution should develop a systematic process to measure its performance and output that is consistent with a quality framework. Self-evaluation could be useful to strengthen the system they presently have. For instance, conducting staff surveys on a regular basis would help in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of any applied system. It would also provide an indication of performance areas that need to be improved and therefore to be addressed when planning. Moreover, survey results at both the departmental and institutional levels should be presented at scheduled meetings to create a climate of open dialogues, and keep staff updated with work progress in order to uncover challenges as well as provide suggestions for problem solving. External evaluation and assessment of quality initiatives is also necessary for any institution that implements a quality system. External audits can motivate institutions and facilitate advancement through identifying problems, and recognizing areas needing improvement. Again, sharing and discussing the assessment results of an institution's performance with all staff is very important in order to select areas to focus on, and identify future needs.

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5.4.3 Recommendations for senior private HEIs decision-makers

For establishing best leadership practices, the recommendations for senior private HEIs decision-makers are as follow:

- Quality management philosophy requires a leadership with specific characteristics. Institutions of higher education require leadership who have a positive influence even in tough times, and guide their people to succeed, leadership that are able to initiate, develop, and carry out significant changes in the institution. It also requires a type of transformational leadership capable of creating a vision that gives the institution a conceptual map for where it is headed. Leadership in the context of quality management is not about power, authority and control, it is more about empowerment, recognition, teamwork, dedication and commitment to continuous improvement, coaching and developing others (Zairi, 1994; Eich, 2012). Moreover, Islamic perspective stressed that leadership must possess three fundamental attributes namely strength, truthfulness and trustworthiness to enable them lead their followers smoothly towards achieving goals (Beekun & Budawi, 1999).
- As soon as senior leadership has established a clear understanding of the quality management system and is convinced of its advantages for the institution, they have to set a clear vision and mission, as well as objectives, and specify them in strategic plan which become the driving force for all staff at all levels in the institution. The vision should reflect an institution's aspirations for the short term, medium term, and long term to ensure performance in different ways and at different periods of time. In order to support delivery of policy and strategy, senior leadership also should align institutional structure. Leadership can only be considered effective when they have shared their vision with all workers of the institution. The literature indicates that many excellent initiatives fail because they remain "theory" and do not get shared and communicated effectively. Therefore, senior leadership should be very active in promoting awareness of quality through the open sharing of institutional visions and objectives, continuous improvement, teamwork, encouraging creative ideas, involving people, and focusing on quality stages. Moreover, in order to achieve an institution's goals in a

systematic way, senior leadership should develop an action and operational plan for managing quality. This can be done through having a proper structure for management of quality, updating policy and strategy, being active in following up on the tasks carried out by the quality improvement team, and developing suggestion schemes and reward and recognition systems.

- For a quality management system to flourish there must be commitment from senior leadership to its principles and techniques. Senior leadership should display a complete commitment to quality improvement and give it high priority. It is important for senior leadership to firmly believe that implementing a quality system will improve institution performance and levels of quality in general. Commitment by senior leadership to quality will mean spending a considerable amount of their time reminding people of the importance of continuous quality improvements. Moreover, they should put a lot of effort into educating workers, and communicating - especially face to face - with all staff.
- For effective leadership it is necessary for management to get very close to staff. It is important that HEIs leadership pay increased attention to developing effective communication up, down, and across the institution hierarchy; and takes action on what has been communicated. Also, they should encourage good communication between staff in all departments and sections of the institution. To facilitate this, the use of fast and effective communication channels, such as social media, is recommended institution wide.
- Senior leadership should establish an environment of trust and openness with the aim of empowering administrators and faculty members. One way senior leadership can demonstrate this trust is by taking purposeful steps towards delegating more authority; this will encourage staff to take full responsibility for decision making related to their work, particularly with regards to self implemented solutions. Moreover, making information related to performance results available for staff viewing, and supporting the use of such information in decision-making would help create a climate of creativity and innovation, and that will lead to instilling a renewed sense of confidence and morale among staff.

- To ensure the successful implementation of a quality management system, senior leadership should minimize the gap between staff and management. In order to achieve this, senior leadership should provide opportunities for staff at various levels (individually or in teams) to participate in the decision-making process; and preparation of strategic goals and institutional policies. Each employee should be involved in quality and improvement activities; encouraged to make suggestions for improvement; and feel responsible for what they do, and the way they act. To increase levels of support and commitment towards quality initiatives employees must share responsibility for the quality procedures of the entire institution. As with all initiatives regarding quality, planning must be carried out to ensure that increased employee responsibility does not lead to considerably more work for staff.
- Senior leadership should emphasize the importance of staff satisfaction. This requires leadership to continuously strive to meet their employees' needs, and ensure that staff problems and complaints are promptly and effectively solved. As a result, this will help to reduce a high turnover of staff in the long run.
- Finally, senior leadership should develop and support an up to date information and communication technology system and ensure that there is an active information section within their institution. The information section should collect and securely store information related to all administrators and faculty members, quality activities, and institutional performance indicators.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

This final section incorporates suggestions for future research. As the number of HEIs implementing quality management programs increases, further research is needed. As mentioned earlier in this study, unlike countries in the West, there are currently limited research investigations dealing with issues related to quality management and leadership in the Arab countries. Future research can be applied in several directions. Each possible direction may lead to a better understanding of a different aspect of leadership practice in implementing a quality management system. This study provided solid evidence that a relationship does exist between leadership and the implementation of quality management. However, despite the contribution of the findings of this study, there is a compelling need for further studies that will

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continue analyzing quality management system in the Sultanate of Oman. Researchers working in Omani higher education in particular, and in Arab countries in general, should continue studying quality approaches to identify the underlying strengths and weakness of various implementations and practices. Suggestions for further study include the following:

- The findings of this research study could serve as the basis for future studies on leadership and quality management system. This study focused only on private institutions in the Muscat governorate. However, in order to obtain a bigger picture of the impact of leadership on a quality management system, and to increase the generalizability of the findings to a larger population, it would be worthwhile to conduct a similar study which included all private higher education providers in Oman. The hope here is that future research will continue to provide in-depth investigation of quality management system practices in higher education, so as to provide researchers and practitioners with more concrete problem-solving tools for future use. Moreover, future research should focus on both academic and administrative areas in order to identify the best quality practices for utilizing a quality management system in higher education.
- As mentioned previously, this research study dealt with the educational aspect of implementing a quality management initiative within private HEIs, but similar studies could also be done with participants from public HEIs to examine how much quality practices between leadership working for private and public institutions differ. Such comparison is important because it will reveal whether the full funding received from the government has an impact on institutional performance and the provision of high quality services.
- Since the present study sample was limited to administrators, faculty members, and senior leadership, future research needs to be done quantitatively with different groups of participants. For instance a study examining the impact of a quality management system on students and other stakeholders should be conducted. This can be done in many different ways, for example, by evaluating the quality of services offered by HEIs overall, or the quality of administrative procedures from a student's perspective. There is also a need

for further research involving in-depth surveys to assess the impact of applying specific quality management tools and techniques to classroom teaching and learning. This can be achieved by increasing the sample size to enable a specific focus on faculty members.

- For investigating institutional quality improvement, it is strongly recommended that researchers should use international benchmarking as a measurement tool. For example, the EFQM Excellence Award, criteria from the MBNQA, and ISO 9001 quality management standards. Of course these standards must be adapted according to the local educational context within which the future research is focused.
- It would be helpful if future research could also be designed to focus on barriers for successful implementation. Future research could examine the least successful quality system experiences in higher education and find out why they were unsuccessful, and what steps could be followed to avoid the same outcome. It is also important to understand what impact the success or failure of quality management implementation has upon HEIs, both short and long term.
- Another direction that future research could follow is to examine the effects of leadership style on quality management system implementation. This could involve investigating whether one leadership style is preferred among the majority leadership, or if they prefer to use different styles based on developments during the different levels of the implementation process. If a relationship between leadership style and quality management implementation is apparent, it would be very useful to determine the nature of that relationship. Moreover, future research could examine and compare leadership styles or behaviors and quality management implementation in both public and private institutions of higher education. Such research would promote a better understanding of the impact of leadership style on quality management system.
- It is important to note that the interview questions were designed to cover several general themes related to practices of leadership related to quality. In fact, each question could realistically be the source of another study. For instance, researchers could study issues concerning the appropriateness of the educational environment in Oman to adopting quality management initiatives.

Another worthwhile study could be done on the impact of academic affiliation agreements between Omani private HEIs and foreign HEIs on the quality of academic programs, and their effectiveness in maintaining quality performance of Omani educational institutions. As can be seen from these two examples, there are numerous research questions requiring attention stemming from this general study.

- Another recommendation for further research is to undertake an in-depth analysis of the OAAA's reports in order to reach conclusions about the current status of both government and private HEIs performance in general and quality activities in particular.
- Finally, there is a lack of understanding of quality from an Islamic frame of reference due to a shortage of published Islamic perspectives on the various aspects of management in general and especially on quality management systems. Thus, further attention should be paid to this topic by conducting specific studies - both analytical and empirical - examining values, practices, and quality management concepts from an Islamic point of view, and to quality concepts from validated contemporary management research. Ideally the results of such endeavors would help to serve Islamic communities.