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Core Values Matrix of the Philosophy of basic Education in Oman (PBEO)

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The aim of this study is to analyze the core values embedded in the philosophy of Basic Education in Oman. Those values are used to develop a standard to guide the administrative work and performance related to teaching and learning in secondary schools in Oman. 449 school administrators (principals, their assistants, educational supervisors and senior teachers) were randomly sampled for the study. To collect data, a questionnaire including 85 items was used. It was developed by transforming core values to practicing-type statements. The reliability of the study tool Cronbach-Alpha was (0.98). The results of the study show that the highest frequency of practiced values is related to community partnership (79.8%), followed by administrative decision making (77.6%), administrative accountability (76.8%), professional development values (76.4%), comprehensive school experience (74.8%), and finally school vision and mission (73.8%). The study also revealed there is a set of 44 values embedded in the administrative practices of the basic education administers such as sharing, creativity, teamwork, diversity, knowledge-production, self-development, empowerment, harmony and coexistence. The school principals seek to establish a school environment based on the values of learning organization by turning the school into a training unit through forming training teams. In conclusion, many recommendations and suggestions are provided.[1]

Introduction

Values are considered as the most essential components of human character. Every individual can use them as a framework of reference for behavior and to provide guidelines for personal choices that can be implemented. Furthermore, values grow through ones' lifetime and experiences.

In organizations, values play a great role in changing and developing their culture through the prevailing value system that usually draws on customs,

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norms and administrative rituals. The culture of the organization includes all the beliefs, feelings, behaviors, symbols and logos pertaining the organization, i.e., it is the philosophy shared by most of the employees of the organization reflecting their thought beliefs, feelings, conceptions, expectations, attitudes, standards and the values they believe in (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Al-Sairafy, 2007).

Sime & Kroeck (1994) state that employees usually choose to work in environments that match their ethical performances. The better the ethical fit, the more likely employees are to continue with the organization and be committed to it. Both individuals and organization have codes of ethics that are rooted in values. As personnel continue to work for the organization, their behavior closely matches the values of the culture. Identification with underlying values helps employees reconcile personal sacrifices caused by their membership in the organization. Personnel learn to accept the organization's values and place their trust in the organization not to harm them (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Osland *et al*., 2007).

Within the administrative structures in Secondary Schools in the Sultanate of Oman, Al-Zadjali (1999) finds that values play an important role in solving conflicts and making decisions, especially when values are similar or shared by all parties in the school. By contrast, when values are not comparable, conflicts arise among members of the organization, leading to instability and chaos.

In the learning process, values have the same importance they have in the managing organizations as they help to create a suitable learning environment to further understand and integrate students and increase teacher-student interactions. Core values play a greater role in deciding the nature and shape of the relationship between students and their teachers. Thomas (1985) refers to the importance of the value of acceptance of the student by the teacher, as it increases the student's interest in schoolwork; develops his/her creativity and the attainment of goals. It is important to generate groups of students or classes based upon their thoughts of values systems, as these values organize the behavior of the individuals and make them more compatible. Groups of similar value sets are more interactive than random ones (Khalifah, 1992). However, schools administrators should realize that different generations have different values. Such realization should make the management more able to deal with and contain this difference (Awad, 2007). Hence, when the teacher's character is accepting, warm or friendly, compatibility between his/her values and those of students is increased. However, the importance of the work-centered approach may be reflected in the increase in the compatibility of theoretical values of both teacher and students (Khalifah, 1992).

Values represent the significance and meaning of behavior. An individual or a group can only be understood in the broader context of the activity of this individual or that group, represented by the value system that is practiced in light of the activity. Values also help an organization to maintain the self-identity that makes it committed to the achievement of its objectives, even if this results in sacrifices in the process (Muhammed, 1994).

Values in Educational Institutions

The theme of values in educational administration is more complex and much broader than has been pointed out. A quick glance at the value system of organizational management schools of administrative thought throughout history reveals that values accompanied all of them as the main guide of their internal organizational behavior. The classic approach in scientific management and bureaucracy focuses on the values of efficiency, productivity, labor division, specialization, authority, responsibility and the quantity of production and the importance of scientific research. Both schools link values with ethics and consider them indicators (Hamaddat, 2006). The contemporary management approach of various schools (the scientific school, the systems school, the situational school, the Z theory, TQM, process re-engineering), focus their values on the variables of the external environment, attention to employees, participation in the process of decision-making and the continuous improvement of administrative processes (Al-Dahhan *et al*., 2005; Haigan, 2003).

The process of determining the values in an educational institution is an important step in the detection of the initial perception of the fundamental values of staff represented in their daily practices. They represent important interests for the institution and their employees (Sadiq and Fakhro, 2003).

Despite the importance of this step in the declaration of values, practices remain the true choice of the nature of the prevailing organizational culture, as can be seen through the customs and types of behaviors that are rewarded, or denounced and rejected. The organization may raise slogans that they adopt an organizational culture that rewards honesty and achievement, or that they adopt the values of accountability and transparency. However, from experience and the reality of daily habits, the staff may find that the administration does not apply or does not exercise this but culture, and in reality they practice the opposite of the declared slogans (Qaryouti, 2003).

In addition, quality of the administrative process in schools mainly depends on values practiced by the administrative personnel of the school in performing operations such as planning, organizing, leadership, control and evaluation. Good management of the values of quality performance is reflected in the valuable investment of the human resources. Ahmed (2007) points out value practices that reflect the quality of administrative work in the organization:

- Consistency and self-confidence in accomplishment
- Obligation to the profession
- Positive Competitiveness
- Effective communication
- Teamwork
- Educational merit (trust, authenticity, honesty, attention to students... etc.)
- Active student participation

- Collective responsibility

In regard to the importance of values in relation to the teaching process, the value pattern has to be considered as an essential source in the process of conversation with students. It affects the level of performance of teachers and the degree of interaction with students. Khalifha (1992) mentions some of the fundamental values that need to be available in the practices of teachers in basic education schools such as:

- Education as a means of self-realization
- Education as a means to satisfy the needs associated with self-realization
- Assessment of the academic specialization
- Applying the democratic approach in the management of the learning process
- Planning for implementing organizational objectives and goals
- Valuing time consuming and investment
- Valuing the importance of science as an ultimate aimed value
- Honesty and sincerity in performance
- Acquiring knowledge as a means for professional development
- Acceptance of criticism
- Faith in group work

Related Literatures

Dean (1999) classifies the values that are supposed to be more common in schools students descend from disparate social and cultural backgrounds. The school administration should work in collaboration with senior teachers to make the school a distinctive cultural environment and to be able to deal with student diversity. Dean (1999) has developed a classification of values that must occur in such environments. Those values are the professional relationships, the values of the learning organization and the values of learning.

Al-Siyabi, (2005) points to the importance of values in guiding the educational process since there is a set of values that lies behind any behavior. In addition, an awareness of the school principal’s values in the learning environment will help to largely eliminate the contradictions that may arise between personnel within this environment.

Pisapia and Lin (2011) explore the relationship between principals' values and action in the Chinese context. The Chinese Value Instrument (CVI) and Strategic Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) were used to collect data. The study findings indicate that achievement and initiative were at the low end, while familial loyalty, social harmony and benevolence were at the high end of the value continuum. With regard to SLQ, the study findings also indicated that Chinese school principal management prototype is formed around transforming and bounding actions.

To highlight the globalization effects on education values, Law and Ho (2009) examined music education's legitimation of values as a means of preparing students for entry into the new knowledge society of the People's Republic of China in a global age. They examined the ways in which globalization has pressured values education into resolving the apparent contradiction between national identity and national unity in the ever-changing play of Chinese history and politics. The results of this study showed that there are juggling among three pairs which are: contemporary cultural and social values on one hand; traditional Chinese and communist ideologies on the other; between collectivisim and individualism; and between national and global cultures.

It has become a priority to refer to core values of administrative practices in the field of education. It helps to reach better decisions, since one of the main sources of values is the philosophy of education. Hamaddat (2006) finds that values emanating from the philosophy of education help in guiding the administrative work of the school and in making educators more aware of the reality of events, overcoming difficulties in forming the educational policies and making decisions related to the school affairs.

Storey and Beeman's (2009) study focuses on the special function of values as an influence on school leaders' decision-making and how they apply this value system to the immediate, every day decisions needed to effectively manage a school. The result of the study showed that all participants considered themselves to be school leaders with moral and ethical integrity, regarding exhibition of these characteristics as an essential requirement of their role. According to participants in this study the influences of faith, family and early education were predominant. Few referred to the influence of their academic training or professional code. Early acculturation in a spiritual code appeared to be an important influencing dimension. Seventy five per cent of participants stated that they were brought up in a particular religious tradition with its rules, ethos, and values influencing them even now. Eighty per cent of our participants believed that morals and ethics could be taught, although there was less certainty over the method of delivery.

Clinton (1993) argues that philosophical values are at the root of a philosophy of education and educational policy choices and school administration. These values can also give some direction to school roles in student-teacher relations, student participation in governance of the school, student-teacher-parent-district relations, and parent involvement in district review committees. All of this needs to reflect a commitment to local controls, personalization, involvement, partnership, innovation, educational excellence, and a student centered curriculum. Since Americans do in fact hold these values, it is possible to examine the consistency in living out these principles, especially in school regulations and policies.

In regard to the importance of the administered character education within Christian Tradition Values, Pike (2010) points out that character education in schools need not to be indoctrinatory, in the pejorative sense, on the one hand

nor conflated with Christianity on the other. It can promote the autonomy of students in matters of religion by providing character education that enables them to choose well. This is seen as an important feature of character education that also fosters a tolerant, respectful and inclusive school and society. Hunt (2004) investigated whether values were taught or caught in a Uniting Church school program for boys using a humanistic sociology conceptual framework. After the program had been taught, the students' experiences developed beyond themselves to their family and community perspectives. Their language used more positive meanings and more abstract forms.

Method and Procedure

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to design a model to include core value practices in the basic education schools in the Sultanate of Oman, through answering the following questions:

1- What core values are perceived by school administrators (school principals, their assistants, education supervisors, and senior teachers) in secondary schools in Oman?
2- What is the core value matrix that can lead school administrators (school principals, their assistants, education supervisors, and senior teachers) in Oman?

Significance of the Study

The importance of the study is multifaceted. The study will attempt to identify core values of PBEO. It will provide stakeholders a reference of values which will help to improve their school management. Finally, it will assist secondary school administrators and peer coaches in developing school administrative performance.

Research Instrument

The main instrument was a questionnaire developed by generating a list of core values of secondary school derived from the literature (Sadiq and Fakhro, 2003; Ahmed, 2007; & Khalifah, 1992). The face validity of the list was calculated by presenting it to a group of referees in the area of educational supervision, educational psychology, and educational administration.

The total list consists of 85 items representing the core values, with a Likert type questionnaire in which marks run from 1(low) to 5 (High). Then the reliability coefficient was measured by Cronbach Alpha and it was found to be 0.98.

The questionnaire was distributed randomly to a sample of the total population of administrators to determine their viewpoints toward the core values that directed educational performance in secondary schools.

The list was converted to a questionnaire composed of two sections. The

first section, for general information, was about the respondent; and the second section included a list of 85 items. The preliminary list and the questionnaire were used to collect information on the first research question. An analytic descriptive approach was used to answer the second question.

Sampling

To apply the study instruments, a total sample of the study (449) represented 12.9% of the total population of school administrators (school principals, their assistants, education supervisors, and senior teachers).

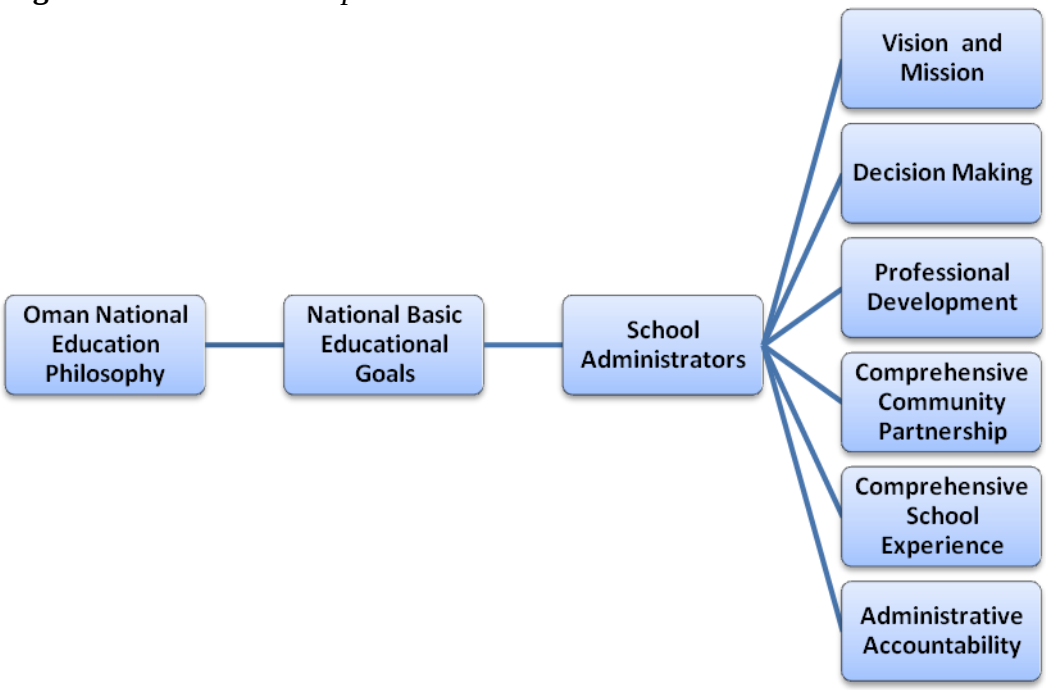
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is built on the dynamic relationship between educational philosophy, and national educational goals and school administration practices. These practices reflect the implementation of philosophical value choices in interaction with cultural and personal environmental elements (Garrison, 1988; Spiecker and Straughan, 1988; Johnson *et al.,* 2011).

Conceptual Framework

The research conceptual framework was developed based on the theory of management by objectives, a literature review and findings that state that national philosophy of education is built upon a set of principles, beliefs, concepts, values and obligations stated in an integrated manner. In the Sultanate of Oman, the philosophy of education serves as a guide for the education process and school administrations. Its educational principles and goals guide the development and implementations of all the Ministry of Education plans (Ministry of Education, 2006). It is believed that school administrators play a big role in the implantation of the national philosophy of education; the Ministry of Education (MoE) wants school administrations to instill values in the day time practicing and administering school affairs. Figure 1 present the research conceptual framework.

Figure 1. *Research Conceptual Framework*



Results and Discussion

The Results of the First Question

The first question aims to detect the extent to which the headmaster practices the behavioral attitudes that reflect the values of the PBEO. Percentages of responses, reflecting the extent to which the school administrator practices the behavioral attitudes that reflect the values of basic education according to the study domains, are shown in the table (1).

Table1. *Study Domain in a Descending order based on Percentages Values*

Rank	No	Domains	%
1	4	Comprehensive community partnership	79.8
2	2	Administrative decision-making	77.6
3	6	Administrative accountability	76.8
4	3	Professional development	76.4
5	5	Comprehensive school experience	74.8
6	1	Vision and mission	73.8

Table (1) shows that the highest frequency was recorded for the domain "comprehensive community participation" (79.8%), followed by "administrative decision-making" (77.6%), then "administrative accountability" (76.8%), then "professional development values" (76.4%), then "comprehensiveness of school experience" (74.8%), and finally, the school vision and mission (73.8%).

The results also revealed that the school administrations were keen on the participation of all employees along with community partnership in the

development of the school vision and mission in the light of which the strategic plan for the school is set. In addition, school boards announce this vision and mission as an essential step for dissemination to all employees. It is one of the most important administrative steps to promote the culture and values of the school, as the school vision and mission comprise the values in which it believes. The knowledge of those values motivates staff to respect and adhere to and apply them through their educational practices in and out of the school in the local community. In order to achieve this, the result shows that the school administration is works to spread the core values of basic education that guide behavioral practices among school staff towards the exchange of opinion, open dialogue, discussion and dissemination of trust.

Khalifha (1992) states that similar groups in value sets and objectives are more interactive in the administrative organization than those who interact randomly or those who lack a clear vision and mission. In addition, the principals' keenness on staff participation in the decision-making process as one of the core value of basic education is just another aspect of transparency and acceptance of the responsibility for making decisions.

The principal of the school cannot develop the school's performance in isolation, but ~~a~~ quick action must be taken regarding the scientific change in the school atmosphere based on the values and beliefs of all its employees. This process of change can only be done through dependence on a value system, taken as a standard, against which the level of change and development sought by the organization is measured.

The results of the first question also indicate that the principal of the secondary school encourages the exchange of opinion among the school staff by giving adequate opportunities for dialogue and effective debate and acceptance opinions of others. The principal also provides a forum for the exchange of experience between individuals internally and externally. In addition, the principal’s administrative practices are mainly based on core values derived from the PBEO. This is consistent with Hamaddat (2006): that values have particular importance in guiding educational work i.e., behind any behavior lies a set of values.

Results of the study also revealed that there is a set of values embedded in the administrative practices geared towards professional development such as values of learning, knowledge production, self-development, creativity and training for professional development. These practices promote the values of the development of school performance and they motivate employees and create in them a desire for self-development.

Sadiq and Fakhro (2003) point out that the educational institution can raise slogans reflecting their organizational value systems directed towards the important interests of the institution. However, they see that raising the said slogans are sometimes not enough to spread the values of professional development and to raise the desire for development unless the institution management creates a regulatory environment that adopts the core values and works toward them. To achieve this, school principals have to make the school

a comprehensive training unit for professional development and excellence.

Regarding overall community participation, results show that the school management must interact with some local institutions by sharing some common core values, such as the consumption of environmental resources, religious awareness, and school partnership. These values can only be achieved through a school environment that enhances students' understanding and increases their awareness of social reality (Qaryouti, 2003).

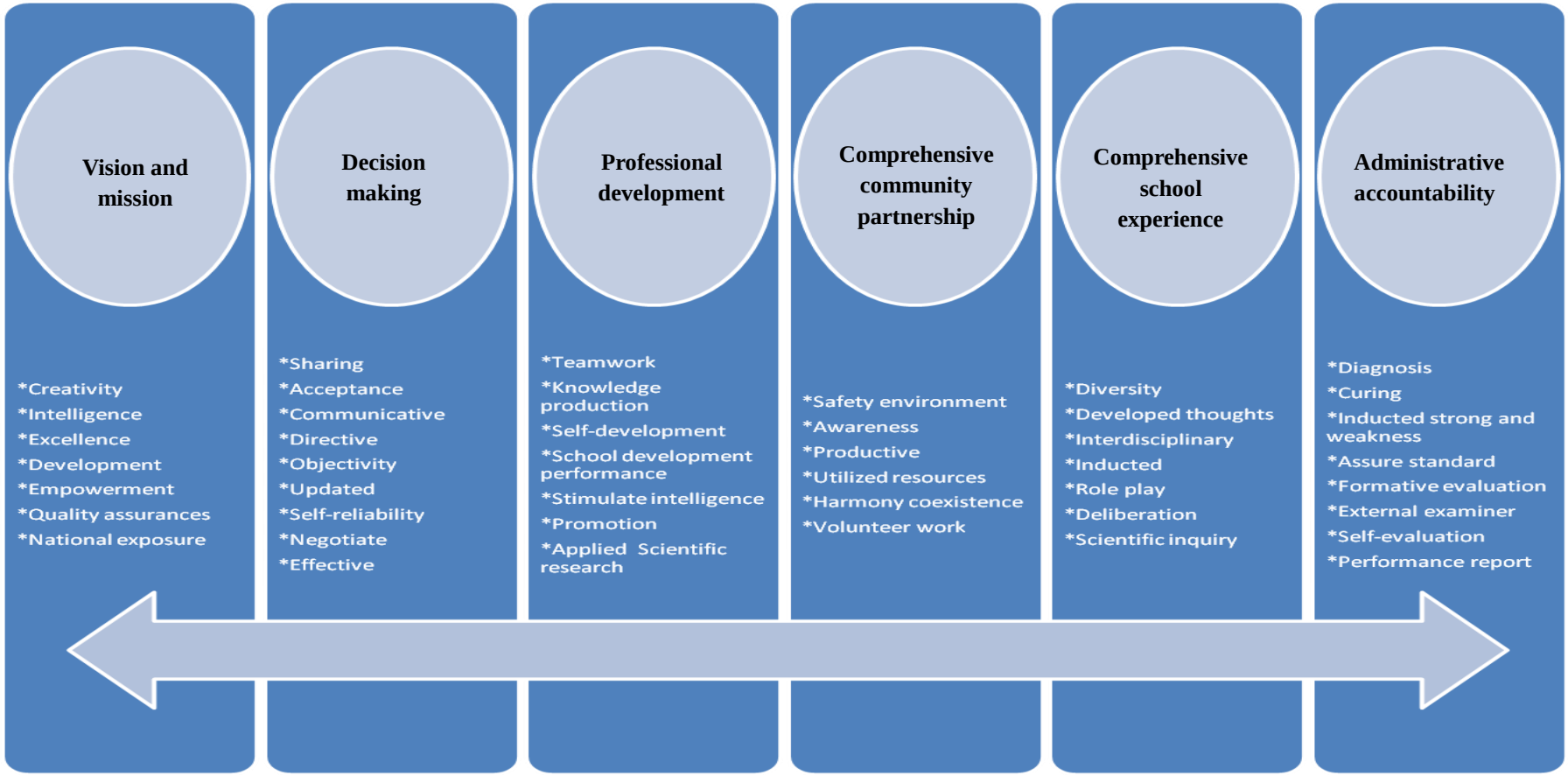
Regarding the comprehensive school experience domain (74.8%), the results of the study reflect the importance the school principal's role in directing teachers to use various teaching and learning strategies. The principal aspires to design plans for the teacher to activate teaching learner–centered methods. This finding is in line with Al-Sairafy (2007) who states that the value component must be reflected in the administrative practice in organizations, and that in turn, it reflects the nature of the organizational climate prevailing in the institution.

Regarding administrative accountability (76.8%), the study results indicate that the school administration is keen on involving parents in the assessment of their children. Parents' sharing in diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses in performance of their children is considered one of the core values of PBEO. The importance of this action taken by school administration will activate the parent pool in supporting development of student performance. Here we can say that the school management is keen on raising the level of school performance through spreading trust among the staff and through spreading the values of educational merit, teamwork, communication, trust and consistent of educational performance.

The Results of the Second Question

This question aims to create a set of values represented in a matrix that reflect the core values in PBEO. Results show that there are many core values included in the matrix developed by author, as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. *Core Values Matrix in the Philosophy of Basic Education in Sultanate of Oman*



Looking at the matrix showed above, there are 44 core values included in the PBEO. These values have been embedded in the school administration by disseminating them through practice.

This can be explained. Since the adoption of the basic education system in Oman in 1998/1999, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has been seeking to spread the core values of basic education through 5-year development plans. The MoE believes in the importance of values in education as they reflect the educational philosophy, and the society's philosophy and nature of life as well. Al-Yamani (2009) points out that there is a strong relation between values and education. Values are usually reflected through objectives within the school cultural context. Al-Kitany (2004) reports that the process of social development in the community will not be genuine unless it is linked to educational system values. In addition, basic education in the Sultanate of Oman aims at the development of aspects of the learner's character within the principles of Islamic values. Al-Samady (2008) suggests that today's education should rely on an original and referential value system that is based on the Holy Qur'an and Hadith (both are main sources of Islamic Values) with its comprehensiveness, integrity and balanced view of man's relationship with the environment, health, communication, information, human rights, arts and aesthetics.

The result of the study showed that the philosophy of basic education rests mainly on a value system that is compatible with modern educational trends and the requirements of modern life. It meets the needs of development plans in the Omani society. It tries to provide the learner with the necessary life skills, and the development of the competences of communication, self-learning, scientific inquiry and critical thinking (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Results of the second question also indicate that there is a clear agreement among the participants on the practices of core basic education values from school management and teachers to establish and spread these values in the school environment. Those values related to superiority, excellence, development and creativity, and the values of quality. The school administration tries to translate these values into behavioral practices within the school environment, by making school a house of expertise for those who seek professional development. School principals encourage all staff to participate effectively in various debates and dialogues, especially in the process of decision-making. This finding is in line with that of Krajewski and Bailey (1999) who state that school plays a major role in establishing the values of care and interest represented in honesty, empathy, respect, assumption of responsibilities and justice among staff.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, it has been shown that most school principals, their assistants and senior teachers, are aware of the core values of basic education, especially after more than ten years of applying the basic education system in

the Sultanate of Oman. Whereas the results indicate that managements of basic school are clearly aware of these values, transforming them into effective behavioral manifestations which make these values are clearly reflected in their administrative practices that direct school educational work.

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations and suggestions are proposed:

1) Develop a reference value system to be used as a guide for educational, administrative and supervision practices (school principals and their assistants, teachers and educational supervisors).
2) Conduct workshops for teachers to develop their abstract concepts of the core values of basic education and raise their teaching practices and classroom management.
3) Spread awareness of the core values of basic education among students, such as: values of dialogue, coexistence, problem solving and respect.
4) Use Informational Technology and Communication Technique tools to spread awareness of the core values of basic education in the local community.
5) Encourage the school to integrate the core values of basic education in educational activities.
6) Conduct training courses for secondary school principals to develop their performance in practicing the strategic planning values of basic education and their related of implementation mechanisms.

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