

The Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman: Between Perennialism and Progressivism

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ABSTRACT

Using a descriptive analytical method, this research will provide a critical examination of the Sultanate of Oman philosophy of education. The purpose of this research is to present and analyze the main attributes of the philosophy of education in the Sultanate of Oman. An investigation of the government's educational orientations is performed through linking the different attributes observed in its philosophy of education to the five following main philosophies of education: Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism, Existentialism, and Social Reconstructionism. The data analysis showed that the most viewed educational philosophical dispositions were progressivism and Perennialism. In fact, Oman's Philosophy of education combines openness to the world values and preservation of the Arab-Muslim national culture and values. The study also found that the Sultanate of Oman has developed an educational philosophy that draws its background from national and universal values. It also contains the main guidelines that educative institutions and instructors must follow. Despite the fact that this philosophy seems to be instructors centered, it shows openness and internationalization of the standards of education.

Keywords: *Philosophy of Education, Sultanate of Oman, Educational philosophies, Progressivism, Perennialism, Educational values.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of human capital was initially and institutionally introduced by Adam Smith as talent. Later, in the early 1960s, it was reconsidered by Schultz (1961). Then, it was developed in its most concrete form by the economist (Becker, 1994) who explained its merits. Basically, the human capital theory is economically applied to education. However, research has allowed the application of the basic fundamentals of this theory to other areas such as Investment, Salary, Growth, Health and Social Benefits. The analysis of the human capital theory emphasizes that education is an investment that can be public or private and that will potentially generate profits or we can say a return on investment at several levels. This investment can generate economic benefits such as wage gain (Mincer, 1974; Becker, 1994; 2009; Garaffa, 2011) Economic Growth (Mincer, 1958; Romer, 1986; Lucas, 1988) or the improvement of productivity. It can also provide socio-medical gains (Grossman, 1972; Becker, 1994; Piatecki and Ulmann, 1995) and influence the situation of women, the personality of learners, family composition (Becker, 2009) health (Brian, 2007) nutritional status. In all cases, the theory of human capital derives its bases from the educational process. Education has played a key role in the development and economic growth (Brasseul, 2005). Considering it as an investment that increases the skill and efficiency of humans, (Page, 1964) admits that education generates a productivity gain and therefore an additional income for the company and the learner. The Sultanate of Oman has challenged itself to vary its sources of income and diversify its economy (Kooli, 2017). In order to achieve this goal, the political authorities of the country have understood the usefulness of the development of their human capital and have thus relied on the principle of education of the Omani people. To take into account the economic, social, cultural and political changes that the world and the nation are experiencing. To better align with the country's strategic directions. Finally, to adapt to scientific and intellectual development, policy makers in the Sultanate of Oman have felt the need to develop the philosophy of education. The Omani Teaching Council was in charge of the development of the mentioned philosophy. It was considered as an important national framework that guides the development process in Oman and enables the development of the education sector. This education chart will also serve as a guide for the implementation of national strategic plans for education. Sadker and Zittleman (2018) admitted that schools and teachers are influenced and guided by a set of related beliefs that are derivative from the philosophy of education. Researches realised on the field demonstrated that philosophies of education are guided by different essential attributes that find their philosophical roots in five main educational philosophies. In fact, the five basic forms for the emergence of a philosophy of education are Essentialism, Perennialism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism, and Existentialism. Using a descriptive analytical method, this research will provide a critical examination of Oman philosophy of education. We will also try to further understand the government orientations by linking the different attributes observed to one or more of the five main philosophies of education. We suppose that Oman's philosophy of education embraced one of the five well known philosophies of thinking.

2. THE MAJOR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES

A philosophy of education represents answers to questions about the purpose of schooling, a teacher's role, and what should be taught and by which methods (Sadker and Zittleman, 2018). We consider philosophy of education as an academic discipline used by public authorities for designing and conceiving theories, policies, politics and strategies containing a set of beliefs and values that guide the educational systems, through practitioners, to the best practices in term of teaching methods. It also seeks to build and maintain a set of attitudes and behaviours that ensure personal betterment and social perfectibility. Epistemologically speaking, when we focus on the nature of knowledge and how we come to know, we distinguish five main educational philosophies that form the basis for the emergence of the philosophy of education. These five branches of philosophy, which can be viewed and recognized

as orientations to teaching and education (Ryan, 2008) are: Essentialism, Perennialism, Progressivism, Social Reconstructionism, and Existentialism. In the context of this study, we will briefly present the five basic philosophies of education and explain their implications about education.

2.1. Essentialism

Essentialism is based on realism and idealism. The main advocate of Essentialism is William C. Bagley (1874–1946). He thought that education must preserve society and not change it. Education is seen as a defender of human as a social and cultural existence (Zirhlioglu and Yayla, 2016). That's why, an Essentialist philosophy of education, tends mainly to focus on teaching the essential elements of academic and moral knowledge. Teaching focuses on building a good knowledge of core and basic subjects (Howick, 1980) rather than modifying the students' behavior. Essentialist researchers believe that the main Purpose of education consists of building a strong socialized society composed of knowledgeable and talented individuals by transferring knowledge and social basics to next generations (Sönmez, 2002; Yayla, 2009; Ergun, 2017). To better understand the actual reality of the world, the Curriculum of teaching used in the Essentialist approach concentrates more on the culture of the society and its historical context. At the main time, a philosophy of teaching based on Essentialism gives more authority to the instructor in the classroom. The teacher is considered as an expert of a particular subject and the only responsible person for decision making in class (Erden, 2007). Tools used in the process of education include lecturing, memorization, repetition, practice, and assessment (Lynch, 2016). Sometimes, this approach is seen as repressive because it gives full authority to the teacher. In this approach, the role of students consists of memorizing whatever transferred and answers whenever asked (Zirhlioglu and Yayla, 2016).

2.2. Perennialism

Perennialism is mainly based on classical idealism and realism. Promoters of this educational philosophy are Jacques Maritain, Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler. These researchers endorsed the importance of the "Great Books" as they help learners to discover and enjoy the truth and beauty they convey. These philosophers admitted that instructors must encourage reading the "Great Books", discussing their content with the student and exploring their subject matter without forgetting their historical context (Gutek, 2005). According to Perennialists, the objective of education is to focus on personal development (Howick, 1980) by teaching students ways of thinking and helping learners to discover truth through cultivating the intelligence and rationality each person possesses (Gutek, 2005). Briefly, the goal of a Perennials' education is to teach students to think rationally and develop minds that can think critically. Also, for Perennials' thinkers, teaching must be emphasized on teaching universal principles and traditions. So, education will secure individual freedom, human rights and responsibilities through the nature (Link, 2008). For perennialists, the query of the truth is mainly related to the observation of a well-disciplined and organized classroom. Teacher as a model to his students in all fields and is an expert in his field. He takes responsibility in the point of demonstrating the ways of logical and consistent thinking. Like Essentialism, Perennialism advocates a Teacher-centered philosophy of education. It tends to be more authoritarian and always seen as conservative because it doesn't focus or recommend the teaching of technology. Also, openings for multiculturalism and dissemination of gender stereotypes are ignored. Finally, the Perennialist philosophy of education emphasizes the existent values and knowledge of the society.

2.3. Progressivism

Progressivism's main source of philosophy is John Dewey's Pragmatic Experimentalism. John Dewey was its foremost proponent. He believed in the importance of freedom and democracy in schools. For him, a democratic society is most conducive to applying the scientific method and creating a truly sharing democratic community (Guttek, 2005). The progressivist philosophy of education considers education as life, believes in the change and rejects all kinds of stability and absolute facts. Progressivists admitted that the attaining of a democratic society is contingent on challenging dogmatism and absoluteness. The educational system must orient learning through, experimental inquiries, questioning and challenging ideas, values and subjects (Guttek, 2005). The development of learners academically and socially is another main component of a Progressive philosophy of education. The learning process should be based on interactions with other people in real-life activities (Howick, 1980; Winch and Gingell, 1999). Progressivism by opposition to Essentialism and Perennialism, denies the traditional view of an education system that is teacher-centered. It places the learner in its orbit. The teacher plays the role of a guider for students. He also guarantees a good learning environment. According to Witcher (1999) progressive educators tend to view school as a social institution and seek to align school programming with contemporary needs in order to make education meaningful and relevant to the knowledge, abilities, and interests (Uzunöz, 2016). The curriculum of a progressivist school is built around the personal experiences, interests, and needs of the students (Sadker et al., 2008). Teaching is emphasized on the independent motivations of the learner and focuses on projects building, problem solving and experimentation inside small scale laboratories.

2.4. Social Reconstructionism

Also based on pragmatism and derivative from the Progressivist movement, the social Reconstructionist movement appeared in the early twentieth century. Its main proponents were Theodore Brameld, Jane Addams and George S. Counts. Reconstructionists introduced a new intellectual revolution on the education system against progressivists in order to treat the social ills, overcome the social and cultural crisis and to rebuild the society (Hill and Werner, 2006). Reconstructionists found the progressivists' ideas wrong because of their learner-centered educational approach and emphasized the needs of the middle class. They claimed the urgent need for a society-centered education which cares for all society's needs. (Erden, 2007). Reconstructionists also admitted that the social and cultural crises observed at that time was caused by some scientific and technological developments. Reconstructionists considered restructuring and reforming the society to create a world society based on common values, social justice and equity. Reconstructionism movement consider the education system not only as life but also the future (Dewey, 1923) that's why the Reconstructionist philosophy of education encouraged the set-up of new strategies and policies. For this purpose, society should be reconstructed by the means of education. Instead of national, religious and gender discriminations, common values like peace, love and tolerance should be cared (Zirhlioglu and Yayla, 2016). The idea of overcoming oppression and improving human conditions is also incorporated in the social Reconstructionists ideology. In such way, educational systems need to focus on student's experience and take a social action on real problems, such as violence, hunger, international terrorism, inflation, and inequality (Cohen and Gelbrich, 1999).

2.5. Existentialism

The existentialist movement raised firstly and essentially in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. This way of thinking was adopted by well-known philosophers like Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and others. The philosophers of this

movement admitted that existentialism gives importance to the lived human experience rather than to given one. The existentialist philosophers reduced the existence of man, nation and the world and gave more importance to the individuality of man. According to existentialists, in order to live a meaningful life people must reduce the importance and continuous reference to social traditions, habits, customs and social reform. The key way of happiness begins by raising awareness of our uniqueness, individuality, making our own choices and assuming responsibility for our actions. An existentialist philosophy of education is student-centered and focuses on raising the awareness of learners about the importance and primordially of liberty in their lives. In the learning process, making choices by the learners themselves reflects such a philosophy. Common point where existentialist philosophers meet is human freedom. Above all, existentialists point out that they try to show people that they are free and they can choose what to value and how to live instead of what to do in a particular situation (Cevizci, 2010). Existentialist's thinkers admitted that truth derives from humanity that's why they recommend teaching of literature, the graphic arts, music and myth rather than sciences (Malik and Akhter, 2013). Like Progressivism and social Reconstructionism, Existentialism places the learner at the center of the educational process. It is considered a Student-centered philosophy. It takes into consideration individual needs, contemporary relevance, and preparing students for a changing future. Students and teachers work together on determining what should be learned and what is best to learn it (Sadker and Zittleman, 2018).

3. PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

The aim of education is not a knowledge of facts but of values (Inge, 1917). The Omani government attaches great importance to the educational system. This is why he has sought to develop a philosophy of teaching through which he explains the various ways of thinking about teaching while emphasizing the ideas and values that should be transferred to learners. The philosophy of education in the Sultanate of Oman (Al Harthi, 2014) is inspired by 10 fundamental sources. Their main traits are religious, identity, national and universal values. It is also based on 16 fundamental principles that are going to be presented respectively.

3.1. The Integrated Growth of Learners

Inclusion is a process that aims to take into account and meet the diverse needs of the population through increased participation in learning, cultural and community life. It also tends to reduce the number of those who are excluded from the educational system or do not have access to education. The principle of the inclusion of learners implies the change and adaptation of contents, approaches, structures and educational strategies. It also builds on a common vision that includes all children in the age group and the belief that the mainstream education system has a duty to educate all children (Bélanger and Duchesne, 2010). UNESCO also recognizes that everybody has the right for good quality of education that meets the needs of essential learning and enriches the lives of learners. The ultimate goal of inclusive education is to end all forms of discrimination, to foster social cohesion (UNESCO, 2017a) and to curb inequalities in the access to education (Bélanger and Duchesne, 2010). Inclusive education is also a universal right that requires taking policy measures to provide quality education for all Oman citizens (UNESCO, 2010). The first principle of Oman's philosophy of education places great importance on the overall development of the learner. The government then seeks to better develop the personality of the learner throughout the process of personal growth according to specific standards while maintaining his physical and mental health. The same principle recommends providing the learner with the skills needed to better cope with global change and to meet contemporary challenges. In order to achieve this goal, the Omani Government is seeking to provide educational

institutions with all the necessary resources. The Omani government is also seeking to create an educational environment that is accessible to all learners and without any representation of their personal, economic, social, cultural, geographic or ethnic background (UNESCO, 2010). In short, the Omani government seeks to build an inclusive education system that guarantees the quality, equity and excellence and is consistent with the principles of equal opportunity, non-discrimination and universal access.

3.2. Identity and Citizenship

Identity can be defined as the way we behave in order to show who we are when we interact with the human and non-human elements of our environment (Dorais, 2004). According to the Canadian Association of Education of the French Language, identity has always existed. It distinguishes one person or group from another. We can note several types of identities: Professional, family, sexual, social, religious, political, national... Omani decision makers are well aware that identity is a dynamic phenomenon, a relational invention, a construction in perpetual motion able to transform according to the vagaries of its environment (Dorais, 2004). This is why the Omani government has given great importance to the issues of identity and citizenship. As a result, the principles of strengthening and consolidating Omani identity and citizen behavior have been incorporated into the Omani philosophy of Education. Through this principle, policymakers sought to consolidate in the learners the beliefs and principles of the Islamic religion. They also seek to promote pride in the Arabic language, Omani identity and national history. This principle also confirms the pride of belonging to the Arab and Islamic nation. The integration of the principles of identity and citizenship into the philosophy of teaching will also push learners to be more aware of the importance of conservation and promotion of Omani heritage. The overall objective will be achieved by maintaining the balance between tradition and modernity.

3.3. National Prestige and Respect (National Identity)

One of the undesirable effects of globalization is the risk of loss of personal and national identity. Being aware of the danger threatening the Omani identity, the government strives to ensure a real-life model of teaching, "learning in perspective", that is understandable by the student and known to him (López, 2003). Then, in order to preserve the national identity, the government insisted on teaching Nationalism. In fact, the third dimension nourishing the philosophy of education draws its excitement from the principle of nationalism and national prestige. Consequently, the education system becomes the main promise of belonging to the nation and fidelity to His Majesty the Sultan. This same principle also tends to reinforce the principle of national unity among the different components of Omani society. The learning of national prestige will pass overwhelmingly through the respect of the flag and the national anthem. The learning of nationalism will pass through the love of the territory and is embodied in the language, the customs, traditions, and in history the vestiges of which surround the subject: It is ultimately this immediate and daily reality that constitutes its nation (López, 2003).

3.4. Good Values and Behaviours (Universal Values)

Values are a central concept of the social sciences. They are used to specify individuals or societies, to track change over time and to explain the basic motivations behind attitudes and behaviors (Schwartz, 2006). According to the UNESCO, many countries are now increasingly interested in improving the quality and relevance of their education systems. Each country places special emphasis on the importance of values, behaviors and skills that promote mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. In this sense, UNESCO recommends the Global Citizenship Education (GCE) program, through which it seeks to show that education's role and the objective now is to create

more just, peaceful, inclusive and tolerant societies. Education for universal values is one of the basic building blocks of the global education program. It aims, among other things, at creating a political, societal, cultural or religious climate open to universal values (for example, human rights and peace) (UNESCO, 2015a). The Sultanate of Oman is one of the countries interested in improving the quality and relevance of education. That is why the government has sought to integrate the teaching of universal values into its philosophy of education. The Omani government aims, above all, at consolidating the learning of Islamic values as well as the human values that are consistent with them. Inculcating good values, behaviors and best human practices in the minds of learners remains a top priority for the government. The educational system must also present itself as a great opportunity through which students are taught the importance of respect for public morality, good morals, customs and traditions of the Omani society (O.E.C., 2017).

3.5. Education for Sustainable Development

First (1973) admits that education is the most powerful weapon for changing the world. Similarly, UNESCO (2017b) finds that education for sustainable development enables everyone to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to build a sustainable future. Mindful of the global importance attached to these new educational modalities, the Omani government has moved on to education for sustainable development. It has sought to integrate into the education system key themes of sustainable development, such as climate change, disaster prevention, biodiversity, poverty reduction or sustainable consumption (UNESCO, 2017b). The Omani government's general objective is to realize an overall development of the Omani society by Strengthening and developing national capacities and encouraging the different components of the society to participate in sustainable development. It also encourages the development of knowledge and technologies related to food security and the conservation of water and natural resources. To end with, the philosophy of education enables learners to discover the importance of the rational use of resources and natural resources.”

3.6. Responsibility and Accountability

The sixth principle integrated into the Omani philosophy of education focuses on the foundations of responsibility and accountability. Learners must learn how to respect the principle of the rule of law and how to comply with the legislation into force. Omani students are applied to learn how to become socially responsible and to develop a sense of responsibility towards oneself and others. They must also deepen their understanding of their rights and duties and promote active participation in society. The Omani government is also seeking to develop learner's awareness of the importance of respecting social norms and maintaining public order. In short, through its educational system, the Sultanate of Oman aims at building the rules of law and institutions. To build a nation within which all individuals, institutions, public and private entities, including the state itself, are held accountable for the observance of publicly enacted laws, applied in the same way to all and administered independently, and consistent with international human rights standards and norms (U.N., 2012).

3.7. Education is a National Responsibility and Partnership

The Omani government seeks to spread a new culture among learners, their families and society in general. Education will be perceived as national rather than personal responsibility; it will now include other partners. The Nation is thus seeking to strengthen community involvement in the education process. The educational system and its organization thus become subject to multi-actor cooperation (Bélanger *et al.*, 2013). In fact, education will become everyone's concern: not only school and family but also society as a whole (Holly *et al.*, 2014). The Omani

government, like many researchers (Duval *et al.*, 2014) also encourages families to play a greater role in the process of educating young people. The Government also calls on the various partners to assume their social responsibility for the education process and to support their efforts to create a better education system in the Sultanate of Oman.

3.8. Education of Human Rights and Duties

In 2007, UNICEF recommended the approach of education based on human rights. The aim is to ensure that every child has a quality education that respects and promotes his right to dignity and optimal development (Unesco and UNICEF, 2008). Similarly, the Omani government seeks to establish an educational process that takes into account human rights. Through the eighth component of Oman's philosophy of education, there is a great desire to set up an education system that encourages and ensures respect for human rights. The government is also widely promoting the human rights culture and seeking to build learner awareness of the importance of humanitarian issues. Moreover, through the educational process, policymakers try to transmit a positive message encouraging the adoption of certain attitudes such as the consolidation of the right to education, the principles of equality and justice and the development of awareness regarding the rights of women, children and people with special needs.

3.9. Education for Peace and Mutual Understanding

The UNESCO considers education as a space for schooling designed to integrate learners into society and teach them different social values like education for peace and tolerance. Through the educational process, schools are considered as places where tolerance is taught and practiced at the same time (Reardon, 1997). Recognizing the need for a civil society based on peace and tolerance, the Omani government has incorporated both principles into its philosophy of education. The government seeks to build peace through respect for human rights and the practice of democracy.

Peacekeeping and tolerance essentially involve learning, encouraging and applying certain principles and practices such as the eradication of intolerance, respect for intellectual differences and multiculturalism; the promotion of dialogue and rapprochement between cultures and civilizations and promoting the principles of international understanding, cooperation and mutual respect among peoples.

3.10. Education of "Al Shura" (Consultation)

Shûrâ, or the principle of collective deliberation, is a practice mentioned both in the Koran and in the practice of the Prophet and his Companions. In the modern context, shûrâ has been understood as the Islamic term of what our contemporaries call democracy (Al-Raysuni, 2011). The principle of collective deliberation constituted the strength, vitality and cohesion of the first Islamic community. Today, Islamic reform movements are continually inspired by this model of wisdom to address the specific challenges of the modern age (Al-Raysuni, 2011). This is why the Omani government insists that this component must be present in the philosophy of education. Omani students must learn to express their opinion and develop a spirit of constructive criticism. The education system also promotes the principle of shûrâ, encourages the diversification of forms of expression and the development of awareness of participation in the electoral process.

3.11. High-Quality Education for All

The eleventh principle integrated in the Omani philosophy of education suggests the establishment of a high quality education system that is accessible to all citizens. Within a country that respects the individual right for

education, the government tends to make learners aware of the importance of respect of different sciences as well as educational institutions. Learners must also have some level of motivation within a high-quality education system that can provide the basic knowledge and skills needed. This high-quality education system must increase the effectiveness of educational institutions and instill a culture of evaluation and continuous development in all aspects of the educational process.

3.12. Life-Long Learning

The Belem Framework for Action defines lifelong learning as "a principle of organizing all forms of education" (UIL, 2010). UNESCO in its Strategy for Education 2014-2021; sets its overriding goals. Regarding lifelong learning goals, it acknowledges that "the entire education system is designed to facilitate lifelong and 'life wide' learning and the creation of formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities for people of all ages. [...] The concept of lifelong learning requires a paradigm shift away from the ideas of teaching and training towards those of learning, from knowledge-conveying instruction to learning for personal development and from the acquisition of special skills to broader discovery and the releasing and harnessing of creative potential. This shift is needed at all levels of education and types of provision, whether formal, non-formal or informal (UNESCO, 2014). Being aware of the importance of lifelong learning, the Omani government has incorporated this aspect into its philosophy of Education. The Sultanate of Oman is seeking to spread a new culture that encourages citizens to learn throughout their life. It also seeks to promote skills that focus on self-learning, development planning and looking to the future. Citizens are also required to learn how to develop positive life skills so as to maintain a sustainable and peaceful Omani society.

3.13. Education and Work

The thirteenth principle embedded in the Omani philosophy of education focuses on education and work. The educational system needs to take care about the notion of work and to make learners aware of its importance and values (moral, physical, social, economic, etc.). The system is also expected to develop the professional skills of learners in order to enhance their local and global competitiveness (Al-Abri and Kooli, 2018). Learners must acquire theoretical training grounded in field practice. The government must also encourage and facilitate the creation of training programs adapted to the needs of the labor market. Courses and subjects taught must also be consistent with the needs of the labor market.

3.14. Research and Innovation

Descartes admitted that "there can be nothing more useful than looking for what knowledge is" (Gouhier, 1987). The UNESCO Chair in Scientific and Technological Education and Teacher Education also mentions that "Access to scientific and technological knowledge is a dual objective of access to scientific and technical culture for all and the development of the scientific and technological skills necessary to support the socio-economic development of countries (Abadli, 2011; C.U.E.S.T.F.E., 2015)". Being concerned about its socio-economic development, the Omani government places a strong emphasis on the application of rational thinking and scientific research in its educational programs. Education institutions are called upon to create a stimulating environment that encourages rational thinking and scientific research. Educational institutions, on the other hand, are called upon to integrate into the curricula modules and new teaching techniques that promote the use of rational and critical thought (mind).

3.15. Entrepreneurship and Initiatives

In order to meet the new challenges of the globalization era, the Omani government aims to promote an integrated system in the fields of innovation (Abadli and Otmani, 2014) and management of entrepreneurial culture in the educational environment. Educational institutions are encouraged to use new information technologies to increase the knowledge needed to advance education and science. They are also called to spread a new culture that encourages entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. In addition, educational institutions are becoming a major catalyst for entrepreneurship. The Oman philosophy of education encourages the creation of a spirit of entrepreneurship among learners. It also encourages and supports the generation of new ideas and allows the learner to turn ideas into actions. All these actions will manifestly anchor entrepreneurship in the culture and mission of educational institutions.

3.16. The Society of Knowledge and Technology

"UNESCO refers to knowledge societies as societies in which people have the capabilities not just to acquire information but also to transform it into knowledge and understanding. A fact which empowers them to enhance their livelihood and contribute to the social and economic development of their societies (Souter and UNESCO, 2010). In order to reach a certain level of human development, it will be necessary to create knowledge societies capable of identifying, producing and transforming information into knowledge. New technologies, "have created new opportunities for the creation, preservation, dissemination and use of information, but it is a human activity that enables information to be transformed into knowledge and to add value to human experience and development (Souter and UNESCO, 2010)". The Omani government has taken the UNESCO's recommendations into consideration and has built its educational strategies on the establishment of the knowledge and technology society. The Sultanate of Oman seeks to follow the directions of the complementary approach of the knowledge triangle by establishing a direct link between companies, the education system and research institutions. It also promotes the importance of information security and technology and network issues. On another hand, educational institutions are called to play an important role in the production of knowledge. They are also called to value existing knowledge and facilitate its access. They must likewise provide and participate in the formation of skills necessary to build and maintain the Omani knowledge society.

4. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OMAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND THEIR LINK WITH THE MAJOR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES

When we try to match between fundamental principles of Oman Philosophy of Education and the five major Educational Philosophies Table 1; we clearly conclude that Oman is standing between Perennialism and progressivism. We can also notice that it contains, with fewer degrees of importance and different variability, certain fundamentals related to Essentialism, Social Reconstructionism and Existentialism. To answer the question if the Oman Philosophy of Education is instructor-centered or student-centered , the answer is in between according to conclusions extracted from Table 1. But, the descriptive methodology followed in this research and data collected gives the impression that the Oman Philosophy of Education contains the main guidelines that educative institutions and instructors must follow. It also just shows the fundamentals and general spirit on which it was written. The analysis shows also that Oman policymakers followed educative principles of the UNESCO. At least 10 principles figuring in the Oman Philosophy of Education were recommended by the UNESCO. Such ascertainment is positive because it shows openness and an internationalisation of the standards of education. At the

same time, Omani policy makers adopted a philosophy of education reflecting the spiritual, cultural and fundamental principles of the Islamic Arab society.

Table-1. Fundamental principles of Oman Philosophy of Education and their link with the major Educational Philosophies.

Fundamental Principles	Major Educational Philosophies				
	Essentialism	Perennialism	Progressivism	Social reconstructionism	Existentialism
The Integrated Growth of Learners		X			
Identity and Citizenship	X				
National Prestige and Respect	X				
Good Values and Behaviours	X				
Education of Human Rights and Duties		X	X		X
Responsibility and Accountability		X			
Education of “Al Shura” (Consultation)		X	X		
Education for Sustainable Development		X	X		
Education is a National Responsibility and Partnership				X	
High Quality Education for All		X	X		
Education and Work			X	X	
The Society of Knowledge and Technology		X	X		
Research and Innovation		X	X		
Entrepreneurship and Initiatives		X	X		X
Education for Peace and Mutual Understanding		X		X	
Life-Long Learning		X	X		

Source: Personal work compiled with data from The Education Council of the Sultanate of Oman.

5. CONCLUSION AND CRITICS

By combining openness to the world and preserving the Arab-Muslim national culture, the Sultanate of Oman has put in place a unique model of teaching philosophy. This model shows a certain openness to the contemporary world and an attachment to the traditional values of Omani Arab-Islamic society. This philosophy of education tends to prepare the Omani citizens to face national and international challenges and better engage in the new turmoil of globalization. The government seeks, through the philosophy of education, to form believing citizens, attached to their country and faithful to their Sultan. Citizens are able to contribute to the process of continuous development and adapt to the demands of human evolution. The Sultanate of Oman has developed a powerful educational philosophy that draws its effervescence from national and universal values. The second part of the research showed that the Oman Philosophy of Education reflects the characteristics of the Oman society. It contained certain references to Essentialism, Social Reconstructionism and Existentialism. Even if that, we clearly concluded that Oman philosophy of Education is standing between Perennialism and Progressivism. This study was limited to the qualitative presentation of the fundamentals of the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman. The educational philosophies identified by the research were limited to Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism, Social Reconstructionism, and Existentialism.

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