CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Omani education has been undergoing a comprehensive reform since 1989 by firstly revamping the general education system and replacing it with the basic education system. The rationale for such a reform was based on the idea that there should not be a discrete, definite compartmentalization or division between primary and secondary education (as is the case in the general education system), but there should be a degree of continuity from the lower grades to the higher grades (as in the basic education system). In corollary, in the basic education system, there is such a continuity in the curriculum from the lower grades to the higher grades i.e. there is no such thing as the primary school curriculum and secondary school curriculum. In addition, in the basic education system, teacher education and training is singular, standard and uniform, and thus trained teachers can teach at all grades and are not labelled as primary school teachers or secondary school teachers.

The reform also impacted on the curriculum and textbook content with subjects such as life skills and ICT being added to the entire basic curriculum. Hence, embarking on education reforms to improve the quality of the education system and human resources it produced requires structural changes and new kinds of school management, school leadership, and teacher professionalism. As a result of these changes,

responsibilities of the school principals have equally been changed to creating a positive school culture. Furthermore, the principals are saddled with the tasks of strategic planning, institutionalizing the school mission and periodic reviews of the school aims and objectives. Creation of a climate that supports teaching and learning is a core value of instructional leaders. As conceived by Hallinger (2000), instructional leadership utilized three conceptual constructs: managing instructional programs, promoting a positive school climate and defining the school mission. In terms of professionalism, today's school principals need to grow and learn throughout their careers to adapt to the changing and varying needs of students and schools (Educational Research Service Report, 1999). Hence principals' professional development is critically related to school improvement, effectiveness of instruction, and student learning performance.

This study was placed in Oman's reformative context and the primary purpose of the research was to examine the relevance or suitability of the fifteen areas of professional development needs of school principals, as identified by Salazar (2002), in Muscat, Oman. The secondary purpose of the research was to identify the relevant skills for instructional leadership and transformation leadership as well as to identify the challenges faced by principals in the Omani context. This chapter presents the summary of main findings and implications, a discussion of the findings, suggestions for future reforms and for further research, and lastly the conclusion.

5.2 Summary of the Main Findings

- In this study, 80 school principals in Muscat participated in the survey on professional development needs. 41 of the respondents were female and 39 male. In terms of length of service, 56 of the school principals who participated in this study have worked for more than five years and 24 of them have worked for less than five years. In terms of school level, 55 of the participated school principals in Muscat were from Basic Education Cycle 2 while the rest 25 were from Basic Education Cycle 1. In terms of their qualifications, 49 of the school principals who participated in this study were Bachelor's degree holders while 21 were Master's degree holders.

- With regard to Research Question 1, this study found that the core professional development needs for school principals in the context of educational reforms in Muscat, Oman, could be differentiated into fifteen domains, as affirmed by factorial analysis and could be rank ordered as follows:

  i.   Designing, implementing and evaluating the school curriculum

  ii. Understanding measurement, evaluation and assessment strategies

  iii. Creating a learning organization

  iv. Understanding students' development and learning

  v.   Building team commitment

vi. Team working skills

vii. Problem solving

viii. Building shared decision-making

ix. Research knowledge skills

x. ICT utilization

xi. Defining the core values and believes of education

xii. Communicating effectively

xiii. Setting goals and determining outcomes

xiv. Building community involvement leadership capacity

xv. Resolving conflicts (building consensus and negotiating leadership capacity)

These findings affirmed the compatibility and suitability of the fifteen domains in Salazar's model (2002) of professional development needs for school principals in Oman. It was expected initially that by factorial analysis these fifteen domains could be either extended or contracted, but surprisingly the fifteen domains remains intact even when applied to Oman's education system. What could be different, however, was in terms of the specific importance of the need items (or the survey items)—as elaborated in the next paragraph.

- There were differences in principals' perception on creating a learning organization based on their working experiences. The principals with more than 5 years of experience perceived creating a learning

organization, building community involvement and leadership capacity as the singularly most important factors compared to the principals that had less than 5 years of work experience. Beside this, the school principals with less than 5 years of work experience had higher expectations of the issues related to defining core values and beliefs of education and setting goals and determining outcomes compared to the principals that had 5 or more years working experience.

In relation to the type of schools, there were differences between principals at Basic Education Cycle 1 and 2 in terms of designing, implementing and evaluating curriculum factors. Principals at cycle 1 associated designing, implementing and evaluating curriculum factors with setting goals and determining outcomes as well as defining core values and beliefs of education as the important factors for principal professional development, compared to the principals at Cycle 2. The principals at Cycle 1 also perceived creating a learning organization factor as a more important factor compared to the principals at Cycle 2.

In terms of principals' qualifications, the study discovered that principals' different educational background and history could play a major role in understanding professional development. From the results, principals with Master's degrees perceived creating a learning organization and defining core values and beliefs of education as very important factors for principals' professional development in Oman compared to the principals with Bachelor's degrees, while, in contrast, the principals with Bachelor's degrees tend to view building shared

decision making and setting goals and determining outcomes as the important factors.

- With regard to Research Question 2, the professional needs could be categorized into two types of leadership needs, namely instructional leadership (IL) and transformational leadership (TL). Specifically, as rated by school principals, the most highly important domain for instructional leadership was building shared decision-making process (mean value 3.5600), and for transformational leadership was resolving conflicts in implementing changes for reform (mean value 3.5200). And, based on the loading factor of each need item for each domain, this study found that the highly important needs were as follows.

i. In Domain 1 (IL) i.e. designing, implementing and evaluating curriculum, the item on curriculum implementation had the highest loading value (.88).

ii. For need Domain 2 (IL), i.e. understanding measurement, evaluation and assessment strategies, the item on how to apply continuous evaluation about performance of schools had the highest loading value (.57).

iii. For need Domain 3 (IL), creating a learning organization, the item on how to apply professional development programs in their schools had the highest factor loading (.77).

iv. For the need Domain 4 (IL), understanding students' development and learning, the item on how to apply educational strategies to increase school performance had the highest item loading (.85).

v. For need Domain 5 (TL), i.e. building team commitment, the item on how to support a positive relationship in their work environment had the highest item loading (.80).

vi. For Domain 6 (TL), i.e. team working skills, the item on how to exchange information, knowledge and skills related to school performance among them had the highest item loading (.73).

vii. For need Domain 7 (IL), i.e. problem solving, the item on acquisition of problem solving skills had considered the highest item loading (.86).

viii. For need Domain 8 (IL), i.e. building shared-decision making, the item on how to make students contribute in the school decisions had the highest item loading (.86).

ix. For need Domain 9 (IL), i.e. research knowledge skills, the item about the importance of educational research in student performance had the highest item loading (.85).

x. For need domain 10, ICT usage, the item about the importance of ICT in school environment had the highest item loading factor (.75).

xi. For need Domain 11 (TL), defining core values and beliefs of education factor, the item about the importance of applying educational beliefs in school environment had the highest item loading (.79).

xii. Under the need Domain 12 (TL), communicating effectively, the item on how to strengthen the communication with parents of the student had the highest item loading (.84).

xiii. In terms of need Domain 13 (IL), setting goals and determining outcomes factor, the item on how to create a positive culture in their schools had the highest item loading (.81).

xiv. Under the need Domain 14 (TL), building community and involvement leadership capacity, the item on how to apply the educational plan in the school environment had the highest item loading (.88).

xv. For the need Domain 15 (TL), resolving conflicts (building consensus and negotiating leadership capacity), the item on how to manage conflicts in school environment had the highest item loading (.66).

Broadly speaking, the findings were in alignment with Stuart's (1988) findings that principals usually recognized their professional skills deficiency, and they desire a problem-based solution (rooted in the context of their work) which will give them opportunity to be involved in all stages of learning.

- As for Research Question 3, this study found that most of the domains on professional development needs were closely correlated with each other. This means that instructional leadership needs overlapped with transformational leadership needs. However, it was observed that a few domains were not correlated with each other, especially:

  - Domain 1(IL) and Domains 2, 4, 5, and 12 (TL)—i.e. the needs on curriculum implementation were not correlated with the needs on assessment methods, student development and learning, building team commitment, and communicating effectively. This finding

reflects that those needs could stand separate and aggregate by themselves, that is, no overlapping; thus, training principals can focus solely on those needs without being complicated by certain other needs.

- Domain 14 (TL) with Domains 3, 8, 10—i.e. the needs for building community involvement were not correlated with the needs on creating learning organization, shared decision-making, and ICT utilization. Similarly, this finding implies that the needs on building community involvement (TL) are not connected to a few needs related to instructional needs.

- For Research Question 4, interviews with school principals revealed that the majority of the school principals in Muscat highly needed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions on exercising instructional leadership and transformational leadership. This is a serious issue that needs to be addressed by the Ministry of Education in Oman. Some of the school principals claimed that the training given or conducted by the Ministry did not include instructional and transformational leadership training and, in addition to this, that the training provided was not relevant to school principals as it did not serve the purpose or solve their problems – an oft-cited concern.

- Interview data also revealed many emerging needs for implementing educational reforms in Muscat specifically and Oman generally.

Supervision skills

School principals complained of not having been trained on how to supervise their schools and were not equipped with the kind of skills that would help them to guide their staff and students.

Research skills

Lack of research skills were highlighted by the principals in Muscat. They claimed that they did not have adequate knowledge about research. Research tends to provide solutions to many problems that are confronted within the school system and if this knowledge is acquired, it can improve both students' and staff' performances.

School leadership and management skills

In Muscat, school principals are deficient of leadership and management skills. According to them, the Omani ministry of education needs to organize proper training that will boost their leadership and management skills which will help them to be leaders rather than administrators.

ICT skills

Information Communication Technology (ICT) poses both new opportunities and obstacles for school principals as they were not trained or exposed to new development in the field of educational technology. This is considered as a new and emerging challenge for them.

Problem-solving skills

Problem-solving skills were needed for school principals in Muscat because they highlighted not having proper training in problem-solving as an area of concern. For school principals, ability both to communicate basic

knowledge and to develop advanced thinking are keys to solving any other problems within the school.

<u>Proper planning and assessment</u>

School principals in Muscat expressed the need for better planning and assessment skills in order to evaluate the effectiveness of educational reforms and their school's development.

<u>Relationship with the community skills</u>

The relationship with the community is one of the new skills for school principals' professional development to take place as the government should frequently consult the community to know what the community needs. The principals felt they needed more training in this area.

<u>Skills for creating a learning environment</u>

Lack of skills for creating a learning environment is one the issues that was brought up during the interviews and the school principals in Muscat demanded that the government provide training for such skills to further improve and develop their educational responsibilities.

<u>Time management skills</u>

School principals in Muscat complained of not having time to attend training, conferences and seminars as they were overwhelmed with other duties and responsibilities.

- Question 5 pertains to the challenges faced by principals in pursuing their professional development in school management and leadership. Reformation of the education system in Oman has posed a great challenge for school principals, especially in terms of

reconceptualization of principals' job, which requires new skills, approaches and training. The significant changes made for new system laid down new roles, rules and regulations. Specifically, the principals pointed the following challenges:

Curriculum implementation:

Designing more learning activities according to problem-based learning. Apart from that, integration of knowledge was included in basic education system, in which western curriculum and Islamic curriculum were intertwined together. Principals also faced challenges in persuading teachers to design competency-based learning to enable the impartation of literacy and cultural competencies among students. For learning activities, students were required to learn by group work, discussion, questioning and classroom presentations. This was conceptualized on the basis of student-centered approach.

Student Evaluation and Assessment

School principals also should master various ways of continuous assessment and to develop problem solving and critical thinking of students. Principals should be able know about oral tests, quizzes, reports, mini research, homework, projects and portfolios, and student self-assessments.

Instructional quality in schools

Principals when interviewed raised several concerns about the aspects related to educational quality in schools, such as inadequate school buildings and educational facilities, lack of adequate and appropriate instructional materials, shortage of qualified Omani teachers, a preponderance of foreign teachers, and lack of instructional technology.

School principals' roles in Muscat are unlimited and this could affect their performance and efficiency. Therefore, these roles should be limited and focused. Apart from this, school principals complained about their workload where they found themselves as having multi-task functions. Therefore, it is suggested that there should be reconceptualization of principals' role and where necessary, additional administrative responsibilities should be given to additional personnel to reduce the principals' workload to allow them to function efficiently and effectively.

Student Learning Time

In basic education, the school year has been increased from 160 to 180 school days; the school day, lesson duration and school plan have been extended; each lesson is of 40 minutes duration; the physical lay-out of the school building has also been changed. Principals need to relate these changes to school improvement and quality.

- With regard to Research Question 6, by analyzing the emerging key concepts in interview data, there were many policy recommendations for school improvement and principals' professional development based on principals' suggestions in the context of educational reforms in Muscat. Among the important suggestions posed by school principals were as follows.

Decentralization of educational system policy

School principals asked for the decentralization of system policy to improve schools, to place more decision-making power in their hands.

Participation in decision-making policy

School principals demanded their involvement in the decision-making process that relates to school development and learning outcomes rather than Government solely making all the decisions.

Evaluation of the programs before implementation policy

A policy of evaluation of the programs before implementation should be established to discover if there will be unforeseen problems and errors as well as knowing the effectiveness of the program to be implemented.

Reducing the rigidity of the school roles policy

The policy of reducing rigidity of the school roles should take place for system flexibility, freedom of expression and autonomy.

Focusing on the area of needs and prioritizing programs policy

Any program and training that is conducted by the school management and government should focus on school principals' professional development needs as well as prioritizing the training and programs to be given.

Relevance of the training and programs to school principals' needs policy

The training and programs that will be implemented and carried out by the government should be relevant and ready to prepare the school principals to face the daily challenges of running a school.

Academic freedom and autonomy policy

Academic freedom and autonomy is so important and should be given and allowed for school principals in Muscat to improve the school environment.

<u>Program benchmarking policy</u>

The school program should be benchmarked with other nations' programs to see what is missing in the system and in order to standardize it for quality development.

<u>Curriculum reform policy</u>

School curriculum in Oman needs to be evaluated in terms of effectiveness and development as well as whether the reformation of the education system serves its purpose and reaches its target.

5.3   Discussion of Findings

This research has supported Salazar's (2002) model and some previous studies on professional development methods for school principals. Training is the traditional, and still dominant, form of professional development which includes direct instruction, skills demonstration, seminars, workshops, and research presentations. These methods have been used in Oman and the government has played a major role in providing top class training for school heads and teachers, as well as allocating a considerable amount of budget for them to attend trainings, conferences, seminars and workshops.

School principals in Muscat agreed on the importance of professional development that could upgrade their research skills for the purpose of improving school leadership and management, teacher professionalism, quality of teaching, and students' performance and development. All the principals agreed that professional development was essential in order to introduce the application of information technology in the classroom and train teachers on how to apply ICT in all areas of

education. Professional development with educational beliefs and values will help to achieve the school vision. The respondents emphasized the need for professional development training that are targeted toward enhancing teacher competencies in teaching, creating positive relationships in schools, and helping teachers to explore their weaknesses. In addition, it will help the school principals in terms of working towards educational aims, planning, and improving communication between parents and the teachers. Besides, to manage conflicts in the schools, changing school conflicts to positive outcomes, negotiating with others to control school conflicts and overcoming school conflicts with acknowledged methods required professional trainings.

This research also concurred with Nuefeld's (1997) study where he studied the perceptions of 23 urban middle school principals regarding their needs for professional development. These opportunities included formal training, as well as visiting and receiving visits from other participating principals. This study supported Nuefeld's findings on school principals demanding professional development and training to upgrade their schools.

This study also supported Ricciardi's (1997) findings who conducted research on the perceptions of 140 principals in South Carolina who had at least two years' experience in principalship. Participants were surveyed regarding their professional development and training needs. Principals identified important needs for additional training in areas such as motivating others and addressing sensitivity. However, few of the principals were reported to have received any training in these areas over the previous two years. It supported Ricciardi on school principals demanding training on how to motivate their staff and problem-solving.

Furthermore, school principals can be sent abroad for conferences, trainings and workshops to learn from other experts in the same job which will help to abolish cultural rigidity and a conservative mentality. In addition, school principals need to be trained in ICT applications in school management and instruction. Also, they should be given training in problem identification and solving. Indeed, self-learning training and programs should be available for school principals in Muscat to know the importance of self-learning, reading, lifelong-learning and development and finally, awareness of the latest developments in education is very important and should be made emphasized.

This research also supported Sergiovanni (1991) study on school leadership and its relation to professional development and student development. Sergiovanni (1991) states that "successful leadership and management within the principalship are directed toward the improvement of teaching and learning for students" (p. 16). Besides this, he offers a contrast of principal leadership in effective and successful schools:

> In effective schools principals are instructional leaders who hold strong views about instruction and exhibit strong and highly visible managerial skills to ensure that all features of the model (objectives, curriculum, teaching, testing, expectations, and classroom climate are properly aligned. In successful schools, principals are educational leaders with strong views about schooling, teaching, and learning... (p. 96).

The findings of this study support Sergiovanni's (1991) assertion where school principals believed that the degree of success of the schools can only take place and school improvement can only be made when the school principals are trained for

professional development, with skills to face challenges and skills to improve teaching as well as learning.

The findings of this study somewhat conformed with Janet, Theresa, Shelley and Cynthia (2007) that providing more professional development to teachers could help them develop their instructional practices, especially in reading. Furthermore, these findings provide some evidence for a direct connection between principals' involvement in professional development for teachers on good instructional practices and teachers' implementation of these practices, at least in reading lessons. Thus, this research findings supported Janet, Theresa, Shelley and Cynthia (2007) on school principals requesting for professional development training and programs to upgrade the skills of their teachers and improve their teachers' teaching and instructions.

School principals need professional development training in areas of instructional leadership and transformational leadership. Instructional leadership as defined by scholars, is an action, step and movement that a school principal takes or delegates to teachers and other staff to promote growth in student learning and performance. It is also a step that the school principal takes to improve a teacher's ability and develop their knowledge and understanding. They need training on how to improve learning and instruct their staff to perform more effectively. In addition, Muscat school principals need to be equipped with transformational skills in order to know how to transform people under them and make positive changes in their schools to achieve the expected goals and future.

Practically, school principals in Muscat need to be encouraged and strive to achieve educational aims and objectives by placing instructional quality as the number one priority in schools and embark on a journey of making that vision realized. These are the duties of instructional leaders and this is why they need to be trained and equipped with skills that could assist them in completing these responsibilities and duties.

School principals in Muscat need training on instructional leadership so that they become competent in managing their schools, supervising their teachers, and designing approaches and methods for improving student learning. In this way, teachers themselves would respect their principals or leaders that had sound knowledge, competencies, and dispositions necessary for making changes and innovations for improving the education quality of Oman.

With regard to transformational leadership, it is critical for school principals and organizational leaders because it is about a leader enhancing subordinate motivation, improving their morale, developing their abilities and upgrading the followers' performance by using the various methods and techniques. According to Burns, such leadership is about transforming people and organizations and making positive changes to enhance performance and outcomes. It would be hard for principals them to work with their teachers to achieve the intended school and education mission and vision if they lack transformational leadership skills.

In creating a learning organization, the school principals need to be encouraged through professional development programs in order to improve their teaching methods,

motivate teachers to improve on their skills and knowledge, conduct research and apply the research findings. Besides this, they need training on how to train teachers to evaluate, measure and proffer better strategies to improve students' performance. Principals were keen to develop professionally to foster good relationships between the school and the society, engaging students and teachers in discussions on how to improve the school and students' performance.

A study by John (2003) found that transformational leadership among middle school principals was indirectly related to increased student learning but it was found to have a positive relationship with teacher satisfaction, a greater perception of principal effectiveness, and to increased willingness on the part of teachers to make extra effort. Middle schools that have principals who exhibit a transformational leadership style are more likely to have an adaptive school culture. These transformational leaders invariably promote an adaptive school culture via staff rewards or compensation practices. This indicates that training principals to be transformational leaders can help to increase their knowledge and competencies in making changes by influencing and sharing with teachers and in building a positive and conducive school culture.

In addition, this research suggests that the education authorities should allocate resources and opportunities for principals' professional development to take place. Professional development for school principals should be made a continuous process of learning and of becoming expert practitioners. An atmosphere that creates learning needs of principals should be such that they can explore and update skills in leadership, curriculum, supervision, instruction and management (Hallinger et al., 1990). Institutions like universities can be the best of such places where learning needs can be

provided for the principals that combine academic study with clinical work; and revamp curricula that include a common core of knowledge and skills for all (Carter and Klotz, 1990).

This research also supported the idea of community involvement for school improvement and development. Principals should observe school culture and community needs in order to understand the factors and issues that could affect curriculum implementation, student behaviors and attitudes, and school goals. Participant observation can thus be another avenue for principalship training in Muscat.

5.4 Implications of the Study

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications

A comprehensive educational reform, such as in Oman, is akin to opening the pandora box of issues, problems, and challenges which create a lot of confusion, uncertainties, arguments, and conflicts. Chaos seems to be the natural outcome of initiating a big system change, but it has to be done no matter how difficult it is in order to achieve a better system. People will come to their senses when they are able to rationalize that change is necessary if the benefits and outcomes in the future far outweigh their resistance, sacrifices, and initial costs and resources. Sooner or later people will accept the importance of reform and give their full cooperation, and their actions and reactions are interlinked with other components of the education system. All the events and actions can be logically understood by change theory (Fullan, 2002) and theory of action (Blasé, 1999).

The findings of this study, especially in the qualitative part, demonstrate very well the situation in change theory and theory of action. Principals and teachers are confused about many things: mission, goals, expectations, roles, curriculum content, assessment, teaching methods, school design and classroom management, school management, and school leadership. All these things give rise to new needs and demands among principals, teachers, students, and parents. Thus, administrators and educators in Oman should learn and understand change theory and theory of action so that they can plan and participate positively in a systematic planned change. According to Claudia Weisburd and Tamara Sniad (2005), the use of a theory of change and a theory of action to help formulate questions about how to develop and evaluate professional development for school principals. A theory of change identifies the process or processes through which a certain type of social change is expected. A theory of action maps a specific pathway for that change to occur.

Reforms and planned change cannot happen without overcoming resistance, low motivation, and job dissatisfaction. The culture of praise, recognition, and incentive should be in place to support reforms and change. In this regard, the path-goal theory seems practical to be used by principals and other administrators. The path-goal theory proposes that a leader's behavior affects the satisfaction, motivation and performance of subordinates (House, 1971). Leader behaviors that support and reward teachers for their good performance would enhance their satisfaction and motivation, and consequently teachers would attempt to improve further their performance. Path-goal theory evolves around a causal relation among the leader's behavior, situation, and subordinate's satisfaction, motivation, and performance. Yukl (1998) illustrated the theory to demonstrate this causal relationship, i.e. the effect of the leader's behavior on

subordinate effort and satisfaction, depending upon the intervening and situational variables.

House (1996) revised the path-goal theory and broadened it to include the effects of the leader on subordinates' abilities to perform effectively and the leader's effect on work-unit performance as well as on dyadic relationships. Leadership behaviors have been increased from four to ten: path goal clarifying, achievement oriented, work facilitation, supportive interaction, group oriented decision process, representation, networking, value based, and shared leadership. Therefore, principals and education directors in Oman should learn and apply the path-goal theory in making educational reforms.

As for school principals, they are leaders who must lead professionally the school organizations. School effectiveness and performance greatly depends on principals' knowledge, competencies, and dispositions. This study suggests that theoretically Salazar's (2002) model seems to be relevant and appropriate for explaining the professional development needs of principals. Therefore, the Ministry of Education of Oman should adopt Salazar's model to develop a systematic training scheme for school principals. The fifteen domains of professionalism need to be mastered by school principals in order to make them function as effective instructional and transformational leaders.

Generally, some domains of principal professional development are more significant whilst others are less significant to the development of school principals' abilities. And so, it is somewhat unusual to find all the factors contributing at the same

time but, incredibly, in this research, all the factors were found to be important and crucial in the Omani context and all the factors have to be taken into consideration.

Moreover, this research has contributed to the body of necessary knowledge on principals' professional development in terms of introducing a new theory where the principal's relationship with community is newly considered among the significant factors in improving professional development of principals in Omani context. Furthermore, this research has discovered a strong association of transformation and instructional leadership with the development of principal professional development and educational reform in Oman.

With regard to the domain on effective communication, the two-way communication theory seems pertinent to be used in making reforms. The theory states that a bilateral flow of communication is needed in school leadership and management is more likely to be perceived as trustworthy. One-way communication between the government and community has created a big gap in knowing what the community or society wants and what should be provided for the citizens in terms of development. In addition, the breakdown in communication between Ministry of Education and school principals has widened the gap in terms of providing necessary training for school principals in improving their professionalism and has created some concerns by overlooking their needs.

The present study provides additional evidence with respect to government partnership with the school principals, the government relationship with the community are at benchmark with other countries' educational system. This emphasizes the

government connection with the school principals for identifying their needs, and what types of training are needed. There are a number of important changes which need to be made that the government should follow up the effectiveness of government plans implemented in school with school principals for greater efficiency. The application of this helps in upgrading school principals' skills and equipping them with new skills, as well as exposing them to the world to know the latest issues in their fields and new skills in school professional development such as ICT, digital teaching instruction and online students' learning system.

5.4.2: Policy Implications

In terms of policy implications, the findings and results of this research suggest some new policies such as:

- Complete decentralization of school policy for principals to seek further knowledge in terms of personal development and growth

- Sharing power between the school principals and the Ministry, because school principals are the implementers of the reform and policy and they should be given some powers to rectify some errors or mistakes in their schools without always referring to the Ministry before getting things done.

- Sharing power policy models for professional development from the UK and others should be adopted. This policy must be implemented and adopted because it is very important to improve school principals' knowledge and capacity as well as for school improvement in Muscat.

- Complete involvement in the school decision-making process policy. The school principal must be allowed to participate in decisions because they are the ones handling schools on a day-to-day basis and they know what is better for their schools as well as the needs of their staff and students.

- Freedom and autonomy policy: According to the results of this study, school principals complained that government involvement in everything without any participation or involvement of the school principals in the issues related to the education and school development are detrimental to the educational system. Therefore, school principals need power to be devolved from the top and placed in their hands so they have the freedom to develop and improve their schools.

5.4.3 Management Implications

In terms of management implications, this study has discovered some gaps in the issues related to principals' professional development in Muscat. This research has again proposed a new model related to what school management should be doing or what school management or administration features should look like in terms of:

1- conducting relevant training, workshops and seminars for school principals and teachers

2- providing the latest professional development programs to improve school leadership ability and school performance

3- improving their schools through academic activities, facilities and greater ICT accessibility and usage

4- dynamism of school movement and benchmarking their activities and programs with other schools outside the Sultanate of Oman

5.5   Recommendations for School Improvement in Muscat and Oman

Based on the research findings, the necessary actions to be taken by school principals are:

Upgrading Curriculum

In order to upgrade the basic education curriculum, first, evaluation of the implementation should take place, followed by evaluation of whether the new curriculum reaches its target; evaluation of the new curriculum in Basic Education system takes Oman to next level and prepares them for the future achievement whether it is for short term or long term. In addition, research about people's perceptions about the current curriculum in terms of effectiveness compared to the General Education system should be carried out. In line with the literature (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004, Deal & Peterson, 2000), this should be done with the involvement of the principals i.e. bottom-up as opposed to top-down implementation as has been the case until now.

Upgrading Textbooks

New textbooks for Basic Education system should be assessed and evaluated in terms of cognitive effectiveness and intelligence; the new textbooks should be examined whether they upgrade students' knowledge and performance; there should be evaluation of the new textbooks whether they fit Omani context and culture. Textbooks should be evaluated in terms of language used in the book, whether the pupil understand it, as well as checking the textbooks whether they deal with current issues.

Improving Teaching & learning Methods

To improve teaching and learning methods in Muscat, teaching observation needs to be conducted to test whether the school teachers are using new methods of teaching and its effectiveness as well as testing students to see whether they are productive with the new teaching and learning methods.

Accessibility & usability of ICT

Teachers need to be equipped with new skills and properly updated on the use of latest instruments and technologies. Besides this, there is need to assess their skill in applying technological devices in the classroom. Lastly, teachers need to be evaluated in terms of impact made on students' ICT usage in their studies and assignments.

Summatively, in relation to other challenges facing principal professional development, the following suggestions are made:

1. Relevant training to the needs and challenges of school instructional leaders should be provided by the Ministry

2. Reconceptualization of the school principals' responsibilities in Muscat, Oman is necessary.

3. Workload should be reduced for school principal. Additional personnel should be given to them to handle additional responsibilities because the school principals in Muscat seemed to be overwhelmed with work and they saw themselves as being multi-tasked.

4. School principals' proper job description is necessary and should be void of red tape

5. Job Specification: A job specification is needed for school principals in Oman and they have lodged complaints with the Ministry to specify their roles, duties and responsibilities in their schools.

6. Adequate time should be allotted to think about professional development

7. Relevant exposure to expert practitioners from other countries, cultures, knowledge, systems and development should be given to school principals in Muscat, Oman to make them aware of latest development. This can be made possible through oversea studying.

8. School principals should avoid mentality problem. Mentality changes, modernization and conservativeness is a challenge facing school principals in Muscat where rigidity plays a major role in school principals to accept the modernization, changes and development.

9. Proper and adequate trainings are advocated to meet 21st century expectations & ICT

10. Professionalism skill training is needed for the school principals in Muscat, Oman since it plays a huge role in keeping school principals updated with the current issues and development. In Muscat, the school principals have highlighted a lack of these skills to keep them up-to-date and dynamic.

11. Problem identification skill training is also necessary for the school principals since it helps in solving problems.

12. Knowledge development skill training is necessary for the principals to make them aware about the importance of self-learning and personal growth and advancement.

13. Lifelong learning is advocated. Lifelong learning is important from a sustainability angle and school principals in Muscat lack this skill which comes from training and seminars.

14. Attending conferences, seminars and workshops. Attending workshops, conferences and seminars to upgrade their skills should be given priority.

15. Regular trainings should be given to school principals in Muscat, Oman on instructional and transformational leadership skills

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Given the fact that this research has highlighted all areas of Salazar's model, there is a need for further research to be undertaken to help better understand the complex factors at play. This could take the form of examining each of the factors in turn, taking into account context, as the original research was conducted in the US. A similar research could be duplicated and expanded to other regions in Oman in order to get a wholesome picture of professional development needs of school principals for the entire Oman. This knowledge would serve as a solid database that could be the basis for conducting training programs for all school principals in Oman which suit the diversity of culture and locality.

There is, therefore, a definite need for the Ministry of Education in Oman to reassess the implementation of the new system in terms of effectiveness and outcomes. These findings suggest several courses of action for further improvement in school policy in Muscat. It facilitates policy-makers, management and administrators in Muscat to work together in designing various training workshops to boost school

principal's professionalism, abilities, leadership, creativity, efficiency and quality school service for the teachers, students and community.

Or, similar research could be duplicated and expanded in other countries, and thereby comparisons could be made on professional development needs of school principals among several countries. Factorial analysis and correlations of the domains could be examined to see the patterns of variations and similarities of professional needs and competencies of school principals among countries.

5.7 Conclusion

The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of principals' professional development needs. Nowadays, school principals are expected to work and think globally. They are expected to demonstrate instructional leadership skills in order to lead their schools to the peak of success. School leadership is now more than acquiring personal skills for personal development rather, it is about applying skills and abilities to influence the school positively. This requires school principals to be equipped with transformational leadership skills in order to transform their staff, students and the school itself to a learning environment where all the staff are ready to face the new challenges and students ready to learn beyond books and as well as think creatively.

Taken together, these findings suggest school principals' professional development needs to face societal and global challenges. Competencies based on Salazar model should be listed and prioritized for incremental development of

principals professionalism. This study was done at the right time when the Sultanate of Oman was concerned with the quality of education in Oman.

This research has highlighted current problems and challenges facing professional development in terms of technology integration in Basic education in Oman and a lack of skills of the school principals in utilizing ICT for school as well as instructional and transformational leadership skills. In addition, school principals in Muscat perceived professional development as beneficial and believed increased skills as school leaders will upgrade their knowledge as a lifelong learning mechanism and provided problem-solving techniques and prepared them with competencies in facing global challenges.

The replacement of general education with basic education has instilled many advantages for school, curriculum subjects and courses. However, it also posed some challenges for school to face and for school principals to overcome. The new methods, approaches, curriculum, subjects and syllabuses with the integration of ICT are totally new to the school principals where they need to learn how to adapt to the new system as well as   be trained to ensure the success of the new system.

Moreover, all the school principals in Cycles 1 and 2 in Muscat emphasized the importance of providing training for school principals for further school development. They stressed the importance of creating a principals' professional development needs course where every school principals must participate for professional development skills enhancement and development

Leading and managing schools effectively needs great leadership skills by the school principal. It requires the Omani Ministry of Education and policymakers to create continuous training, seminars and a program of professional development that will improve and upgrade their leadership skills which will help them to perform their responsibilities effectively.

Applying instructional and transformational leadership skills would help school principals to observe and supervise their teachers and this skill will be passed down to the teachers to analyze their students' achievement and follow up their progress. Besides, school principals could be held accountable of advancing their schools and inspiring teachers and students to work hard to achieve the school and educational goals and objective. As a matter of fact, for the school principals to achieve the stipulated mission, frequent professional development training on school leadership and supervision training and programs should take place.

The findings of this study would help to strengthen government relationships with the school principals in Muscat and society which will form a collegial platform to work closely to improve school principals' skills, upgrade teachers' abilities and increase students' performance. It helps in allocating times, training and constant seminars for school principals on professional development where school principals in Muscat will be free to attend this training without being bogged down with work. For the effectiveness of education reform in Oman, school principals' professional development is crucial in assisting principals to promote best practices and moving schools to the next level. In order to lead schools towards improvement, it needs

different types of leadership styles which will establish a culture of professional learning.

In reforming the education system, several theories come into play in understanding the justifications and dynamics for reforms. Among the notable theories are system theory, change theory, and action theory. System theory explains that a system is always in a constant interaction; external forces exert a strong influence on a system and the components inside it, while on the other hand, internal forces react in many ways to the external forces. The two forces gradually change a system. Change theory then explains that a system initiate a change process by identifying the issues, resources and strategic plan to execute the change. Action theory then explains that cross-communication and active participation of the change agents in different departments are essential for attaining the desired outcomes. The political will must be complemented with active learning and activities.