

## TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, SALARY AND PROMOTION IN RELATION TO WHY THEY ARE DECLINING FROM TEACHING PROFESSION IN OMAN

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**Abstract:** This research aims at investigating the reasons behind the decline in the teaching profession in Oman as well as to examine whether the motivational factors may have some effects on the decline in the Omani teaching profession. In addition to this, the research also tries to explore the possibility of whether it is the teacher's professional development or the lack of this that has seriously contributed to the teacher leaving the profession, as well as to pinpoint the main factor that contributes to the decline in the Omani teaching profession. To accomplish this research, samples for this study were taken from a sample population consisting of 200 teachers from various schools in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. Measurement Model from the Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to determine if there were any significant relationships between the salary, promotion, teaching overload, and non-teaching workload with the teacher's professional development that consequently resulted in the decline of the Omani teaching profession. The results of this study show that being promoted due to professional development does not determine an increment in the salary in Oman but in order to obtain a promotion, one needs to have a professional development. The nature of the work itself or the teaching loads may have led to the teachers decline in the teaching profession. In this aspect, salary, promotion and professional development can be gainfully used to reduce the teachers' decline in the teaching profession.

**Key words:** *teachers, decline, profession, education system, schools, Oman*

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### INTRODUCTION

Generally, teaching development leads to learning improvement and as a matter of fact, a government or school management that takes care of the teachers is directly related to building a good learning environment for students and educational productivity. Undoubtedly in this aspect, teaching shapes and sharpens the mind of the people. Thus, teachers can be analogically compared to candles that burn to illuminate the way for educational development for children. Indeed, the development of every nation, country or society is attributed to successful educational systems. Smyth (ed.) (1996, as cited in World Education Report, 1998) has reported that "teachers have crucial roles to play in preparing young people not only to face the future with confidence but also to build it with purpose and responsibility"

(Smyth, ed. 1996, p. 16). The Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2010) had glorifyingly said about teachers on the Teachers' Day: "We feel blessed because of their presence in our lives". In Oman, from the very beginning of his rule, His Majesty plainly highlighted the importance of education for Omanis by his famous statement "let learning be even under the shadow of a tree".

Since ancient times, the Omani society, in general, has always been well known for showing respect and esteem to people, in general, and educated people, in particular. Elders who were responsible for teaching young children in religious and ethical sciences were highly valued. In fact, they were reverently considered as modern prophets for they devoted their lives to enlightening and paving the way for educational development and advancement for the future generations. There were days when learners held the old maxim "whoever teaches me a letter, I shall be his slave" as their emblem.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Apparently, all good systems and methodical procedures that have been successfully accomplished never remain the same. In many countries in the world and in Oman specifically, the teachers tend to be respected in the society, even though rewarded with poor or insufficient salaries, status and reputation. Sooner or later, this system of low reward has led some teachers to leave their professions resulting in the decline of the teachers' population who are indirectly pressured to choose other professions in remarkably significant numbers in the last few years. Besides, teachers no longer believe in the holistic message that they are responsible for delivering the educational enlightenment to the coming generations. Students underestimate their teachers' incalculable educational contributions and show the minimum respect, if any at all. School graduates enroll in colleges of education just for the sake of getting a certificate in higher education with no intention of being teachers after graduation. Additionally, many educated students in Oman, especially, in the Sultan Qaboos University which is the only public university in Oman, have been asked whether they are willing to become teachers after finishing their studies. Unfortunately, their answers are a specifically definite "NO", showing a very negative interest of taking the teaching profession as a career.

However, a research must be conducted to trace the roots of this radical change in the last few years. This trend cannot remain without further indepth discussions; otherwise, the teaching profession will be abandoned, replaced with other professions and the aim of designing a multifaceted education system will be unachievable. It is highly lamented on seeing other countries being upgraded; developing education system and allocating their resources to develop their educational systems, while it is in the contrary in Oman where there is marked deterioration in the teaching interest followed by the decline of teaching professionals in the educational field for lack of respect in a multitude of embarrassing forms. What could be more disastrous for countries that have a huge number of teacher turnovers with low interest and enthusiasm on the students towards teaching? In the light of this pathetic situational circumstance, this research embarks on a journey of investigating the causes and potential effects on teachers leaving the teaching profession.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

1. Is there any significant relationship between the salary, the promotion and the teaching overloads on teachers that have brought the decline in the teaching profession?
2. Is there any significant relationship between the teachers' professional development and the occupational decline? What can be the factor to induce teachers to stay in the teaching profession?
3. What is the factor that leads to teachers leaving the teaching profession in Oman?

### **RESEARCH PURPOSE**

- To investigate the reasons behind the teaching decline in the teaching profession in Oman.
- To examine whether the motivational factors have something to do with teachers leaving the teaching profession in Oman.
- To study whether the teacher's professional development or lack of professional development can lead to some teachers leaving the teaching profession.
- To explore the main factor that affects the teachers' desire to leave the teaching profession in Oman.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Teaching profession is one of the most important necessities in the present day community. Unfortunately nowadays, no one concedes the significance of this field, even the teachers themselves. As it was mentioned earlier, there are many factors that contribute to the lack of teaching development, and in view of this untenable phenomenon, this study has vehemently emphasized on the main role of the teaching profession. To illustrate this salient point, the teaching profession is to be seriously considered as the building block that contributes to generate other professions as well as to build the individuals' intellectual identity. Based on these conceptual premises, this paper seeks to explore some suggestions that may encourage to improve and enhance the teaching conditions in Oman. Since there are few researchers devoted to this issue in the Arab countries, generally, and Oman specifically, this study has produced the evidence on the importance of teaching profession and how the government can resolve the problem on the increasing number of teachers leaving the teaching profession, particularly, in Oman. Furthermore, this study illustrates some statistical analyses using the advanced 'Measurement Model from Structural Equation Model' that may contribute to the crucial investigation on the effects of professional development, salary, promotion and their association with the teachers abandoning the teaching profession. This paper reveals some findings that might be positively connected or negatively detached with the issue under study. What is important, these findings will be considered as a source of highly related educational parameters that might help the government to effectively generate some solutions related to this issue.

### **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study has some limitations:

#### Sample

The sample cannot be used to draw a large conclusion or generalization. Besides, the sample was not large enough as there were some teachers that were not involved in this research. Moreover, it targeted only some Muscat schools and did not include others. The female samples also seemed to be higher than the male samples which could be favourably justified as the female teachers seemed to be more approachable and friendly to deal with. Besides, female teachers tended to be in a large number as compared to the male teachers.

#### Methods

This research is a survey research where questionnaires were distributed to the teachers. It was limited in its scope in the sense that it did not use the qualitative methods, such as, interviewing the teachers and observing their occupational attitudes.

### Factors

It is limited in the in-depth study by using or testing few factors of Herzberg's sixteen factors of job satisfaction.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### ***Education in Oman in the Past***

We can trace the educational history in Oman as we perceive it today, from instructions handed down through teachers in schools, to 50 or 60 years ago. Education was primitive and modest at that time. The Ministry of Education (2006, in Al Kharousi, B. & Atewh, B. nd.) stated that when his Majesty became the ruler in 1970, there were "only 3 schools with 30 teachers educating 909 students. Nearly 66% of Omani adults were illiterate" (p.25). However, from the first day of his rule, His Majesty recognized that the educational system in Oman had to be developed urgently. Since then, the educational system has witnessed a radical shift from 3 schools and 30 teachers to 1,053 schools and 39,993 teachers in 2006. Similarly, "student numbers increased from 909 in 1970 to 563,602 by 2007" (Ministry of Education, 2008, in Al Kharousi, B. & Atewh, B. nd.).

At that time, there were only a few qualified Omani teachers; thus, the government had to recruit teachers from other countries, such as, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Al-Hinai (2007) mentions that "with only a few indigenous teachers, the MOE had to depend on recruitments from other countries to teach young Omanis." However, the number of Omani teachers began to increase rapidly as there were six regional colleges that trained teachers in Oman, in addition to the College of Education in the Sultan Qaboos University which were established during the years from 1985 to 1987.

### ***Factors that have led to the decline in teachers' Status***

There are many factors that have led to the concept of teaching as an unattractive career recently. Three of these factors are highlighted here:

- Teaching is an overwhelmingly demanding career:

There are a great number of people who claim that teaching has no significant differences from other careers. Most probably those people who think according to their whim and fancy, have not been through the experience of teaching in a class of 30 or 40 pupils. On the other hand, people who have been through the experience of teaching have an entirely different view, specifically because teaching, unlike many occupations, requires teachers to be extremely patient and fully aware of how to deal with pupils of different abilities and different behavioral trends with different family backgrounds and different irritating moods. One example is lucidly mentioned by the poet TS Eliot who says:

"I have never worked in a coal mine, or a uranium mine, or in a herring trawler; but I know from experience that working in a bank from 9.15 to 5.30, and once in four weeks the whole of Saturday, with two weeks' holiday a year, was a rest cure compared to teaching in a school. (Eliot 1950)". (As cited in Kyriacou, 1998, p.2).

In Oman, a study conducted by Saleem Al-Habsi (2007) has confirmed that Omani teachers experience emotional stress. To quote the researcher's exact words:

The general view among Omanis is that teaching is a comfortably safe job, but this is not altogether the view of the respondents. While teachers generally responded positively when asked if they feel safe in teaching, they also said they experienced stress, depression and anger. (p. 240).

- Teachers are not getting enough Professional Development

Another drawback of being a teacher in Oman is that teachers lack the opportunities for professional development. To indicate one of the consequences of the random applications of the new reforms in the educational system in Oman, Al-Habsi states that "In Oman, the number of changes being introduced

simultaneously and the speed with which they have been implemented has increased the workload in schools." (p. 239).

Professional development by continuous workshops and courses is essential for teachers to be kept updated with the new trends in the methods of teaching and the educational system in general. Some of these trends, as Al-Hinai (2007) states, are: "teachers' roles that have become more complex: the increased workloads and complexity, unpredictability and uncertainty that teachers have to cope with" and the need to "deal with pupils of different needs, behavior and backgrounds" (Day, 1997, p. 42). For these reasons and more, Al-Hinai calls for an ongoing professional development for Omani teachers. He says straightforwardly: "for teachers to become experts in education, they require continuing professional development" (p. 43).

Yael Duthilleul (2004) believes that professional development can be an effective motivation for teachers. She reports that: "there are few incentives for teachers to improve their practice and develop as professionals". Therefore, she emphasizes that: "Teachers want policies that promote professionalism, pedagogical autonomy, provide more help and less control from local and central authorities, as well as opportunities for career development" (p. 7, par. 7).

- Teachers' salaries

Undoubtedly, when choosing life careers, people consider occupations that can guarantee a secure financial resource. Accordingly, if teaching is to regain and maintain its attractiveness, teachers' salaries have to be considerably higher. A report by the United Nations (1966) indicates how teachers' salary plays an essential role when classifying teaching as a career. It reports that "Amongst the various factors which affect the status of teachers, particular importance should be attached to salary" (p. 11). Mason (2004) shares a similar view in emphasizing the connection between the teachers' salaries and the teaching position; he mentions that "making the salaries of teachers attractive and comparable to other professions will afford the teaching profession a higher status." (p.6). The Directorate for Education (May, 2005) went even further in making teaching a competitive career by stating the need to:

Develop special programmes and incentives to attract subject specialist teachers, e.g. fee waivers, scholarships and forgivable loans to attract people into teaching and salary bonuses and recognition of work experience for qualified teachers in subjects of short supply.

Contrariwise, the World International Report (1998) published by the UNESCO notifies that "other characteristics too are relevant, notably the fact that in most countries a majority of teachers work in the public sector where they normally are not highly paid in comparison with persons in other occupations with similar or less training, and long tenure in the job usually does not bring very large increases in salary" (p.22). In Oman, in particular, according to a research conducted by Saleem Al-Habsi (2007), teachers are not satisfied with the salaries they are paid. The scholar states that "around half of the teachers perceived monthly salaries as low." (p. 235).

There is no doubt that the salaries teachers receive are an effective factor that encourages teachers to continue or abandon teaching. Many studies have been conducted in this regard and it seems that teachers are not satisfied with their salaries. For instance, Parkay and Hardcastle (1990) believe that teachers' salaries are "still modest and do not compensate teachers' work" (p. 5). Another study that took place in Tanzania showed that about 45.1% of the teachers thought about quitting their teaching career because their salaries do not cover their life expenses (Towse, Kent, Osakis & Kirua, 2002, p. 44).

The workplace conditions of teachers are another issue that leads teachers to discontinue their careers. Macdonald, (1999) mentioned eloquently that in "countries like Yemen, Ghana, Albania, teachers leave their countries to get a job with better conditions". To emphasize the same point, Parkay and Hardcastle (1990) reported that apparently the hours teachers worked seemed pleasing and attainable but genuinely they were far more burdensome than met the eyes. Another problematic point that forced a teacher to abandon teaching under workplace conditions was the support from the administration. For example, according to a study conducted to investigate the resignation of 8 American teachers after a short time of joining the teaching career, whereupon the reason mentioned by all 8 teachers was that the principals of the schools overwhelmed them with workloads and criticized them constantly (Gonzales, Brown & Slate, 2008, p. 6).

- Why research on the teachers' status is of importance

It is undeniable that teachers hold a great responsibility for educating young children who will one day contribute to the development of nations and countries in the future. Therefore, if education is to be productive and effective, it is crucial that the Sultanate must have competent, satisfied and motivated teachers. This can only be achieved by responding to the teachers' needs and problems.

Despite the fact that teachers comprise the most important factor in the success of the educational system in any country, their status is miserably declining. This is a serious issue that concerns the educational system in the world, in general, and Oman, in particular. In this regard, Mousavi (2007) reported: "teachers have always been the centre of attention in the classroom, yet ironically their concerns and needs have not always been addressed in the same way" (p. 33). Similarly to Mousavi, Duthilleul wondered about the juxtaposition of "the important role education plays in children's development and growth, which is increasingly and widely recognized, and the declining status of teachers."

Certainly, the intention behind this discussion is not to demoralize prospective teachers, thus causing unmotivated teachers to be in charge of our children's education. For this reason, there is an urgent call for studies and researches to be conducted to investigate the factors that have led to this decline in the teachers' rank and numbers. Such studies contribute to shedding some light on the issue and may provide fruitful suggestions to solve the problem.

### METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

The samples of this study consisted of teachers from various schools in Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman and 200 teachers participated in this study. The Path Analysis from the Structural Equation Model (SEM) was performed to determine the direct-effect of exogenous variables (salary, promotion, and teaching overload and professional development) on endogenous variable (Teaching declining from teaching profession).

#### *Instruments*

In terms of instrument, this study had used questionnaires in collecting data. The instrument was a self-developed instrument and a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the instrument used.

### FINDINGS

#### Demographic Data

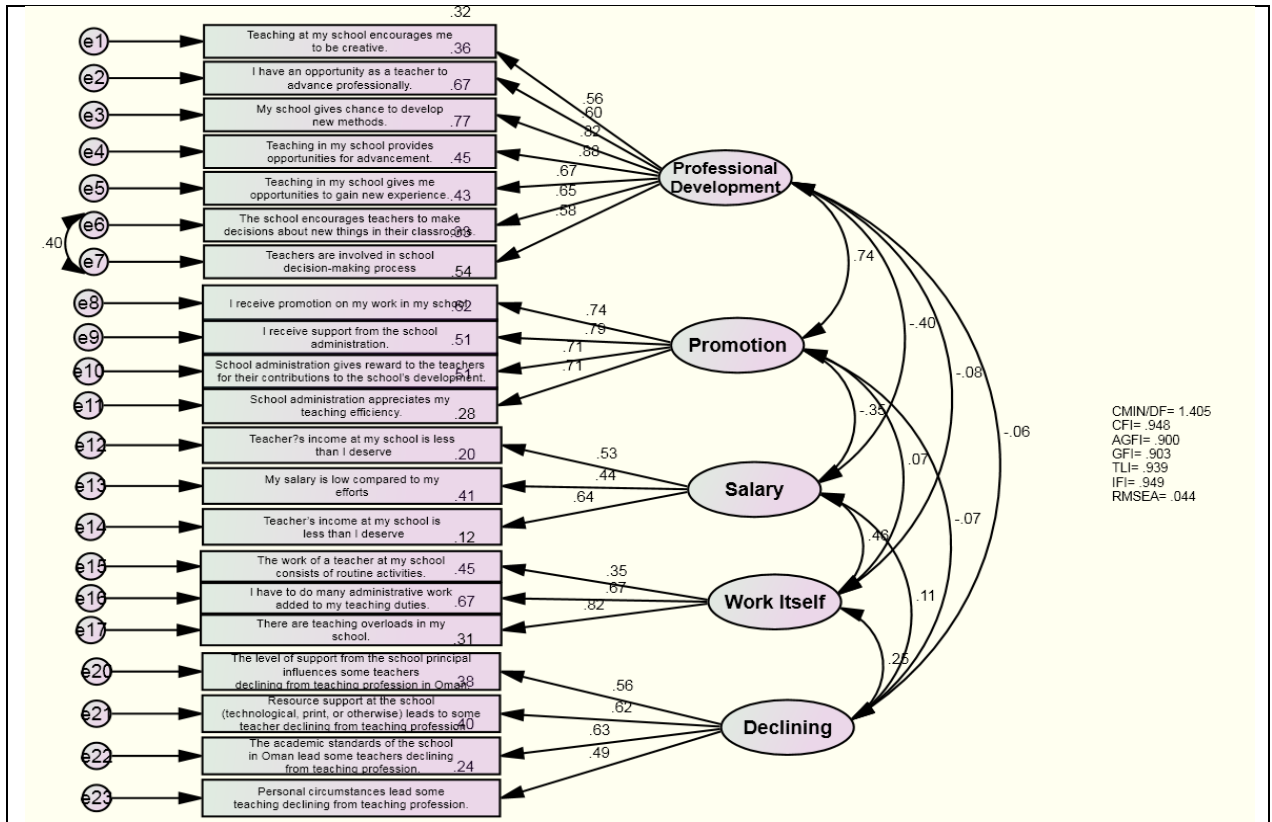
**Table 1:** Demographic Data of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	145	67.4
Female	70	32.6
<b>Qualification</b>		
Degree	199	92.6
Master	16	7.4
Total	215	100.0

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to gender and their qualifications. According to gender, the results showed that 67.4% (n=145) of the participants were male teachers while 32.6%

(n=70) were female teachers and the total was (n=215) teachers who participated in this research. In terms of qualification, 92.6% (n=199) of the teachers were Degree holders while only 7.4% (n=16) were Masters Holders.

**Measurement Model**



**Figure 1:** Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Professional Development, Promotion, Salary Work-itself (teaching and Teachers declining).

**Table 2:** Goodness-of-fit Indicators for Professional Development, Promotion, Salary Work-itself (teaching and Teachers declining) (n=215)

Cmin/df	$\chi^2$	df	AGFI	GFI	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
1.405	250.09	178	0.900	0.903	0.948	0.939	0.949	0.044

To assess the fit of the measurement model, the analysis relied on a number of descriptive fit indices as it was shown in Table1 which provided nine fit indices for Professional Development, Promotion, Salary Work-itself and Teachers declining. The Comparative Fit Index of Bentler (CFI) = 0.948, Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index (AGFI) = 0.900, Goodness-of-fit Index (GFI) = 0.903, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.939, and the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.949. The chi-square goodness of fit test statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) had a value of = 250.09 which, with 178 degrees of freedom, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) below 0.05 indicated that the model fitted the data and all these indices supported the model on the Professional Development, Promotion, Salary Work-itself and Teachers declining.

## INTERPRETATION

Surprisingly, it appears that there is no direct relationship between the professional development and the teachers leaving their teaching career. Many teachers agree with the statement that says "my school gives chance to develop new methods." Regardless of all the workshops and courses in using the technology and implementing new theories provided by the Ministry of Education, teachers still do not put values in developing their skills and knowledge because this can be interpreted as a fact that teachers find it difficult to put these valuable training into practice. To mention a glaring example, the Ministry of Education offers workshops in using a technology in their teaching; however, there are no technological devices available in the classrooms. Another tangible fact is that teachers are given some new theories in teaching and at the same time the curriculum does not help to implement these theories and methods which incidentally portray the educational system as an exercise in futility.

Another shocking finding is that the salaries teachers are getting is not the main factor for teachers discontinuing their profession. For example, for the statement that says "I am satisfied with my salary", only a few teachers responded negatively. This can be justified by the recent trends that occurred in the Sultanate in which salaries in general and teachers' salaries in particular had been increased. The increase is a radical one which means that salaries have been increased in a percentage of over 60%. Nevertheless, even retirement payment has been raised so that a teacher will get more than 70% percent of his/her salary after they retire. Teachers did not dream of these changes before. Accordingly, the satisfaction of the teachers on their salaries can be explained by considering the developments that happened lately.

Teachers do not have high expectations that if they develop professionally they will be promoted. This is what the results have shown. In our questionnaires there were teachers who were holding master degrees and they had not been promoted. This fact leaves the teachers unmotivated to go for any professional development. They prefer not to waste their time and money and at the same time these extra qualifications will not add anything to their careers except some words in papers. In that case, they are equal with those who are holding bachelor degrees which give the impression to the potential teachers as a lop-sided salary scheme not worth venturing into.

In fact, teachers believe that even if they are promoted, their salaries will not be increased. For example, a teacher will be promoted to be a supervisor which means that his salary will be decreased because the teaching promotion will be cut down from him/her salary. Moreover, promotion will mean more effort and more work and sad to say, this makes teachers unwilling to be promoted in terms of position only without the benefit of monetary gains.

In brief, teachers are deserting their profession because of opposite consequences in their professional developments and promotions. Firstly, it is true that teachers are offered professional development but they are not given the chance to apply it in their teaching exercise. Therefore, they see professional development as useless and difficult to achieve in the normal classroom atmosphere. Secondly, promotion means more work and responsibility for the teachers and it is not accompanied with salary increment. In fact, sometimes promotion means less salary but more responsibilities. That is why teachers avoid any promotions.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study show the teachers' professional development as a leading factor to reduce the number of teachers quitting the teaching profession. Therefore, the results have supported Al-Hinai results calling for an ongoing professional development for Omani teachers and accordingly support Al-Hinai's request of continuous professional development for teachers to become experts in the educational sphere. For teaching loads, the present research result seems to support Al-Hinai's (2007) findings where teachers' roles have become more complex with additional workloads which increase the teachers' complexity and making it harder for teachers to cope with.

In terms of the teachers' professional development, the present research has discovered a significant negative relationship between the professional development and teachers declining from the teaching profession. This result has supported Yael Duthilleul's (2004) finding where professional development becomes an effective motive for teachers while it does not support her reports on using incentives for teachers to improve their practice to develop into professionals.

In the Omani current context, teachers seem not to complain more on their salaries because the latest teachers' demonstration in Oman helps them in getting their salaries increased. Therefore, the result of the present research does not support Saleem Al-Habsi's (2007) research findings where he discovered the teachers' salaries in Oman were the major teachers' dissatisfaction. But it supported Mason's result (2004) where the findings found a relationship between the teachers' salaries and the teaching jobs. He proclaimed that upgrading the teachers' salaries to be at par with other professions could enhance the teaching professional status

### **IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY**

On the whole, this study stresses the idea of not only promoting but also enhancing the teaching profession, and concurrently, there are various suggestions that may create a good image in the educational field while this study also views the need to enhance the professional development of the community as being crucially important, thus, it aims to urge the Ministry of Education to take an immediate action towards the issue of teachers' declining number in the educational field. For instance, this paper calls for the importance of the teaching role in the society because it is the only way to appropriately inculcate the spirit of learning in the minds of students which ultimately will project the peoples' identities and culture in the truest sense of the words. Generally, the Ministry of Education helps a great deal in attracting individuals to work in the teaching field through a systematic development of the teaching profession as the main emphasis of the ministry's operation in developing the educational system in Oman. Teachers should be encouraged to participate in the school's educational system which applies all the methods recommended therein without being completely controlled by the administrators.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is undeniable that teaching was once considered to be one of the most honorable and prestigious careers in Oman, thus, every school graduate student wanted to be a teacher. Similarly, teachers were highly respected not only by their students but also by the entire society. They were regarded as sources of knowledge and, thus, their judgments on social matters were met with great appreciation and approval. Ironically, however, all of these great and admirable attributes to teaching and teachers have radically shifted within a few years. The teaching career has lost many of its glorifying attributes and advantages to attract school graduates to join colleges of education and be teachers. Out of a sample of 50 students who enrolled in the College of Education in SQU, only four students had given their first priority to the College of Education. They expressed their intention that they joined this college merely to attain higher education rather than missed the only chance of getting it. In other words, they considered the College of Education as a means rather than a need or a career.

As a result of the foregoing discussions, this research has investigated the factors that might have led to the decline in status of teachers and teaching as a career. Three assumptions had been put forward and accordingly examined on the probability of being responsible for such a trend, which were theoretically assumed due to salaries, lack of professional development and overwhelming work duties. The research used two tools in order to attain data: relevantly prepared questionnaires distributed to 150 samples and an interview was held with two professors from the College of Education. The research has found the extent to which each of the assumptions mentioned above contributes to this decline. In addition, the research has also extracted some potential reasons for the teachers' and teaching profession's decline apart from the three assumptions. The research reveals that salaries and professional development can

hardly be the compelling reasons behind the teachers and the teaching declining status. Conversely, this research shows that people develop negative attitudes towards teaching because it is a highly demanding career. Moreover, both parents and the Ministry of Education are part and parcel of the educational system and they should collectively ensure that teaching career regains its rightful position in the society and the ministry should considerably decrease the pressure put on teachers by cooperating with the teachers in matters of educational enhancement.

Regardless of the efforts devoted to investigate the reasons and the recommendations suggested, this research calls for further studies on the decline of the teaching career and the holistic teachers' status in Oman, while the assumptions may be different or similar to the grievances on the teachers' salaries, teachers' lack of professional development and a demanding career, it is still in the interest of the teachers as well as the public that more investigations will have to be initiated in order to reveal new tangible facts as the tenuous situation has recently displayed a worsening trend with implications that might lead to the educational system in Oman to be ineffective as well as self destructive in the near future if no concrete mitigatory measures are vehemently mobilized and the core problem to be amicably resolved as well.

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