

Evaluation of Public Policy Implementation: an Investigation into the National Training Programme at the Ministry of Manpower in the Sultanate of Oman

Ali Saif Al Harthy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Liverpool John Moores University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

June 2017

PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THIS WORK

Al-Harthy A, Lawless A. 2016. Insider and outsider collaboration: questioning realities and revealing mirages - the case of the National Training Programme in Oman Joint UFHRD/AHRD European Conference

Al-Harthy A, Lawless A. 2015. Challenges involved in evaluating the national training programme at the Ministry of Oman: an insider perspective Joint UFHRD/AHRD European Conference

DECLARATION

I, Ali Saif Al Harthy, do hereby certify for this thesis that:

- (a) Except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of myself alone.
- (b) The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award.
- (c) The content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research.
- (d) That any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

.....

Ali Saif Al Harthy

Abstract

This study analyses the macro and micro levels of policy implementation in Oman, and draws together the worlds of policy-makers and 'street-level bureaucrats'. It evaluates the implementation policy of the National Training Programme, along with its associated concepts, and investigates the obstacles encountered in the implementation. In addition, the study explores the perceptions of how barriers create obstacles to the implementation process in Oman.

In Oman, National Human Resource Development (NHRD) is used to re-engineer many of the private sector jobs that are currently occupied by expatriates, in the hope that greater social and economic prosperity among the indigenous population will occur. To ensure the achievement of this goal, the Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Manpower introduced the National Training Programme that seeks to develop the skills of Omani job-seekers, and which supports the Omanisation policy, by placing workers in the private sector. Since its introduction in 2003, the National Training Programme has attracted significant Government investment, yet the empirical understanding of the implementation process remains limited.

Conceptually, the study is primarily based on public policy implementation theory, along with elements of evaluation and stakeholder theory. Empirically, the study is informed by the lived experience and views of representatives of the four stakeholder groups involved in implementing the policy, namely, the Ministry of Manpower, employers, training providers, and trainees. Conducted through insider research, the experience of 36 informants was gathered through semi-structured interviews, with the findings being analysed thematically using template analysis.

This research addresses conflicting policy implementation theories, including 'top-down' implementation and policy network theory. Thus, in analysing the factors and barriers associated with policy implementation, the study makes a valuable contribution to public policy implementation theory. The study also showcases the culture of public policy implementation and

how the inherent cultural challenges can impede national Human Resource Development. It was noted that the perceptions of the various stakeholders differ and that whilst the manpower planning, clarity and implementation structure functions are influential factors in the policy implementation, the mix of the trainees' motives to join the private sector, and employers' indifferent cooperation, emerged as challenging barriers to policy implementation.

Key contributions to theoretical knowledge are made through extending the elements of public policy implementation theory, stakeholder theory and, to a lesser extent, elements of national Human Resource Development in an emerging economy – using Oman as case context. Furthermore, as a management tool, this study provides a map to facilitating Omanisation and promoting national skills development which is the aim of the government's NTP agenda. The need for a more structured implementation process to operationalise the training is emphasised. In addition, it contributes to effective networking of various stakeholders of NTP to achieve a more detailed and well informed practice of skills development across the private sector.

Prior to this study, the evaluation element of the NTP in Oman was broadly absent. Based on this study therefore, future government policies relating to Omanisation would take into account the process of evaluating the outcomes of skill development programmes.

Acknowledgment and Dedication

All praise be to Allah, The Merciful and The Compassionate, who allowed me endure this journey in health and with patience, and who has guided me to the accomplishment of this thesis.

I am in debt to many people who have supported me in accomplishing this thesis. First of all, there are simply no words to truly articulate my deep gratitude for my Director of Study, Dr Aileen Lawless, for her tremendous support, courage, kindness and wisdom that enlightened me during this journey. Without her constructive comments, motivation and generous support, I would not have been able to complete this thesis. She was always available when I needed advice or faced any difficulties, encouraged me to network within the HRD community and introduced me to various scholars, from whom I gained confidence and self-esteem. Her moral and professional support will last forever in my memory.

My thanks are also offered to Dr Yusra Mouzughhi, with whom I started this journey, for her inspirational guidance, precious advice and encouragement, and who waited for the completion of this thesis. Thanks too are extended to Dr Mina Beigi for her invaluable comments, sharing of research expertise and energetic support. Finally to, Dr Ian Lovegrove for his constructive criticism and insightful comments. I will always have every respect for all of you.

This thesis is dedicated to the memories of my parents for their endless love, support and encouragement. My lovely mother who dreams to call me a Doctor and my father who gave me everything he could, his words are always a source of inspiration and motivation. I am so proud to be your son. May Allah bless them and forgive them, your Memories Will Ever Be with Me. I would like to thank my brothers and sisters for their priceless support and encouragement. Your support has made me a stronger person and I will forever be grateful.

My appreciation also extends to the Ministry of Manpower for providing me with the opportunity to pursue a higher education research degree and assisting me with the required data to make this study possible. I would not have been able to progress my education without this support.

Finally, this work is dedicated to my affectionate wife and my adored Maya and Shihab for everything, I do not have any words to express my appreciation for your patient, infinite support, and the incredible moments that made me stronger and even more determined to complete this thesis. My love you all.

Table of Contents

PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THIS WORK	ii
DECLARATION	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgment and Dedication.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Abbreviations.....	xiii
List of Tables.....	xiv
Table of Figures	xv
Chapter One: Introduction	16
Introduction	16
1.1 The Socio-Economy of Oman.....	17
1.2 Omanisation, Training, and the Labour Market – Research Context	20
1.3 Training Legislation and Policies	24
<i>Bylaw Relating to the Private Training Institutions</i>	24
<i>Ministry of Manpower Evaluation Form</i>	25
<i>The Tripartite Training Contract</i>	26
1.3.1 Stakeholders	31
<i>The Ministry of Manpower</i>	31
<i>Employers</i>	31
<i>Training Providers</i>	32
<i>Trainees</i>	32
1.4 Statement of the Problem	33
1.5 Aim and Research Questions	34
1.6 Significance and Research Contribution.....	34
1.7 Insider Research	35
1.8 Outline Structure.....	37
Summary	37
Chapter Two: Literature Review	39
Introduction	39
2.1 Policy Implementation	39
<i>Public Policy</i>	39
<i>Policy Implementation Overview</i>	41

<i>Theoretical Development</i>	42
<i>Policy Network</i>	52
<i>Public–Private Policy Partnership</i>	56
2.2 National Human Resource Development	58
<i>Emergence of NHRD</i>	59
<i>Objectives of NHRD</i>	59
<i>Approaches to NHRD</i>	62
<i>National and Vocational Training in the Arab Countries</i>	65
2.3 Factors Affecting NHRD Policy Implementation	66
<i>Factors Relating to Public Policy Implementation</i>	66
<i>Factors Related to NHRD</i>	70
<i>Factors Related to NHRD in the Arab Context</i>	73
2.4 Evaluation.....	74
<i>Origin and Theoretical Perspectives of Evaluation</i>	74
<i>Purpose and Types of Evaluation</i>	77
<i>Stakeholder Evaluation</i>	79
<i>Challenges in Evaluation: National Training Evaluation</i>	82
2.5 Conceptual Framework	84
Summary	86
Chapter Three: Methodology	88
Introduction	88
3.1 Research Philosophy	88
<i>Ontology</i>	91
<i>Epistemology</i>	92
3.2 Methodological Approach: an Insider Case Study	94
3.3 Methods and Techniques.....	100
<i>Sampling</i>	101
<i>Data Collection – Choice of Method</i>	104
<i>Data Collection Activity</i>	107
<i>Ministry of Manpower</i>	108
<i>Employers</i>	111

<i>Trainees</i>	111
<i>Training Providers</i>	112
<i>Data Analysis</i>	113
<i>Template Analysis</i>	116
3.5 Research Quality	123
<i>Credibility</i>	128
<i>Dependability</i>	129
<i>Confirmability</i>	129
<i>Fairness</i>	130
3.6 Ethical Considerations	131
Summary	132
Chapter Four: Findings – Ministry of Manpower	133
Overview	133
4.1 Ministry of Manpower Informants	134
4.1.1 Clarity of the Policy	136
4.1.2 Manpower Planning	139
4.1.3 Programme Design	142
4.1.4 Barriers to Implementation	148
Summary	152
Chapter Five: Findings – Employers	154
Overview	154
5.1 Employers Informants	155
5.1.1 Implementation Structure	156
5.1.2 Skills Supply and Demand	159
5.1.3 Quality of Training	161
5.1.4 Barriers to Implementation	167
Summary	170
Chapter Six: Findings – Trainees	172
Overview	172
6.1 Trainee Informants	172
6.1.1. The Training Process	174

6.1.2	Motives to join NTP	176
6.1.3	Barriers to Implementation	179
	Summary	181
	Chapter Seven: Findings – Training Provider	182
	Overview	182
7.1	Training Provider Informants	183
7.1.1	Training Goals.....	183
7.1.2	Training Procedures.....	185
7.1.3	Barriers to Implementation	188
	Summary	191
	Chapter Eight: Discussion	194
	Introduction	194
8.1	Factors that Influence the NTP Policy Implementation – The perception	195
8.1.1	Key Factors Associated with the Ministry of Manpower	195
	<i>Clarity of the Policy</i>	195
	<i>Manpower Planning</i>	198
	<i>Programme Design</i>	201
8.1.2	Key Factors Associated with Employers	205
	<i>Implementation Structure</i>	205
	<i>Skills supply and Demand</i>	207
	<i>Quality of Training</i>	211
8.1.3	Key Factors Associated with Trainees	215
	<i>Training Process</i>	215
	<i>Motives to join NTP</i>	218
8.1.4	Key Factors Associated with Training Providers	221
	<i>Training Goals</i>	221
	<i>Training Procedures</i>	223
8.2	Barriers to NTP Implementation	228
	<i>Key Barriers – Ministry of Manpower</i>	228
	<i>Key Barriers – Employers</i>	231
	<i>Key Barriers – Trainees</i>	234

<i>Key Barriers – Training Providers</i>	237
Summary	240
Chapter Nine: Conclusion	242
Introduction	242
9.1 Key Areas Associated with the Implementation	242
<i>Ministry planning and evaluation</i>	242
<i>Training Content</i>	244
<i>Employer Preference for Expatriate Workers</i>	245
<i>Trainee Attitudes</i>	245
9.2 Public Policy Implementation	247
9.3 Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge	250
9.4 Contribution to the Practice Agenda	251
9.5 Limitations	255
9.6 Implications for Further Research	257
<i>Concluding Comments</i>	257
Bibliography	260
APPENDICES	292
Appendix (I)	292
Appendix (II)	293
Appendix (III)	296
Appendix (IV)	298
Appendix (V)	299
Appendix (VI)	300
Appendix (VII)	301
Appendix (VIII)	303

List of Abbreviations

E	Employer
HEAC	Higher Education Admission Centre
HRD	Human Resource Development
MoM	Ministry of Manpower
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NHRD	National Human Resource Development
NTP	National Training Programme
T	Trainee
TP	Training Provider

List of Tables

Table 1. 1 Employment in the Private Sector.....	23
Table 1. 2 NTP Statistics for the Period (2009-2012).....	30
Table 2. 1 Policy Implementation Stages.....	42
Table 2. 2 Comparison of Top-down and Bottom-up Theories	47
Table 2. 3 Matrix of Ambiguity–Conflict.....	50
Table 2.4 Differences between Participatory and Conventional Evaluation	80
Table 2. 5 Factors Inhibiting Effective Workplace Learning Evaluation.....	83
Table 3.1: Philosophical Underpinnings for Research	90
Table 3.2 Case Studies - Five Misunderstandings.....	98
Table 3.3 Sources of data used in analysis of NTP implementation.	100
Table 3.4 Qualitative Data Analysis: content versus grounded methods ..	114
Table 3.5 NTP Initial Templates and Sub Codes from the four stakeholder groups.....	118
Table 3.6 NTP Final Templates	120
Table 3.7 Parallel Quality Criteria	123
Table 4. 1 Background of MoM Informants	134
Table 4.2 Factors and Barriers of Implementation – the Ministry.....	153
Table 5. 1 Background of Employer Informants	155
Table 5.2 Factors and Barriers of Implementation – Employers	171
Table 6. 1 Background to Trainees Informants	173
Table 6.2 Factors and Barriers of Implementation – the Trainees	181
Table 7. 1 Background of Training Provider Informants.....	183
Table 7.2 Factors and Barriers of Implementation – the Training Providers	192
Table 7.3 Overall Key Barriers to NTP Implementation – Four Stakeholder Groups.....	192

Table of Figures

Figure 1. 1 NTP Process Involving the Key Stakeholder Groups.....	28
Figure 4. 1 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation in Oman as Perceived by the Four Stakeholder Groups.....	134
Figure 4. 2 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation – MoM Participants	135
Figure 4. 3 The MoM Perception of the Clarity of NTP Objectives.....	136
Figure 4. 4 Barriers to NTP Implementation as Perceived by MoM Informants.....	148
Figure 5. 1 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation – Employers	155
Figure 5. 2 Clarity of Objectives as perceived by Employer Informants	157
Figure 6. 1 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation – Trainees	173
Figure 6. 2 Trainees’ Motives for Joining the NTP	177
Figure 7. 1 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation – Training Providers	182
Figure 8. 1 Factors associated with implementation	227
Figure 8. 2 Barriers impeding NTP implementation	240

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

National Human Resource Development (NHRD) has emerged in recent decades as a strategic priority in many countries (McClean et al., 2012). The contemporary requirements of globalisation – rapid technological advancements, the internationalisation of labour, and market competition – are amongst various other motives for national investment in human resource development (HRD) (Stewart et al., 2013). Indeed,

[t]he governments of many developing countries believe that a large and successful vocational education sector is an important and necessary element in their development strategies as it equips citizens with the skills needed by industry, and at the same time helps reduce unemployment. (Wilkins, 2002a:5).

The Sultanate of Oman exemplifies the global trend in developing its human resource, with the total budget allocated for education and training being 13% of the total national expenditure (MoF, 2016). The percentage of allocation has led to the rise of individual improvements, such as an increase in the number of schools in Oman, which exceeded 1,000 in 2015 (NCSI, 2016), compared with 1970 when only three schools existed. Another improvement is the Government's sponsorship of local and overseas scholarships, with around 32,000 students having passed the General Education Diploma in 2015, coupled with 30,421 such scholarships being awarded (HEAC, 2016). These investments reflect Oman's advancement in NHRD, which were acknowledged in a United Nations Development Programme publication: The Human Development Report (UNDP, 2015).

Oman's Government is clear in its belief that these efforts will result in positive outcomes, represented by educated and skilled human resource that are deemed necessary to achieve the range of national development

goals. Specifically, these include developing the knowledge and skills of the indigenous population and creating job opportunities for the increased numbers of job seekers, thereby reducing the nation's dependency on expatriate labour. Such goals are embedded within the Sultanate's overall economic plan: Vision 2020 and its Omanisation policy. The NTP, overseen by the Ministry of Manpower (MoM), is one of the programmes that is aimed at achieving these goals.

Since its commencement fourteen years ago, the NTP has provided training to more than 36,000 individuals in areas as diverse as commerce, industry, and craftwork. However, whilst this quantitative data appears impressive, an analysis of the policy constructs remains elusive. This gap presents an opportunity to advance our understanding of the effectiveness of the programme, and potentially to identify limitations in its implementation.

1.1 The Socio-Economy of Oman

Oman is a middle-income monarchy located on the south-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, and is the third largest country in the Arabian Peninsula after Saudi Arabia and Yemen (Dunn and Mondal, 2011). Geographically, the country shares borders with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen (Information, 2014). Oman controls the Strait of Hormuz to the north, which provides the nation with a strategic global position, since besides the 35% of the Gulf's petroleum passing through the bottleneck, so does all the country's other trade (Selway, 1997).

Over the past decade, Oman's resident population has doubled, and now exceeds 4 million. Omani citizens constitute 55.8% of the population, with expatriates comprising 44.2%. The population of Oman is estimated to be growing at an average annual rate of between 2.5% and 3% (Oman, 2014). There are 225,266 people working in the public sector, excluding the military and other security sectors, of which Omanis constitute 83% of all the employees in this sector. However, the picture is different in the private sector, where expatriates are in the majority. Indeed, private sector expatriates number 1,249,768, whereas Omanis account for only 186,112

(Insurance, 2014). The Omani population has been categorised under three groups: the employed, job seekers, and outside the workforce (Azamn, 2014). Azamn's report determined that 55% of the total population in Oman are outside the workforce, of which 17% are unwilling to work, and 28% are younger than 15 years. It also revealed that 3 million people are of working age, of which 45% are Omanis. Additionally, Oman is a young nation, with 52% of workforce being between 15 and 29 years of age.

In respect of education, one in four Omanis holds a National Diploma, whilst one in three expatriates have no qualifications. The growth rate of Omani labour in the private sector is just 3.5%, whilst it is 7.1% for expatriates. This may reflect a greater need for unskilled labour in the private sector than in the public sector.

According to Famighetti (1997), the main ethnic groups in Oman are Arab (74%), Pakistani (15%), Balushi (4%), Persian (3%), Indian (2%) and African (2%). Islam forms the country's religion, with Arabic being the official language, although the second language is English, which is taught in schools and universities. In Oman, Islam (the application of Sharia'h Law), the tribal system (people bear a tribal rather than a family name) and family relations all play major roles in the lives of people, and the execution of legislative and administrative practices (Al-Hamadi and Budhwar, 2006).

Oman comprises 11 governorates, with each of these having their own distinctive administrative, geographical and economic significance. Muscat functions as the capital and the heart of the country's political, administrative, and economic system (Information, 2014). The basic law of the State, promulgated under Royal Decree No.101/96, enables citizens to be involved in shaping and directing the course of national expansion and growth through the Shura (consultation) Council, which is part of the Council of Oman, which fulfil advisory as well as legislative roles (Information, 2014).

The GDP of the country continues to grow annually by 2–5% (NCSI, 2016), although a recent slump in the price of oil brought a reduction of 14% revenue against 2014 (KPMG, 2016). To address the escalating deficits, the

Government took a decision to introduce value added tax (VAT) by 2018 and increase company's tax rate from 12% to 15%. On the positive side, foreign investment legislation has been developed to serve the country's economic diversification strategies, with it now being possible for foreign investors to hold up to a 65% share in all entities. Oman is a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and a signatory to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) provisions. These steps have been taken to assist Oman in meeting the new challenges in the global marketplace (Al-Hamadi and Budhwar, 2006).

Oman's economy is dependent on natural resource, and it is the depletion of these that prompted the Sultanate to diversify its economic activities. In particular, education and development were seen to provide a globally recognised solution to pending socio-economic problems (Uriah and Wosu, 2012). In Oman, education has a history of being taken seriously, although more recently the emphasis has been directed towards an enhancement of training, so as to create a national workforce that is capable of taking on localised labour.

The discovery of oil, along with the subsequent economic boom witnessed in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries since the 1960s, provided the initial cause for the current reliance on expatriate labour, which mainly came from the Asian countries (Al-Lamki, 2000; Al-Dosary and Rahman, 2005; Das and Gokhale, 2010). Over the last three decades, expatriate numbers have grown to outnumber nationals in several of the GCC countries, with the rise in oil prices and demand for specialist skill driving this rapid development (Shah, 2008). The demand for expatriate labour stems predominately from the national populations comparatively poor education and vocational training (UNDP, 2015). In addition, employers have a preference for migrant workers, as they are viewed as having greater flexibility and a greater commitment to work ethic, which makes them less threatening than Omani nationals (Al-Lamki, 1998). In addition, the social circumstances surrounding expatriate workers mean that there is always a continuous flow of them to meet the labour demands (ibid).

Labour migration to the GCC countries has contributed significantly to their development and construction, but to some extent has brought negative consequences, such as the issue of financial remittance. To place the figures in perspective, in 2010 South Asia received around USD \$ 83 billion in remittance from migrants in all countries, compared to roughly USD \$ 56 billion in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and foreign aid combined (Clemen, 2013). In India alone, in 2013, remittances exceeded earnings from information technology services, whilst the inflows to Egypt were greater than earnings from the Suez Canal (Ratha et al., 2014). In particular, remittances from GCC states totalled USD \$ 75 billion in 2011 (IMF, 2009), whilst Oman's outward remittances increased by 12.6% to RO 3,501 million in 2013, from RO 3,109 million in 2012 (Oman, 2014).

1.2 Omanisation, Training, and the Labour Market – Research Context

The realisation, by the governments of GCC countries, for the need to diversify their nationals to move outside the public sector, has been evident since the 1990s (Forstenlechner et al., 2012). However, in Oman, such trends toward localisation arrived earlier than in other Gulf countries, and became apparent after its local war ceased in the late 1970s. At that time, localisation emerged in the military and security jobs (Valeri, 2005), although it subsequently expanded to include other public sector and civil service institutions. With the rapid developments in technology, and sufficient employees in the public sector, this concept of localisation was gradually developed until in 1996, when the policy was implemented into the private sector. Hence, the nationalisation of jobs in the private sector was firmly placed on the agenda with the policy of Omanisation.

Like other GCC countries, Oman depends extensively on expatriate labour, even whilst a large number of its citizens are unemployed, with the figure continuing to rise. This unbalanced situation is partly explained by Omani citizens being strongly public sector-oriented in their employment aspirations, with the attraction being greater benefits and opportunities (Al-Lamki, 1998). Apart from the higher social status attached to Government work, the office hours of work are lower and salaries are higher. A recent

survey by the National Centre for Statistics and Information supported these observations and went on to suggest that around 95% of job seekers in Oman prefer to work in the public sector (NCSI, 2016). In order for the Government to reduce its reliance on expatriate labour, along with many citizens' preference for public sector work, the 'Economic Vision 2020' was introduced in 1996. The Vision articulate the necessary strategies required for creating a more robust private sector, and well-developed human resource base (Al-Lamki, 1998).

In essence, Vision 2020 focuses on HRD, economic diversification, and private sector development (Valeri, 2005), which carry extensive resource implications for its delivery. The development of human capital is important in achieving Omanisation, and this involves a series of labour localisation policies aimed at increasing the number of Omanis employed in the Omani private sector, with a view to ultimately replacing the large numbers of expatriates currently occupying jobs in that sector (Swales et al., 2012; Al-Lamki, 2000). Zerovec and Bontenbal (2011:365) confirm this initiative, summarising the aim as in order "[t]o reduce dependence on foreign labour and to tackle unemployment, the Government introduced a policy of Omanisation or nationalization of its labour". However, Omanisation cannot succeed without skilled and qualified human resource, and the shortages in this respect were considered as a major challenge in its implementation. Nonetheless, the issue of Omanisation, along with the replacement of foreign workers, has become as one of the most sensitive issues in the economic and political debate in Oman (Valeri, 2005).

On a wider perspective, globally NHRD is delivered in developed and developing countries to encourage societal development and economic promotion (Alagaraja and Wang, 2012), often through vocational training and development programmes. In Oman, the 'societal development' has been embodied in the need to reduce the unemployment rate and achieve a pre-defined percentage of Omanis being employed in the private sector. Omanisation, which refers to the vision of localising labour in Oman, coincides with practices implemented in other countries globally, that are

aiming for national skills development and economic prosperity (OECD, 2010).

Earlier studies (Al-Lamki; 1998; 2000) are regarded as the bedrock of academic debate on how the policy has been mobilised. These studies chart how the Omanisation philosophy gained ground in the public sector, noting its impressive success in reporting over 82% of all jobs being filled by Omanis in 1999. The studies also observed how the Government, inspired by the positive experience in the private sector, had in 1995 begun to deploy the same ideas in the private sector. However, whilst the Government is the legislator of policies and regulations pertaining to the public sector, it does not enjoy the same authority with the private sector, and realised the need to approach the process with care, aware of the impact that such policies could have on the sector's investment and productivity.

Nonetheless, the replacement of foreign labour with local labour remains central to national HRD strategies in several of the Gulf States. Oman illustrates their importance, with April 2015 figures showing that out of a total population of 4.1 million, expatriate workers constituted 43%. Since the renaissance of the Sultanate of Oman in 1970, it has been a priority of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said's Government to improve human resource, with the Omanisation policy, instituted in 1988, aiming to replace those expatriates brought in by the 'oil revolution', with qualified Omanis, whilst simultaneously reducing unemployment amongst the indigenous population.

With respect to education, the total numbers of registered students at the General Education stage exceed 520,000, whilst the Tertiary Education sector has in excess of 52 public and private higher education institutions. Indeed, more than 120,000 Omani students were registered in Higher Education (HE), both within the Sultanate and abroad, in 2013/2014. The Government has also established seven Colleges of Technology, six Vocational Training Centres, two Fishermen's Training Institutes, and various training programmes, all of which are directed towards enhancing the supply of skilled and semi-skilled labour. However, despite these efforts in infrastructure, the demand for local labour by the private sector remains low, as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1. 1 Employment in the Private Sector

(000)	05	06	07	08	09	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Omanis	98	114	132	147	158	178	174	172	182	198
Non-Omanis	425	511	638	794	874	955	1.115	1.316	1.471	1.510
Total	524	625	770	942	1.033	1.133	1.289	1.488	1.653	1.708

Source: Adapted from NCSI (2016)

The table 1.1 above shows clearly that the private sector employs more non-Omanis than Omanis to perform functions that could ordinarily have been performed by a well-trained Oman citizen. Additionally, over the years, the gap in number between Omanis and non-Omanis in the private sector has widened as exhibit by statistical information shown in Table 1.1 above. The implication of the situation of the Omanisation project is that a lot of vocational and academic training are required to be carried to close the extensive gap between expatriates and Omani employees.

Whilst sectoral differences exist, with Oil, Gas, Banking, and the Telecoms sectors reporting higher levels of Omanisation than Construction, the overall impact of Omanisation remains limited. Recent data (NCSI, 2016) clearly illustrates extensive gaps between the numbers of Omanis and expatriates working in the less preferred sectors. For instance, in Construction, Omanis account for as little as 7.5% of the workforce. In comparison, 78.3% of the Financial Intermediaries workforce, in the private sector, is comprised of Omani nationals, although this is an exception. A list of sixteen private economic sector comparisons is presented in Appendix (I).

Various reasons have been advanced to explain the imbalance in the private sector workforce, which cite the relatively inferior employment terms and conditions, a mismatch between the skill requirements, and a perception that some private sector companies do not welcome Omani

recruits (Al-Lamki, 1998; Al-Lamki, 1999; Al-Lamki, 2000; Ayman et al., 2007). However, the lack of robust data inhibits the drawing of clear conclusions of the difficulties faced in achieving Omanisation. Within the Omanisation policy, Oman's Vision 2020 requires a reassessment of the private sector supply, and demand. The starting point of such a reassessment is the National Training Policy, which is the focus of the current study, and flowed from the Omanisation initiative. The National Training Policy is administered by the MoM and the next section addresses the legislation, and associated policies.

1.3 Training Legislation and Policies

An examination of the current rules, regulations and policies associated with the NTP helps place it in context of the topic for the current study. Indeed, the Bylaw relating to the private training institutions, the MoM evaluation, and the training tripartite contract provide an initial framework which was used to identify relevant literature and to guide pilot interview questions. An outline of the NTP procedures, indicating the role of the main stakeholder groups, is presented at the end of this section.

Bylaw Relating to the Private Training Institutions

The 'Bylaw of the Private Training Institutions' was issued by Ministerial Decree 490/2010 (MoM, 2010). The document, which contains eighty-three articles, organises, categorises and classifies private training institutions in Oman, with a large part referring to the terms and procedures for establishing private training institutes, centres, and service offices. Four main training fields are identified, being commercial, industrial, crafts and private programmes, along with an explanation of the three main occupational levels that result from the vocational training: semi-skilled, skilled, and occupational. The Bylaw does not, however, detail levels of competence, nor the mechanisms and requirements to progress between levels. These levels are not linked to any set of skills and knowledge; neither is there any clear assessment of the performance and outcomes expected. Essentially, there is an absence of occupational standards and testing criteria. This is in contrast to the UK (United Kingdom), which has a

national qualification framework based on national vocational qualifications (Stewart et al., 2013).

Whilst the Bylaw outlines the procedures that institutes are required to follow in establishing a training service in Oman, no particular reference is made to what role the institutes might play in delivering the NTP. It does, however, classify private training institutions into four categories, and only those institutions in the highest category are permitted to deliver the NTP.

In essence, the Bylaw concerns the work of the training institutes rather than the implementation of the NTP, with no reference to training models or specific programmes. There is no reference to the employers who are associated with the NTP. Hence, there is limited guidance regarding the nature or implementation of the NTP.

Ministry of Manpower Evaluation Form

One formalised element of the NTP refers to the evaluation document used by the Ministry. The MoM believes that the evaluation and assessment of trainees is an important mechanism for assessing the match between the planned and actual outcomes. Hence, being comfortable with bureaucracy, an evaluation document was developed to assess the progress of trainees on the NTP programmes. The form is only produced in Arabic, despite some of those training providers and private sector employers involved in the assessment process being non-Arabic speakers. The researcher has translated the form into English for the purpose of this thesis, so that it could be discussed with relevant stakeholders, see Appendix (II).

The MoM administer the form on three occasions, before, mid-way and post-training, although, as reported later, it is common practice for the MoM assessors to visit trainees only twice during their training period. Close inspection of the form reveals that the evaluation criteria apply more to craft and technical training, rather than the commercial or administrative work. In addition, the evaluation criteria are concerned only with the training content of training, and ignore the initial suitability of the candidate to training.

Finally, the form fails to cover post-training follow-up, which means information is not gathered about how effectively the skills have transferred into the workplace. These failings provided a catalyst for the current study, as it, and its administration, has failed to gather information surrounding the implementation of the NTP. Nonetheless, the form provided a template for questions that needed answering by the stakeholders involved.

The Tripartite Training Contract

The NTP involves a tripartite agreement between the trainees, training providers and employers, which is overseen by MoM staff. These four groups formed the stakeholder focus of the current study.

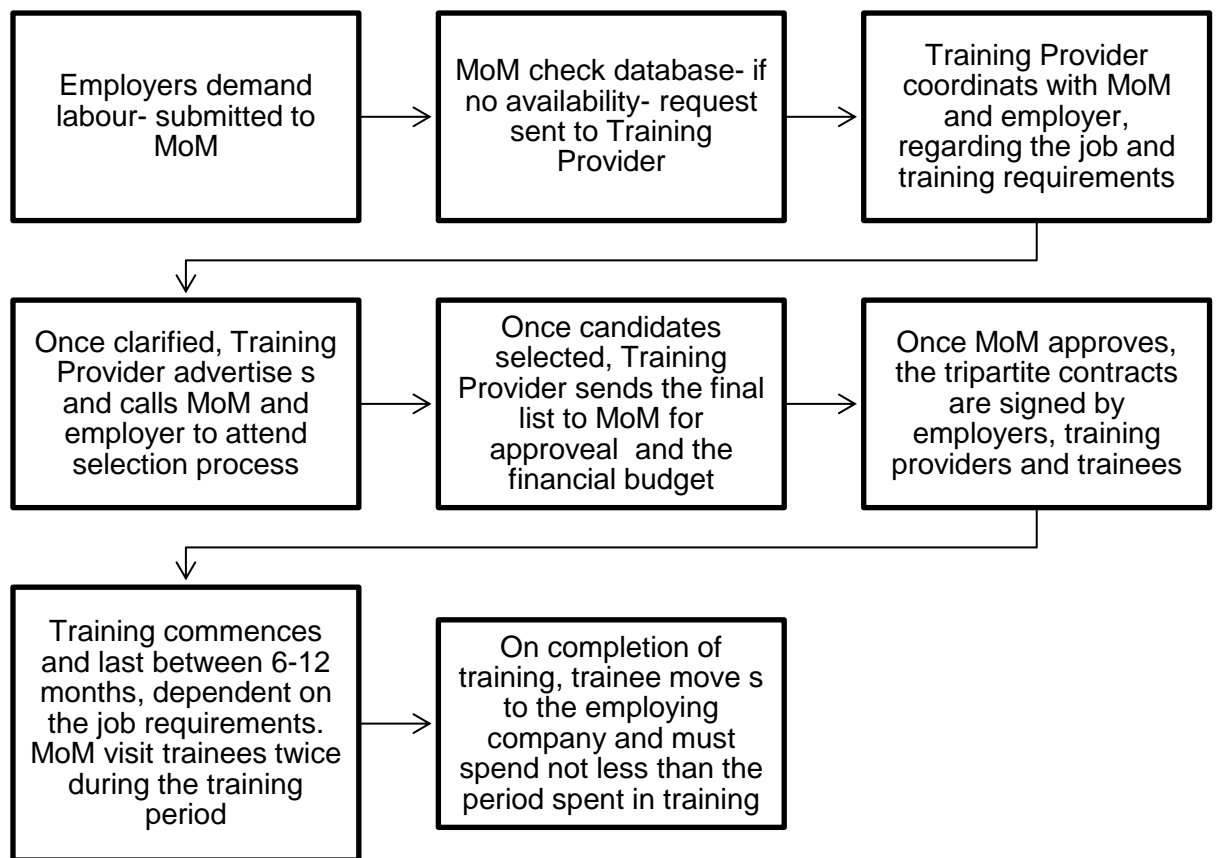
The relationship between the three parties directly involved in the NTP is encapsulated in the MoM training contract, and comprises the only written document that manages the relationship. The MoM is not a party to the contract, since it does not form part of the NTP's delivery. Essentially, the contract is divided into two main parts, with the early sections comprising general biographical and commercial details, whilst the second part contains the rights and responsibilities of each of the three stakeholders.

The ultimate outcome is that employers are expected to hire the trainees within one month of the completion of their training programme, with the trainees' financial entitlement being stipulated in the employment contract. Employers are expected to accept the trainees for on-the-job training, according to the programme provided by the MoM, and to monitor their progress and performance. There is also an obligation to comply with Omani employment regulations. In addition, penalty clauses are stipulated, particularly that where employers fail to employ the trainee following completion of the programme, or if the employer terminates the contract employer within one year, then the employer is obliged to reimburse the MoM for the training fees. This latter point can lead to divisive practices, with the consequences of financial penalties being evaluated.

For their part, trainees are required to follow the course, and comply with regulations concerning behaviour and discipline. In return, a monthly allowance, and other non-financial compensations are provided, followed by a guaranteed job on completion. In addition to the employer's commitment, trainees have to accept the contracted job, and remain for no less than one year, otherwise they are liable for the training fees. Training providers form the third part of the contract and are obliged to provide trainees with training materials, facilities, and training. Approval by both the MoM and employers for the training content is mandatory, as is updating the MoM on the progress. Finally, training providers are 'requested' to follow up each trainee's progress during their first three months of employment.

Whilst the contract provides broad guidelines for those involved in implementing the NTP, it is in isolation of both the Bylaw, and the assessment form. Hence, there is a fragmentation of NTP documentation, which is discussed later. The tripartite contract does not provide details of the resulting job description, nor does it address future career plans. It does, however, require employers to insure trainees from the start of the programme, despite those individuals not being directly employed whilst on the programme. The contract provides the rhetoric, although, as reported by various stakeholder groups, the reality of practice can differ. Nonetheless, the process formally approved by the Ministry is presented in Figure 1.1

Figure 1. 1 NTP Process Involving the Key Stakeholder Groups



Source: Compiled by the researcher using Ministry of Manpower Data: The National Training Programme process

The Sultanate of Oman provides the geographical and national context for the current study, with the National Training Programme (NTP), as viewed by the key stakeholder groups, being the central focus.

In seeking to discharge their obligation under Omanisation, the MoM launched the NTP, in 2003, as a vehicle for equipping job-seekers from secondary and post-secondary education with the pre-requisite knowledge and skills for work. The term NTP embraces a number of projects, however, for the current study the term represents the policy developed by the MoM that seeks to provide Oman's occupational sectors with appropriately trained and skilled job-seekers. To compound matters, the NTP does not appear as a policy document in itself. Rather, it is a collection of key documents, ministerial decrees, and reports from several employment

seminars, held during 2001 and 2003, which provided the impetus for the subsequent Ministerial decree; the commencement of Omanisation.

The NTP represents a Government-introduced mechanism, designed to achieve Omanisation and described as 'training to make Omanis employable'. Essentially the goal is political, aimed to alleviate the situation whereby large numbers of expatriates comprise the private sector workforce, while Omanis staff the public sector. That situation is not sustainable as there are insufficient jobs in the public sector for Omanis, which has resulted in unemployment. In addition, Omani citizens are hesitant about working for private sector employers, whilst conversely, private sector employers are seen to have a preference for the better skilled expatriates, who are also cheaper to hire and genuinely want to work. The Government's solution was to provide an NTP that equipped Omanis to undertake private sector jobs that have traditionally been occupied by foreign workers.

The MoM refers to the NTP, which is funded and regulated by them, as 'training mingled with employment'. Whilst the strategy follows the trend in many European countries to support vocational education (see Stewart et al., 2013), in the Omani context the prime desired outcome is to replace the large numbers of expatriate workers in the private sector with trained and skilled Omani jobseekers. Thus, there exists a partnership relationship between the MoM and the private sector, where the former supplies the demand expressed by the latter. That said, the involvement of various agencies in the implementation of the NTP detracts from the clarity of that relationship, and what actually happens is largely influenced by the different parties that are involved directly (O'Toole, 2000); an issue that is explored in the current study.

The NTP courses last for between six to twelve months, and whilst being delivered by private training institutions, they are all fully sponsored, regulated, and administered by the Government. A snapshot of trends in take-up is presented in Table 1.2 below:

Table 1. 2 NTP Statistics for the Period (2009-2012)

		2009	2010	2011	2012
Training Discipline	Administrative	421	342	181	784
	Technical	668	799	573	974
	Occupational	391	407	223	427
	Vocational	440	204	86	154
Gender	Male	1587	1502	902	1616
	Female	333	250	161	723
Trainee Qualification	Below General Diploma	504	630	290	655
	General Diploma	1284	1301	740	1662
	Above general Diploma	132	91	33	22
Total Trainees		1920	1752	1063	2339

Source: Compiled by the researcher using Ministry of Manpower Data (Private Training Department)

Three key stakeholders currently involved in implementing the NTP are: the MoM, the training providers and employers. The ‘products’ of the policy, the trainees themselves, constitute a fourth stakeholder group, as they can provide their lived experience of the programme.

In the absence of an official NTP policy document, the MoM established three key objectives:

- a. Develop the Omani workforce to meet the diverse knowledge and skills required by the private sector through learning programmes in occupational, technical, and administrative disciplines.
- b. Encourage the private sector to recruit trained and qualified Omani jobseekers.
- c. Increase the percentage of Omani citizens employed in all economic sectors in the private sector; this is referred to as Omanisation.

1.3.1 Stakeholders

The Ministry of Manpower

The MoM was established with its current responsibilities in 2001, after a restructuring of the previous Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. Their responsibilities are to plan and implement general manpower policies, in alignment with the Sultanate's socio-economic requirements (Manpower, 2016), and in line with regulating and organising the labour market, to achieve Oman's Economic Vision 2020.

In the context of the NTP implementation, the role of the Ministry is to establish the infrastructure for implementing this policy. This includes regulating the training provision through quality assurance processes, and to ensure training providers are competent to deliver training. In addition, the Ministry initiates the tripartite contract between employers, training providers, and trainees. The Ministry also conducts the administrative procedures regarding the advertisement of new opportunities and implementing curriculum development, delivery, and assessment. Embodied within these responsibilities is the duty to align the manpower requirements of those companies involved with the Ministry's registered jobseekers.

Thus, the Ministry adopts an enabling role that facilitates the implementation of training activities. Their role is more concerned with the general framework of training, rather than with the training itself, and hence guides other stakeholders towards the achievement of the NTP's objectives.

Employers

Historically, the private sector's reluctance to hire Omani jobseekers (Al-Lamki, 1998) was one of the triggers for establishing the NTP. Currently, as recipients of the training process they are significant players in the NTP implementation. However, their position is not without tensions, with a sensitive issue being conflicting motives. The NTP requires them to support the Government's Omanisation programme through labour localisation, which helps solve the unemployment issue amongst Omani citizens; however, they also need to ensure profitability, both on a personal level and

to support the national economy. With respect to profitability, the employers traditionally hold a preference for expatriate workers, who are perceived to have a stronger work ethic, and are content with lower salaries than Omani nationals (ibid). An additional tension concerns Government's power, as the sole awarder of work permits for expatriate workers. To address these tensions the Ministry established a partnership strategy (or '*Sharaka*') with the private sector, which involves both players in labour organisation planning and implementation in Oman's private sector.

In respect to the NTP, the employers initiate contact with the Ministry to inform them of a vacancy, who then check their database for suitable individuals. If a match is not found, the employers enter into the process of curriculum development, to design a course that is delivered by training providers.

Training Providers

It is the institutes that provide the training element of the NTP, and as such they make a direct contribution to quality. Following discussion with the Ministry and employer appropriate courses are designed, ensuring that they are designed to meet the individual and market needs. Their role is not in the realms of policy formulation or manpower forecasting, but rather the determination of training content and delivery. Further, they need to advertise the opportunities, and select trainees on a continual basis, in order to sustain their business. As they are funded by the Ministry, and evaluated by them and other stakeholders, there is a degree of sensitivity surrounding their activities.

Trainees

The ultimate aim of the NTP is to deliver skilled workers, so trainees form an important element in the equation. Having accepted a place on a training programme, trainees are obliged to sign a tripartite contract, to which they must adhere. Typically, the training course lasts between six months and one year, after which they join their designated company. Whilst they have

no voice in the programme content, or its delivery, their lived experience can corroborate, or otherwise, the claims of other stakeholder groups. Indeed, given the challenges involved, the motives for undertaking such a venture are of interest.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

HRD has assumed greater importance in the last few decades, due to global transitions that place an urgent need on organisations, societies, and nations to develop their human capability (Wang and Swanson, 2008). At a more strategic level, NHRD is designed to move towards understanding how a country recognises the importance of skills and their significance, through state policies and strategic plans, in national economic sustainability (Stewart et al., 2013). As a result, several countries have gone beyond the traditional five-year development plans, to adopt NHRD plan that meets the requirements of global fluctuation (McLean, 2004). Currently in Oman, HRD is fragmented within a number of Government authorities, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Health, and the MoM. The MoM has adopted a policy of providing 'training mingled with employment', delivered in line with the NTP with the aim to fulfil the Government's Omanisation vision.

Large investment has been made in the NTP, with a total allocation in 2013 of RO 26 million (£42 million), along with a considerable increase in 2015 to RO 95 million (£150 million). This allocation represents almost 25% of the overall funding allocated to the MoM (Naimi, 2014). Despite this outlay, no recorded data exist that relates to how employers or trainees perceive how the NTP has been implemented. Following the NTP's fourteenth year of operation, the absence of any codified information regarding the extent to which key stakeholders perceive the programme represents a significant gap in evaluation, with the extent of the financial investment already made compounding the situation. The absence of empirical data surrounding the NTP implementation provides an opportunity for investigation.

1.5 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the current study is to investigate the implementation of the NTP, through the perceptual voices of the four key stakeholder groups. In seeking to achieve the research aim, the year 2003 was taken as the starting point. The choice was influenced by the availability of data, and the regulations associated with the programme in its current form.

Following from the study's aim, research questions were identified. These were purposively kept to a minimum so as to provide a less restrictive framework within which the research will be carried out, and to allow the themes to emerge from the data. Thus, following on from the research aim, two research questions were formulated:

What are the factors influencing the implementation of the NTP policy in Oman, and how are these perceived by key stakeholder groups?

What barriers do NTP key stakeholder groups perceive as having impeded NTP implementation, and how have they impacted?

The first research question focuses on those factors that are associated with the implementation of policy, and explores how these are perceived to exist in the eyes of stakeholders. The previously identified stakeholder groups, who are key to the implementation process, provide the perceptual voice. In a similar way, the second research question seeks perceptual information that relates specifically to the barriers associated with implementation.

1.6 Significance and Research Contribution

Recent empirical studies have explored the issue of NTPs in different contexts around the globe and have investigated workplace training that has not been linked directly to the national picture. Consequently, whilst there is a growing body of literature in the HRD and NHRD field, the process of implementation of policy is under-researched.

The study breaks new ground in that the area of public policy implementation, within the context of the National Training Policy, has not

been previously researched in Oman. The outcomes produced from the study are drawn from empirical data, which adds to and develops public policy implementation theory. Theoretical contributions are also evident in the area of stakeholder theory, with it being used as an evaluation model. An added dimension to the contribution is that the contribution relates to an Arab context, which remains under-researched.

In addition to the theoretical contributions made, the outcomes will contribute to Oman's citizens who are currently requesting greater transparency and disclosure in Government matters. Whilst not a stated aim of the current study, the barriers that have been identified influences the decision-makers associated with the National evidence of NTP practice in the past fourteen years.

1.7 Insider Research

Another rationale for conducting this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena through insider research. The embedded nature of insider research is perceived to be more politically complex than other forms of research, due to the key understanding that it is "a risky business from an intellectual point of view" (Alvesson 2009:166). Further, Trowler (2012) highlights that the choices in designing an insider research project are infused with political judgements and have political consequences. In addition, Trowler (2012) discussed four related issues: first, the research focus and which category or categories of participants are being selected for the study; second, the research problem, and whose concerns are being framed in the research questions and design; third, the power structures within the system and the subordinate position of some categories of people; and fourth, the role of the researcher and how he or she is positioned in the system. The research focus and problem have been discussed above and provide an insight into the power structures within the system, which in theory expresses a high degree of relatedness, and interdependence.

There are many advantages associated with insider research (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). Indeed, insider researchers are more likely to understand

the contextual nature of the organisation's culture, compared to others, and this established familiarity can assist with transparency amongst informants. The insider researcher is also aware of the formal and informal organisational hierarchy, and overall their position of familiarity helps facilitate access to interview schedules and for the recruitment of participants (Hayfield and Huxley, 2015). Conversely, the insider is vulnerable to 'familiarity', which compels them to overlook parts of the organisation or data by being drawn into a taken-for-granted mind-set (Mercer, 2007). The danger also exists of 'remaining native', whereby an over-sensitivity to certain areas is adopted, in which a degree of objectivity is totally abandoned (Unluer, 2012).

As an employee of the MoM, and an insider, the researcher had access to a variety of documents, both formal and informal, such as articles that were published locally. The documentation helped formulate the detail of the research direction. His position also facilitated access to colleagues within the Ministry, along with other key stakeholder groups within the NTP initiative. Evidence also emerged of the 'double-edged sword' element of the insider's role (Mercer, 2007), with a particular issue being that external parties sometimes perceived him as a 'Ministry person' and showed signs of being cautious in their responses. Internally, due to his senior position and twelve years of service with the Ministry, there was an implicit expectation, or hope, that he would unearth 'proof' that the NTP is effective. This represents a misunderstanding on their part, as rather than seeking proof in a positivist way, the study sought to gain a deep and rich understanding of the NTP implementation. Political dimensions associated with insider research have been identified previously (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007), and so the phenomenon was not unknown to me.

This information on insider research has been presented here to assist the reader in placing the research in context.

1.8 Outline Structure

In addressing the stakeholder perception of NTP implementation, the thesis is presented in a series of nine chapters. The Chapter One, serves to introduce the research through an outline of the research questions and setting the study in context, with background information on the nation and the topics involved with the implementation. Chapter Two reviews the literature in relation to Public Policy Implementation, National Human Resource Development, and Training Evaluation models, whilst also covering network theory. In Chapter three, the methodology applied to conduct the empirical aspect of the study is presented, along with a justification of the methods used in data gathering. The findings, drawn from interviews with the informants, are presented in Chapters Four to Seven, with a chapter being assigned to each of the four key stakeholder groups. In Chapter Eight, using the research questions as a framework, the barriers and challenges of implementation that the four stakeholder groups perceived are discussed. The final Conclusion in Chapter Nine draws together the main points to address the research aim and the broader context of the study. Importantly, the chapter also states the contributions the study has made to theoretical knowledge, identifies the limitations and makes recommendations for future research.

Summary

In introducing the thesis, this chapter has presented the context for the study, placing it within Oman's socio-economic environment, including the Government initiatives for HRD. The concept of Omanisation, and the subsequent introduction of the NTP as a means to address this were explored. The policy generated in this respect, were discussed, and Governmental concerns regarding the slow progress in implementing NTP, especially in terms of the ratio of Omani citizens to expatriates private sector, was identified. The background to the NTP, along with the paucity of investigation in this area, provided the rationale for the study, which was followed by the research aim and two research questions. Four key stakeholder groups, involved in the NTP, were presented, with each role

being identified. The chapter has concluded by outlining the significance of the study and the theoretical contributions to knowledge it makes.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, the literature relating to the key areas of the thesis is reviewed. The importance of public policy implementation theory, which has five elements, is first considered, and contextualised through an overview of HRD and NHRD. Next, the factors affecting the implementation are covered, both in general and in an Arab context. Subsequently, the chapter examines the concept of evaluation, particularly with respect to the use of the stakeholder. The chapter ends by restating the two key research questions, which aim to fill the gap in the literature, and presents the key concepts in a schematic conceptual framework.

2.1 Policy Implementation

Essentially, the literature relating to policy implementation concerns public policy, and therefore, it is of importance to the current study, which is an example of Government (public) policy, to focus on the NTP, which is part of Oman's national HRD initiative to achieve Omanisation. Indeed, when evaluating public policy, it is considered helpful to view a specific programme (DeGroff and Cargo, 2009), as this enables a concrete understanding of the concept to be gained, rather than an abstract idea. Certainly, for the current study, the conceptual background to public policy implementation is central. Consequently, this section highlights implementation theories that have been developed in this area and through which the findings are eventually produced, and analysed.

Public Policy

The term 'policy' is first conceptualised, and in this respect, Heclo (1972:84) observes that this "is usually considered to apply to something 'bigger' than particular decisions, but 'smaller' than general social movements". In particular, it embraces decisions taken by the governing authority responsible for a certain policy area, which are usually represented in a statement, or formal position on the issue in question, and then executed by means of bureaucracy (Keeley and Scoones, 2014). The word 'policy'

denotes three main attributes: authority, expertise and order, and these three elements serve as a gatekeeper in respect of participation in the policy process (Colebatch, 1998). Various meanings are accorded to 'policy'. It can be construed as putting a plan into practice, an authoritative answer or strategy for all cases under the same type, or establishing authoritative language for talking about issues (Prokhovnik, 2005). Nevertheless, in relation to practice, Mabbett (2005:8) offers the following definition, which is argued as being rather closer to the reality: "a policy may involve a series of laws, or it may be possible for the government to introduce a policy within existing legal powers. This may include changing administrative practices or establishing new institutions". Another aspect is to distinguish between analysis of policy which aims to further the understanding of the policy, and analysis for policy which seeks policy quality improvement (Hill, 2012). In the current study the emphasis is predominately on the 'of', as the aim is to understand the process of the policy, although indirectly this may allow others to undertake possible improvements. This leads to the term 'public policy', which embraces dimensions of human activity connected to a governmental, or social regulation, or an intervention that results in a desired change (Parsons, 1995). As a research subject, public policy focuses on providing an explanation as to how policy implementation works and in exploring the variety, and complexity of the decision- making process and implementation (John, 1998).

Analysis of public policy can be made by exploring the development of a particular policy, by evaluating its impact upon the population or by analysing the outcomes and how these have arisen (Hill, 2012). Prokhovnik (2005) goes further, believing that there are many more ways to study public policies and mentions that this can be through exploring the policy process, policy outputs, the utilisation of information, policy advocacy by various groups, and by evaluating the effectiveness of policy. Also on this main issue, DeGroff and Cargo (2009:48) detail the steps of policy process analysis as being; "(1) agenda setting, (2) issue definition, (3) policy formulation, (4) policy decision, (5) policy implementation, (6) evaluation, (7) maintenance, succession or termination". Put more simply, policy analysis falls into three stages, these being: formulation, decision, and

implementation (Mabett, 2005), with the latter being the focus of the current study, which also links with the fifth step of DeGroff and Cargo's (2009) policy process. The aim was to analyse the implementation of the NTP as a public policy developed by the Omani government, thus focused on the factors influencing the process of implementation, along with the barriers involved, and the degree to which stakeholders had an impact on that process.

Policy Implementation Overview

The study of public policy implementation emerged primarily in the United States of America (USA) in the early 1970s, and later in Europe, as a response to a missing link between policy-making and outcomes evaluation (Hill, 2012). The policy implementation is considered to be the vehicle that transforms a written policy, as articulated by the policy-makers, into a practice aimed to generate outcomes that meet the needs and expectations of the policy-makers, and those stakeholders involved. Policy implementation is defined as "the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions" (Mazmanian, 1989:20). Although, according to O'Toole (2000:266), "policy implementation is what develops between the establishment of an apparent intention on the part of government to do something, or to stop doing something, and the ultimate impact in the world of action". On the other hand, policy implementation studies can be viewed as investigations into change, how it occurred and what prompted such change (Parsons, 1995). In short, the implementation of any programme involves the policymakers' decisions to affect the behaviour of "street level bureaucrats" who aim to deliver a service or regulate the behaviour of a certain group (Mazmanian, 1989). There are a number of different observations here, however for the current study, the primary emphasis was on the 'world of action', as perceived by the "street level bureaucrats", although a range of key stakeholders involved in the NTP were sought.

Theoretical Development

A chronological review shows that theories underpinning public policy implementation developed through separate generations, with three broad generation being identified (DeLeon and DeLeon, 2002; Pölzl and Treib, 2007). The first generation is encompassed by the Economic Development Administration (EDA), conducted by Pressman and Wildavsky (1974), with the second generation consisting of a top-down and bottom-up orientation to policy implementation, whilst the third relates to the scientific generation. Parsons (1995), however, extended these generations to create a four, by categorising the top-down and bottom-up tendencies as different movements. An overview of the generational theoretical contributions is presented in (Table 2.1).

Table 2. 1 Policy Implementation Stages

Generation	Authors
The analysis of failure	Derthick (1972), Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), Bardach (1977)
Rational (top-down) model to identify factors which make for successful implementation	Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), Hood (1976), Gunn (1978), Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979)
Bottom-up critiques of the top-down model in terms of the importance of other actors and organisational interactions	Lipsky (1971), Wetherley and Lipsky (1977), Elmore (1978, 1979) Hjern et al. (1978)
Hybrid Theories: Implementation as:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evolution (Majone and Wildavsky, 1978)• Learning (Browne and Wildavsky, 1984)• Policy-action continuum (Lewis and Flynn, 1978, 1979) (Barrett and Fudge, 1981)• Inter-organisational analysis (Hajern, 1982; Hajern and Porter, 1981)• Policy Types (Ripley and Franklin, 1982)• Part of policy sub-system (Sabatier, 1986a)

Source: Adapted from Parsons (1995:463)

It is interesting to note that whilst Parsons' outline appears to relate to twenty years ago, recent works still maintain the same four generational models (Smith and Larimer, 2016). The current study predominantly addressed the three latter categorisations of the theoretical development of policy implementation, with less of a focus on the first, as the aim was to explore and understand the NTP implementation, as opposed to judging its success or failure.

The first generation was much concerned with defining policy, and how, in practice, its interpretation led to success or failure. This was seen as two opposing aspects of the same issue, and actually makes only a limited contribution to implementation theory. The work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1974) falls into this category, and consisted of a case study analysis of the Economic Development Agency (EDA) projects in Oakland, California, USA. This agency was responsible for developing the city's economy in an effort to reduce unemployment. The researchers felt the policy process was irreversible, starting first with policy formulation or design, as conceived by the leaders, and later executed by administrators or intermediary implementers. The authors identified three factors which caused the policy to fail, these being: 1) the difficulty of converting the agreement into decisions, which led to increase the number of participants implementing the policy and the result that many diverse views emerged on its execution, 2) the many and diverse views caused delays in decision-making and sometimes the blockage of certain decisions, and 3) the unfounded economic theories which underpinned the programme. The work was at the beginning of what was heralded as "paradigmatic heyday of policy implementation research" (Hupe, 2014:164), which led to further empirical studies.

The second generation, which covered the 1980s and beyond, represented a more rigorous and sophisticated theoretical input (DeLeon and DeLeon, 2002). The pioneers of this generation, which advocated a top-down model (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983), became the hallmark of this generation's thought. However, differences existed within the generation, with two opposing models being developed during

different periods. Overall, the top-down approach “is deeply rooted in the stages model, and involves making a clear distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation” (Hill, 2012:196). It views implementation as the extent to which authoritative decisions are translated in actions carried out by the implementing officials, and the target group (Matland, 1995). It is seen as a response to the previous implementation failure, and has a focus on a good chain of command, plus the capacity to co-ordinate and control of various aspects (Majone and Wildavsky, 1978). Top-downers essentially followed a prescriptive approach that viewed policy as input and implementation as output factors, with implementation being seen as a process of interaction between the setting of goals, and actions geared to achieve them (Pülzl and Treib, 2007). Within this model, implementation studies were designed to explore the reasons for implementation failure, and to provide recommendations that establish conformity with the objectives of the policy (Barrett, 2004). To progress the model, Hood (1976) developed five conditions for perfect implementation: 1) the ideal implementation is a product of a unitary ‘army-like’ organisation, with clear lines of authority, 2) norms are enforced and objectives given, 3) people will do what they are told and asked, 4) there is perfect communication between units of organisation, and 5) there are no time pressures.

Top-down policies were perceived as challenging in as much as the politicians often formulated policy without clarifying implementation procedures (Hill, 2012), thereby producing a gap between policy constructors and potential implementers who had no clear vision of what exactly was to be achieved, and why. This approach assumes a great deal about goal definition, human interaction, and behaviours, as it “blatantly excludes any consideration of how real people actually behave” (Parsons, 1995:467). This criticism was further supported by Hill and Hupe (2002) who argued that implementation studies that followed the top-down model were contested on analytical grounds and for their subjective implications. Moreover, Matland (1995:147) asserts that top-downers were blamed for the statutory language employed in their approach which “fails to consider the significance of actions taken earlier in the policy-making process”. The

weakness in omitting the role of the other stakeholders and actors, in the policy implementation process, led to the emergence of the bottom-up model.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, several studies revealed no clear causal link between political outcomes and policy objectives, which opened the door for studies to be conducted that identified the interaction among stakeholders in the policy implementation (Pülzl and Treib, 2007). Sabatier (1986:22) observed that this bottom-up approach “started with analysing the multitude of actors who interact at the operational level on a specific programme”. This analysis was conducted by identifying the behaviours of public service workers, the so-called “street-level bureaucrats” that were represented by teachers, social workers, police officers, doctors, and other civil service employees (Howlett and Ramesh, 2009; Lipsky, 2010). Bottom-up policy implementation problems occurs at both the macro and micro level (Bennan, 1978: V), with the institutional setting being the primary difference between these two areas. The issues surrounding the macro level refer to: “a) many actors interact to determine who gets what, when and how, and b) policy passes through and is transmuted by successive levels of implementing organisations”, with the consequence being a gap between macro level (formulators) and micro level (implementers), which leads to questioning how a policy will be implemented by the street-level bureaucrats. Another factor within the context of this form of policy implementation is that the micro element can take the lead and remove control from the policy designer. Certainly, the bottom-up model involves negotiation and consensus building, which happens within the two areas of organisational culture, and the ‘political’ environment (Parsons, 1995).

This view of the implementation process was scrutinised by Hjern and Porter (1981:211) who argued that in the “multi-organisational unit of analysis, an implementation structure should be used when describing and evaluating the implementation and administration of programmes”. This was done in their study of the implementation of manpower training programmes in Sweden and Germany, where they discovered an extensive number of organisations and actors. They found that in order to study policy involving

various stakeholders, it is crucial to analyse the interaction between them. They assert that, programmes are implemented partly by public and partly by private organisations, and hence, define the implementation structure as “the administrative entity which programme implementers use for accomplishing objectives within programme” (ibid, 211). Therefore, from this perspective, the policy analysis is based on organisation theory, which rejects any privileged actor or set of actors. The analysis of ‘administrative imperatives’ behind the legislation and authorising the programme is considered as the starting point for policy analysis. This includes an analysis of the roles of the various actors within the training process, and ends in defining the ‘pool of organisations’ which form the training programme. According to Lipsky (2010:222), within the implementation structure of a training programme, key elements are shared among the stakeholder groups:

1. The actors in the implementation structure have a variety of goals and motives. While there is agreement on general concepts like education, individuals still have their own different goals.
2. There is a programme rationale within which purposive action takes place.
3. Authority relationships often focus on professional status, coordinative competence, potential or real power, and resource control.
4. There is a great deal of local discretion.

These elements correspond with the bottom-up model in the sense that it rejects the command and control approach. It stresses the bureaucracy of policy implementation that promotes the networks of relationship between various policy actors. The more developed and regular implementation structure can be described as networks of relationships, where actors have rather settled expectations about each other, and vice versa. Barrett and Fudge (1981) agreed that the various actors mediated the process between policy formulation and policy implementation, interpreting, modifying and even supervising the execution of the policy. Hence, they conclude the difficulty in separating policy formulation from implementation, yet they insist

on separating the policy analysis studies in formulation, and implementation, in order to more easily identify the extent to which policy is implemented as the policy formulators intended it.

These two approaches to policy implementation are different in several ways and falls critically into top-down and bottom-up theories as shown in table 2.2 below:

Table 2. 2 Comparison of Top-down and Bottom-up Theories

	Top-down theories	Bottom-up theories
Research strategy	Top-down: from political decisions to administrative execution	Bottom-up: from individual bureaucrats to administrative networks
Goal of analysis	Prediction/policy recommendation	Description/explanation
Model of policy process	Stagiest	Fusionist
Character of implementation process	Hierarchical guidance	Decentralized problem-solving
Underlying model of democracy	Elitist	Participatory

Source: Adapted from Pülzl and Treib (2007:94)

Using the top-down approach as a research strategy implies taking the decision-makers and policy-formulators as the starting point of the policy implementation analysis. On the other hand, the bottom-up approach recognises the roles of the actors other than policy designers, and includes 'street-level bureaucrats'. Similarly, these two approaches are divergent in terms of their goals, as the aim of the top-down model is to develop a general theory of implementation, which will predict programme success, and this may result in recommendations for further policy refinement. However, the bottom-up model tends to provide a holistic empirical assessment of the stakeholders involved in the programme's delivery.

The top-down approach is viewed as being more process-oriented, following a clear sequence of stages, whereas the bottom-up analysis tends to integrate the policy-making and policy implementation in the same study, thus creating an interest for the researcher in the entire process. Another difference between these two models, is the responsibility for implementation, as top-downers perceive this as an administrative process with the power lying with the central decision-makers, who hierarchically guide the process. In contrast, scholars that support the bottom-up approach consider those policy implementation actors other than the policy formulators, to be the shapers and true decision-makers concerning policy process, and implementation. They assert that the implementation process is political, and the goals usually ambiguous. The final differing characteristic is concerned with democracy. The top-down approach receives its legitimacy from their position, with the role of ensuring that policy implementation is effected as accurately as possible. Bottom-up proponents, however, stress the need for the participation of street-level bureaucrats, and any other actors in which the decision-making is likely to have an impact.

These two polar opposites have been synthesised in hybrid theories that combine both approaches (Matland, 1995; Smith and Larimer, 2016) and acknowledge the methodology, and the normative or ideological perspectives that influence the study of implementation (Hill and Hupe, 2002). Moreover, Winter (2006:158) argues that “looking for the overall and one for all implementation theory, as has been the utopian objective for many implementation scholars, we should welcome diversity in both the theoretical perspectives and methodologies applied”. Accordingly, academics have diversified in how they present their synthesised perspectives, with some focusing on a straight combination of the top-down and bottom-up approaches, whilst others concentrate on contextual circumstances that prompt the choice of the most suitable approach (Pülzl and Treib, 2007).

With respect to the combined approach, Elmore (1985), who is seen as the primary mover, presents a combination that is characterised by forward and

backward mapping, which was underpinned by his belief that policy formulators need to identify the available resource, as well as the incentive structure of the other policy actors, in order to successfully execute policy. In the forward mapping, the policy designer needs to clearly define the policy objectives, detailing the process and elaborating the desired outcomes. Conversely, the backward mapping requires an accurate elaboration of the behaviour that will result from the policy implemented, and the operation employed to change the behaviour. Hence, backward mapping is considered as a more appropriate tool for policy designers seeking to understand the other actors' interpretation of the policy in practice (Matland, 1995; Pölzl and Treib, 2007), which is the focus of the current study.

Another conceptual framework that combines the top-down and bottom-up approaches was suggested by Sabatier (1986:37) who argued that "a preferred alternative to these either-or choice situations is to synthesize the best features of the two approaches". He therefore, proposed a framework for examining policy change over a ten to twenty year period, which combined the best features of the two approaches. The result was the 'Advocacy Coalition Framework' in which the analysis of the policy implementation includes all major actors, top-down and bottom-up, with Sabatier (1986:39) commenting that

the elements of such a conceptual framework are at hand. Consistent with the bottom-uppers, one needs to start from a policy problem or subsystem... and then examine the strategies employed by relevant actors in both the public and private sectors at various levels of government as they attempt to deal with the issue consistent with their objectives.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework is structured around two main areas that impose constraints and affect the resource of sub-system actors: relatively stable parameters, and dynamic external events. The relatively stable parameters are stable over an extended period, and include: (1) basic attributes of the problem area, (2) basic distribution of natural resource, (3) fundamental socio-cultural values and social structure and (4) basic constitutional structure (Pölzl and Treib, 2007). It is considered that "these parameters are important because they structure the nature of the

problem, constrain the resource available to policy participants, establish the rules and procedures for changing policy, and broadly frame the values that inform policymaking” (Pülzl and Treib, 2007:125). The external dynamic factors include: changes in socio-economic conditions, changes in public opinions, changes in systemic governing coalition and policy decision and impacts (Sabatier, 1986). The actors within the sub-system of this framework are aggregated into a number of advocacy coalitions composed of the interested actors. Each coalition adopts strategies envisaging changes in governmental institutions perceived to further its policy objectives, with the policy brokers mediating the conflicts among coalitions.

Another synthesis was made by Matland (1995), and focused on the characteristics of the policy differentiation. He criticised the previous studies for concentrating on a single case in approaching policy implementation, since this ignored the notion that the characteristics of the policy implementation process vary as the process moves from one stage to another. Indeed, his attempt differs from the other efforts to synthesise a theory, since it is about explaining when it is more appropriate to use the top-down approach rather than the bottom-up version, and vice versa, rather than trying to combine them. Accordingly, his “ambiguity-conflict model is presented as a contingency model that attempts to provide a more comprehensive and coherent basis for understanding implementation” (Matland, 1995:155). The ambiguity-conflict model embodies four different perspectives that theorists and decision-makers need to consider in the implementation process. Conflict invariably occurs when there is interdependence of actors who hold incompatible views regarding the policy objectives, and who perceive that the policy is relevant to their interest. Ambiguity in policy implementation occurs because of goals or means ambiguity, which results in varying degrees of conflict.

Table 2. 3 Matrix of Ambiguity–Conflict

	Low conflict	High conflict
Low ambiguity	Administrative implementation Resource Example: Smallpox	Political implementation power Example: busing

	eradication	
High ambiguity	Experimental implementation Contextual conditions Example: Headstart	Symbolic implementation Coalition strength Example: Community action agencies`

Source: Adapted from Matland (1995:160)

With regard to a rational decision-making process, a low level of ambiguity and conflict generally provide the prerequisite condition. The goals in this category and the tool employed to solve the problem are clearly defined, as are the roles, and this in itself states who the contributing actors are in the implementation process. This type of implementation is based on the principle that resource given to the implementers decide the outcomes generated. The failure of administrative implementation is attributed to “misunderstanding, poor coordination, insufficient resource, insufficient time to use the correct technology, or lack of an effective monitoring strategy to control and sanction deviant behaviour” (Matland, 1995:161). Administrative implementation is aligned with the top-down implementation model in which policy is isolated from those intended to deliver it, and where there is poor goal clarity and weak consensus among policy actors.

Another category is political implementation, where the conflict among actors is high, while the goals, and means to achieve them are clear. Here, the outcome of the implementation in this category is influenced by the power of the policy-maker, with success being determined either by the power of the policy-maker or by the resource allocated for the policy. Mechanisms of coerciveness and remuneration work best to secure the implementation of this policy. Disputes are solved by policy-makers through several techniques, such as: payments, logrolling, oversight, or ambiguity; hence, it is not clear what the goals are.

The experimental implementation occurs when the level of ambiguity of the goal is high but the conflict among actors is low. Here, the outcome of the implementation process depends mainly on the context of the policy, and where there is ambiguity, there are variations in policy implementation according to the specific context. Moreover, the convergence of policy goals

is another factor that increases the participation in implementation. When policy is seen as experimental, then the outcomes are considered as a formative evaluation, resulting in rigorous future implementation. However, two pitfalls are recognised during the experimental implementation: “first, the process should not be forced into an artificially constrained form and second the process requires a conscious realization that learning is the goal” (Matland, 1995:167). This category corresponds with the bottom-up implementation model, which stresses the role of the street-level bureaucrats, and in which actor involvement is the main driver of the policy’s success.

The last category is entitled Symbolic Implementation, where both ambiguity and conflict are high. In this area the policy course relates to a coalition of actors who operate at the local level, and who control any resource that are available. This type of policy usually fails, due to its conflictual in nature. Actors are intensely involved and the disagreement between them is resolved by coercion or bargaining.

The examples discussed in this section represent theoreticians’ endeavours to synthesise the two main approaches to policy implementation. However, other models, based on participation and democracy, have equally been advanced (DeLeon and DeLeon, 2002; Fischer, 2003), which concerns participatory evaluation approaches, using either qualitative or quantitative methods (DeGroff and Cargo, 2009).

Policy Network

Network analysis, as an emerging policy implementation theory, is another option that is relevant to the current study, since the NTP has a number of stakeholders to consider. The continuous deliberations between proponents of the top-down, and bottom-up models has led to the development of a ‘policy network’ approach to implementation (Hanf and Scharpf, 1978). They argue that there is difficulty for policies to be processed and controlled by a single actor and thus perceive formulation and implementation of policies as the result of interaction between various stakeholders, who may have

contradictory goals, interests, and strategies. To avoid confusion between terminology, the policy network adopted in the current study is similar to the idea of sub-systems, sub-governments and policy communities, which indicate that policy-making occurs between interest groups and governmental agencies (Klijn, 1996). The decision to include the policy network perspective was made because of its wider uses in the field, and the clear explanation of its terminology.

The policy network relates to the interaction amongst organisations involved in implementing a certain policy (Parsons, 1995), with network analysis involving the formation and implementation of policy, where issues of co-ordination and collaboration are the primary focus (Hill and Hupe, 2002).

Conceptually, development relates to the way a policy network is interpreted and presented, although in political science the concept denotes the analysis of complex relations between different agencies, and interest groups (Klijn, 1996). Recent studies have concentrate on understanding the nature of those resource dependencies that form the network relationships, which is not covered by the polarised top-down or bottom-up models. Four reasons for the development of network policy approaches have been identified (Jordan and Richardson, 1987; Hill and Hupe, 2002).

- They facilitate a consultative style of government.
- They reduce policy conflict and make it possible to depoliticise issues.
- They make policy making predictable.
- They relate well to the departmental organisation of government

Theoretically, network theory is seen as aligning with situations where bottom-up actors are an effective driver of the policy implementation process (Winter, 2006). It is assumed that the public and private sector are important to the analysis, and therefore, there is the opportunity for collaborative networks at the operational level, which result in reduced dependency on hierarchal implementation of policy. However, an alternative view is that the theoretical roots of network policy lie in inter-organisational sociology (Hill and Hupe, 2002). The interaction amongst various actors

within the network policy entails cooperation between the policy's stakeholders, with the various stakeholders being interdependent actors, and their mutual dependency meaning that "policy can only be realised on the basis of co-operation" (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000:140), with interactions being seen as 'games'. Here, the policy network is constructed on the basis of interdependency, which results in a complication of policy goals, and a conflict of interest (Parsons, 1995). The notion is that organisations are dependent for their survival on resource controlled by other organisations, and this is the reason why inter-organisation theory studies the exchange of resource between organisations (Klijn, 1996).

Yet, the absence of an agreement on regulations and poor cooperation among the actors can lead to damaging consequences. Thus, in order to ensure proper policy implementation it is important to manage the network effectively. As the policy network includes different actors associated with a policy, the policy itself serves as a social link (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). This process drives the relationship between the actors, which is often seen when delivery mechanism of direct government action impacts on partners in the private sector (Blair, 2002). These characteristics are under five principles which comprise the anarchism approach (Wachhaus, 2011), which fosters the management of networks through; 1) shifting the focus from static structural elements to dynamic processes, 2) working collectively in a co-operative manner, 3) establishing social networks, 4) integrating network participants to achieve stability, and 5) locating accountability within network linkages. Salamon (2000), in his introduction of the 'New Governance Paradigm', identified these five key characteristics as new characteristics, which differentiate from the old models of public administration, in that they endorse the need to select the correct tools for policy implementation. Furthermore, the new governance approach positions the focus more toward organisation network, rather than hierarchical agencies, whilst defining the roles of the actors. The New Governance Paradigm stimulates public-private partnership, rather than competition; government provides the resources the private sector requires, whilst the private sector supplies the expertise and innovation not possessed by government. The approach emphasises negotiation and

persuasion, which replace the command and control philosophy, thus, “instead of issuing orders, public managers must learn how to create incentives for the outcomes they desire from actors over whom they have only imperfect control” (Salamon, 2000:1635). Finally, this approach tends to encourage enablement skills amongst partners, and stakeholders, to ensure that common goals are reached.

The inter-organisational analysis has two main parts: power relations between organisations, and organisational benefit exchange (Parsons, 1995). Power and resource dependency refers to when organisations induce other less-powerful and more dependent organisations to interact with them; whilst organisational benefit exchange concerns the organisation’s dealing with others, on the basis of the benefit each can derive. Rhodes (2008) believes that each participating actor in the network deploys their resources, whether legal, organisational, financial, political or informational, in order to maximise policy influence, and reduce the degree of dependence. He confirms that “the basic argument is that institutions are systems of rules that structure the opportunities for actors (individual and corporate) to realise their preferences” (ibid:11). Hence, the process relates to the outcome of the interactions of resourceful actors whose have their preferences, and perceptions are predominately shaped through their institutionalised norms (Scharpf, 1997).

The policy network approach has resolved much of the conflict associated with the top-down and bottom-up models, although it is not as widely used as, possibly due to the weak theoretical foundation, and poorly defined concepts (Börzel, 1998), or its descriptive, which is weak on providing explanatory power (Parsons, 1995). The weaknesses may result from the policy focusing on establishing cooperation between actors, and on managing the network, rather than analysing the conflicting power holders (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). Finally, a considerable drawback is that it ignores the government’s role in the implementation process, considering it to have the same standing as the other parties (Rhodes, 2008).

Public–Private Policy Partnership

Historically, public management tensions have existed between government and the private sector (Salamon, 2000), although the 21st Century often requires public policies to be implemented in collaboration with private and even not-for-profit organisations (Blair, 2002). In particular, Public–Private Partnership (PPP) is a policy implementation network that represents a mechanism for public service delivery that is outside the hierarchical approach, and is more orientated towards collaborative delivery (Lecy et al., 2014). The literature emphasises that PPP is common in the construction sector, where they contribute to the nation's infrastructure, through government contracts (Wettenhall, 2003; Hodge and Greve, 2007). However, the current study uses the term to refer to the Omani Government policy to achieve the localisation of labour, with the cooperation of private sector partners, who are financed to deliver the Omanisation initiative.

Indeed, PPP is widely interpreted, having been implemented around the world for various projects, which has resulted in the term becoming somewhat loose and ambiguous. Hodge and Greve (2007), have therefore, suggested a revision of PPP definitions. Originally, it was identified as a public sector method to supersede conventional contracting methods, although Bult-Spiering and Dewulf (2006) argue that the concept is often used as a synonym for privatisation. In the earlier years PPP was seen as the new language of Public Management, and one designed to embrace more established procedures that involved private sector delivery of public services (Linder, 1999; Hodge and Greve, 2007). In the delivery of public policy there is often the need for government to work collaboratively with other parties, and this is seen within the Omanisation initiative. The Ministry hold responsibility for facilitating employment for Omani jobseekers, whilst the private sector (the training providers and employers) are partners in the delivery of the NTP. The government has a two-fold role; first to gain the private sector cooperation, particularly from employers and second, to jointly administer, with the Ministry of Higher Education, the VET institutes, such as Higher Colleges of Technology, VT Centres, and Colleges of Applied Sciences. The public–private partnership is a response to the Government's provision of qualified manpower, to meet the nation's Economic Vision 2020.

The NTP is a tripartite contract between the Government, represented by the MoM, employers and training providers. Within the partnership, the Government finances the process, whilst the private sector facilitates Omani youth into employment. It is noted that defining PPP as a spectrum of relationships between the public, and private sector, it embodies the idea of sharing risks and rewards equally (Bennett et al., 2000), although the reality may differ.

Numerous driving forces exist when government and private sector partnerships are establishing. For example, PPP can be viewed as the government's endeavour to combine the strengths of the public and private sectors (Hodge and Greve, 2007), to improve efficiency, quality of public services and products (Bult-Spiering and Dewulf, 2006). The first reason broadly applies to the NTP, as the private sector possessed the specialised expertise required to deliver private sector work for Omani jobseekers.

The implementation of PPP relates to certain factors that work either to foster or hinder the efforts made by the partners, with an important aspect being the integrated partnership between the public and private sector, which includes service delivery, and evaluation (Sekhri et al., 2011). In respect to evaluation, a number of factors can assist the implementation, such as: careful consideration of risk-sharing, the presence of a strong private consortium, judicious government control, along with a stable political and social environment (Zhang et al., 2012).

Such requirements present challenges to policy implementation, with a particular barrier being the lack of public sector regulation surrounding the partnerships (Wettenhall, 2003), which can lead to role confusion amongst all parties. Similarly, the absence of government guidelines, along with ambiguity of objectives, was highlighted as obstacles to PPP implementation, in a Malaysian context (Ismail and Azzahra Haris, 2014).

2.2 National Human Resource Development

The primary focus of the thesis refers to policy implementation, however, as the policy in question concerns NHRD, background literature to the topic is presented. NHRD is a part of the wider body of literature pertaining to HRD generally. Harbison and Myers (1964) are regarded as the pioneers of HRD, although as economists, they perceived HRD to be an important tool for national development, although the term was subsequently narrowed, to be used primarily in organisations (McGuire, 2011). The process relates to people and is seen as “developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organisation development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance at the organizational, process and individual/group levels” (Swanson, 1999:2). In a much earlier definition, Nadler and Nadler (1989: 4) “HRD is organised learning experiences provided by employers, within a specific period of time, to bring about possibility of performance improvement and/or personal growth”. Others add that HRD is inter-disciplinary in nature, drawing from the fields of philosophy, communication theory, sociology and humanities Weinberger (1998), with Russ-Eft (2014:547) confirming its eclectic nature “HRD is an interdisciplinary field that is focused on growth or flourishing of human beings so that they can serve as a source of help, information, and strength to organisations and to society”.

The quotations demonstrate the variance, with it being acknowledged that HRD is seen as an umbrella term covering many activities, and the emphasis can change according to organisational and national circumstances. In Belgium, for instance, HRD is interpreted as training and development, whereas characteristics and language of organisational change appear to be the central focus in the UK (Grieves and Redman, 1999). Different interpretations also exist for training and development, with training being provided to enable trainees to absorb new skills, and understanding, whilst development refers to preparing people to perform beyond their current responsibilities (Thomason, 1988). Thus, when NHRD, or HRD are being conceptualised, scholars and practitioners commonly use: learning, development, training, skills, and performance improvement, to describe the phenomenon.

Emergence of NHRD

The source of human capital as a scientific idea can be traced back to Adam Smith in 1776 (Balogh, 2013), with it being related to the capability of individuals to make changes in action and development of the economy, through knowledge and skills (Schultz, 1962; Becker, 1962). Looking at an earlier 1964 study by Harbison and Myers, Wang and Swanson (2008), consider this the point of departure for subsequent studies on national development policies, because of its emphasis on increasing ‘investment in humans’. The study stated explicitly that: “human resource development is the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills, and the capacities of all the people in a society (Edgard and Cornachione, 2010:2). Further, it is argued that investments in education and training are the most relevant types of investment in human capital, and that the benefits of investing in these areas can be readily observed (Becker, 1993). HRD is fundamentally linked to the economy of all countries, and hence, this macro level of HRD as a field of study for the sake of national development, has come to merit the NHRD concept.

Despite commonalities of HRD, and the derivation of NHRD from that term, there is still no definitive agreement on a precise definition for either term (McLean, 2004; Wang and Swanson, 2008), although it can be seen that human skills development, for national and state development purposes, is at the core of the idea. Devins and Smith (2013) present NHRD as an approach followed by a country targeting the enhancement of citizens’ socio-economic existence, brought about through the development of human capabilities. This notion links with the earlier economists’ ideas and is currently extend to demand policies relating to compulsory, further and higher education, and indeed to vocational education and training (VET) (Stewart et al., 2013).

Objectives of NHRD

Regardless of the national differences in NHRD, scholars’ agree about the need for NHRD, although the objectives vary. McLean et al. (2012), for example, argue that the gradual application of organisational HRD in a

wider, national, context has aimed at societal development and improved welfare of human beings generally, rather than just in the workplace. The view shared by Alagaraja and Wang (2012) who believe that NHRD emerged as a phenomenon to promote economic growth and societal development. On the other hand, Cho and McLean (2004) conclude that for certain countries NHRD have broader objectives that incorporate health, and education policies. Wider still, NHRD is seen as a means of combatting labour migration problems (Tynaliyev and McLean, 2011), and human trafficking (Mace et al., 2012). Undoubtedly, NHRD objectives can relate to all aspects of life, although the concern is mostly social and economic.

Training for the sake of national HRD is strongly related to the idea of economic sustainability (Becker, 1993; Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009), and in this regard, it is important to consider the exact purpose of training, such as whether the goals are long or short-term. Vocational Education and Training (VET) has a key role to play in NHRD, as it is directly related to the improvement of employment skills. Indeed, it has required to solve unemployment issues, to reduce the burden on higher education, to attract foreign investment, to ensure rapid growth of earnings and employment and to reduce the inequality of earnings between the rich and the poor (Gill et al., 2000). Finegold and Soskice (1988:21) made the point almost three decades ago, that “[e]ducation and training are seen to play a crucial role in restoring or maintaining international competitiveness, both on the macro-level by easing the transition of the work force into new industries, and at the micro-level, where firms are producing high quality”. The close association between education and economy is apparent in these quotations, although certain economists reject this belief, arguing that education has no effect on the economy (Lewis, 2009), with it possibly being viewed from the challenge involved in accurately measuring the return on investment

Vocational training is assumed to be of considerable political assistance for countries in addressing unemployment issues, or in the transition of young jobseekers from training to the workplace (Hanushek et al., 2017). One impact of HRD on political stability is apparent in the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011,

whereby civil unrest emerged, from among other things, widespread, and chronic unemployment. Indeed, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommended a development Model to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area, which included the equipping of youth with the appropriate job skills to help countries achieve economic growth (ILO, 2012). In Oman, and other GCC countries, the political instability witnessed in the MENA area in 2011 provoked various responses from Government. These came in the form of job creation, reforms in the Government cabinets, increased salaries, and the provision of greater educational opportunities (Colombo, 2012). This suggests that training and education is being targeted beyond developing human resource, and maintaining stability in civil society. Consequently, the question arises as to whether education, and training are genuinely there to achieve their stated goals, or whether they are instruments for something different.

The economist Mahdavi (1970) assumes that Middle Eastern countries are predominately 'Rentier' states that depend on rents received from their natural resources of oil and gas. In the rentier state arrangement, the relationship between government and people is different from other countries, with it being focused on the financial entitlement of citizens. These entitlements comprise public sector salaries, grants and, housing, and are distributed, rather than citizens having to pay taxes to government (Luciani, 1990). This arrangement is aimed at achieving long-term stability, and the legitimacy of Arab monarchies who have 'bought' citizens by providing secure jobs, health services, financial loans and education (Gray, 2011). After making these payments to citizens, governments assume their right is to do what they believe is appropriate with the nation's wealth, and hence they create their own priorities in terms of development. Ross (2001), however, argues that rentier governments deliberately reduce their commitment to education, in an effort to preserve citizens' reliance on them, and to reduce democratic efforts. In this argument, education in rentier states is not perceived as intending to achieve the usual objectives of NHRD, but rather as a grant from monarchy governments, with an aim of maintaining the political status quo. This would seem a simplistic argument, and one that fails to take account the aspirations of thousands of young

people who, having been given the 'gift' of education, subsequently seek rewarding employment.

Oman's situation seems to acknowledge this issue, since the Sultanate has responded to the Arab Spring by implementing numerous economic, social, and political reforms, with education and training featuring prominently among them. There has been a large expansion in the number of students accepted into vocational, technical and tertiary education, whilst the increase of jobs in the public sector in 2011 was unprecedented in Oman, since the country's renaissance in 1970. Even before 2011, Oman's Economic Vision 2020 had firmly identified HRD as an urgent national requirement for economic sustainability, and began the process of directing education and training towards the localisation of labour, with a view to young Omanis taking over jobs currently done by expatriates.

Approaches to NHRD

It is apparent that the aims of NHRD differ between countries, depending on government priorities, but irrespective of such differences. Thus, there are numerous approaches that countries might adopt to satisfy their training needs. Cho and McLean (2004) propose five NHRD models: (a) centralised NHRD, (b) transitional NHRD, (c) government-initiated NHRD, (d) decentralised/free-market NHRD, and (e) small-nation NHRD. An alternative set of four models is presented by Devins and Smith (2013):

- Centralised model: imposed top-down from central government (China, Mexico).
- Free market model: leaves the decision on HRD to market forces (UK, USA, and Australia). The market for skills is expected to be 'demand-led' by employers.
- Corporatist approach: seeking to generate agreement between the key stakeholders (government, employers and trade unions) (Austria, Germany, and Czech Republic).
- Match-making model: reconciles the dilemma of intervention and voluntarism by the intelligent use of forecasting data at government level to guide the supply infrastructure, persuade, and stimulate the demand for

skills from organisations within the context of high growth and high skills aspirations (South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan).

As long as national training aims to develop the skills of the nationals, the accountability for its implementation rests with the government, the private sector, people themselves, unions or a combination of these. Devins and Smith (2013:55) observe that the “[g]overnment can play one of two roles to treat the market failure: voluntarism, which sees its role as the encouragement of organisations to take responsibility for skills acquisition and HRD, and interventionism, where government seeks to influence decision-making on HRD in the interests of the economy as a whole”. The choice of which approach to use is dependent upon the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of each country (Stewart et al., 2013).

According to Wilson (2012:139), “[i]n the UK the government operates a laissez-faire (demand led-decentralised) VET system in which employers are largely left alone to decide what training to provide to their employees”. The World Bank position is that in developing countries VET is best left to individuals, enterprises, and private sector training institutions, with government interventions kept to a minimum (Bennell and Segerstrom, 1998). That said, the decision leave training to employers might result in insufficient or untrained employees (Hoeckel and Schwartz, 2010). Support is given for a combined effort (Cooper, 2004), with the private sector making an important contribution the nation.

The German experience demonstrates that public investment in initial training can deliver strong economic returns, with the private sector contributing to occupation-specific training, which addresses the skills shortfall (Protsch and Solga, 2016). This approach is termed the Corporatist approach, which relies on a strong social partnership, with government support, and an active participation of employers (Zimmermann et al., 2013). Indeed, several European countries approach NHRD in this way, with Germany, Austria, and Switzerland being examples. However, studies in Germany suggest a high reliance on the firms’ ability to develop skills as part of their dual apprenticeship scheme, which might cause future

difficulties (Thelen, 2007). Indeed, Graf (2013:189) argues that “pressure to expand the higher education (HE) system in line with the discourse promoted by international organizations such as the EU is assumed as a challenge to the dual apprenticeship system”.

The Matchmaking approach is another way to achieve NHRD and is evident in South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. The strategy adopted is manpower planning, whereby the different requirements for human resource are identified (Maurer, 2010). The Asian approach is regarded as having four core components (Cummings, 1995): (1) the state and government co-ordinate knowledge transfer and mastery of foreign technology, (2) the government funds primary education and limited specialisations for higher education, (3) individuals, families and employers supplement government efforts in education, and (4) co-ordination in development and employment is evident through manpower planning.

The approaches already identified are predominately decentralised, in comparison with developing countries, where a centralised approach is often characterised by the government’s interventionist role in NHRD. Yang et al. (2004) believe that the government, which is responsible for training, imposes a top-down system, from government to the private sector. This approach includes vocational secondary education, and the training for the unemployed (Grubb and Ryan, 1999). In addition, their HRD policies have often been found to link to a five-year national development plans (Cho and McLean, 2004). However, a danger exists that the government can marginalise private sector initiatives and entrepreneurship (Eichhorst et al., 2012), which leads to incompatibility between private sector requirements, and governments’ education strategies. That said, the involvement of a variety of social partners in the training process is integral to the successful implementation of training policies (Flude and Sieminski, 1999). With different arguments being presented it is clear that a one right approach to NHRD has not been identified, which is due to numerous variables that affect HRD practices in different situations and communities (McLean and McLean, 2001; Cho and McLean, 2004; Budhwani and McLean, 2005). It is apparent from the different models reviewed, that Oman follows a

centralised model, as the planning, management, and funding, is directed by the Government. There is a partnership between Government and the private sector, with the latter assisting the former to achieve Omanisation.

The OECD reports provide rich information on the implementation of VET in various countries, with manpower planning being a central focus. VET is often conducted through three methods: student preference, planned provision and market determination (Hoeckel and Schwartz, 2010), with Oman falling between market determination and planned provision. From the NHRD literature, Oman's NTP is reflective of the training policies enforced in various other countries, although, to avoid confusion it needs to be noted that whilst the NTP is delivered in partnership with the private sector, this should not be confused with the vocational education, which is delivered through the Governments' Vocational Training Institutes, which do not fall within the scope of this study.

In what now follows, the management of vocational education in the Arab countries is explored in order to identify the variety of approaches followed to execute this type of training.

National and Vocational Training in the Arab Countries

High youth unemployment rates are considered a major issue for many countries, with Arab countries being particularly affected: 25.1% in the Middle East and 23.6% in North Africa, which well exceed the world average of 12.6% (Robbins and Jamal, 2016). These figures cause concern, and have resulted in protests that continue still, in parts of the Arab World. In recognition of this urgent challenge, education and training have been identified as one of the 'tools' to reverse this trend.

Between the 1960 and 1970s, the Arab countries witnessed an expansion in their training and education provision, which was in response to the deficiencies in the education system and a lack of skilled human resource (Al-Lamki, 1998). National and vocational training emerged as one solution to deal with the skills shortages, which were hampering economic

development. More recently, the primary reason for VET emerging in Arab states relates to resolving the unemployment phenomenon. According to UNESCO (2014:24), “populations are growing rapidly which is leading to increased demand for jobs and high youth unemployment ... VET is seen as a way of supporting employment, transition and equal opportunities.” In countries that did not have unemployment protection and social welfare, only the public sector offers job security, which makes this sector extremely attractive. As a result, the Arab established training programmes and educational institutions, which also occurred in Algeria and Saudi Arabia, which have an unemployment provision. These developments in training and education were underpinned by Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1962; Schultz, 1962), which argued that greater investment in education would generate higher earning, although a recent ILO report (Nabli, 2007) tends to reject this. Indeed, the report suggests that in MENA countries, attending education, in particular tertiary education, increases the risk of unemployment, in comparison to less educated jobseekers. In the Omani context, a study conducted by Al-Lamki (1998), using students from Sultan Qaboos University, confirms this theory, although the real problem lies in the job match, which emerges in the following forms: jobs are created in areas other than those where there is unemployment, and there is job mismatch between roles and youth skills or job denial due to the low return (Chaaban, 2010). These issues have caused a problem for the private sector, which had had high expectations of contributing to the country's economic diversity and sustainability.

2.3 Factors Affecting NHRD Policy Implementation

Factors Relating to Public Policy Implementation

Numerous studies have investigated the implementation of public policy, indeed “the number of variables offered by researchers as plausible parts of the explanation for implementation results is large and growing” (O'Toole, 2004:310). In looking at the implementation over thirty years ago three general factors were identified (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981). First was

the tractability of the problem requiring governmental intervention; how manageable is the problem. In this respect, constraints in programme implementation can relate to technical difficulties, diversity in the groups' behaviour, size of the target group, and the extent of behavioural change required. The authors felt that the most manageable problems were those that related to statutory objectives. The second factor concerned the ability of policy-makers to structure implementation, with this relating; clarity of programme objectives, hierarchical integration of implementing agencies, regulations organising the involved actors, and the involvement of external actors in the decision-making. The third factor outlines the influence of non-statutory variables, which include socio-economic conditions and technology, variations in public support, the attitude of groups, along with the commitment, and leadership skills of implementing officials. This particular factor was later emphasised by DeGroff and Cargo (2009), who found that networked governance and new public management were factors influencing the management of policy networks. Networked governance is based on the co-ordination of the policy process across multiple stakeholders, and implementers. Such co-ordination is a complex process demanding a governance framework structure for policy implementation, rather than simply leaving this to government itself.

New Public Management (NPM), advocates an outcome-based approach to assessing policy, a trend which is also used to evaluate policy implementation accountability. A study in the UK looked at responses to a central government initiative, with important factors relating to: policy characteristics, layers in the policy transfer process, factors affecting responses by implementing agencies, and responses from those affected (Hill, 2012). Factors drawn from this study, helped establish potential areas of influence for the NTP implementation in Omani, although the differences Western context of the study was recognised.

In a Malaysian context, Abas and Wee (2015) recently presented four factors that influence the implementation of governance practices in the management of solid waste. Whilst the policy focus is not in HRD, it was of

interest that the research was conducted in a developing country. Their first key factor concerned the clarity associated with the policy, which embraces goals, degree of pluralism, openness, and the level of autonomy. According to Matland (1995:159),

the degree of ambiguity inherent in a policy directly affects the implementation process in significant ways. It influences the ability of superiors to monitor activities, the likelihood that the policy is uniformly understood across the many implementation sites, the probability that local contextual factors play a significant role, and the degree to which relevant actors vary sharply across implementation sites.

The second factor from Abas and Wee's study relates to the competency of stakeholders to underpin the policy implementation. This was in addition to their willingness, beliefs, and personal orientation, which were seen to play a major role. The third factor involves the availability of the resources, including financial, and human resource. Finally, the fourth factor stresses the management of the stakeholder network, an issue that is returned to later in the chapter. These recent reports broadly concur with Ryan's (1996) earlier work, which identified, policy formulation, clarity of objectives, adequacy of resources, integration within the policy system, and the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation.

Another factor in policy implementation concerns an attempt to synthesize the top-down and bottom-up approaches in as single model, to ensure rigorous implementation. To address this problem O'Toole (2004) proposed the 'contextual interaction theory' (CIT), which is an abridged framework for the systematic identification of factors that influence the policy implementation. According O'Toole (2004:325), "the theory is essentially a deductive argument that places emphasis on interdependent action between implementers and targets, with policy instruments one, but only one, element shaping what happens". The main three elements within the policy implementation were seen as: objectives, information, and power. The extent to which a policy is integrated within the stakeholders' strategies is considered integral in motivating the implementer toward policy execution.

Spratt (2009), citing previous researchers (Sabatier, 1991; Kayaba et al., 2005; Deibert et al., 2006), states that “examining motivation helps stakeholders understand the perspectives of implementers... often revealing the root causes of implementation barriers” (Spratt, 2009:11).

O’Toole’s (2004) model also identifies the adequacy of information, along with the competency of stakeholders, as significant factors in policy implementation, with the final point referring to a clear identification of sources of power, and which actors possess legitimacy. To some extent, this theory corresponds with the network policy approach, in that they both acknowledge the way different actors interact on the basis of power and resources dependency (Parsons, 1995). Understanding the interaction amongst various stakeholders can support implementation, in particular, the interaction amongst policy stakeholders, the level of cooperation, degree of opposition amongst actors, and the joint learning process shared between the different stakeholders, are all considered important (Spratt, 2009). Indeed, the three CIT factors represent the core ingredients of any implementation process. Nonetheless, the CIT framework assumes that contextual differences will introduce different factors that relate to circumstances, and which “can be incorporated, at least implicitly, without increasing greatly the complexity of the basic theory” (O’Toole, 2004:326).

McLaughlin’s (1987) early work contributed to the debate by stressing individual incentives in a belief that a policy implementation will bring benefits. With such incentives, along with a clearly formulated policy, and agents to implement it, is sufficient to achieve the implementation. However, he acknowledged that support from stakeholders would further facilitate the implementation, whilst adding that actor pressure arising with differing viewpoints was inevitable. He proposed the existence of sets of factors, both internal and external, with the external ones having to be considered before the implementation commenced. These important external factors were goal clarity and effective authority and once these criteria were met, then the internal factors could be considered: commitment, motivation, and competence of the stakeholders.

In a recent study, May (2014) demonstrated how the governing arrangements for addressing policy problems work, either to reinforce or undermine political commitments to making implementation work. In exploring this issue, the concept of 'policy regime' was introduced as a basis for revitalising policy implementation. It was argued that "this perspective depicts regimes as governing arrangements for addressing policy problems and draws attention to the interplay of the ideas, institutional arrangements, and interests that undergird a given regime" (ibid:295). This approach helps to outline whether the implementation in practice "is perceived legitimate (or not), advances a coherent set of ideas (or is fragmented), and is durable and able to sustain commitment beyond that of the initial policy enactment (or fleeting)" (ibid:295).

Factors Related to NHRD

Several factors determine the implementation of NHRD policy initiatives, with Cho and McLean (2004) arguing that that process needs to be flexible and capable of adapting to global changes. Additionally, NHRD need to adopt the 'best fit' rather than 'best practice' approach, with the 'best fit' methodology being more sensitive to institutional and cultural characteristics (Murphy and Garavan, 2009). Lynham and Cunningham (2006) also identify a number of requirements for NHRD specifically in developing countries, as follows:

- (1) There needs to be careful consideration of the United Nations Index (UNI), particularly in respect of health, GDP, and education.
- (2) NHRD needs to be aimed at creating a balance in political, economic, social, and educational opportunities.
- (3) NHRD needs to be understood as going beyond education.
- (4) NHRD needs to be implemented for an explicit purpose.
- (5) NHRD strategy needs to encompass all learning systems.
- (6) NHRD needs to be made to work to manage talent and to drive innovation.

(7) NHRD needs to be included in all development strategies, and citizens need to be engaged and empowered in its achievement.

(8) NHRD needs to be in parallel with the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) Millennium goals.

The requirements are relevant to the current research as Oman is ranked as a developing country, and thus, the NTP would help inform and extend the current understandings NHRD factors in the developing countries.

The circumstances of the developing countries have a dramatic influence on the way in each country is pursuing NHRD as a national policy (McLean, 2004), with there being variations in what NHRD requires, which accords to the particular circumstances of the country concerned. For example, Korea provides systematic legal support, and appoints a Minister to oversee NHRD policy (Kim et al., 2009), with these institutional efforts being considered necessary to underpin the implementation. In the UK, however, the challenges are to balance the standardisation of NHRD activities with national differences and to expand aspirations; these have been managed through the Government's determination to support less traditional aspects of provision, and to access traditionally difficult-to-reach recipients (Lee, 2004). Again, in Singapore, human capital development (as HRD is termed) is achieved through a tripartite system: (1) a committed government, a network of agencies and commitment to tripartism, (2) political stability and (3) geographically-convergent, and intelligent leadership (Osman-Gani, 2004; Singapore, 2014). On the other hand, in China the Government plays a key role in establishing HRD policies, and related strategies, whilst at the same time transplanting the Western model of HRD, in as much as it considers the social implications of these policies that works to preserve social harmony (Yang et al., 2004; Alagaraja and Wang, 2012).

The importance of carefully examining the Western and Eurocentric approaches to NHRD, prior to adopting any imported policies, and strategies, is expressed by Alagaraja and Wang (2012). He emphasised the need to ensure compatibility with specific cultural contexts due to

differences between contexts where these policies were devised and their context of application. Indeed, having conducted wide-ranging research on national and organisational culture, Hofstede et al., (2010:22) asserts that “the world is full of confrontations between people, groups and nations who think, feel, and act differently”. However, it is apparent that countries and regions differ in more ways than just their cultures (Alagaraja and Wang, 2012).

In particular, the factors affecting the implementation of training directed to encourage youth employment, was investigated thirty years ago by Levin and Ferman (1986), who studied nine programmes conducted by the Youth Employment Demonstration Project Act (YEDPA), in the USA. According to their research, two main factors affected the success of the training programme, these being: the structural conditions of the organisation where training programmes were conducted, and the behavioural pattern of the managers. With respect of the first factor, four requirements emerged: first, the need for a steady political hand by the executives responsible for the programme’s implementation, who played a major role in establishing the convergence of interests among the different actors in the programme. There was a specific need to bridge, and ease the tension between the public and private sectors. Second, the need for the local policy infrastructure to comprise institutionally-oriented organisations, rather than individuals and for both the organisations, and individuals, to be motivated toward innovation, and change. Third, the need for effective programme design, which involves clear goals, and patterns of administration should be offered, to provide guidance in terms of discretion in programme implementation. Fourth, the need for an open mind, as the prior expectation of difficulties may deter any implementation.

Levin and Ferman’s (1986) second factor of managerial behaviour, focused on two types of behaviour that were displayed by executives in the process of policy implementation. In this respect, executives can operate as ‘fixers’ of policy, where they simply assemble programme pieces by establishing a conducive working environment, and convincing those involved that they

need to work together. In this role, executives seek to establish a coalition of effort that ensures policy implementation, which is achieved through the introduction of a compensation policy for various actors. The second type of behaviour is concerned with 'bridging', where an executive is perceived as a bridging agent, whose aims to facilitate "joint action among various interests through [his/her] standing and membership in more than one of the relevant implementation camps" (Levin and Ferman, 1986:319).

More recently, Collins et al. (2007) have proposed a further set of factors that were tested in a national evaluation study concerning child welfare training. A number of their factors coincide with those already mentioned, but other also emerged. First, the context of the implementation policy was shown to be an important factor in shaping the process of implementation. Second, the study stresses the need to base the policy on a causal theory that is able to clarify the expected reaction of people as a result of policy implemented. Finally, the valid use of top-down and bottom-up theories is perceived as necessary in conceiving the policy implementation strategy, and developing appropriate training activities.

Factors Related to NHRD in the Arab Context

When considering the factors affecting governmental policies, such as NHRD, Oman demonstrates similarities with the literature that surround the conditions for implementation. According to Al-Sayyed (2014:113), "the most important internal and external factors affecting the HRD are leadership style, employee commitment and motivation, demographic characteristics, labour unions, and governmental laws and regulations". Consequently, the impact of these specific factors on the NTP implementation in Oman is considered important. Moreover, according to a UAE study conducted by Wilkins (2002b:15), "the demand for, and implementation of vocational education in the higher education sector is greatly influenced by economic, social, cultural and political factors". These factors are likely to have similar importance for any Omani investigation, since the two countries share a common socio-cultural background. Indeed, these factors made a substantial contribution to the motivation for training

initiatives, and the desire to create skilled national labour, in respect to certain types of employment. The study conducted by Al-Lamki (1998), for example, was among the early academic efforts to highlight the composition of the Omani labour market, and the barriers encountered in trying to implement the Omanisation initiative. The study emphasised the role played by the private sector, with it being perceived as a major factor in any policy relating to the labour market issues surrounding Omanisation. Moreover, the study stressed the critical importance of using manpower planning to achieve the match between graduate supply from academic and training institutes, and the labour market demand. In light of such recommendations, a partnership between the public and private sector emerges as a logical step.

Having reviewed the literature and the theoretical and conceptual areas associated with the implementation of policy, and particularly NRHD policy, attention now turns to various means of evaluation that are associated with HRD, of which the stakeholder theory of evaluation emerges as the preferred option for the current study. The current study does not use evaluation in its traditional form, of testing out if goals have been met, rather it uses evaluation techniques to gain a greater understanding of the perceptions of stakeholders towards the implementation of NTP.

2.4 Evaluation

Origin and Theoretical Perspectives of Evaluation

Various scholars have traced the origins of evaluation to different times and contexts, with Scriven (1991), assuming that the formal evaluation of crafts may possibly extend back to an assessment of stone chippers properties' and Samurai swords. Nonetheless, formal evaluation in the public sector is displayed as early as 2000 BC, when civil service examinations in China were used to assess an individual's proficiency for work in government positions (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). It is also argued that "Socrates used verbally mediated evaluation as part of the learning process" (ibid, 2012:39). With particular regard to the systematic evaluation of programme, this first became commonplace in education and public health, prior to World War I (Rossi and Freeman, 1993), although the process both before and after this

time was considered to be a long evolution, rather than a radical emergence (Fitzpatrick et al. 2012):

- i. Early forms of formal evaluation: 17th century and earlier.
- ii. Programme evaluation: 1800-1940 arose due to the dissatisfaction with education, and social programmes in Great Britain.
- iii. Programme evaluation: 1940-1964 expansion of applied social science research during World War II, as governments targeted the training and development of the military.
- iv. Emergence of modern programme evaluation: 1964-1972, which coincided with the rise in Planning, Programming and Budgeting Systems (PPBS) which represented a variant of the systems approaches that were being used by many large aerospace, communications and automotive industries to improve system efficiency, effectiveness, and budget allocation.
- v. Evaluation as a profession: 1973-1989 in line with the growth in various approaches. Programmes were developed to train students to become evaluators, and professional assessors. In addition, this period witnessed an intense growth in publications that focused exclusively on evaluation.
- vi. Present Evaluation: 1990 to the present time - the evaluation discipline has been conducted in many different settings and using several approaches and methods.

Others have adopted different classifications of how the development of measurement and evaluation emerged, with Wang and Spitzer (2005), citing three distinct stages: (1) practice-oriented atheoretical stage (1950-1987); (2) process-driven operational stage (1987-1999); and (3) research-oriented, practice-based comprehensive methodologies (2000-present). What needs to be understood is that the evaluation process has developed into a dynamic field, with each case interacting to, and taking careful note of the environment and its changing nature.

In addition, it is important to understand its meaning, objectives, and uses of a particular evaluation process, although, even in relation to clear objectives, evaluation is still perceived as a judgment of the worth or merit (Scriven,

1967). Fitzpatrick et al. (2012:6) describe the process as “a basic form of human behaviour, sometimes it is thorough, structured, and formal while often it is impressionistic and private”. In the context of training and learning interventions, it is often perceived as an assessment of the value and costs involved in such interventions that are formally conducted by an organisation (Bee and Bee, 2003; Devins and Smith, 2013). At the national level, especially with respect to VET initiatives, evaluation has emerged as both common and essential in countries such the USA, the UK, and throughout the European Union (Grubb and Ryan, 1999).

Evaluation also has an important quality assurance role, in that it can provide feedback on methods, achievement of objectives, and individuals, as well as organisational needs (Bramley, 1996). The process of evaluation can be undertaken to achieve a number of objectives, for example: satisfying pre-defined objectives, assessing the methods used to deliver the intervention, informing different stakeholders about the progress of an intervention, improving the quality of interventions, and, from a financial perspective, assessing the return on investment (Rae, 1991; Thomason, 1988; Bramley, 1996; Grubb and Ryan, 1999; Bee and Bee, 2003; Devins and Smith, 2013). Moreover, according to Farjad (2012:2838), “the purpose of the strategic plan for training evaluation is to develop rigorous methods to assess and report effectiveness of training so that the findings can be used to improve training and training related activities (such as mentoring and other transfer of learning supports)”. In the training context, evaluation can measure the trainee responses, and assess their capability to transfer the learning to the workplace (Thomason, 1988). Evaluation can be approached through several techniques, although they invariably fall into three categories (Pineda, 2010; Eseryel, 2002). There is the initial Ex ante evaluation, used at the commencement of a programme and which is invariably formative; the Interim evaluation, used during the programme, which can be either formative or summative; and finally there is Ex post evaluation, which appears at programme completion, and is mostly summative. Where the aim is for programme or implementation improvement then the process would often refer to formative methods,

possibly obtained in subjective or informal means, rather than any formal assessment of goals (Scriven, 1967).

Whilst a general agreement on the significance of various approaches does not exist, Fitzpatrick et al. (2012:22) argue that “an undue emphasis on summative evaluation can be unfortunate because the development process, without formative evaluation, is incomplete and inefficient”. With respect to sequencing, Taras (2005) affirms that assessment begin with summative assessment, further adding that formative assessment is perceived as summative assessment, plus feedback gained from the learner. In either approach there is a mix of inquiry and methods, which include judging quality standards, collecting relevant information, and the application of the standards to determine quality and value (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Purpose and Types of Evaluation

Evaluation serves various purposes, and is undertaken for different reasons, such as to judge a programme’s worth, to assess new initiatives, or to satisfy the accountability requirements of a programme’s sponsors (Rossi and Freeman, 1993). The actual evaluation process can be either operational, including meeting training objectives, individual development and feedback on training provision, or strategic, which broadly encompasses the effective use of resources, contributions to organisational performance, and justifying expenditure on training (Sadler-Smith et al., 1999). In addition, Elwood et al. (2005) argue that the primary objective of evaluation is to assist organisational managers to make better decisions about the value of the HRD investment, with this being particularly true of a linear form of summative evaluation. Additional purposes of evaluation have been identified that range across a wider spectrum (Patton, 2008; Fitzpatrick et al., 2012), for example to foster democracy within the organisation by involving different parties in decision-making and engaging them in managerial roles; to improve societal development through its assessment of policies and programmes that are intended for the benefit of

society; and to extend knowledge, and explore theories in the real world setting or, if required, to test existing theories or laws.

Conceptually, evaluation is approached using different designs and implementation strategies, with the process being classified in terms of its design (Bamberger et al., 2012). Design can vary according to the purpose, scope or methods adopted, be they quantitative, qualitative, or mixed. According to Bramley (1996:9), there are six main approaches to evaluation: goal-based, goal-free, responsive, system, professional review, and quasi-legal, although in commenting on assessing systems and programmes, McMeeking et al. (2012:508) argues that “theory-based evaluation (TBE) is an evaluation method that shows how a program will work under certain conditions and has been supported as a viable, evidence-based option in cases where randomized trials or high-quality quasi-experiments are not feasible”. However, TBE is considered to be a time-consuming process that involves extensive data collection. Another modern approach is introduced by Patton (2008), who developed Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE), based on the principle that an evaluation should be judged on its usefulness to its intended users. The essential conditions for adopting this approach are that there should be a clear identification and engagement of the potential users, and that these users should themselves guide the evaluation process. Such involvement of evaluation users in the design of the evaluation exercise is more likely to produce results that gain optimum utility. The primary UFE tasks are identified in a twelve item checklist, which includes the identification of primary Intended users, and situational analysis.

A variety of models and frameworks have been used to evaluate workplace learning, which range from Kirkpatrick's early 1959 Model (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick , 2006), through the CIRO Evaluation Model, Responsive Model, Goal-based Evaluation, Systematic Evaluation, the Quasi-legal Approach, and Pre-programme Evaluation (Devins and Smith, 2013). Many of these approaches assume evaluation to be either goal-based or systems-based, with it also being the case that evaluation is often designed to meet the specific, and different interests of stakeholders (Tomé, 2009). These different approaches to evaluation suggest that the activities involved are

complex and not always well-structured (Eseryel, 2002), but it is also acknowledged that the process can be used to gather information, rather than being judgemental.

The current study, in its evaluation of the implementation of Oman's NTP, parallels a number of the objectives identified, in that a) it aimed to enhance our understanding of factors influencing NTP implementation, and the challenges encountered in its execution; b) the outcomes of the study will stimulate thought amongst NTP decision-makers and raise a general awareness of the programme; and c) the involvement of programme stakeholders will provide democratic feedback, which is set to promote respect amongst the different parties, and enhance future engagement and cooperation.

Stakeholder Evaluation

Another type approach concerns stakeholder-based evaluation, which is widely used in training evaluation, being "one of the larger recent trends in evaluation theory and practice [focusing] on stakeholder participation" (Mark, 2001;462). The approach involves various actors who are required to make decisions, which impact on the performance of the training initiative (Guerci and Vinante, 2011).

The approach is based on stakeholder theory, and whilst the origins are unclear, the concept was first thought to be coined by Freeman (1984) in the early 1960's. It aims to involve a broad range of people in decision-making processes, rather than it being the sole preserve of management. Whilst forming part of management theory the concept has various interpretations, although a founding principle refers to the normative sense of the theory that suggest that overlooking other stakeholders is unwise, imprudent or unjustified ethically (Phillips, 2003); the approach embraces how management 'ought' to engage with stakeholders. However, the theory can also be used as a descriptive approach, where the characteristics and behaviours in the organisation are described, including the way stakeholders perceive how managers manage (Friedman and Miles, 2006).

Whilst all approaches are mutually supportive, Donaldson and Preston (1995) argue that the normative approach, which identifies moral guidelines on how to behave and manage in an organisation, is at the core of the theory.

In a broad sense, stakeholder theory aims to assist managers in managing, although as identified by Friedman and Miles (2002), the process can be used to investigate wider philosophical views, as was the case surrounding implementation. Another element of the theory that emerged, relates to the difference in power between stakeholders, which has been cited as being part of a stakeholder theory by Mitchell, et al. (1997). Power within the stakeholder group can be perceived as legitimate, in which sense it often becomes control, or its legitimacy, where the power is perceived as accreted socially (Steiner and Steiner, 1997). Within the literature, stakeholder analysis can be termed ‘participatory monitoring and evaluation’ (P M & E), which as noted by Estrella and Gaventa (1998:3) “is part of a wider historical process which has emerged over the last 20 years of using participatory research in development”. It is any evaluation intended not only to improve programme understanding but also to transform programme-related working relationships through broad local participation in evaluation processes (Greene, 1997). This approach helps to promote the exchange of perspectives and experience amongst various programme stakeholders (Mathie and Greene, 1997), as it allows those different stakeholders to identify evaluation questions, involves them in continuous programme improvement and gives them a sense of ownership and empowerment, which strengthens stakeholders evaluation skills, and fosters continuous learning (Zukoski and Luluquisen, 2002). The differences between this approach and other conventional approaches are summarised in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Differences between Participatory and Conventional Evaluation

	Participatory	Conventional
Who drives the evaluation?	Community residents, project staff and other stakeholders	Funders and programme managers

Who determines indicators of programme progress?	Members of community groups, project staff and other stakeholders; evaluator	Professional evaluators and outside experts
Who is responsible for data collection, analysis and preparing the final reports?	Shared responsibility of evaluators and participating stakeholders	Professional evaluators and outside experts
What is the role of the local evaluator?	Coach, facilitator, negotiator, critical friend	Expert, leader
When is this type of evaluation most useful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are questions about programme implementation difficulties - Information is wanted on a stakeholder's knowledge of a programme or views of progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a need for independent judgment - Programme indicators are standardised rather than particular to a programme
What are the costs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commitment from project staff and other stakeholders - Co-ordination and support for key players - Potential for conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultant and expert fees - Loss of critical information that only stakeholders can provide
What are the benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local knowledge - Verification of information from key players - Builds knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent judgment - Standardised indicators allow comparison with other research findings

Source: Adapted from Zukoski and Luluquisen (2002).

Whilst the involvement and engagement of stakeholders tends to encourage democracy, there is the criticism that such involvement can be manipulated,

and that where this happens the credibility of the evaluation is threatened (Mark, 2001).

Indeed, the evaluation of programmes and social interventions is known to face various challenges which limit its implementation, to which Bamberger et al. (2012:2) argue: “the real world evaluation approach was originally developed to address four of the most common constraints evaluators face: budget, time, data availability and political influences”. When considering the numerous types of evaluation, the choice of which to use is dependent on the philosophy of the evaluators. Thus, the evaluated programme, the methods, and decisions involved are a reflection of the beliefs about the evaluation issues (Patton, 2008). As noted by Russ-Eft (2005:82), “it is important for HRD evaluators to search the most effective means for determining the critical issues and questions of stakeholders, understanding the most appropriate methods for answering these questions, and ultimately using the information for decision-making and action”. For the current study the descriptive approach of stakeholder theory was used to evaluate implementation, as a greater understanding was being sought about the factors and barriers involved with the NTP.

Challenges in Evaluation: National Training Evaluation

Evaluation will continue to develop and progress, as a discipline and a practice in response to new threats, and challenges (Devins and Smith, 2013). However, Skinner (2004) affirms that barriers to evaluation are primarily rooted in contextual factors within the organisation’s history and culture and that a secondary barrier relates directly to the choices, and decisions involved in the evaluation process itself. Moreover, the lack of valid research instruments, and viable models might represent obstacles to in-depth evaluation (Pineda, 2010). Barriers can also be presented as the lack of information available for evaluators (Lockheed, 2009), lack of support from top management, and the belief that evaluation is perceived as an expensive exercise (Wexley and Latham, 1991).

In the workplace, the training objective can be a barrier, especially if the goal is simply to increase performance, since the trainer is concerned with only developing knowledge and skills (Berge, 2008). At the same time it is understood that poor performance is not always the outcome of poor knowledge and skills (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009), with a number of factors being identified that inhibit evaluation in the workplace (see Table 2.5).

Table 2. 5 Factors Inhibiting Effective Workplace Learning Evaluation

Factor	Authors
Capacity issues (resource consuming)	Sims (1993); Sanderson (1995); Geertshuis et al. (2002); Aragon Sanchez et al. (2003); Wang and Wilcox (2006); Griffin (2011)
Assumption that training works and therefore does not require evaluation	Sims (1993); Sanderson (1995)
HR professionals feel threatened by possible evaluation results – “what you don’t know, cannot hurt you”	Sims (1993); Sanderson (1995); Mann and Robertson (1996); Blanchard and Thacker (2007)
Lack of agreement on what aspects of learning should be evaluated	Sims (1993); Spitzer (2005)
Capability issues	Sanderson (1995); Mann and Robertson (1996); Geertshuis et al. (2002); Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003); Spitzer (2005); Wang and Wilcox (2006)
Lack of a supportive organisational culture	Sanderson (1995); Wang and Wilcox (2006); Blanchard and Thacker (2007)
Lack of confidence	Spitzer (2005); Wang and Wilcox (2006)
Lack of knowledge about evaluation techniques	Giangreco et al. (2010)
Cost of evaluation outweighs benefits	Giangreco et al. (2010)
Failure of organisations to take a long-term perspective	Berge (2008)
Lack of scientifically robust	Sanderson (1995); Mann and

measurement tools	Robertson (1996); Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003); Berge (2008)
The low status of training functions within organisations	Holly and Rainbird (2001)
Lack of available data	Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003); Blanchard and Thacker (2007)

Source: Adapted from Griffin (2012:396)

According to Anderson (2007), whilst evaluation is part of what trainers and managers do, it involves many practical challenges, for example 80% of HRD professionals believe that training and development delivers more value to their organisation than they are able to demonstrate. Whilst, in addition practitioners find ‘serious’ evaluation to be extremely time-consuming and finally, line managers rarely show a keen interest in ‘traditional’ evaluation data (CIPD 2014). In a national sense, challenges to evaluation arise in the need to connect “evaluation research outcomes and processes with the inputs that professionals... use in making judgments and taking decisions” (Devins and Smith, 2013:182). Key challenges to national policy evaluation include establishing appropriate institutional structures and incentives to inform decision-making authorities (UNDP, 2009).

Even though evaluation is acknowledged as an important process, local government organisations often accorded a low priority to the process, with Dawson (1995), suggesting that the process may be seen as threatening, as there is a danger that senior officials can be exposed to criticism.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The purpose of a conceptual framework is to illuminate those key theoretical components of the study that provide the researcher with a map of the territory being investigated (Miles et al., 2014). The framework can be presented either graphically or in narrative form, with the latter being the case for the current study. In the broadest sense, the study is located within the Sultanate of Oman, with all the attendant elements of Arabic and Middle-Eastern culture which are embraced within that national environment. As with any research, these cultural elements are likely to frame the study

and place its findings' within a specific contextual setting. Within the current literature review, the broader aspect of cultural has been contextualised through literature, studies and organisational documentation, to provide a situational context for the study. One particular aspect of Omani culture refers to the connotations that surround 'evaluation', or any terms perceived to be associated with this. For example, 'investigation' is perceived as being associated with a negative police agenda. Similarly, the concept of 'success' in evaluating a programme was deemed commercially sensitive, particularly when dealing with training providers and employers, and hence a direct evaluation of the National Training Programme was avoided. The cultural element is embedded within the perceptions' of each actor's individual framework. Indeed, the primary theoretical consideration referred to how the actors perceived policy implementation and to this end, the literature reviewed embraced a range of theories, such as those that referred to the different stages of policy implementation, with the aspects of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' implementation being visited. Policy Network and Public-Private Policy Partnership were equally presented in the literature (Refer Section 2.1), as aspects of policy implemented and these areas provided a framework for the subsequent collection of empirical data.

Whilst the central focus referred to public policy implementation, the policy to be implemented was the National Training Programme of Oman and in this sense this can be seen as the 'vehicle' for the broader concept of public policy evaluation. To place this 'vehicle' in a wider context a number of areas associated with national human resource development were explored, including its objectives and purpose. The concept of NHRD was further explored in contextual situations, with specific reference to the factors, such as managerial behaviour and how other nations have implemented NHRD programmes. Within the context of the current study, the earlier discussion of Omanisation placed the NTP within a wider framework, with it being acknowledged that the NTP is one element of the overall Omanisation initiative.

The final concept addressed in the literature refers back to the primary thesis title: the 'evaluation of public policy implementation'. The purpose, methods and challenges of undertaking evaluation were explored, with particular reference being made to NHRD policy implementation. Of the various methods discussed, stakeholder theory emerged as the evaluation tool that most closely aligned with the aim of the current thesis. The approach sought to provide a 'real world' (Bamberger et. al. 2012:2) perspective of how the key stakeholder groups involved in the NTP, perceived the implementation process. In that the literature provided examples of how stakeholder theory has been used to evaluate policy implementation, this strengthened the inclusion of this element within the conceptual framework of the current study.

As the conceptual framework flowed from the literature, and in addition to providing guidance for the research direction, it played a part in helping to surface the study's research questions:

1. What are the factors influencing the implementation of the NTP policy in Oman, and how are these perceived by key stakeholder groups?
2. What barriers do NTP key stakeholder groups perceive as having impeded NTP implementation, and how have they impacted?

Summary

Key aspects of the literature have been reviewed in respect to policy implementation, national HRD and the associated evaluation processes. Various theories surrounding policy implementation were discussed, including generational development, policy network and public policy partnerships, both within a broad political context and the more specific area of NHRD. The discussion on NHRD built on the earlier discussion of Omanisation, with the National Training Programme being identified as one element of this national initiative. Whilst being placed within the Omani

context, examples from other nations were explored, so as to provide an insight into how such policies have been implemented in different settings. Also, in keeping with the direction of the research, the various factors associated with evaluation were explored, to fully understand the nature of evaluating policy implementation, with stakeholder theory being identified as the most appropriate approach to surface the informants' perceptions.

In providing an in-depth review of the theoretical and contextual underpinning that surrounds the public policy implementation of Oman's NHRD policy, it is apparent that a gap exists in the literature and that the implementation of the NTP policy is worthy of investigation. Thus, in drawing on the literature, guidance and insight have been provided regarding the key concepts that formed a framework for the study. Following analysis and discussion, will be presented as contributions to theoretical knowledge. The literature and conceptual framework also provided direction for the empirical work and the next chapter reviews, and justifies, the methodology and methods that were used to progress the research aim and questions.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present detailed information about the approach taken to conduct this research. In order to rationalise the approaches used, the main philosophical positions are discussed before indicating which is employed for the study. This discussion is followed by a clear identification of the methodology and strategies used to achieve the aim of the study, which is, to investigate the implementation of the NTP from the perspective of four key stakeholder groups. The particular methods used for data collection and analysis are then presented. A clear assessment of the trustworthiness of the qualitative data is then made, and a discussion on the role of the researcher as an insider is also presented.

3.1 Research Philosophy

In all research, the exploration needs to be fully grounded within a philosophical position that serves to guide those performing the study. Bickman and Rog (2009:224) refer to this requirement, stating that “researchers must situate the study in a paradigm which refers to a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology), and how we can understand it (epistemology)”. Essentially, this means that the way researchers view reality, determines their beliefs about how knowledge is formed, and the process followed to develop the nature of this reality (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Schutt, 2011). It is argued by Denzin and Lincoln (2008) that all qualitative research is guided by principles which combine beliefs about ontology (the state of being, the nature of reality), epistemology (the relationship between the inquirer and the known), and methodology (the means of gaining knowledge of the world). These three fundamental belief systems are referred to as paradigms, and are present in all forms of inquiry (Guba, 1990). Maxwell (2009:224) states that “[a]t the most abstract and general level, examples of such paradigms are philosophical positions such as positivism, constructivism, realism, and pragmatism, each embodying very different ideas about reality and how we can gain knowledge of it”. However, the question can be asked as to what extent it is important to consider these philosophical positions in research.

In this respect, there exists a competing argument regarding the importance and significance of philosophical representation in social science inquiry. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2015), the philosophical position underlies the design of management research, and is influential in assuring the integrity of that research and its outcomes. The underlying philosophy is important because: (1) it clarifies the research design, and thus helps to identify how the evidence is gathered and then interpreted so that answers to the research questions can be obtained; (2) it helps to identify the most suitable design for a specific research project; and (3) it helps in learning new designs (ibid:17). The need to identify the underpinning research philosophy has been stressed by Guba and Lincoln (1994), and Saunders et al. (2014). Conversely, there are opposing voices that consider philosophy as non-essential. Patton (2015:69), for example, argues: “my practical view is that one can learn to be a good interviewer or observer, and learn to make sense of the resulting data, without first engaging in deep epistemological reflection and philosophical study”. This viewpoint was also advocated by Hammersley (1992), who warned researchers that engaging in such philosophical debate could alter the focus of an inquiry so that it veered away from the main theme of the research.

Despite the disagreement, in the current study, a definite decision is taken on the issue, due to the researcher’s belief in the importance of securing a proper fit between his assumptions and the methodological approach. Maxwell (2009:224) stresses the need to obtain this proper fit, stating: “[t]rying to work within a paradigm (or theory) that doesn’t fit your assumptions is like trying to do a physically demanding job in clothes that don’t fit ...”. In addition, Johnson and Clark (2006), assert that when choosing a particular research philosophy, it is necessary to consider alternatives, and then to reflect on the eventual choice, and justify why others were rejected.

At this point it is noted that, to avoid confusion within this thesis, the terms paradigm and philosophy are used interchangeably. The term ‘paradigm’

was introduced by Kuhn (1962) to describe a set of basic beliefs. According to Guba (1990), Kuhn himself used the term in no less than twenty-one different ways. Hence, it is important to recognise the need to use such terminology appropriately.

In terms of paradigms, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that four options have competed for acceptance as the paradigm of choice in informing and guiding inquiry, and especially qualitative inquiry, with these being: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and related ideological positions, and constructivism. They analyse these four paradigms through the use of ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions. However, Collis and Hussey (2009) consider there to be four assumptions (ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological), which are analysed within the framework of one of two main paradigms, which are quantitative and qualitative inquiry. As a means of clarification within the current research, the researcher adopted the categories presented by Easterby-Smith et al. (2015), whose choice is derived from a review of extant literature. The outcome is a clear representation illustrating the relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods, which uses the metaphor of a tree trunk that has four rings. The outer ring shows the methods, whilst the inner side represents the ontology. These four rings are outlined below.

Table 3.1: Philosophical Underpinnings for Research

Ontology	Philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality
Epistemology	A general set of assumptions about ways of inquiring into the nature of the world
Methodology	A combination of techniques used to inquire into a specific situation
Methods and Techniques	Individual techniques for data collection, analysis, etc.

Source: Adapted from Easterby-Smith et al., (2015: 2).

Ontology

The common starting point in the philosophy debate amongst concerns what constitutes reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015), the ontological stance. Such debates seek to answer the questions as to what is the form, and nature of reality and, what is there that can be known about it? Two polar views exist: “the possibility of singular, verifiable reality and truth vs the inevitability of socially constructed multiple realities” (Patton, 2015:134). These two ontologies can be seen to emerge as four different approaches to reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015:19):

- (1) Realism – the belief that there is a single truth and that the facts about it exist and can be revealed.
- (2) Internal realism – the belief that truth exists, but it is obscure and the facts cannot be accessed directly.
- (3) Relativism – the belief that there are many truths and the facts about them depend on the perceptions of the observer.
- (4) Nominalism – the denial of the existence of the truth, and a belief that the facts are all human creations.

In the current study, the ontological stance corresponds with relativism, since the NTP’s stakeholders construct the reality of the situation, and therefore, there are multiple ideas about the programme and its implementation, some of which are in conflict with each other, and may indeed change with time and as circumstances evolve (Mertens, 2015). The evaluation provided in the current study sought to provide understanding of the NTP, and the context within which it operated, through the lens of its key stakeholder groups, and neither realism nor objectivity is appropriate for enabling this (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). The experience of the various stakeholders is the principal means of arriving at the truth in this context, as they all differ in terms of their own circumstances, for example education, gender, and experience in the NTP, and thus, they will generate many truths as the experience they receive from participation in the NTP is reflected differently in their thoughts.

Epistemology

Having decided on the ontological position of a study, the consideration of its epistemological stance can be made. Essentially this refers to how the knowledge about the reality can be found. In the social sciences, two contrasting views emerge in this respect, these being: positivism and social constructionism. As noted by Jankowicz (2005), the accepted view is connected with the researcher's personal theory of knowing and the relationship between the researcher, and the context being researched (Collis and Hussey, 2009). According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2015), there are four clear epistemological positions that can be identified: strong positivism, positivism, constructionism, and strong constructionism. Each of these is based on certain ontological assumptions and has methodological implications for the research. An explanation of the diversity within these positions can be gained by reviewing the two polar opposites (positivism and social constructionism) which are now discussed, before arriving at the decision as to which approach was appropriate for the current study.

Guba and Lincoln (1994:108) identify positivism as denoting "the 'received view' that has dominated the formal discourse in the physical and social sciences for some 400 years". Positivism assumes that the truth can be discovered objectively and that all the variables relating to it can be identified through the creation of hypotheses, which are then tested statistically (Rynes and Gephart, 2004). It advocates the application of the natural sciences methods of discovery to the study of social reality (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Positivists believe in the externality of the social world and the reality developed by objectives (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In this case, human beings have no influence on the formation of that reality. This particular epistemological position corresponds with the approaches of realism and internal realism that have been identified in the discussion of ontology. Thus, internal realism assumes the existence of truth apart from the perception of its observer, hence the scientific objective is to better understand this reality (Schutt, 2011; Guba, 1990). Positivism is concerned with explanation and particularly with the establishment of causal

relationships between variables, such that it can lead to a specific deductive or integrated theory (Collis and Hussey, 2009). These relationships are established through experiments, and surveys, and consequently the type of data involved is dominated by numbers and statistics (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Whilst considered appropriate for certain types of inquiry, this particular philosophical underpinning is not suitable for the current study, which requires an approach that is more human-driven.

Indeed, the establishment of reality as perceived by different stakeholders, was a primary aim of the current study, and in searching for this reality, there was an implicit assumption, on the part of the researcher, that the reality for each group of informants can differ according to their position. Hence, constructionism is an appropriate epistemological approach, since this accepts the relativity of reality; that there can be more than one reality. From this position multiple realities exist (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

From a constructionist ontological position reality is subjective, there are multiple truths to be found, and the 'facts' depend on the viewpoints of the informants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Blaikie (2003:17) illustrates this process, stating, "[t]he meaning of the social world is intersubjective and knowledge of social reality can only be achieved by collecting social actors' accounts of their reality and then re-describing these accounts in social scientific language". Further, Cunliffe (2014) asserts that the social world is socially constructed, being created and maintained by human beings through interaction, and that consequently individuals are influenced in the way they think, and act by the very social world in which they operate. Hence, social constructionists are interested in the process of interaction amongst individuals, as they believe that this interaction is shaped by their background, which is derived from their historical, cultural, and personal experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Accepting that there may be multiple realities of any situation, the comment by Burns (2000:11) is of note, since he states that "[t]here is more than one

gate to the kingdom of knowledge, each gate offers a different perspective, but no one perspective exhausts the realm of 'reality' whatever that may be". This quotation aptly summarises the researcher's belief that evidence of the many realities can come from a wide range of sources, one of which is his background, as an employee at the MoM for more than twelve years. Indeed, using this experience, the researcher acted not only as the collector of other stakeholders' views on the NTP, but as interpreter, and organiser of the information offered. It follows that the outcomes of the study are subjective, in that they produced a relativist reality developed by the NTP's stakeholder groups, and which reflects their personal experience during a defined period of time, and from their relative positions within and their views towards to the NTP.

Identifying the ontological and epistemological positioning of the current research was important, so as to better design and formulate the data collection methods. In essence, as constructionism is consistent with a qualitative approach to data collection, this form was appropriate means by which to address the research questions:

1. What are the factors influencing the implementation of the NTP policy in Oman and how are these factors perceived by key stakeholder groups?
2. What barriers do NTP key stakeholder groups perceive as having impeded the implementation of the policy?

3.2 Methodological Approach: an Insider Case Study

The research questions pursued in the current study sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of the policy implementation process, as experienced by the stakeholder groups interacting with the NTP. This involvement of stakeholders to discover perceptions lends itself to a qualitative approach, in which data emerges from the informants, rather than quantitative research that relies on testing existing variables. The current study gathered in-depth information through the case study approach, which involved the use of document analysis by an insider and interviews with various NTP

stakeholders, which was deemed the most appropriate methodological approach.

The data obtained from a case study means that the informants' views can be interpreted, in line with the underpinning research philosophy, to better understand and explain the surrounding theory and its interpretation (Quinlan, 2011), which in the current case is the area of broad theory of public policy implementation. Support for such an approach is found in the observations of Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) who consider the relationship between the research philosophy, the level, and type of researcher engagement, is embodied in the design. These can portray the various possibilities divided into a four quadrant matrix that identifies different degrees of attachment between the researcher and the investigation context, with the matrix showing that greater researcher involvement leads to a tendency to reflect a constructionist philosophy, and vice versa. In the current study, the researcher is involved as an insider, which identifies him as being more social constructionist. Creswell, (2013) illustrates how a case study enables an in-depth analysis of the issue (currently NTP implementation) from the perspective of the various stakeholder groups involved.

There are various views on what constitutes a case study. Ragin (1992:3) argues that “[a] case may be theoretical or empirical or both; it may be a relatively bounded object or a process; and may be generic and universal or specific in some way”. Adding to this, a case is simply “any study of any kind on any topic using any methods” (Patton, 2015:259), although this rather global description offers little guidance on how to conduct a case study. Single and multiple case study research also form part of the literature. The single case study (as utilised within the current research) is the exploration of one particular phenomenon, whereas the multiple case study entails a duplication of the research conducted with one target group with other groups, the outcomes of which are then compared to determine the differences and similarities (Robson and McCartan, 2016). The choice of whether to study one case or several is informed by the specific research

philosophy, since “advocates of single cases generally come from a constructionist epistemology whilst those who advocate multiple cases usually fit with a more positivist epistemology” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015:54). In addition, Hyett et al. (2014) identify two popular approaches to case study, the first, suggested by Merriam (2009), is considered to be situated in a social constructionist paradigm, whereas the second views case study research from a post-positivist standpoint (Eisenhardt, 1989; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Yin, 2012). In the social constructionist approach to qualitative case study, the researcher and the case interact, so that a relationship is developed between informants and the researcher (Stake, 1995). In addition, Patton (2015) observes that case studies are particularly valuable in programme evaluation, especially when the researcher wishes to target the lived experience of different informants, which is the focus of the current research. Therefore, the selection of a single case study was deemed the most appropriate methodological approach with which to address the research questions.

Due to the researcher having been employed at the MoM for the last twelve years, accessibility to the required data was both possible and indeed, facilitated. Moreover, his position within the Ministry made it possible to secure data from a range of sources and use this information to obtain a broader understanding of the overall issues surrounding the NTP implementation. This ability to secure evidence from a range of different sources enables case study design, with the diversity of sources being likely to increase the trustworthiness of research findings (Yin, 2014). Moreover, the investigation of the NTP policy implementation in Oman aimed to explore the views of the four groups of stakeholders that were involved in the implementation process so as to develop a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the factors influencing the implementation and its barriers. It is the grouping of all the above characteristics that pointed to the suitability of case study design for the current research.

Nevertheless, the design of the case study demands a clear identification of the unit of analysis for the case being investigated (Saunders et al., 2014),

that which is the primary focus of the study, in terms of data sources and linkage between research questions, data and analysis. This decision regarding the unit of analysis depends on the way the researcher intends to produce the findings. According to Patton (2015:229), “the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study”. In the current study, the unit of analysis was the NTP policy and its associated activities, with data generation and analysis being focused on the different experiences of the programme stakeholders. Collectively, the stakeholders’ views formed a comprehensive account of the factors that influenced the NTP programme implementation.

Having considered the value of case study design for the current study, it is appropriate to acknowledge the criticisms made of the method. In this respect, Yin (2014), as one of the main advocates of the case study method, has considered the criticisms, which begin with the complaint from positivists that the method lacks the rigour of natural scientific design. Additionally, it is argued that case study research is weak in its ability to generalise its findings to wider a population and that there exists a strong possibility of researcher bias entering the data interpretation process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Moreover, despite case study design being characterised by a capability to deliver rich, contextual and phenomenal data (Maxwell, 2009), some opponents consider this as a negative attribute (Stake, 2005), essentially due to the sheer volume of the data collected, which can present problems in analysis. In this respect, Stake (2005) raises five specific questions: how much data is required to report the story; how much is required to make comparisons with other cases; how much is needed to be able to make generalisations or to allow the reader to do that; how much of the researcher should feature in the report and, finally, how to deal with the issue of anonymity – whether this should be protected and if so, to what extent? These limitations have been addressed by Flyvbjerg (2011), who considers them to be more than misunderstandings surrounding the orthodoxy of the case study and attempts to clarify the position (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Case Studies - Five Misunderstandings

	The Misunderstanding	The Clarification
1	General, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete case knowledge.	Case study produces a concrete, context-dependent knowledge which provides a nuanced view of reality including human behaviour.
2	One cannot generalise on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development.	One can often generalise on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalisation as a supplement or alternative to other methods. Formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas “the force of example” and transferability are underestimated.
3	The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, whilst other methods are more suitable for hypothesis testing and theory building.	It is useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses but is not limited to these research activities alone.
4	The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is, a tendency to confirm to the researcher’s perceived notion.	The case study contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher’s preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry. On the contrary, experience indicates that the

		case study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification.
5	It is often difficult to summarise and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies.	The good case studies should be read as narrative in their entirety.

Source: Adopted from Flyvbjerg (2011:302-313)

Beyond such observations, however, is a consideration of study topic or area, with the case study approach being particularly useful when a detailed investigation of a particular organisation, group, or set of individuals is being undertaken and the aim is to provide an analysis of the context, and process, which highlight the theoretical issues being studied (Cassell and Symon, 2004). The case study seeks to answer research questions that are relevant to how and why a particular phenomenon appears (Yin, 2014). Indeed, given the aims of the current study, which centred on the particular case of the NTP and which were coupled with the researcher's insider status and to access to rich data, both in the form of documents and stakeholders, the case study strategy was considered to be the ideal design for the current study.

Hence, the NTP, as a Government policy that aimed to enhance NHRD and which was administered by the Ministry, become the case in question. It fits into the description given by Patton (2015) who defines a case study as an exploration of a 'bounded system' over time through detailed, in-depth data collection. In the current case, the 'system' consists of the policy and its actual implementation, through the various courses delivered in its name. It is the implementation of the policy and its training initiatives that formed the interest of the case study, which was pursued using the methods now outlined.

3.3 Methods and Techniques

Interest in this research problem began before the commencement of the PhD, as a long-standing insider employed by the MoM. Preliminary informal discussions with the Assistant Director General of ‘Occupational Standards’, the Directorate responsible for the NTP, facilitated access to key documentation and people. The following table presents the data sources used and the methods utilised within the current study (Table 3.3)

Table 3.3 Sources of data used in analysis of NTP implementation.

Data source	Method
Key Documents (including): Original policy; minutes of meetings; Ministry reports; tripartite agreement; evaluation forms, Bylaws and Degrees.	Document analysis – identified initial templates. Revision to the available documents related the NTP implementation.
Insider Access	Observed and had informal discussions during visits to Department of National Training Institutes (MoM). Observed activities performed by staff and various employers and training providers; obtained through meetings.
In-depth Interviews: MoM: (8) Employers: (10) Training providers: (9) Trainees: (9)	Thirty-one semi-structured interviews with thirty-six informants from the four key stakeholder groups involved in the implementation of NTP (note: some informants were interviewed in groups).

Source: Developed by the researcher

Directorate employees were broadly supportive of the study as no formal evaluation of the NTP had been undertaken since it was commenced in 2003. Initial analysis of the pilot study data identified emergent themes and informed the sampling strategy.

Sampling

In large-scale research it is not always possible to obtain data from each member of the population under investigation and consequently, at least in positivist terms, it is necessary to produce a sample that is representative of the wider population. Jankowicz (2005:144) defines sampling as “the deliberate choice of a number of units (companies, departments, people) who are to provide the researcher with the required data to draw the findings of the study”. In quantitative studies, the researcher is guided by a pre-determined sample size that is based on certain considerations, although for qualitative inquiries the concern is more with the point of saturation; the point in the investigation when data collection ceases to add any more useful information (Kumar, 2014), with it being this point, rather than numerical size, that determines when data gathering ceases. Sampling can be either probabilistic, where the probability of each entity being part of the sample is known, or non-probabilistic, in that all informants share the same characteristics, but it is not possible to state the probability of any member of the population (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Collis and Hussey (2009) point to a further classification of sampling, to differentiate between that which is random and that which is non-random. Random sampling includes systematic sampling, stratified sampling, quota sampling, cluster sampling and multi-stage sampling, whereas non-random approaches involve snowball sampling, judgmental sampling, purposive and advertising sampling.

Patton (2015:264) advises researchers to “think of sampling as a core design issue, engage sampling as purposeful and strategic thinking”. This implies that sampling is consistent with the philosophy, design and methodological choices, in such a way that it is the research direction and aims that drive the sampling procedures. Consequently, in the current study,

it was necessary to adopt a non-probabilistic purposive sampling strategy to identify the informants that were most closely fitted the research aims. Thus, the researcher needed to determine which categories of potential informants would be approached, with elements of eligibility criteria having to be met, that is, they meet the purpose of the study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). There are several key uses of purposive sampling, but importantly the approach has to relate to the typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected (Maxwell, 2009). In addition, purposive sampling can, in a positivist sense, be used to capture the heterogeneity within the population of interest, or for testing the theories underpinning a study, or “to establish particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals, a common strategy in multi-case qualitative studies” (Maxwell, 2009:235). Indeed, whilst the current study is a single case of the NTP policy implementation, the different stakeholder groups can be considered as separate cases, since policy implementation may have been perceived differently by the stakeholder groups.

In positivist terms, randomness in selecting a sample can aid credibility, with the method being extended, by Patton (2015), to equally apply to qualitative studies, in that he argues that random selection can reduce bias. Given that both the NTP policy and the implementation of its training programmes, serve as the unit of analysis for the current study, the sample of informants needed to include the different programme actors: Ministry employees; employers; training providers and trainees., and from each of these, the samples are drawn randomly. However, in the strictest sense of the word, none of the informants were selected randomly: the methods of selecting the informants are now addressed.

As informants were required to fit the purpose of the study they needed to be selected for their knowledge, experience and understanding of the NTP programme. The process was initiated though the Assistant Director General of the ‘Occupational Standard’ who requested the Training Department Director to nominate individuals involved with the NTP, with these individuals being identified from the Ministry’s database. The only

criterion imposed was that individuals needed to be sufficiently experienced to be able provide informed answers to areas of the NTP. It is understood that no attempt was made by the Ministry to interfere the selection and, thus, Training Department employees were duly nominated, together with employees from other departments that were involved in NTP implementation. After identifying the Ministry informants, those from the other three stakeholder groups were identified, again by drawing from the Ministry's database. For the training providers, the Private Training Department provided a list of fifteen centres that covered the major sectors, for example commercial, industrial, tourism and crafts. The aim was to generate at least seven informants, with it being anticipated that data saturation point would be reached with this number. Initial contact with the training providers was facilitated by the Ministry, as it was important to convey that the survey has been sanctioned officially. However, face to face contact was made by the researcher, in an attempt to build mutual respect and emphasise transparency. With regard to trainees, the researcher contacted seven potential informants, again drawing from the Ministry's database, with the first seven agreeing to participate in the study. This same process was replicated to secure a cross-section of employers who were recipients of the NTP trainees, once again using the Ministry's database. Given the researcher's association with the Ministry it was important to build trust with employers, who financial stability as often related to Ministry patronage. Ten employees were selected that represents a range of sectors, including banking, retail, tourism, oil and gas, and the automobile industry.

In line with ethical procedures, each informant was provided with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, and reminded of the voluntary nature of their involvement. Dates and times of the interviews were arranged through mutual agreement, by the researcher, with contact being made by mobile phone, since this method of communication is commonly used in Oman, for both formal and informal purposes.

The process associated with the selection of informants was thus, non-probabilistic, with a purposive element. In using the Ministry's data and

allowing others to make selection choices, a high degree of subjectivity was involved, with this being acknowledged here as a way of illustrating that it was the individual stories that were being sought. Essentially, the sample was obtained by a broad form of convenience sampling (Patton, 2015), although to gain a wider feel of the NTP network a degree of snowballing sampling was used. Here, employers were asked to provide one or two names of trainees who had joined their organisation, whilst information was sought from training providers about employers who they worked with. However, rather than using the information, the questions were introduced to help avoid any suspicion that the Ministry had digression over selection, particularly of trainees.

Data Collection – Choice of Method

Sources of data are many and varied, including for example, organisational reports, government documents, literature, informal conversation, and interviews (Cameron and Price, 2009). Data that are gathered directly by the researcher, which can refer to observation, questionnaire, or speaking to people, are identified as primary data, with secondary data referring to information secured from published documentation. Research can involve the collection both primary and secondary data, and can be qualitative, quantitative or a mixture of both (Kumar, 2014). The required sample size is a pertinent consideration in determining the type of methods used for collection, whereby large numbers often require a questionnaire survey, whilst the qualitative approach, using smaller number and with person-to-person contact, is best progressed through interview (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Regardless, when gathering data, the primary need is to match the approach to the chosen research philosophy, strategy and design.

When the collection choice is qualitative, four basic roots of data can be obtained: qualitative observation, qualitative interview, qualitative documents; and qualitative audio and visual materials (Creswell, 2014). As the current study aimed to gather information about the NTP implementation, the various policy actors were considered the key source of information. Whilst individuals were distributed between different organisations and

locations, it was felt that their experiences could only be genuinely captured through a face-to-face encounter, with interviews being deemed the most suitable tool. Indeed, interviews intensify the insights that can be gained into the social and organisational realities of the inquiry (Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) and remain a common method of qualitative data collection in inquiries (Symon and Cassell, 2012). Further, interviews allow the researcher to re-word questions and to evoke discussions in an informal sequence that is agreed between the interviewer and interviewee (Cameron and Price, 2009). This suggests that interviewers can reach areas of reality, such as individuals' subjective experiences and attitudes, which would otherwise remain inaccessible, with their use equally overcoming the distance in space and time (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori, 2013). The flexibility associated with in-depth interviews means that a more case-centric situation arises, with the conversation flowing with greater fluidity, particularly in the sense that the relationship between ideas and data is likely to change during the research (Curtis and Curtis, 2011).

As a counter to the benefits, interviewing is a process that requires considerable interviewer skill, with it being important that the whole process needs proper management, if informants are to give of their best. According to Silverman (2013), to avoid unwanted outcomes during the interview process, a systematic planning process should be followed: 1) clearly identify the research problem, 2) make a decision about the number of interviews required, 3) identify the guidelines to be given and questions to be asked, 4) identify the structure of interview questions and sequencing, and 5) pilot the proposed interview schedule. King (2004) also highlighted the first four of these steps as essential pre-interview preparation. Further, when considering interview preparation, there is a need to identify how much structure to impose on the process and hence, how much to control the conversation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The appropriate structuring of the questions is of equal importance, with this being dependent on the literature and the researcher's experience of the issue involved. Additionally, the questions need to be sequenced in relation to the themes identified within the research questions, with the interviewer perhaps needing to

exercise control to ensure that the interviewee responses do not extend into areas that are beyond the interview focus. At the same time, the interviewer needs to be aware that, apart from these administrative considerations, the context of the inquiry and the nature of interviewees impose a set of cultural norms, and practices that determine their behaviour. Indeed, a number of factors will need to be considered for a beneficial interviewee-interviewer relationship to develop, which is sensitive to the interviewee's needs (Hawamdeh, 2014). Within an Arab culture it is felt that openness, flexibility and a reflexive approach by the researcher can help to manage the challenges present in this setting (Hawamdeh, 2014).

The interview method of data gathering is not without its critics and its associated limitations. One limitation of the face-to-face interview is its time-consuming nature, both from the interviewer's viewpoint and that of the interviewees, many of whom will give freely of their time to participate (King, 2004). Another major issue concerns the amount of data collected, which new researchers can find daunting (ibid). It is usually the case that qualitative research studies yield large volumes of data and if interviews are not properly managed, there is the danger of irrelevances emerging. This problem can be avoided by careful question design that aligns questions directly to the study aims and research questions. However, an associated issue refers to the degree of credibility placed on the answers provided. However tightly questions are framed and irrespective of the control exercised by the interviewer to maintain focus there is likely to be slippage (Cameron and Price, 2009), with the addition of interviewer bias, which may be particularly significant from those who have strongly-held beliefs (Quinlan, 2011). A number of the points raised come from a positivists perspective and even if they were significant, efforts can be made to reduce any perceived negative effects, although in qualitative an approach they may well form acceptable practice. Indeed, in keeping with the philosophical paradigm, interview was deemed an appropriate method to facilitate the study aim and research questions (Creswell, 2013).

In summary, data collection can comprise qualitative or quantitative information (Punch, 2014). For the current study semi-structured interviews with the NTP's stakeholder groups was considered appropriate, in order to surface a variety of stakeholder perspectives surrounding the phenomenon (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

Data Collection Activity

As an insider, the researcher had guaranteed access to Ministry documents and statistical data, which served to enrich the interpretation of the primary data gathered via the interviews. Consequently, documentary analysis, which included quantitative data, formed part of the data collection strategy and can thus contribute to the research authenticity. Indeed, "as an insider, you are in a unique position to study a particular issue in depth and with special knowledge about that issue. Not only do you have your own insider knowledge, but you have easy access to people and information..." (Costley et al., 2010:3).

Having arranged the interviews, questions and sequencing were developed in line with the initial pilot study, so as to present a coherent and logical sequence. Prior to the actual interviews, an initial social exchange is required in Omani culture, which might include time spent discussing recent news, the weather, a pressing topic, or even exchanging personal information such as family and tribal connections. Indeed, it is often the case that the two parties realise that they are acquaintances common to both families. This social connection can be beneficial to the interview, since it brings a degree of mutual commitment that reflects the collective nature of Omani society. However, whilst this strategy of pre-interview small talk, which is indeed common in Oman, can reduce potential barriers between the researcher and the informants, the danger exists of both interviewer and informant bias. The letters provided by LJMU and the Ministry (Appendices III and VI, respectively) were brought to each interview and discussed with the interviewees. Essentially, this brief discussion highlighted the topic of the study, the rights of the interviewees, the risks and benefits associated with the research, and the steps taken by the researcher to ensure the

confidentiality of the information to be obtained. This form of introduction was brief as the informants had been informed in advance of the detail, but it was delivered to reassure the informants of the researcher's commitment to protecting them and the confidentiality of their data. Indeed, an associated element of data collection is data security, and all informants were assured that data provided would be stored on LJMU protected computers, with anonymised hard copies being held in a securely locked cabinet on the University site. Likewise, all informants were assured of their anonymity, both current and in the future, with a guarantee given that data would only be used for academic purposes.

Essentially, the interviews were characterised by cooperation and a willingness of informants to divulge relevant information, which resulted from three main factors: (1) the researcher was a long-standing employee at the Ministry and known personally by most of the informants; (2) the research aim and importance was clear to the interviewees, since the research was the first attempt to evaluate the NTP empirically; and (3) the supporting letters provided by LJMU and the Ministry's HRD Department.

Within the semi-structured framework, the informants' experiences were probed to gain a greater in-depth understanding of the context. Further, bearing in mind the heterogeneous nature of the stakeholder groups, a different style was adopted for each, with this being perceived to be in keeping with their individual circumstances. Highlighted below are elements of the interview process that were specific to certain groups.

Ministry of Manpower

Within the protocol, normal procedures were followed, including the reiteration of the secure storage of data and its anonymous nature. This point was particularly important for the Ministry informants, as they lived inside the organisation that was responsible for the NTP. It could be that criticisms they raised against the organisation might be damaging to them if

these became public knowledge; thus, data security and confidentiality were stressed.

The informants were drawn from a number of departments, including the Directorate General of Professional Standards and Curriculum Department, the Department of National Training Programmes, the Department of Quality Assurance, the Department of Employment and the Finance Department. Given the researcher's 'insider' position, he was well situated to conduct the research within his own Ministry, but at the same time there was a particular need to eliminate any unnecessary form of bias during the process. Within the workplace, and hence the interview encounter, Omani culture predisposes that all communication should be conducted on the basis of harmonious and informal relationships. Indeed, at the conclusion of the interviews there was a tendency for informal discussions to continue, which provided greater insight into the NTP and enriched the data. Moreover, the cordiality of the meetings led to the provision of additional documentation. Further, with the NTP being administered within all departments, it meant that a selection of informants from each of them would produce a comprehensive picture.

Interviews with Ministry informants were held during working hours and on site, although one Skype interview was arranged as the informant's busy schedule meant he could not be interviewed in Muscat as planned. Five interviews were conducted individually on a face-to-face basis, along with one Skype interview and a further interview undertaken with two informants at the same time, which was requested by their department since the two people contributed were experts in different areas. The department felt that by interviewing both informants at the same time a more comprehensive outcome would be forthcoming with regards to the programme and the challenges encountered in curriculum development.

The interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour, and so as not to restrict the flow of the data, no pre-determined time limit was imposed. Despite an awareness being raised on the Information Sheet and Consent Form, certain informants indicated their reluctance to be recorded. Women were particularly reluctant, possibly due to the conservative nature of Omani

culture, although some male informants were equally uneasy, expressing concerns over possible data leakage. However, following the researcher's assurance of security and extensive ethical protocol, which protects the confidentiality of informants' disclosures, the individuals felt sufficiently assured and agreed to their interviews being recorded. The researcher's preference for recording the interview emanated from his experience during the pilot study, and the difficulty associated with written notes. The ability to rewind the recording and listen again was believed to facilitate a deeper exploration of the informants' meanings.

A consistent approach was applied, moving logically from one theme to the next, as shown in Appendix (VII), with the intention being to develop a structured discussion, rather than to listen to lengthy personal stories. However, as Omani culture embodies deep respect for other individuals, it is sometimes inappropriate to interrupt people, which required the researcher to exercise skill in re-directing discussions towards relevant areas of interest, whilst appearing to remain interested in the informant's wider story. Using the semi-structured style of interview encouraged informants to narrate their experiences, feelings and perceptions regarding the NTP and, where necessary, the order of the questions was adjusted for tangential, although important, issues to be explored. This strategy led to new questions being asked, or a modification of planned ones, so as to respond to the particular context that was being developed in each interview. In general, the themes were replicated in all the eight Ministry informants. All interviewees were Omani citizens except one expatriate, and all had more than ten years' experience at the Ministry. Some held supervisory and managerial posts, whilst others were professionals in the field of vocational education and training.

The Ministry interviews were held in tandem with the other stakeholder groups, thereby facilitating the researcher's cross-investigation of the different themes and enabling him to look for emerging patterns in the perceptions of different stakeholders.

After each interview, the interviewees were debriefed by the researcher and efforts were made to determine whether there had been any

misinterpretation of any statements or ideas. In most cases, at the end of the interview the researcher replayed part of the recording to ensure its technical functionality. All interviews were recorded using the iPhone 6 application 'Recorder', developed by Tab Media, and were protected by the researcher's pin and fingerprint code.

Employers

The initial intention was to select seven companies involved in the NTP programme, although as nine were keen to participate and a general manager of another company asked to share information with the researcher, a total of ten interviews were conducted. All companies had employed trainees who had finished their training programmes after 2005, so a spread of data could be obtained.

The employer informants followed a similar protocol to the interviews undertaken with the Ministry informants, although they tended to last longer, taking between 45 minutes and one and a half hours. Some informants were well prepared and brought training documents and Ministry correspondence, along with communications with the training providers. Others introduced the researcher to trainees who had joined their companies. At the employers' request, the interviews were conducted on their company premises in Muscat, the capital of Oman. In sharing their experience about the NTP, they tended to highlight the problems encountered with the Ministry rather than the NTP areas, which on occasion required a re-directing of the discussion. As with the Ministry informants, a discussion was held after each interview, to ensure that the informants had understood the questions correctly, with a check also being made of the recording, prior to leaving the premises, to ensure capture. Again, with Omani culture, informal conversations were continued after the interview, with a view to developing or strengthening relationships that might facilitate further interviews or interaction.

Trainees

Trainee interviews were predominately arranged through employers and training providers. The interest in trainees reflected their direct experience of

the training provided for them, with it being appropriate to simply ask them to tell their story. Hence, these interviews were structured differently from the other stakeholder groups which, following introductions, began with an open request to “please tell me about your experience in relation to NTP”. This approach generated rich data that related to the trainees’ experience both before joining the programme and their experience in searching for a job opportunity.

Nine trainees were interviewed, with an approximate mid-level gender split. All informants were given equal respect, and information was exchanged as per the informants from the other stakeholder groups. The trainee informants had pursued their courses in different locations, with their training being completed at different times. The interviews were generally shorter than the other groups and lasted between half an hour, and one hour and twenty minutes.

Whilst the central focus of the empirical work was on the implementation process, the trainees’ voice was considered important, in that their data provided evidence of the level of implementation, whilst equally adding a lived experience that could be set against the stories offered by other stakeholder groups. Furthermore, once the trainee informants realised that the researcher was an employee at the Ministry, they were keen to participate, perceiving that their comments and concerns might be delivered to those responsible for the NTP.

Training Providers

A similar system to that used for the employers was utilised for the training provider informants. Eight interviews took place on the training institute’s premises, with one being conducted in Carrefour, City Centre, Muscat, at the request of the informant. All were face-to-face, with the exception of one which involved a trainer as well as the training provider, and in this case, two individuals were present in one interview. The interviews lasted between thirty-five minutes and just over one hour. All the informants, who were drawn from different specialisations, either held managerial positions or were instructors responsible for the training delivery. All had more than

five years' experience in providing the NTP, and thus had been in contact with the Ministry.

Extreme care was taken in approaching the informants in this stakeholder group, since training providers were most likely to derive the greatest financial benefit from the training. Hence, any evaluation of the training provided could be viewed as potentially unwelcome, especially if the outcome was negative or might involve a future major change. Consequently, care was given to how the study aims were introduced and to the selection of topics for discussion. The informants' shared belief that a Ministry employee might convey perceived complaints to the Authority tended to influence the interview progress, with it being necessary to restrict the discussion to particular areas of training. That said, it was important to secure as much information as possible, since the training providers are central to the NTP implementation. Hence, there was a high degree of sensitivity surrounding this particular stakeholder group.

In summary, the interviews with all four stakeholder groups were held concurrently, which provided the opportunity to identify and develop themes that ranged across all the informants. In particular, themes emerging from one Ministry interview coincided with those from an employer informant, and led to a speedier development of themes than initially expected. Consequently, the researcher became more skilled in guiding the subsequent interviews. In some identified categories, the cross-exploration of the various themes resulted in saturation of the data being achieved after four interviews. After sufficient data were gathered to answer the research questions, the process of conversion into useful information was next, with the process being partly dictated by the research approach.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis is the means by which the data are managed, categorised and presented in a meaningful report (Quinlan, 2011). The process goes beyond describing a phenomenon, with a key element being that the thought process is one that establishes the fundamental relations between the different determinants in a particular situation (Anderson, 2013).

Each approach, be it quantitative, qualitative or mixed, entails a different method of analysis (Kumar, 2014), with the data gathered in the current study being purely qualitative. Hence, to maintain consistency with the philosophical and methodological assumptions made in the research design, a method that corresponds with qualitative inquiries needs to be chosen (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015), with a selection now being addressed. Bryman and Bell (2011) note that compared to the analytical tools available for quantitative data, there are relatively few well-established and widely accepted rules for the analysis of qualitative data. Nonetheless, in an attempt to simplify the inherent complexities of analysing such information, Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) provide a comparison between the two extremes in analysing qualitative data (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Qualitative Data Analysis: content versus grounded methods

Content Analysis		Grounded Analysis
Searching for content (prior hypothesis)	_____	Understanding of context and time
Causally (linked variables)	_____	Holistic association
Objective/ subjective	_____	Faithful to views of respondents
More deductive	_____	More inductive
Aims for clarity and unity	_____	Preserve ambiguity and contradiction

Source: Adopted from Easterby-Smith et al. (2015:163)

Qualitative data can be processed either according to a set of items that have been decided in advance (content analysis), or by allowing the data to guide the entire research (grounded theory). However, alternative methods are also available that sit somewhere in the middle of these extremes, such as template analysis. Discourse analysis is another useful method that

allows for meaning to be derived from talk and texts, with such analysis comprising a range of language-oriented approaches that can be meaningfully deployed to study organisational phenomena (Oswick, 2012). Recently, discourse analysis has been used widely in various disciplines in response to the need to understand the more immaterial elements within organisational contexts. According to Lawless et al. (2012:323), “[a] discourse perspective opens up the prospect of researching practice through studying the talk/action in use”. This method shares many similarities with narrative analysis, where the aim is to establish an extensive account of the actor’s experiences and analyse them in a narrative methodology (Creswell, 2013), with Curtis and Curtis (2011:43) believing that, “conversational analysis, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis, include processes of searching for patterns and/or underlying meanings in the data”.

Whilst qualitative data can be analysed in various ways, it is important that there is proper categorisation of the various ‘chunks’ of information that relate to the research theme or question (Miles et al., 2014). The position taken by the current study to interpret the collected data was driven by the researcher being an ‘insider’, working within the Ministry and who, consequently, comes to the study with a history of speculative ideas that are drawn from twelve years of experience. Moreover, the theoretical review, undertaken at the earliest stage of the study, provided a conceptual foundation to guide the interview process. As a means of analysing qualitative data, template analysis has potential value. Indeed, King (2012:257) observes that it “works particularly well when the aim is to compare the perspectives of different groups of staff within a specific context”. King, who pioneered the template technique, identifies it as “a style of thematic analysis that balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study” (ibid:426). The analysis is located mid-way along the Content Analysis – Grounded Analysis continuum. Codes are usually defined before analysis, although these can be updated during the analysis process, thereby providing a degree of flexibility in dealing with the data

(Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In focusing on coding and the categorisation of emerging themes, template analysis is a suitable approach for the current study, since the exploration of the factors influencing the NTP implementation are concerned with identifying themes, rather than an examination of the language the informants used during the interview.

Template Analysis

After reaching a level of saturation in terms of listening and discussing the different stakeholders' experiences, the researcher returned to the UK to commence the data analysis. All interview data were categorised in the relevant stakeholder groups and converted on LJMU protected computers to MP3 files. As a backup, a copy was saved to a removable memory drive, which was stored securely in an LJMU cabinet. Once completed, the original recordings held on the researcher's mobile phone were deleted, to increase the level of security. All interviews, except two, were conducted in Arabic, as requested by the informants, with the exceptions being in English. Subsequently, the process of listening, translating and transcribing the interviews from Arabic to the English language began, after which the anonymising of informants took place, using symbols known only to the researcher. A sample of translated transcripts was forwarded to a Ministry employee, who had not been involved in the research, to verify the translation and raise issues of a semantic nature. The input phase was completed by importing the text files, as Microsoft Word documents, and audio files, into NVivo10.

Before commencing any analysis of the data, consideration needs to be given as to how large volumes of qualitative data can be handled, for which template analysis was deemed a suitable inquiry tool. Recognition was also made that this existing method had the potential to provide the researcher with a qualitative analysis approach that would assist in the classification and categorising of a large body of data. The process involves creating the initial templates, revising the templates (insertion, deletion, changing scope and changing classification) and developing the final templates. To accelerate the process and achieve clearer organisation of the data, CAQDAS software was used to assist in its management (Creswell, 2013),

with coding and categorisation being undertaken within NVivo10. The emerging themes were discussed with the supervisory team and a Ministry colleague not involved in the empirical research, to gain feedback on their cohesiveness within the main context of the thesis. These steps were taken to monitor and support the rigour associated with the study and to ensure the empirical work aligned with the overall thesis.

Template development involves following structured steps to organise themes that emerge from a data set (King, 2012), and in the current study the codes were derived from a range of different sources including the academic literature, the research aims and questions, and the research's philosophical orientation (Anderson, 2013). Preparation of these codes provided guidance for integration with subsequent themes, as they emerged from the empirical data. The codes in template analysis provide descriptions of label headings for certain text (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015), with Miles et al. (2014:56) noting that "[c]odes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to 'chunks' of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs".

The initial templates, developed for the investigation of the factors influencing the implementation of the NTP in Oman, are presented in Table 3.5. These themes emerged from the literature and the initial pilot study that the researcher conducted. The role played by each of the four stakeholder groups is represented in different hierarchical codes to facilitate the process of categorising the perceived factors from each group, and to identify the convergence and divergence amongst these groups.

Table 3.5 NTP Initial Templates and Sub Codes from the four stakeholder groups

MoM Themes	
Objective of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Role of MoM in the training ○ Policy development
Role of the government/ interaction with private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identification of trainees ○ Match-making ○ Partnership with private sector and communication
Training activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Content ○ Implementation procedures ○ Evaluation practices
Challenges of training implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cooperation ○ Omanisation ○ Private sector
Employers' Themes	
Means of policy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Involvement in policy formation ○ Control and power ○ Clarity/ambiguity of goals ○ Availability of resources
Manpower supply/demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Match-making ○ Supply and demand process
Quality of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivery and implementation of training in the workplace ○ Commitment ○ Evaluation practices
Barriers to implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Omanisation ○ Legislation

Training Providers' Themes	
Training approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bureaucracy/integration ○ Cultural issues ○ Training procedures
Barriers to policy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Financial resources ○ Motivation of trainees ○ Role of the private sector
Trainees' Themes	
Training structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advertisement ○ Content of training ○ Learning and delivery to the workplace
Trainees' expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preference for work in the private/public sector ○ Role of the private sector ○ Legislation and Minimum Wage policy
Barriers to policy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cultural ○ Structural ○ Legal

Source: Developed by the researcher

The pilot interview transcripts generated a number of initial templates, with the above table being the culmination of various continuously amended codes that emerged during the transcription process. As might be expected, some themes are replicated across stakeholder groups, for example, policy goals, objectives, training practices and procedures.

Once the initial templates are identified, a systematic transcription is developed for the entire data set. Through this process, the initial themes are subjected to refinement, which includes 1) expansion to a new template,

2) deletion of an existing template, 3) re-defining an existing template, 4) re-classification of a template, and 5) presentation of the final template (King, 2012). At this stage, the focus is on gaining a rigorous understanding of the data, which entails continuous reflection and evaluation of the data. This aspect of template analysis needs to answer the following questions posed by Easterby-Smith et al. (2015): Does it support existing knowledge? Does it challenge it? Does it answer previously unanswered questions? What is different? Is it different? These questions were helpful in establishing the initial conceptualisation of the data, when comparing it to the literature, and to develop the estimated links that may exist between the programme stakeholders' experiences. During this stage, 'chunks' of information were distributed amongst those templates that were developed during the process of refinement (Anderson, 2013). The process of amending and distilling the data is perpetual, as long as there are uncategorised texts (King, 2012). Hence, once the final templates were prepared, the themes were able to be abstracted and presented meaningful links between the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

It is important at this stage to recall that the current study was initially situated in an endeavour to explore the effectiveness of the NTP implementation in Oman, although the pilot study showed this to be problematic and threatening to certain stakeholder groups. Hence, the study was refined to investigate the implementation of the programme, along with the factors and barriers associated with that implementation. It was at this stage and in response to the pilot study outcomes that the theoretical framework relating to public policy implementation was introduced. In response to the stated focus, the final themes used to analyse the research questions are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 NTP Final Templates

MoM Themes	Sub-codes
Clarity of the policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Role of MoM in the training ○ Policy development

Manpower planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identification of trainees ○ Match-making ○ Partnership with private sector and communication
Programme design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Design and delivery ○ Implementation procedures ○ Evaluation practices
Barriers to implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Barriers related to employers ○ Barriers related to trainees-jobseekers ○ Barriers related to the Government
Employers' Themes	
Implementation structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Involvement in policy formation ○ Control and power ○ Clarity/ambiguity of goals
Skills supply and demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Match-making ○ Training vs Omanisation
Quality of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivery and implementation of training in the workplace ○ Capacity of training providers ○ Evaluation practices
Barriers to implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trainees motivation/ attitude and cultural ○ MoM planning and evaluation ○ Government regulations
Training Providers' Themes	
Training goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desire for policy implementation ○ Cooperation
Training procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training design

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivery and assessment
Barriers to implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MoM planning and evaluation ○ Employers preference of expatriates' labour. ○ Trainees Attitude/culture.
Trainees' Themes	
Training process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advertisement ○ Content of training ○ Implementation in the workplace
Motives to join NTP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enablers of implementation ○ Legislation and MoM regulations
Barriers to implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MoM/ evaluation ○ Employers preference to expatriates/behaviour ○ Training content and structure ○ Government regulations and projects locations.

Source: Developed by the researcher

The final templates emerged from coding the data, with the multiplicity of perceptions regarding the NTP policy leading to different levels of coding. However, to avoid confusion and to manage the data structure presented in later chapters, the presentation and analysis of the highest code classifications are excluded; for example, in the Ministry's case the clarity of policy, manpower planning, training design and barriers to implementation were the headings used in the analysis. This was due to a multitude of sub-factors being present and the need to focus on the research questions, with the later chapters expanding on these themes.

The importance of assuring the integrity of qualitative research designs needs to be recognised, since followers of positivism are quick to criticise

such studies on the grounds that they lack validity and reliability, and hence that their outcomes can be challenged.

3.5 Research Quality

Researchers need to show a concern for the quality of their studies, with there being a need to persuade both the reader and researcher that the study findings are credible, and may legitimately function as a theoretical underpinning for future investigations (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Thus, this section presents the tools that were employed in the current study to maintain quality and simultaneously defend any potential for criticism of its findings.

In quantitative inquiries, the trustworthiness of research findings is assessed by reference to the validity and reliability of the instruments used to reach the conclusion (Collis and Hussey, 2009). However, the rejection of reliability and validity claims in qualitative investigations, which started in the 1980s, has led researchers to explore much more rigorous methods for ensuring the quality of a qualitative study (Morse et al., 2002; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In this respect, several options are presented in the literature for assessing the integrity of qualitative studies, amongst which are those put forward by Guba and Lincoln (1989), who illustrate the philosophical divide in terms of quality criteria (Table 3.7).

Table 3.7 Parallel Quality Criteria

Positivist term	Naturalistic term
Internal validity	Credibility
Generalisability	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Source: Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1989)

Since the current study is underpinned by qualitative data, emphasis is placed on this area. Credibility refers to the efforts made by the researcher

to establish a good fit between constructed realities and the reconstructions attributed to them (Symon and Cassell, 2012). This fit can be achieved through various actions, including the researcher's immersion within the inquiry, continuous peer involvement and discussion, analysis refinement, comparison of initial with emerged constructions, and the involvement of informants in research interpretations (ibid). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that the presence of transferability in qualitative inquiries can be taken to be as important as the generalisability claimed for quantitative studies. Transferability denotes the extent to which the research findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied, whereby the researcher is required to supplement the findings with a 'thick' description of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In addition to these criteria, it is suggested that in quantitative research dependability is considered as a viable alternative to reliability, with dependability relating to stability, consistency and predictability. This refers to the ability of a study to be replicated under similar conditions, using similar inquiry processes and achieving findings that can be broadly recognised as similar. Finally, Guba and Lincoln (1989) proposed the replacement of objectivity with the term 'confirmability'. This embraces the idea that any auditor or second team of researchers is empowered to conduct an audit on the sources and types of data that were used to construct the study's evidence (Greener, 2011).

Whilst many scholars consider the parallel quality model (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) to be an effective approach to qualitative quality, it has attracted criticism on the grounds that in terms of its assumptions about positivist research, it takes for granted that the tools used can indeed demonstrate the research to be credible (Smith, 1990; Symon and Cassell, 2012). Accordingly, the notion of fairness is included as another criterion, which provokes the researcher to establish a balance in reporting all stakeholders' views, perspectives, values, claims, concerns and voices in the text (Lincoln et al., 2011). The inclusion of this condition enhances the authenticity of research and has a tendency to reduce any claim of bias.

Other scholars have built on Guba and Lincoln's (1989) earlier work and formulated their own sets of standards, some of which are relevant to the current study. One approach identified three key criteria to be authenticity, plausibility, and criticality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Authenticity refers to the extent to which a depth of understanding is reflected in the research context; plausibility concerns whether the research is positioned within the most related theoretical area; whilst criticality is identified as the degree to which the research has been successful in encouraging the reader to question his or her previous assumptions based on the research findings. The aim is to provide sensible criteria for assessing the credibility of qualitative inquiries, which relates to the protocol for developing the research evidence. Indeed, "the results of constructionist research should be believable, and they should be reached through methods that are transparent" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015:54). More specifically, the quality of case study research has been reviewed by Creswell (2013:265), who developed criteria for 'good' case study research, which are reflected in the following set of questions:

- Is there a clear identification of the 'case' or 'cases' in the study?
- Is the 'case' ('cases') used to understand a research issue or used because there is intrinsic merit within the 'case' ('cases')?
- Is there a clear description of the 'case'?
- Are themes identified for the 'case'?
- Are assertions or generalisations made from the 'case' analysis?
- Is the researcher reflexive or self-disclosing about his or her position in the study?

Another set of criteria has emerged that can be used to evaluate the rigour of qualitative case investigations, with these being shown in the guidelines proposed by Cepeda and Martin (2005) for evaluating case studies in practice. They argue that researchers should consider three main elements when conducting a qualitative case study: 1) a clear conceptual framework, 2) a vivid methodological iterative process, and 3) continuous interplay between initial and emerged data to support any attempt at theory building. These guidelines appear to be more appropriate for the conduct of

qualitative research generally, rather than as a specific framework for the evaluation of quality.

In the pursuit of quality, a review of the literature found that qualitative researchers relied more on their personal judgement than on any existing standards, although some of the standards invoked corresponded with those already highlighted (Symon and Cassell, 2012). The value lies in the knowledge that the literature study focused on quality, both methodologically and theoretically, which provided a meta-analysis of the works of other researchers. The breadth was equally comprehensive, in that it covered all types of qualitative research including case studies, grounded theory, phenomenological, ethnographic and narrative research. In presenting their general guidelines, the authors were keen to warn the qualitative research community of the dangers associated with a rigorous commitment to a specific list of criteria, categories, or indeed guidelines. They argue that the nature of qualitative research requires there to be flexibility and iteration within the exploration process. They caution that researchers who constrain themselves to one set of criteria may limit the rigour of research findings, as the focus is purely on satisfying those criteria. That said, Morse et al. (2002) express an opposing view, emphasising the importance of having a set of criteria before commencing a study, since this can help correct the researcher's path during the entire process and serve to maintain the highest level of research trustworthiness.

Having reviewed the various perspectives on quality, the question revolves around the extent to which concern is held for the area and whether criteria need to be established before commencing a research study, or whether they can be invoked along the way. The researcher's personal view is that the context of the research is all-important and should guide the researcher to the appropriate answer to these questions. There is further confusion, because some of the criteria that have been identified appear in the work of different scholars, yet are labelled differently; for example, the researcher's 'immersion' in the research context which was labelled as credibility by Guba and Lincoln (1989), is referred to as authenticity by Golden-Biddle and

Locke (1993). Moreover, certain items such as 'dependability' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) may not be appropriate, since the surrounding world is dynamic, where the contextual elements and other factors are likely to influence any application.

The context in which the current study was undertaken is politically driven, which places specific demands onto the approaches the researcher used for the claims being made. Hence, the methods adopted were underpinned by the researcher's belief and endeavour to gain an in-depth understanding. This required flexibility in terms of research methods, such that the key NTP policy informants could be interviewed at different periods. Consequently, the researcher decided not to link the issue of quality with a particular set of criteria, but rather to carefully ensure rigour throughout the research process. Considerable efforts were made to avoid bias in conducting the interviews and when analysing the outcomes.

Having considered the research integrity, it is appropriate to reflect on the researcher's personal experience and how this was used to execute the study. The researcher realises the importance of having quality associated with a research study and the extent to which a study is cohesive, in that it is philosophically and methodologically aligned. According to Anderson (2013:168), "regardless of whether you take a broadly inductive or deductive approach to your research, it will lack credibility if you are not able to ensure that your data are relevant and trustworthy". This prompted the researcher to use rigorous methods to enhance the quality of the research findings, and although a rigid set of quality assurance criteria was not applied, a wider view of the overall quality issue was held. The guidance provided in the literature on how to execute a qualitative study and ensure that findings are of value is not very different from the lists of criteria put forward (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Symon and Cassell, 2012). Hence, the standards followed by the current study relate to credibility, dependability, confirmability and fairness.

Credibility

A straightforward definition of credibility is provided by Anderson (2013), who refers to it as the extent to which a researcher accurately records the data collected and then validates those data after interpretation. In this respect, the researcher used his good relationships within the Ministry to reach out to a wider group of informants, who represented the views held by the three other stakeholder groups. His communication skills and simplification of the interview process helped to establish good relationships with the informants, many of which have continued beyond the data gathering process. Moreover, updates regarding the NTP that were reported by the media were assimilated by the researcher, so as to gain the widest possible view of the phenomenon under consideration. The contact with those Ministry staff that held responsibility for NTP implementation was further extended through the organisation's existing social network and, after gaining consent, the researcher was enabled to provide updates on the study's progress through social media. In this way, the strong presence of interpersonal connections was of great importance in understanding and disseminating information concerning the NTP.

In addition, the researcher's contact with Omani Colleges of Technology provided him with a network of academics, with whom it was possible to share ideas about the researcher's PhD topic and to receive advice regarding how, in an Omani context, to best proceed with the empirical work and a justification for the methods used. As an example of this cooperation, the interview questions were checked with another academic working in the same field, while the language used, together with the translation from English to Arabic and vice versa, was scrutinised to help ensure both accuracy and relevance. The initial findings were shared with another academic, which helped in developing the topic and avoiding certain pitfalls, particularly with respect to the coding and analysis in the NVivo software package. Similarly, to gain credibility, the research findings were shared with a human resource academic who provided constructive observations, although despite all the feedback received, the decisions on choices remained the researcher's alone.

In another endeavour to promote credibility, before commencing the detailed writing-up stage of the thesis the researcher prepared a chapter that presented the collected data, although excluding any mediating information. This chapter was shared with a selection of informants, who were requested to comment on the data associated with their particular interviews. In addition, the researcher held telephone conversations with other informants, to obtain their reflective thoughts on the areas covered during the interview and how it was conducted. Whilst these approaches strengthened the relationship between the researcher and the informants, they also provided valuable insight into the process, which increased the researcher's ability to draw stronger links between the various factors and barriers.

Dependability

Dependability denotes the extent to which a researcher has properly outlined the procedures to be followed in conducting a study. The philosophical and methodological choices underpinning this research have been addressed, whilst the research has shown how the choices made were appropriate to an investigation of how the NTP implementation was perceived. Dependability is expressed through answering the research questions, which was progressed through template analysis, wherein the process followed on to the codes to be refined, to take account of the context and fluid situation.

Confirmability

Confirmability emphasises the extent to which the truth claimed by a researcher is free from bias, with this being especially important for qualitative inquiries. The involvement of the various stakeholders groups in the NTP contributed towards assuring confirmability, since different perspectives emanated from the four groups; a process that allowed their voices to be heard. Furthermore, the research included an analysis of various documentary sources that related to the NTP, with examples being

the tripartite contract, the current NTP course evaluation form and more recently the Training Fund Bylaw , issued by Royal Decree (48/2016) in 2016. These documents revealed information about the NTP that is not housed elsewhere, and thus helped the researcher to establish his initial knowledge about the topic.

Fairness

The nature of the current inquiry was such that it involved a selection of individuals who had close links with the NTP. Whilst the trainees were the 'product' of the NTP, they were not involved directly in its implementation. Nonetheless, with respect to the other stakeholder groups, they were afforded equal attention and their 'stories' were taken seriously. Indeed, recognition of their contribution to the debate brings an element of fairness to the study, as they are as well placed as any other stakeholder group to comment on the NTP implementation. Hence, they do form an integral part of the programme, with their views being of particular relevance to the study.

Whilst numbers are typically smaller in qualitative studies, the sampling method followed by the researcher sought an approach that provided justice to each stakeholder group. Whilst some people were naturally eliminated from the study, efforts were made to ensure that the sample selection conformed to just principles. Total random selection was neither practical nor desirable, given the small numbers involved in the survey and its philosophical stance. Whilst the Ministry's database provided the main source by which informants were identified, the list provided to the researcher only recorded organisations of potential informants, without names. Thus, the focus was on the criteria, rather than the person involved, which provided an element of fairness. In addition, the researcher developed a second database, with the information gathered from the training providers, employers and trainees, which helped to counterbalance the Ministry's provision. Therefore, the current study was able to demonstrate some elements of fairness within the investigation.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

In general terms, research that involves human beings requires ethical guidelines, with a researcher's failure to follow these being likely to impact negatively on the study's integrity (Bryman, 2012). In order to ensure the appropriate way forward in this study, attention was directed towards the proposed data collection method.

Within the Omani culture, gaining approval from an accredited source is important. To this extent, credibility for the authenticity of the research was gained through an LJMU letter of explanation and support for the study, whilst the Ministry's Human Resource Development Department provided a letter confirming the legitimacy of both the study and the researcher (see Appendix (V) and Appendix (VI)). These letters, which were signed and stamped by the relevant authorities, provided evidence that the research was bona fide. In Omani culture, such letters are highly important, as they testify to the legitimacy of the researcher and the area of investigation.

Issues concerning ethics, access and potential hazards that can arise during or after a study are commonly addressed within the University monitoring systems. Whilst permission was granted to proceed, the onus was on the researcher to implement LJMU's policy and procedures. One particular issue, which has already been cited, referred to the sensitivity associated with evaluating public policy through stakeholder groups that have a vested, possibly commercial stake in the programme. Even when the focus turned to the implementation of NTP policy, it was down to the researcher to manage the encounters with informants in a sensitive way. It would be easy for the informants to perceive the researcher, with his twelve years' experience, as the 'Ministry man' and tailor their responses towards their own interests. However, from an ethical point of view, his role was to ensure no harm came to the informants, either physically or mentally. In addition, access to documentation that was sometimes sensitive, or gathered informally, required tact, so as not to disclose the source of such material. Above all, the Directorate and the Ministry had to be assured that all data would be treated in an ethical way.

Indeed, with respect to the proposed research questions, which had been sanctioned by LJMU, these were revised in a comprehensive way through the assistance of the Ministry's Director General of Technical Education, to help ensure their relevance to the organisational culture and the phenomenon being investigated. Several comments were made regarding the question wording, with these observations being built into the final version of interview questions.

As an example of good practice, a Participants Information Sheet (Appendix (III)) was distributed, which contained a clear outline of the research aim, the surrounding procedures and the informant's rights within the process. The sheet aimed to provide information so that informants could give their informed consent when they completed the Respondent Consent Form (Appendix IV). One particular ethical point concerned the initial reluctance of some informants to have the interview conversation recorded electronically, although, after additional information exchange, the situation was resolved successfully. However, whilst the legitimate collection of empirical data requires that the University's requirements are approved, it is important to note that the on-the-ground responsibility lies with the researcher and their own moral compass.

Summary

This chapter provides a detailed illustration of the philosophical and methodological positions assumed by the researcher, and illustrates how these choices were based on the nature of the inquiry, and the research questions. Sampling techniques are discussed, along with the reasons for using a non-probabilistic strategy that utilised purposive selection of the informants. Interview protocol determined the rigour of the subsequent data. It presented a number of options for analysing qualitative data, with justification given for the introduction of template analysis as the primary analytical tool and how that worked in practice. Finally, issues associated with the quality of qualitative data were explored and placed into context within the current study. Having identified the philosophical and practical approach to data gathering, attention in the next chapter turns to the data that arose from the enquiry.

Chapter Four: Findings – Ministry of Manpower

Overview

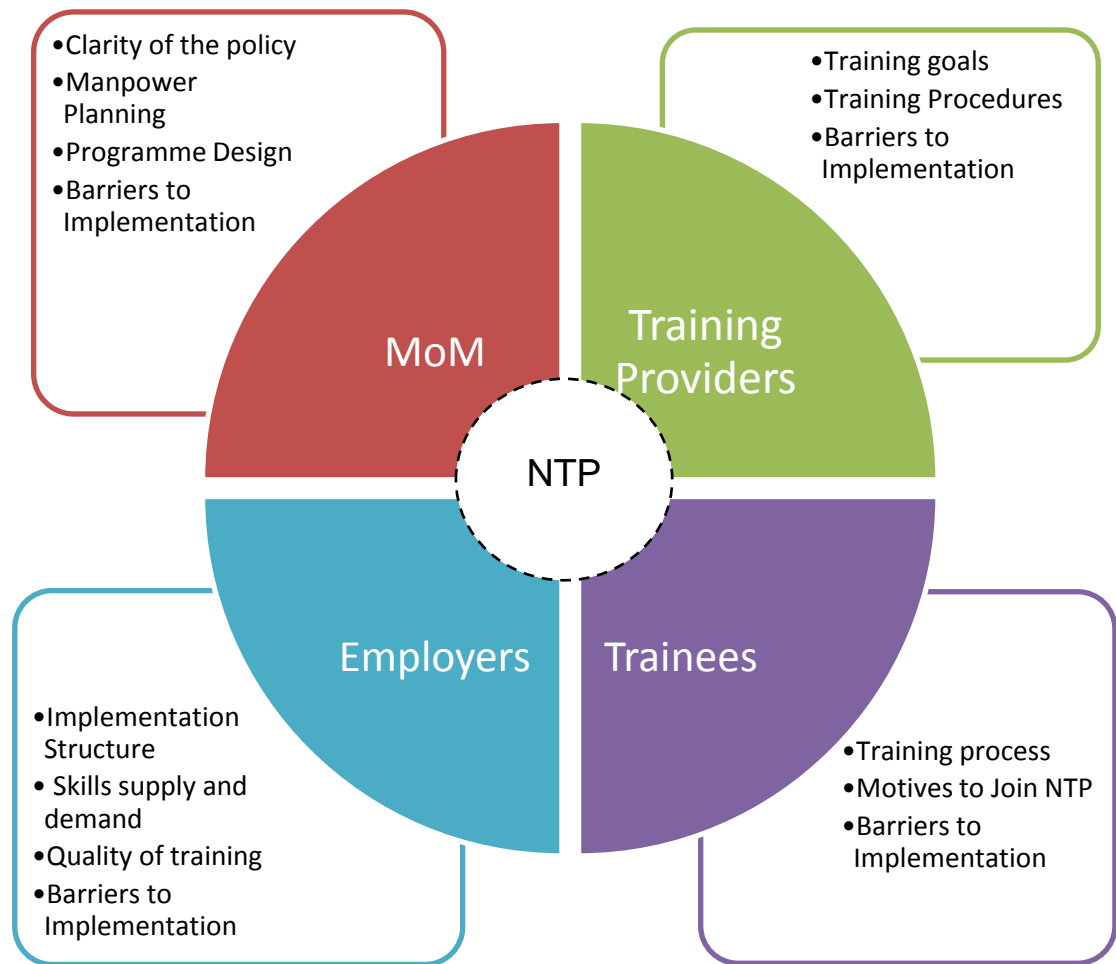
Chapter four, five, six and seven present the research findings, with each chapter addressing one of the four key stakeholders: MoM, Employers, Training Providers and Trainees. Their perceptions surrounding the NTP implementation are organised and structured under a priori codes, which were developed to facilitate the data collection (King, 2004). However, revisions were made during the data indexing and generating of templates, which resulted in new codes being introduced, along with existing codes that did not relate directly to the research question, being deleted.

In total, thirty-six individuals participated in the interviews, some of which were conducted simultaneously with two or three people. Findings from the four stakeholder interviews, and the themes emerging from this fieldwork, are presented in each chapter. These themes represent the perceived factors that influence the implementation of the NTP in Oman. Whilst differences are noted, the following four chapter seek to report the findings, with the inter-stakeholder contrasting and comparing being contained in Chapter eight; the Discussion chapter.

In presenting the data, individual biometrics has been kept to a minimum in order to maintain anonymity.

The schematic outline presented in Figure 4. 1 provides an overview of the four chapter on findings and identifies the key themes arising from each of the four stakeholders.

Figure 4. 1 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation in Oman as Perceived by the Four Stakeholder Groups



4.1 Ministry of Manpower Informants

In the MoM stakeholder group, seven interviews were held, one of which involved two informants, all of whom had responsibility for implementing the NTP policy. The informants were drawn from various departments and ranged from Executive to Operational level (Table 4. 1).

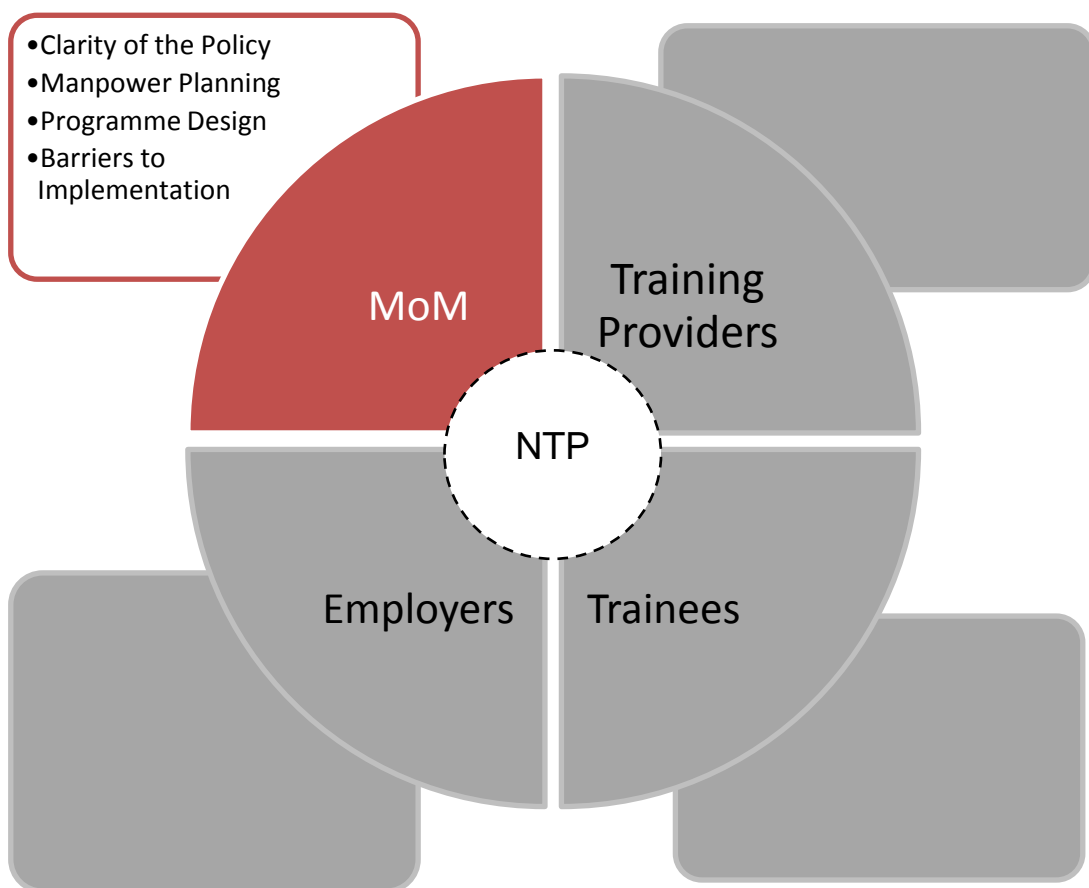
Table 4. 1 Background of MoM Informants

Informant	Experience	Qualification	Job Level
MoM1	25 years	Masters	Executive
MoM2	23 years	Bachelor	Managerial
MoM3	11 years	Bachelor	Operational

MoM4	27 years	Higher Diploma	Managerial
MoM5	23 years	PhD	Executive
MoM6	18 years	Higher Diploma	Operational
MoM7 Group Interview (2 Informants)	30 years	Masters	Operational
	16 years	Bachelor	Operational

Following the procedures outlined in the Overview above the themes identified within the MoM informants are presented in (Figure 4.2).

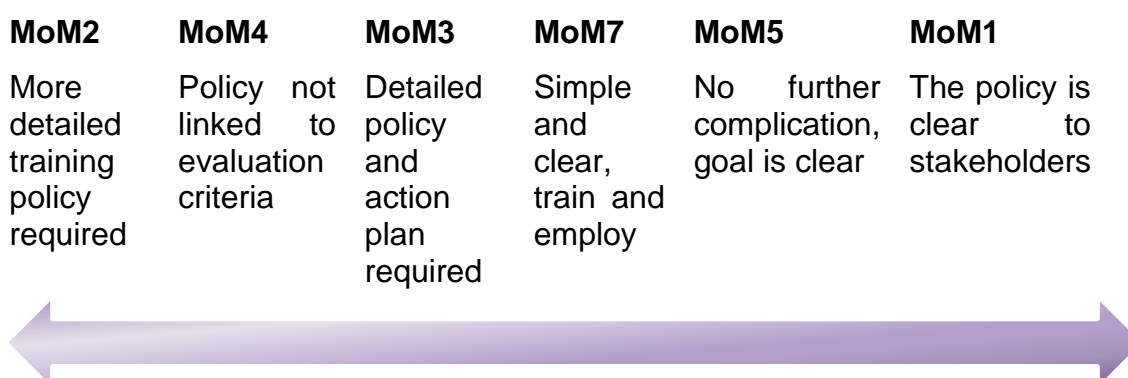
Figure 4. 2 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation – MoM Participants



4.1.1 Clarity of the Policy

The need to investigate the clarity of the NTP objectives stems from various sources. Importantly, whilst the creation and delivery of the NTP sought to encompass ‘training mingled with employment’, a single standalone objective for the programme has never been identified. Rather the NTP forms part of the general responsibility of the MoM to ensure training occurs and that it persuades the private sector to employ local, rather than expatriate labour. It is also the responsibility of the MoM officials to implement the NTP, yet, despite their official position a variation in the degree of clarity amongst MoM informants is apparent (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4. 3 The MoM Perception of the Clarity of NTP Objectives



Informant MoM2 felt that:

“the objectives of the NTP revolve around two main issues - (1) developing the skills of the young jobseekers according to the requirements of the private sector, and (2) securing and finding jobs for Omani youth after training.”

There is no specific policy document entitled the NTP, with the objectives existing as a form of tacit knowledge amongst MoM staff, although the two issues identified are considered to summarise the policy in its entirety. Within the culture of the organisation, whilst MoM officials are used to following their superiors' directive, which can reduce the need for detail, one informant commented that:

“we need more detailed objectives which can be better evaluated and enable us as MoM officials to know whether we have achieved these objectives or not.” (MoM4)

This opinion found support from informant MoM2 agreed, who commented that:

“these objectives are general and we as MoM employees face difficulty in assessing our achievement; the main objective is clear to us - training and then employment, but we need to be given much more detailed tasks like, targeting a specific number of trainees, and clearly identifying the specialisation of training.”

The two interviewees cited above were considered to be the most experienced employees who worked in the department directly relating to national training, and hence, were considered knowledgeable informants.

Further, in relation to the NTP objectives, MoM3, whose department dealt with employment at the NTP completion, expressed his unease, stating:

“the goal of the Government is big but unclear, and there is a need for an exhaustive policy considering the sectorial differences among companies.”

This informant agreed with the other informants, regarding the need for a precisely-worded training policy with detailed objectives, which met the needs of the various stakeholders. His comment also emphasised that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach would not be suitable for the private sector, since enterprises in different sectors of the economy have different requirements.

The discussions surrounding the NTP objectives lead to the question as to whether there is a primary goal that drives the entire training process, and in this connection, the members of staff involved with quality assurance of the training provided, were clear about that goal. For example, MoM7 stated that:

“our main objective is to prepare the national jobseekers to meet the demands of the labour market; mainly we are conducting the training for the sake of employment.”

This belief was echoed by other colleagues at the MoM, although, as will be shown later, they were not completely shared by the employer stakeholder

group. Disparity was also seen within MoM, in that MoM7 took a contrary view to MoM3, firmly believing that clarity did exist, since he identified strategic objectives relating to the demands of the various economic sectors within the Sultanate. In this respect, he felt:

“we are following the strategic goals of the country, but we execute these goals according to the requirement of various economic sectors in Oman, for example, the technical jobs are dynamic and have required us to update our courses and programme to meet the diverse needs of that sector.”
(MoM7)

This quite specific focus reveals an element that MoM3 clearly did not recognise. Moreover, MoM1 also supported the notion of a clear focus:

“this training is unique in terms of its association with employment; I think the objectives are clear to all the stakeholders involved in this training.”

MoM1 thus expressed disagreement with those informants who claimed the need for greater detail within the policy. However, MoM1 operated in a different context from the other informants, with his responsibility lying with long-term planning and the strategic goals of the policy, rather than with policy implementation, as were the other informants cited so far. The uniqueness of the NTP that MoM1 highlighted is embedded in the structure of the programme and its collaborative approach with employers, which is different from Omani Vocational Training Centres, and the Colleges of Technology. Informant MoM5, who occupied another executive position within the MoM, shared MoM1's views with respect to the clarity of the policy objectives, stating that:

“NTP objectives are clear, they aim to train and employ Omani youth jobseekers and then employ them in the private sector, we don't need any further complicated details, we achieved these objectives and this is evidenced in the number who have joined the private sector” (MoM5).

The statement, however, omits to recognise the number of trainees who subsequently leave the private sector after a relatively short period of time.

MoM1 considered the goal of the NTP to be simple, straightforward, and aimed at treating an immediate problem. On this issue, he felt that:

“the NTP is a solution designed to meet companies’ demands; simply, it is introduced to satisfy needs of the companies with limited attention to the needs of the trainees.”

As will be seen later, other stakeholders felt that the simplicity referred to by MoM1, impeded how the training processes were executed, with there being little proactive involvement by either the employers or the jobseekers. Indeed, MoM1 saw no reason to discuss ‘objectives’ with either of these stakeholder groups:

“the jobseekers do not look at our objective, it is like the production line, If the employer is seeking to recruit trained Omanis, and there are Omanis looking for a job, then our role is to formulate objectives to satisfy their demands without having to include them in these detailed objectives, without involving employers in the curriculum design.”

The implications of this top-down viewpoint, and the consequent exclusion of employers in goal-setting, presents an impediment to policy implementation and will be returned to later.

4.1.2 Manpower Planning

MoM informants emphasised the importance of determining supply and demand in respect of manpower, in relation to the effective implementation of the NTP. However, some MoM informants considered a lack of employer participation in manpower planning to be an important factor in influencing the implementation of the NTP. The issue related to the number and quality of trainees joining the programme, and where the responsibility for making decisions in this respect lay. Both issues emerged as lively interview topics for this study. Essentially, the focus revolved around the responsibility for determining the manpower supply and demand, and role Government plays in remedying the nation’s skills deficit. On these points, MoM1 argued strongly that the Ministry was reactive rather than proactive:

“we are demand-led because the market requirement is dynamic; therefore, the labour market which is driven by the private sector plays the main role in shaping our strategies for training.”

This statement suggests that whilst as the agent of Government, the MoM is charged with providing the national talent required, it only has a limited role

in deciding what is required. Thus, the number and type of employees with particular skills is dictated by the employment market, and consequently, the number and type of jobseekers accepted by the MoM to participate in the NTP is also determined by the employment market. In recognition of this, the MoM was seen to emphasise the need for partnership and collaboration with the private sector as a means of guaranteeing the employment of Omani youth once trained. The production of suitably-trained and qualified young people who wish to work is classed as the primary reason for the programme. Speaking on this matter, MoM1 stated:

“we are facing big companies and we need them to employ our citizens; therefore, clearly we have to satisfy their needs.”

On the contrary, MoM4 commented about the current approach to identifying the manpower required, and the role of the Government in this case, arguing that:

“this is what we follow currently, but I do not agree with it completely; however, the method currently followed is considered the most effective to achieve the desired objectives of training since we do not have other tools to identify the proper demand of the private sector.” (MoM4)

Another informant addressed the need to close the skills gap through training, pointing out that it is difficult to identify what the precise demands are, and argued for greater Government effort:

“the current method is effective in terms of facilitating the employment process; however, the need to consider the real demands of the private sector is absolutely crucial, since NTP incentives are manipulated by the private sector to enable the hiring of expatriates.” (MoM3)

This claim regarding the incentives given to private sector employers in return for their participation in the NTP (and implicitly their employment of Omani nationals) was equally highlighted by other stakeholder groups.

The views about determining the required manpower were not shared by all the MoM contributors, since MoM7 felt that the Government adopted two strategies to do achieve this. One was to consider the needs reported by employers, and the other was to take advice from the training providers:

“we are following both strategies for manpower planning, either the Ministry ordered the training institutes to start a training programme or the training provider initiates a

training programme and suggests to the MoM that training starts based on the needs of the private sector.” (MoM7)

The determination of manpower requirements is a complex issue, being linked to the Government’s role in training intervention, since this intervention (resulting in better prepared and qualified youth) is considered as an incentive for the private sector, which the NTP provides with employable jobseekers. In this respect, MoM7 added that:

“it is not possible for companies to demand skills for a particular occupation that is not required by them, the MoM rewards employers for taking young Omanis, and part of the incentive offered is their involvement in the manpower determination process.”

It was revealed by MoM1 that in this determination, the focus was on current and emergent needs, as confirmed in his statement that the NTP

“does not need to consider the future training since it aims to meet a current demand.”

Furthermore, MoM1 clarified the situation, saying:

“the role of the MoM is to identify the gap in collaboration with the private sector, and then to work with employers so as to enable the trainees to be introduced into the workplace.”

This was expressed as a general overarching aim, rather than a specific contract with a particular employer, since MoM1 added:

“if the person works in the same occupation and after one year leaves to work in another job within the same discipline or in another area, we as the MoM consider we have created a technical human with a good work ethic, and equipped with a work culture. I believe that if we hadn’t conducted that training and not prepared that trainee to join the workplace and respect his/her occupation, s/he would not even have had the chance to join the workplace.”

This argument was supported by MoM7 who emphasised the long term role of the NTP, saying:

“we have trained people for a specific occupation, and this has opened horizons for the trainees; strategically, we trained them to be employed, regardless of where and what they will do.”

It can be seen from these comments that the MoM has followed the trend of allowing employers to guide the planning in respect of the skills required in the labour market in Oman.

4.1.3 Programme Design

The MoM informants perceived the current NTP design to be an influential factor in its implementation. In this respect, the way in which training was delivered was not stipulated in any policy relating to the NTP, but rather that various departments were involved, with responsibility being shared and somewhat fragmented.

Informant MoM3 was clear in stating:

“there is no approved training model followed by the MoM to conduct the NTP; the current procedures were developed a long time ago, and have been followed by the Ministry since then.”

Indeed, there is no formally-described procedure for training, nor is there any monitoring of the older established procedures to ensure that they are being used effectively, or that they meet the needs of the training programme. Rather, the private sector leads the process of identifying the training needs and thus, that sector is considered as the starting point for the NTP. MoM2 described the procedure as follows:

“the starting point of the NTP is when a company submits its request to hire labour for a certain job... and in the case where there are no available jobseekers, the Ministry reports to the company that it has been necessary to commence training, and requests the Private Training Department within the Ministry to do that.”

This process was confirmed by MoM1 and MoM3, who were directly involved in the arrangement of training, with their support providing implicit acknowledgement of the limited role of the Government in the identification of manpower needs.

Course content is based on the job descriptions in the Gulf Arab Manual Common Vocational Classification along with information from the employers concerning the job vacancy. MoM7 outlined the process:

“we start by identifying the job description of that occupation and we depend on the Gulf Arab Manual Common

Vocational Classification and description as well as the company job description. Then we design the contents of the training after clarifying the person specifications for the prospected job holder.”

Informant MoM1 took a different view, stressing the need to identify clearly the basis for delivering a training programme, which in his opinion need to be linked to the precise job requirements:

“I do not want to see any content, if he is able to pass the practical test, the discussion is over because the content of the curriculum is assessed through that test.”

These two contrasting views within the same department, which is responsible for shaping the implementation of the NTP, illuminate the dilemma surrounding the design of the training.

That said, all MoM informants confirmed the value of the training programmes, and acknowledged their content as enabling them to achieve the current (implicit) objectives of the NTP. Nonetheless, criticism on the course content arose from MoM2, MoM3 and MoM4. For example, MoM2 put forward that:

“the ratio of theory to practice is inappropriate, the decision-makers made a change to deliver most of these programmes theoretically. I am at the front line with trainees and they complain to me that they need more practice.”

This argument challenges MoM7’s statement, which stated that the contents of the training are designed in co-ordination with the employers. This main issue concerns the content and the concern that it is not providing sufficient practice of a new skill. It could, however, be that the content themselves has changed, and if this is so, then after such changes still relevant for employers’ needs. To which MoM3 added:

“not all the training programmes are suitable for the jobseekers targeted by employers; we need to review the nature of the jobs offered, considering the cultural issues, and we need a much more rigorous interviewing process.”

Moreover, MoM4, who was responsible for following up trainees, felt that the curriculum contents of training courses was outdated:

“there is a need to update the contents of each training programme to match the expectations and demands of the employers. I think we, as a Ministry, have failed to advertise for the NTP and convince Omani youth who are searching for jobs, to join the programme.”

Some informants even saw the outmoded curriculum as having prompted the MoM to leave employers to solve this issue, with MoM4 adding:

“to make the issue flexible, we allow the employers to update the contents of the curriculum and to make whatever changes may be required.”

The MoM has limited input in decided upon the number of trainees and the type of manpower to be produced by the NTP, and given MoM4’s comment, the Ministry also places the responsibility for the design of training with employers, simply retaining the right to revise training should that be necessary, as earlier claimed by MoM7.

The interviews with MoM informants revealed issues concerning the NTP design, specifically the capacity of the training providers, and the fragmentation of the Government efforts in NHRD among different programmes and institutions. To deliver training programmes under the NTP policy, training providers need to comply with Ministerial decree No. 490/2010, and submit to evaluation on the basis of trainee performance. As confirmed by MoM2:

“we assess the training providers initially from the performance of the trainees after completing 50% of the training. The trainee is a reflection of the trainer, if the trainee understands the content of the training programme, then this is evidence that the trainer is capable to deliver.”

When probed about the possibility of other factors influencing the trainees’ performance, such as the trainees’ mental capacity, orientation, and availability of the materials, the informant commented:

“it is possible, but our role is to assess the performance and based on that we judge the training institute.” (MoM2)

MoM1 supported this argument by stating that:

“we are selecting Category One training institutes which have to meet the conditions of the MoM in terms of capacity in order to deliver a training programme. They must satisfy three essential requirements: (1) training area which includes workshops, classrooms and labs, (2) human resource which means trainers and supporting teams, and (3) physical resources.”

Adding that if institutes met these three requirements they would be capable of carrying out effective training, in line with MoM expectations.

The NTP as a policy involves a performance evaluation for each training programme delivered. The MoM informants explained the process. First, the Ministry delegates assessors to visit each trainee half-way through their training programme, wherein their progress is evaluated. This process is systematic, with the assessor using an assessment sheet covering thirteen elements related to the training, see Appendix (VIII).

MoM4, from the Follow-up Department, highlighted the nature of the ‘follow-up’ assessment of trainees:

“the assessors visit the trainees in the training institutes - the assessment can be theoretical or practical, based on the type of training.”

However, the informants were vague as to the degree to which the skills being developed during the training were actually practised in the workplace. Indeed, MoM4 was unsure that the Ministry training being actually delivered was actually implemented in the workplace:

“this is a challenge - did the company employ the trainees in the same specialisation? We assume there has been no problem in this respect since we have authorised the employers to decide and design the training contents.”
(MoM4)

This lack of clarity and understanding was confirmed by other informants who suggested that it was necessary to explore the detail as to how the programmes were assessed, because the overriding objective to place Omani jobseekers in employment. Employment was a higher priority than a job with special skill requirements, to which MoM1 proclaimed:

“I don’t think we can go into detail when we complete the evaluation, we don’t have adequate time to cover all these details; this would require the suspension of training which we can’t do. We look to the issue from the perspective that, we aim to solve the issue of unemployment and we achieve this objective. This is indicated as one of the signs of programme successes.”

The justification used by MoM1 for a more liberal evaluation was linked with the role employers played in the training design, since as he pointed out:

“the company has interviewed the candidate, set the training course in co-ordination with the training provider, and recruited the candidate; thus it supposed that the output meets their requirements, as they contribute in the entire process of hiring the trainees.”

Nonetheless, as will be discussed in the next chapter, employers challenged this version of the process as is discussed later in the chapter.

MoM2 did not share this belief held by MoM1, however, challenging the notion that evaluation could be left to a vague assessment that simply of provided generic skills that would be useful within any workplace. This informant believed that a well-structured evaluation model needed to be developed:

“this evaluation is not sufficient to investigate the trainer’s or the trainee’s capabilities; we need a much more structured training evaluation framework.”

Support for this contention equally came from MoM6:

“the current evaluation practices are not adequate, and the MoM does not consider the financial data when attempting to undertake the assessment.”

This individual, who was in the Finance Department, was referring to the need to take account of the capital invested in the programmes, and the extent to which that investment generates the expected returns. Thus, in this case, the financial considerations are perceived as paramount in evaluating a venture. Adding further detail to the role of the Finance Department, MoM6 conveyed:

“our role as Finance Department is to approve the documents and send them to the Ministry of Finance, we don't conduct any financial analysis, they just request statistical reports detailing the numbers involved in the training, and the money paid.”

Since the commencement of the NTP in 2003, more than 36,000 Omani citizens have completed the programme, and claims were made by some of the MoM informants that the trainees have impacted positively on the labour market. For instance, MoM1 argued that:

“our aim is to impact on the private sector and yes we do, and the evidence is that there are many of the trainees from the NTP who have joined the labour market and who have been promoted and continue in the same company. However, those who are less capable in terms of understanding or who have different goals - you do not find them in the same company.”

Hence, a measure of the NTP success is perceived as the number of trainees who have completed their programme and have joined and remained with the private sector. However, MoM3 criticised this approach to evaluation, believing that more prosaic outcomes mattered:

“we are concerned only about the numbers, the only measurement we use to identify whether we have achieved our objectives is the number of people who joined the workplace after training and how many of those remained in their companies ... the highest return on this investment is the community service.”

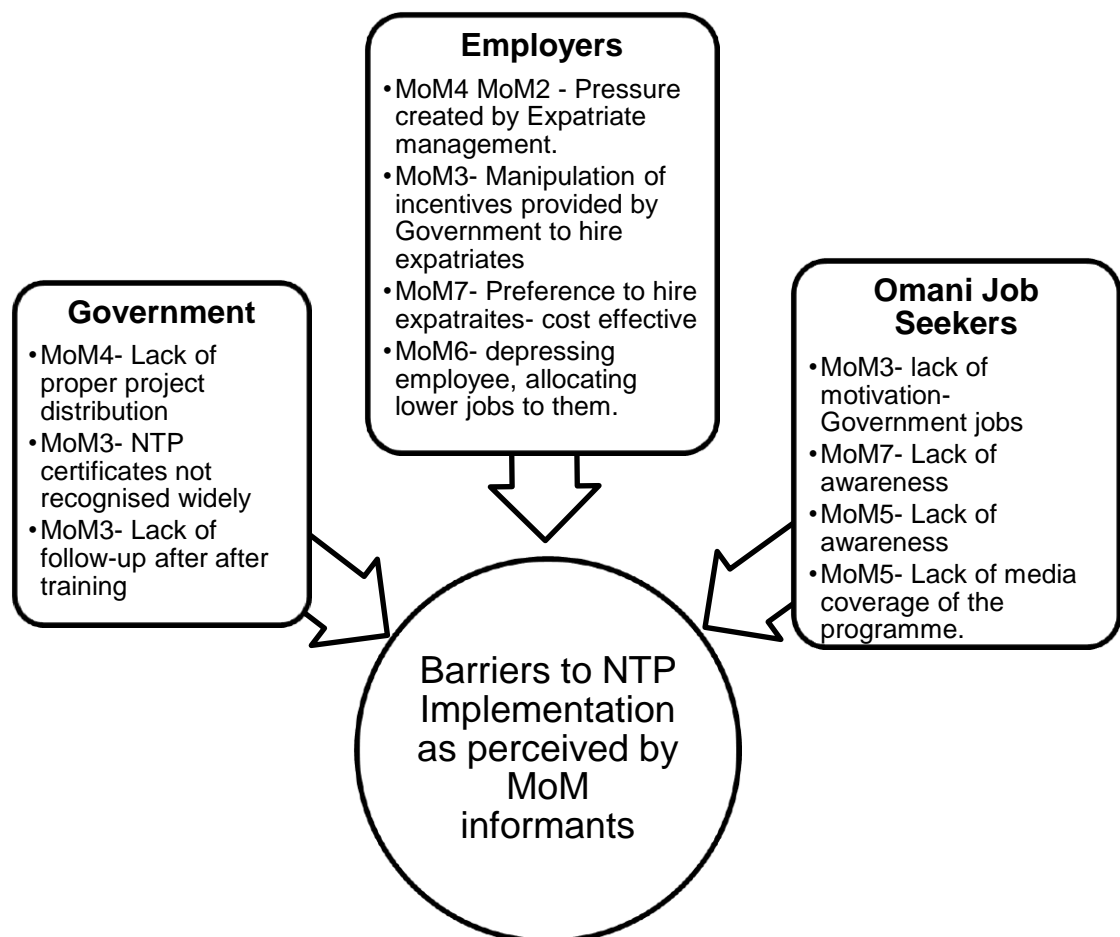
MoM3, from the Employment Department, considered the NTP to be more than a mechanical system driven by quantitative outcomes, perceiving it as a social solution for job-seekers who are enthusiastic about working. In summary, it was evident that a need existed for a much more efficient and effective tool by which to understand and measure the success of the NTP, as illustrated by informant MoM7:

“there is no clear and definite tool to identify the impact of NTP on the private sector.”

4.1.4 Barriers to Implementation

Similar to many policies, various barriers impeded the NTP implementation, as it was envisaged by the policymakers. MoM informants cited their experience of the obstacles encountered, which essentially fell into two key groups: (1) those related to the jobseekers (trainees), and (2) those related to the employers. In addition, some MoM informants provided evidence of barriers associated with the MoM regulations and the follow-up processes. Whilst grouped separately, these challenges are perceived as being interrelated (Figure 4. 4).

Figure 4. 4 Barriers to NTP Implementation as Perceived by MoM Informants



In relation to the ambitions of young Omanis, MoM3 highlighted a genuine obstacle to the NTPs effective implementation and success, by stating that:

“the desire of the young Omani jobseekers to work in the private sector is very weak; this is due to the opportunities offered by the Government, particularly in the military and security sector.”

This reluctance among Omani youth to work in the private sector was confirmed by MoM2, who felt that:

“the motivation of young people to join the programme and undergo training leading to work is almost non-existent. For them, the NTP is not a choice. They join it just because there is no other opportunity with better incentives offered to them.”

This particular informant, who was involved with the trainees, was able to identify the challenges they themselves faced:

“the trainees prefer to work near to their homes, and having to come to the capital, leave their families and incur all these expenses, are among the reasons for not joining or continuing the programme.” (MoM2)

MoM4 confirmed this observation, noting that:

“there is a lack of desire from jobseekers to enter this programme. It is considered as the last choice for them, you rarely find a trainee wanting to join this programme, as most young Omanis want to work in the public sector.”

Such comments were echoed by both the employers and the trainees, which imply a negative impact on the wider Omanisation project, and not just on the NTP. The Government’s desire to localise the labour force within the private sector was therefore damaged by a lack of enthusiasm for young Omanis to acquire the type of skills and knowledge required by private sector employees, yet already possessed by expatriates. Further, the perception that young jobseekers were fairly intransigent in this respect was a strongly held view, to which MoM6 affirmed:

“jobseekers are reluctant to work in the private sector; they just care about the salary without considering the job or the prospects of the company.”

Taken together, there was a consensus view that jobseekers perceived the NTP as the last resort (MoM3 and MoM4).

In addition to poor trainee motivation, the MoM informants considered the private sector itself constituted a barrier. In this regard it was asserted that employers' motives were often other than those intended by the Government. Essentially, programme involvement by private sector employers provided the reward of gaining approval for work visas, which subsequently allowed them to hire expatriate workers, with MoM3 highlighting that:

“the incentive Government provides to the private sector is the main driver for private sector employers to hire Omani through the NTP, as they know they will be allowed to employ expatriates. Hence, they hire Omanis but as soon as they are able to hire the expatriates, they create all sorts of reasons to dispose of the Omani workers.” (MoM3)

Coming from the MoM informants in general this is a somewhat sensitive issue, although MoM7 presented a differing view:

“since the decision-makers within the private sector are expatriates, they tend to want to hire people to whom they are related, like family members.”

Expanding on his observation, MoM7 reported specific instances of employer behaviour:

“in some organisations, they have asked the trainees who joined the company after completing the training to clean bathrooms, distribute company brochures in the streets or even work as a porter, even though they know that the person was trained in a certain technical occupation.”

MoM4 made a similar observations:

“sometimes, the private sector hires the trainees and asks them to perform duties not related to their main occupation or even lower than the main duty, like cleaning bathrooms and distributing the company's advertisements in the street.”

Indeed, a number of informants placed the blame at those in leadership positions in the private sector, not only for the NTP failure, but in the physical and mental harm inflicted on many young Omani jobseekers:

“the leaders in the private sector, specifically individuals who come in direct contact with Omani workers are to

blame for the fact that Omanis do not want to work in that sector.” (MoM6)

“I think expatriates create all sorts of reasons to get rid of Omani citizens, because they fear that Omanis will take over their positions once they gain experience. Indeed, the whole point of the Omanisation scheme is to achieve that.” (MoM2)

“all of these things are done to depress the Omani employees simply because Omanis are costly to the company. Now, the salary of an Omani (after raising the minimum wage) is equivalent to the salary of the expatriate supervisor, but the companies do not want to equalise the salaries, even though the law doesn’t allow them to differentiate.” (MoM7)

Another barrier to the effective implementation of the NTP is perceived as external recognition:

“the weakness is that the Certificate is not recognised as equivalent to an apprenticeship and is not accredited. Therefore, trainees might not be able to make use of it in the future, without already have some experience to show they can do the job.” (MoM3)

Another perceived obstacle reported by MoM3 referred to the lack of follow-up after the programme:

“the lack of follow-up by the MoM leads to all these manipulations of the programme for the sake of gaining the associated incentives. The employers are just looking for their benefit without any care for the other stakeholders.” (MoM3)

Tension between the NTP stakeholders existed and yet, within the MoM, which initiated and designed the scheme, there is capacity for self-criticism.

Some barriers referred to micro level issues, with one area concerning the location of projects initiated under the NTP. Since the projects were not evenly distributed throughout the Sultanate, it meant that trainees often had to migrate:

“most of the projects in Oman are concentrated in almost four main areas and this leads to internal migration which will end in increasing trainees’ expenses since to live in the capital costs more than elsewhere, and this results in either

refusal to join the NTP, or withdrawal after joining the programme and finding the travelling or being away from family and home, too difficult to manage.” (MoM4)

The location issue was also cited by MoM2, and by trainees themselves, which will be returned to later.

Referring to a further barrier to implementation, MoM informants cited the variation in the different industrial areas within the private sector, not all of which were attractive to trainees. Indeed:

“the construction sector is among the least preferred, and this is considered as a challenge to the objective of Omanisation, as well as to the NTP implementation, because the nature of this sector is not attractive. The working conditions are hard and the payment is very low, and there are no incentives.” (MoM7)

The sector issue was also identified by the employers, as will be seen later in chapter five.

The final barrier, which was identified by many MoM informants, concerned the lack of media coverage and effective marketing, with this being perceived:

“as one of the main reason for problems encountered in programme’s implementation.” (MoM5)

Adding greater detail, MoM3 stated that implementation depended upon the private training institutes using appropriate marketing techniques to attract trainees.

Summary

The Ministry were perceived as ‘gatekeepers’ of the implementation policy for the NTP, in that they held a controlling position. Nonetheless, in discussing the various issues there is evidence of a large degree of self-reflection. Topics that found consensus amongst the Ministry informants related to clarity of policy and the lack of manpower planning, both of which fell within the informants’ remit. Indeed, the role of the Ministry and the overall ambiguity associated with implementing the NTP were raised as factors associated with the programme, which extended to the training

design and, in particular, the lack of evaluation practice. In terms of the perceived barriers to the NTP implementation, the Ministry informants tended to look outside the organisation to apportion blame, with certain employers being perceived to act contrary to the original intentions of the scheme. Whilst the Ministry's role was acknowledged as a barrier, there was criticism of trainee attitudes, with their desire for public sector employment being a particular point. In summary, Table 4.5 outlines the contributing factors and barriers, as perceived by the Ministry informants, and these form a staging post for the subsequent discussion and conclusion, and provide the building blocks for the schematic presentations in Figure 8.1 and 8.2. The findings from the employer informants are presented in the next chapter.

Table 4.2 Factors and Barriers of Implementation – the Ministry

Ministry of Manpower Themes	
Clarity of the policy	Role of MoM in the training; Policy development
Manpower planning	Identification of trainees; Match-making; Partnership with private sector and communication
Programme design	Design and delivery; Implementation procedures; Evaluation practices
Barriers to implementation	Barriers related to employers; Barriers related to trainees/jobseekers; Barriers related to the Government

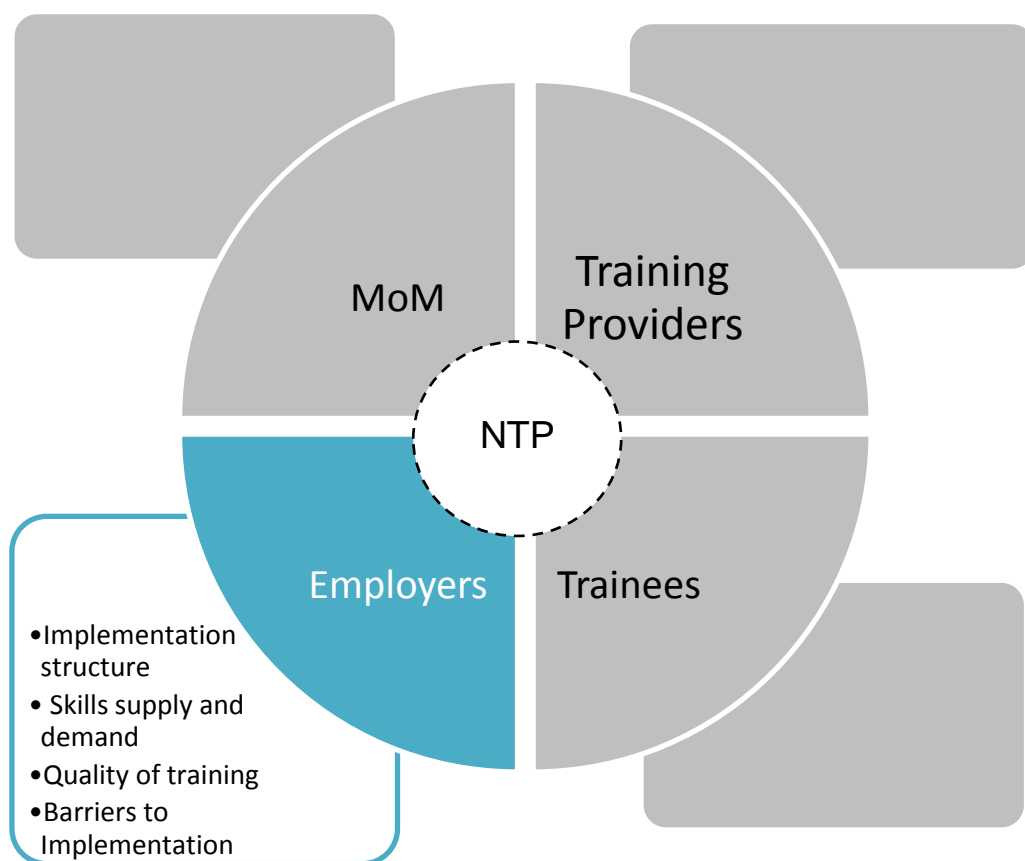
Chapter Five: Findings – Employers

Overview

Oman's Vision 2020 has at its heart an increase in employment opportunities for Omani citizens, in both the public and private sector. Whilst historically, the public sector was the main employer, in recent decades the private sector has emerged as a key element in building the country's economy. This new development required specific skills and abilities, which have been primarily sourced through expatriates, rather than local labour. Vision 2020 incorporates Omanisation as a policy that encourages localise labour within the private sector. Several obstacles were identified by MoM informants, with some of the criticism falling to the human resource.

The Government investment in training is seen as a natural response to addressing the Omani skills gap, although it requires cooperation from the private sector, be it in the form of training, or employment, or both. The NTP was designed to facilitate this cooperation, with a tripartite agreement involving the three main stakeholders: trainees, training institutes, and employers. The principle themes identified by the employer informants are presented in (Figure 5. 1).

Figure 5. 1 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation – Employers



5.1 Employers Informants

This particular stakeholder group comprised ten informants, which represented seven economic sectors (Table 5.1).

Table 5. 1 Background of Employer Informants

Informant	Sector	Qualification	Position
EA	Insurance	Masters	Chief Operation officer
EB	Tourism	National diploma	HR Manager
EC	Construction	Masters	General Manager
ED	Construction	National diploma	HR Manager
EE	Banking	National diploma	HR Manager
EF	Retail	Bachelor	Operation Manager
EG	Tourism	Masters	HR Manager
EH	Manufacturing	Bachelor	HR Manager

EI	Construction	Bachelor	HR Manager
EJ	Automobile	Bachelor	HR Manager

As outlined in the methods section, each interview commenced with a description of the study aim. It was apparent that the informants were keen to discuss the detail of their NTP experience, and their interaction with the MoM, rather than a more general focus on the programme. They showed enthusiasm for raising issues surrounding hiring expatriate labour, the bureaucratic MoM system, and warning of a threat to the current level of investment in the Sultanate, if these critical issues were not resolved. Despite conveying researcher neutrality, his position as an insider researcher, employed by the MoM, might have influenced their actions. During the discussions it was necessary for the researcher to intervene, to ensure that the conversation followed the aim of the study.

Whilst there is common ground between stakeholders, the employers focused more on the alignment between the NTP as a Government implemented policy, and their organisations' objectives, which are inextricably linked to productivity and profit. Hence, the MoM goals and those of the employers are perceived as different, with the former expecting the latter to providing permanent employment as the final destination for trainees, whilst the latter prioritise productivity levels through the presence of skilled labour. Consequently, there is an apparent inherent tension between the wants and needs of employers, and the MoM informants.

5.1.1 Implementation Structure

In terms of clarity of the policy, the employer informants were broadly in agreement with the views expressed by the MoM informants. The employers equally considered it important to identify precisely what the policy is intended to achieve, and the extent to which it does this.

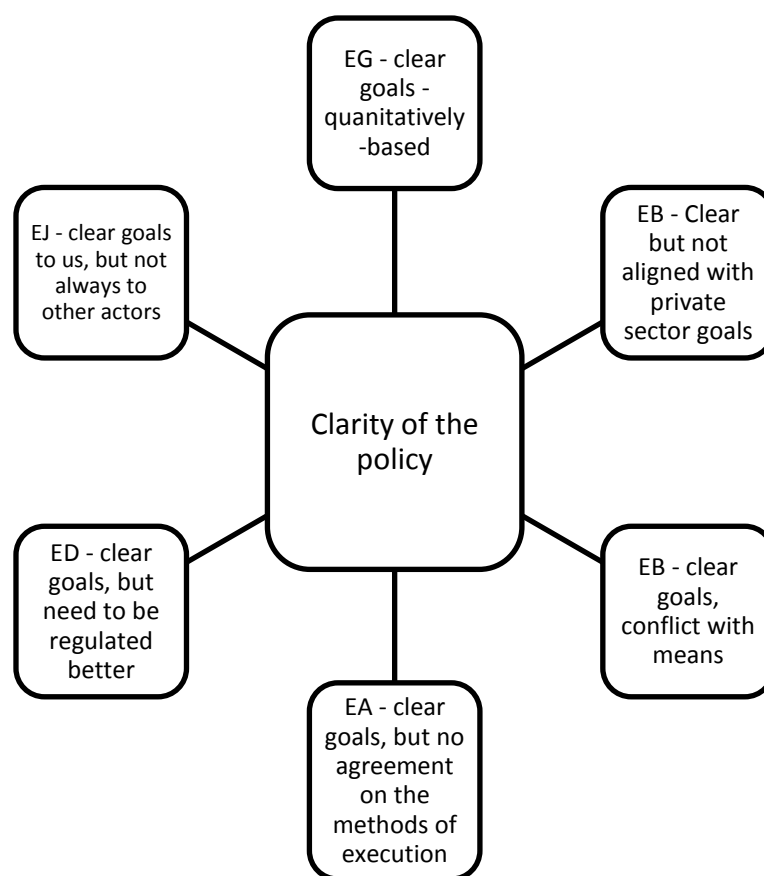
All employer informants believed that the vague NTP objectives were the source of many implementation difficulties. The business-orientation of the employers was seen to be out of alignment with that held by the MoM, which focused primarily on reducing unemployment and getting Omanis into

private sector work, although the lack of goal clarity and planning complicated the situation.

“the speed of nationalisation without rigorous planning could influence the training and the organisation’s business negatively.” (EB)

This argument was developed by all the employer informants, who were frustrated by the lack of clarity of the NTP objectives relating to what was expected of them.

Figure 5. 2 Clarity of Objectives as perceived by Employer Informants



All employer informants indicated that they found the objectives of the policy relating to the NTP to have broad clear, although surrounding issues were expressed by several of them. For example, comments were made on stakeholders differences, as well as within the same segment:

“the objectives of the NTP are clear and as a company we are targeting the achievement of these objectives through the NTP, but we have to recognise that the objectives of

each of the parties varies, and this could be a cause of tension.” (EJ)

That said, all the employer informants were clear that the policy was simply about the post-employment of NTP trainees, with little genuine consideration being given as to how productive those trainees might be:

“the NTP contributes in developing the basics within the trainees as its objective is to develop Omani jobseekers, but the MoM does not consider the quality of the trainees, they just looking to achieve the numbers in employment that meet the Omanisation targets.” (EG)

“the Government goal is clear and achievable, but not aligned with the private sector approach and orientation in the way policy disseminated.” (EB)

Indeed, EB expressed the belief that the conflict between the employer’s and trainee’s objectives was an issue:

“the training has created problems for us as the trainees who have joined the company are much more concerned about the financial compensation they can receive more than what they themselves are supposed to be able to deliver.”

In probing as to why the employer informants agreed to participate, a more ulterior motive became apparent:

“the companies look at the NTP as providing them with a chance to build a relationship with the Government. Their main aim is not to assist with Omanisation, but rather to reap the incentives given to them for accepting trainees. This is the main driver of their participation in the NTP.” (EA)

The conflict between the NTP policy, and the employers’ goals was clearly-perceived by the employer informants, but there was also dissatisfaction with the way the policy was implemented, particularly with regard to the evaluation of programmes and the subsequent follow-up on trainees who had passed through them. For example, a recently-appointed HR manager within one of the construction companies participating in the study, felt that:

“the NTP as a policy, is meeting the objectives and demands of the sector, and after a long period of reluctance among construction companies to employ Omani youth because of their lack of desire to work in this sector, the

problems have now been sorted, but the implementation is not complete because there needs to be a further level of follow-up and monitoring by the MoM.” (ED)

“the goal of the Government is well understood by us as a company, but the main problem is after training, because the follow-up that is supposed to be done by the Government doesn’t happen.” (EG)

5.1.2 Skills Supply and Demand

In order to achieve an effective NTP the Government and the private sector, need to engage in national and organisational manpower planning. Acknowledging the political and socioeconomic demands, the private sector employer informants completely understood the Government’s objective in attempting to solve the unemployment issue. At the same time, however, they felt that their objectives concerning financial performance, competitiveness, and sustainability also needed to be part of the equation.

In respect of their manpower requirements, the informants were particularly concerned with the process of identifying the demand for the supply of individuals with various types of skill and ability:

“as a company, we prepare our annual manpower requirements based on the company’s operation and the Omanisation plan provided by the MoM.” (EH)

Hence, whilst it was understood that the manpower planning conducted within companies is linked to the Omanisation targets, there is a perceived lack of action to secure those targets:

“there is no training plan, currently the plan is only concerned about the employment and meeting the Omanisation objective. However, we need to establish a plan for the training because this will help achieve the objectives of developing the skills of the young jobseeker.” (EH)

“the private sector is excluded from the planning and determination of the manpower demanded, which shows that the MoM is just concerned about the achievement of

Omanisation, and not the provision of training. It is merely assumed that a one-size-fits-all approach will be OK.” (EF)

In contrast, however, EB confirmed that the private sector had been a partner with the Government in terms of determining skills supply and demand:

“the Government has involved the private sector in the process of Omanisation implementation since the NTP has allowed employers to design the training programmes along with training providers without much interference from the Government on the number and type of trainees.”

Interviews with the MoM informants tended to this observation, and that made by EF, as they stressed that the percentage achievement of Omanisation, through the NTP, was of great importance.

A contribution from EG, an employer in the tourism sector, who introduced the wishes of the trainees into the discussion, observing that:

“we need a more efficient human resource plan that considers the actual desires of the trainees along with the other opportunities in the labour market. Currently, the MoM has failed to achieve the desired objective.”

EG believed that the young Omanis supplied to the tourism industry were not in sufficient numbers to meet demands, with a similar claim being in the retail sector:

“the retail sector is among those sectors only marginally accepted as a place to find employment by Omani job seekers. There is no comparison between us and the oil sector in terms of salary and risks.” (EF)

These two observations suggest a need to contextualise the NTP implementation in relation to the economic sector concerned.

The consequences of the perceived gap between the demanded and supplied skills were identified in a live case, which led to a manipulation of the NTP:

“sometimes the company is not in need of a particular occupation or job, but because Omanisation is a condition, they hire Omanis purely to meet the percentage, not because of a real need. There are many companies that achieve their Omanisation targets just to show to the Government that they are complying with the directive. Likewise, there are many young Omanis who do not care about learning and developing skills; rather they care only about getting the salary, I know some employees are registered in the company purely for the purposes of showing them on the record, and thereby to enable the company to receive visas and enable the company to hire expatriates.” (EB)

The orientation towards hiring expatriates was strong amongst the private sector informants, for reasons of cost, and their willingness to work harder than Omanis.

5.1.3 Quality of Training

With respect to programme design, and implementation, the employer informants raised issues concerning the quality of the training provided, along with training needs and procedures.

The identification of individual job training needs for the NTP is the responsibility of the ‘sponsoring’ company, with the process of submitting their Omanisation plan to the MoM and the training providers being understood:

“we approach the training provider and report our requirements to them, and then the training provider advertises to jobseekers that they are offering a ‘training mingled with employment’ opportunity in our company.” (EB)

The process was criticised for its long bureaucratic procedures, which affected the NTP implementation:

“we finish all the training process, including the interview and selection of the trainee. However, after that, the training institute follows all the formalities stipulated by the MoM in respect of funding and administrative approvals, and this process takes more than six months. By that time, the trainees who have been selected have changed their minds and withdrawn from the programme.” (EG)

The unwelcome consequence of such a delay negatively influences the overall recruitment process, and hence, affects employer productivity. Further, if the bureaucracy involved unduly delays the NTP recruitment, the organisation's ability to recruit both Omani and expatriate staff is hampered, and the incentive for being involved in the NTP is reduced:

"if you are banned from hiring expatriates until you have recruited Omanis, how can you run the business? The formalities for hiring Omanis take such a long time that it becomes impossible to recruit expatriates when they are needed. How can we succeed in the business with this kind of complication?" (EG)

Nonetheless, a sense of normality was expressed by EH, stating that:

"these formalities are normal since they entail financial audit."

This employer experience of recruiting trainees provided some rich insights into the implementation of the NTP, along with some impacts from the process. One example was cited in the tourism sector, which related to a potential recruit:

"This occupation is not considered desirable within the Omani culture as it has low respect from the community, and is therefore, avoided. After starting the interview for this post and describing the details of the job which was for a hotel kitchen cook, the potential trainee decided to discontinue the interview, and asked me to change to another training opportunity." (EG)

The official view is that the situation should not have occurred, as the information surrounding the training opportunity is supposed to be included in the advertisement. Considering this reluctance of young Omanis to take advantage of certain training opportunities, EI highlighted that Omani society generally pushes Omani youth to target public sector jobs:

"the young age of the trainees together with the cultural context which promotes work in the public sector as desirable, are factors that should be expected to emerge during the interview and selection of trainees, and considered when making choices." (EI)

The poor advertising process for NTP opportunities is seen to impact negatively on the private enterprises, as they need to recruit to survive. Thus, there is a large financial incentive to promote training opportunities in a favourable light. Equally, the training institutes might seek to admit all applicants, irrespective of their chance of success, because a programme cannot start without a full cohort:

“I was interviewing one cohort of trainees and I filtering out candidates based on their performance during the interview. However, the training institute wanted to impose upon us all those who had attended the interviews, even the weak ones we had rejected, since there were no other applicants to fill the course.” (EH)

Furthermore, the training programme content was cited by the employer informant to influence trainee effectiveness, and, in turn, the implementation of the NTP. With respect to the programme content the informants were clear that the skills their new employees possess were invariably not to the required or expected standard:

“the standard of the training is below what is required. We accept the trainees knowing that they only possess the basics, and not as individuals ready to be employed with a comprehensive understanding of the job and the tasks required of them.” (EF)

Informant EE, from the banking sector, added support to the poor standards, which the MoM needs to address:

“the contents are not customised to our business, the training programmes are general and when the trainees have finished these, they come to us where we want them to do things they have not been taught in the training institutes. They cannot use the software we use, so we become the trainers, which is not what we want. They should provide courses that teach what is needed, that are specific to our needs.” (EE)

EE's observation corresponds with the comment made by one trainer (T3), who joined the workplace without any information about the software the company used, which led to the employer, rather than the training institute, being the assessor of trainee performance:

“the assessment of the trainees after completing the programme must be conducted by the employers, since they have a better understanding the job requirements, and are the only people capable of determining whether the training programme has been successful.” (EC)

Furthermore, EG and others, referred to the length of the training programmes as being insufficient to produce individuals who could discharge the responsibilities expected of them in the workplace:

“the job requirements including the teaching of proper work ethics, basic skills of the job, labour law, and other major skills required by the job itself, as well as the practical side of the training need much more time than that allocated at the moment for the training period.” (EG)

“the reality of the differences among different sectors and the greater degree of complexity in some occupations, requires advanced laboratories and workshops, and longer time spent in training.” (EF)

“rather than giving the person a short course in cooking, it is better to align the course with the practice, and end up graduating a professional ‘chief cook’ with a diploma in two years.” (EG)

The shortcoming in the course content was equally evident within the construction sector:

“after the trainees joined the site, we introduced the machinery to them, but found that they don't know anything about the different components and how to operate the machines, and we had to train them. They must have a comprehensive training programme before coming to us, in which there is practical training alongside the theoretical aspects.” (EI)

Apart from the content, the employer informant questioned the competence and qualifications of the training providers, and their ability to prepare trainees to the required level. Some informants had extensive experience in working with these institutes, and often knew the trainers personally. This was the case with EG, and others, who had been an employer in the tourism sector for over twenty years:

“the instructors who are working in the training institutes are not qualified to teach or train others. They have no academic qualifications. Yes, they have work experience,

but they lack the academic qualification that shapes their theoretical understanding, and this is a drawback to their ability as trainers.” (EG)

“basically, the training providers are not matching the requirements of the employers and the intended outcomes with the contents of the training they are offering.” (EH)

Other criticisms of the NTP implementation concerned the MoM actions, such as instructing training providers to change the courses composition, to make reduce costs:

“the MoM considers the cost more than it thinks about the return from the training programme. We are in tourism sector, and the majority of guests and customers are foreigners who speak English, but unfortunately, the MoM reduced the total number of English teaching hours on the training programme and the trainees can’t speak the language well enough.” (EG)

Informant EG attributed MoM’s situation to a lack of communication between the MoM and employers, which is contrary to those MoM informants who claimed that employers have autonomy over content.

In terms of the overall contribution made by NTP trainees, the employer informants cited their experience, the majority of which were negative:

“to be frank with you, only 5-10% of the trainees who have joined our company have proven themselves as willing and capable. Honestly, the graduates are so weak.” (EI)

“the graduates are very weak. You don’t expect a person to be trained in mechanics for a full year, and for the Government to pay thousands of Omani Rials, for that person to finish the course and not even know how to use a computer.” (EC)

Not all the comments were negative, with EF noting some positive aspects:

“comparing the trainees with the current graduates from the secondary school, the trainees are capable of handling basic jobs and they can be promoted up to supervisory level, but it is a challenge for them to be promoted to a manager, unless they have been trained very well.”

EF equally stressed the importance of the trainee’s work environment, arguing for organisations to develop a supportive culture, rather than leaving

new recruits to their own devices. This insight was emphasised by other informants:

“it is necessary for companies to clarify their organisational regulations and the job duties, and the responsibilities of the new recruit within the legal form of Omani labour law, I believe the HR department must play an integral role in minimising the turnover possibilities.” (EE)

“the success of the training is directly linked to the practices of recruitment and induction after training. I think also, placing trainees in the correct job with the correct responsibilities would create the maximum benefit from the NTP.” (EH)

One particular area of enquiry concerned negative comments about the NTP's output, and which related to a general lack of workplace skill. Employer informants cited a lack of harmony as a common reason:

“it is a joint responsibility between the MoM, training providers, and the trainees who should be willing, but these three parties are not in harmony with their objectives.” (EB)

This reference to trainee willingness was cited by several employers, who essentially criticised the attitude of young Omanis:

“there is very little benefit gained out of the NTP and this due to the lack of desire among Omani citizens to work in the private sector.” (EB)

He went on to provide an example from within his company:

“I am speaking from the position of being neutral to the issue; I am employee working in this company and an Omani citizen. Omanis are costing the company so much, I will give you one example, before the recent Eid Holiday, 60% of them did not come to work on the last day of work before the holiday.” (EB)

The informant added:

“Omanis are getting the minimum wage which is formulated by the MoM, and working less than the expatriates who are getting less and working more.” (EB)

The informant attributed this problem to the negative attitude held by Omani citizens towards working in the private sector:

“Omanis think that because of their Omani national dress they are entitled to everything. There is no sense of responsibility among Omani workers, except some rare cases. Recently we have promoted more than four or five Omanis to be in leadership positions, but unfortunately, they have usually disappointed us.” (EB)

With respect to company stability and the economy in general:

“the tight restrictions on hiring expatriates and the lack of solid and firm regulation enhancing the level of commitment and the sense of responsibility among Omani youth, may well lead to the closing down of some businesses that decide to move their investment to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates as the overall conditions and facilities for conducting business there are much more attractive and autonomous.” (EC)

Irrespective of where blame lies for the current disenchantment felt by the employer informants, it is apparent that the issue of making the NTP implementation successful is critical. Attention now turns to the overall challenges confronting the NTP.

5.1.4 Barriers to Implementation

Several barriers to the proper implementation of the NTP were acknowledged by the employer informants. Some of these related to a particular sector, others concerned the lack of appropriate preparation during the training courses, whilst others revolved around the apparent lack of communication between employers and training providers that resulted in inappropriate course content.

According to three employer informants (EC, EF and EG) basic education is the bedrock of a strong human being, and the principle source of successful national development. However, they were critical of basic education arguing that individuals emerge from it with a lack of work ethic, and little knowledge of the culture private sector work. They felt that the system should be remedied during the early years of schooling, where clear work attitudes can be developed:

“the current basic education does not enhance the commitment among the students.” (EC)

In particular, the wider cultural attitudes towards private sector work form a barrier to implementation of the NTP:

“the biggest challenge is the shared idea within the community among children and parents that it is shameful to work in the private sector, and with such an idea in their heads, I don't expect any of these plans will find their way to success.” (EB)

Whilst these observations of public sector preference are apparent, the responsibility for changing such values is less clear. It is also apparent that economic sector differences exist, which can impede the effective execution of the NTP in certain sectors:

“the tourism sector in particular is facing a problem of cultural orientation because the trainees refuse to do some jobs due to their family background or religious reasons, and we have to respect and accept that. Nonetheless, it has impacted upon our operations, and resulted in high turnover. These challenges lead us to wonder what motivates the trainees to join the NTP in the first place.” (EG)

“the basic willingness among the trainees to work in the private sector is the main element causing a problem.” (EI)

“the trainees who join the retail sector where I have worked for more than thirty years are forced to join us since they have no choice, due to the lack of opportunities somewhere else, particularly in the Government.” (EF)

This lack of motivation for private sector work is equally due to the perception that an appointment can be viewed as a temporary placement as EB argued:

“immediately after appointment, he/she needs everything straight away, like salary increments, promotion, and other incentives. I think they consider being in the private sector as a transit station, a temporary place to be on the way to getting a job in the Government.”

This comment suggests that trainees may have no intention of advancing their career in the private sector organisation they join. Indeed, some trainees admitted that, at the first opportunity, they would leave to take a job in Government. Informant EB, who is an Omani citizen working in the private sector, explained the harsh reality:

“the work conditions in the private sector are incomparable to those in the public sector, the compensation is linked to the performance and the jobs demand extra patience, determination, and a real desire for success.”

The HR manager, at a manufacturing company, suggested that the lack of motivation in young Omani jobseekers was, given the situation, to be expected:

“what are the incentives provided to them? Did they get the required training? Were they treated fairly and offered the right package? We as the private sector should not complain that people prefer the public sector, simply because they are being treated better there.” (EH)

Presenting an alternative view, EB felt that it was partly the fault of Government, for their overgenerous allocation:

“people work under the umbrella of the civil service and are paid whether they perform or not – salary, bonuses and holidays are all secured, and here we have the problem.”

To which EH added:

“the recent changes in Omani labour law have made for a convergence with the civil service law in terms of working hours, minimum wage, and general employee rights. The fact that might impede Omanis from agreeing to work in the private sector could be related to the facilities provided by certain banks to the individuals working within them.”

These challenges have implications for the overall policy of Omanisation, but as the NTP is a direct response to the creation of localise labour, the comments are equally valid.

Three other perceived barriers to NTP implementation were referred to. First, the nature of the tripartite agreement signed by the trainees; second, ambiguity in labour law, and third, poor communication with the MoM. With regard to the tripartite agreement EC confirmed that:

“one of the clauses allows the trainee to resign whenever he/she wants, and whilst that in itself is good as it protects the trainee, I as the employer do not have the same right to terminate that trainee’s service if he/she is not performing well. The trainees are dealt with too sympathetically.”

This employer also described the communication with the MoM regarding various issues as difficult, with which EG concurred:

“seventy percent of our turnover is due to absenteeism, and subsequent convictions for robbery among employed Omanis. Naturally we would prefer to hire expatriates as these issues just do not arise, but the MoM refused our request to recruit expatriates, justifying the compulsion for us to continue with Omanis on the grounds that we have a high turnover... they don’t consider our reasons and do not even bother to look into the situation to see the reality for themselves.”

Summary

The employers are the ultimate recipients of the Omani NTP trainees and, as such, are in a strong position to identify the problems and numerous barriers they face. One particular factor that concerned them referred to the process for determining the skills demands and the lack of input into this. This point combined with the employers’ perception that the Ministry operated in a command and control manner, yet little information or clarity emerged on how the programme should be implemented. This lack of clarity extended to the ambiguity surrounding the responsibilities of individual stakeholders. In line with the lack of clarity, the paucity of post-training evaluation was raised as factor that impacted negatively on the programme. Possibly to shift any blame from themselves, the employers felt that a factor associated with implementation, along with their ability to contribute to the Omanisation process, lay with the training providers. The employers questioned the quality of both the training and the providers themselves, some of whom they perceived to be inappropriately qualified. Again, possibly in an attempt to deflect attention from any inherent failings of their organisations, the employer informants cited a lack of motivation in trainees as a barrier to policy implementation. One particular element of this barrier related to the trainees’ perceived desire to secure a public sector job, which was believed to be culturally embedded in Omani society. Before attention turns to the recipients of the training, the trainees themselves, Table 5.3 presents an overview of the factors and barriers identified by the employers.

In line with the Ministry, these factors will be returned to in the discussion chapter, and will subsequently constitute the building blocks for the conclusion.

Table 5.2 Factors and Barriers of Implementation – Employers

Employer Themes	
Implementation structure	Involvement in policy formation; Control and power; Clarity/ambiguity of goals
Skills supply and demand	Match-making; Training vs Organisation
Quality of training	Delivery and implementation of training in the workplace; Capacity of training providers; Evaluation practices
Barriers to implementation	Trainees' motivation attitude and cultural; MoM planning and evaluation; Government regulations

Chapter Six: Findings – Trainees

Overview

Trainees are at the heart of the NTP, since it is to the training of young unemployed Omanis that the NTP is targeted. Hence, their success would fulfil the objective of the entire Government initiative. The trainees' experience of the NTP was limited to before NTP training, during the training, and their subsequent workplace job. Some similarity of themes arose to the two stakeholder groups already presented, although the themes were focused differently (Figure 6.1). Rather than addressing any detailed policy issues the trainees' responses dealt more with practice and their lived experiences.

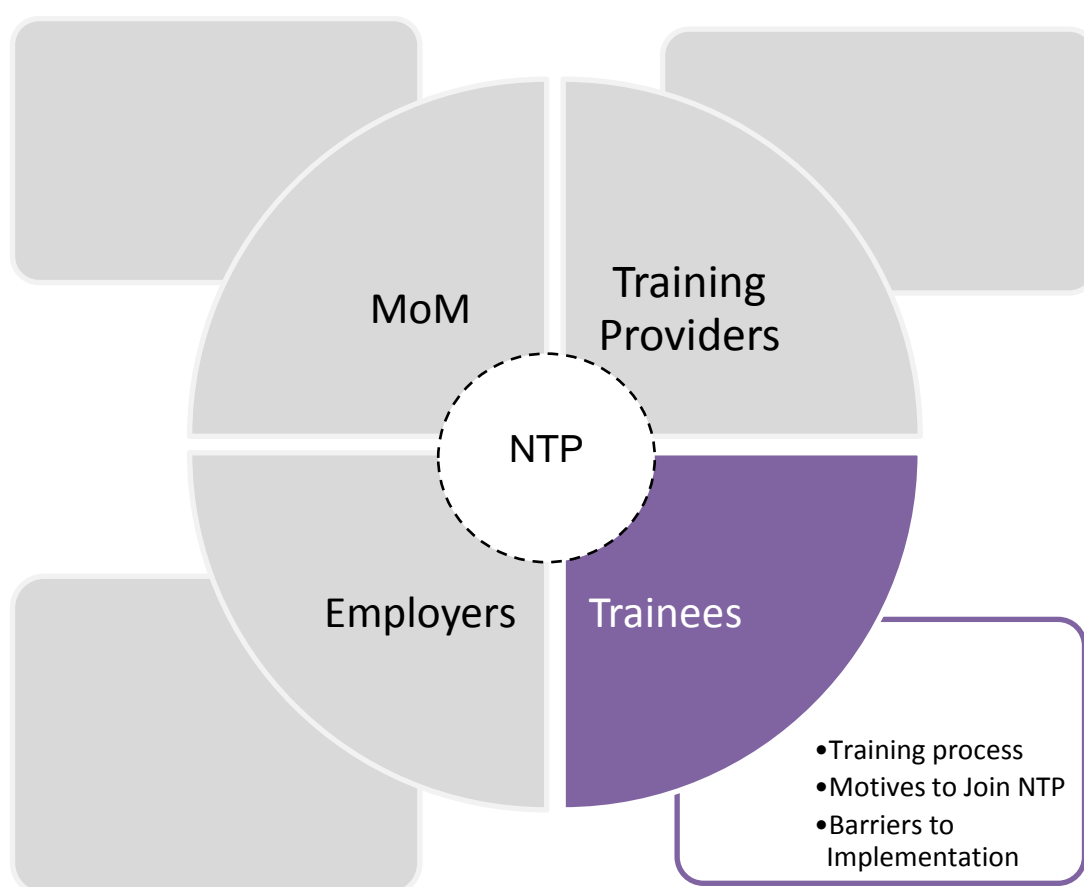
6.1 Trainee Informants

Interviews with the trainees followed a similar pattern to other stakeholder groups, although it was noticeable that they were intent on narrating their experience of job searching, undergoing the training period, and their present company work. Most interviews lasted less than forty minutes. Contact with the trainees was enabled through their company HR directors, with all interviews being conducted in the workplace. As with other informants, the researcher introduced the trainees to the study aim and reminded them of their right to withdraw at any point, without reason. Given the researcher's position within the MoM, there was a danger that the trainees perceived the interview as a follow-up Training Department inspection or check. Consequently, the researcher clarified his position in respect of the research. These preconceptions held by the trainees sometimes required the researcher to redirect the discussion, in order to retain the focus on key areas. Nine trainees were interviewed, with their details being outlined in Table (6.1).

Table 6. 1 Background to Trainees Informants

Informant	Sector	Training area	Company Experience
T1	Construction	AutoCAD	Eight months
T2	Tourism	Hospitality	Three years
T3	Banking & Finance	Exchange	Seven months
T4	Construction	AutoCAD	Eight months
T5	Tourism	Customer service	Two years
T6	Insurance	Insurance	Two years
T7 Group interview (3 Informants)	Construction	Site supervision	Seven months
			Seven months
			Seven months

Figure 6. 1 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation – Trainees



6.1.1. The Training Process

In exploring the training process the trainee informants reflected on their training, and the extent to which their training enabled what they encountered in the workplace. They remarked on the quality of the training provided, using as benchmarks, the contents of their training programmes, the capacity of the training providers, and whether their training was of use in their companies. Additionally, they shared their experience of their initial job search.

The methods for hiring the trainees varied, for example, in the case of T7, he:

“received a call from the training institute stating that there was a training opportunity mingled with a job, that the training was for seven months as a ‘site supervisor’. We later attended the institute and had the interview, which was just filling in a form asking for personal information.”

Informant T5 was contacted by a telephone call from the MoM, whilst T1 heard about the training opportunity informally, through a friend working at the training institute, whereas T4 received a text message from MoM. The variation in approaches to alert trainees of training opportunities seemed reasonable, although the discrepancies in the selection criteria were seen as less acceptable, and in need of revision:

“the selection criteria must be revised carefully and more tests need to be introduced in order to select the most willing candidates.” (T2)

The impact of neglecting such advice can lead to demotivation, as the trainees are likely to meet with and discuss their experience once on the programme. However, the apparent lack of bureaucracy had the advantage of accelerating T6’s admission:

“the procedures were easy and fast. I completed most of the procedures within a very short period.”

This comment presents a different perspective than that made by EG regarding the lengthy procedure from the employer advertising to training.

Possibly there are varying levels of bureaucracy different types of job. It is apparent that the procedures varied:

“there was no interview, we were just introduced to the training provider and the company.” (T1)

“the training provider brought the training contract and there were representatives from the employing companies.” (T7)

“the MoM didn’t attend the interview.” (T4)

Having completed their training programme and take up their job, the trainee informants’ views on the factors affecting the NTP implementation were valuable. Most reported a positive outcome with respect of the course content, although some felt that the training was not relevant to the jobs they were given. A report from the tourism sector stated that:

“The training contents were good, in particular, the practical side of the training.” (T2)

Furthermore, T1 and T4 joined the AutoCAD course in order to gain employment with a construction company, confirmed that:

“the training course was good and the training provider has the required facility in terms of instructors and the required workshops, the only cons are that it was intensive.” (T1)

Similarly:

“the contents of the training were good, we learned many things which we didn’t know before.”

“I have transferred so many things I learnt in the training institute to the workplace, almost 60% or even more.” (T7 Insurance sector)

Conversely, criticism arose between the job requirements and the training course content:

“we learned English language during the training course; however, the most demanded language for the job is Urdu, this is because of the customers utilising our services.” (T3)

“I did not transfer much of the learning to the workplace because the content of the training programme was not much aligned with the requirements of the job. There are

many software packages used in the company but we did not learn about them in the training institute.” (T5)

The latter comments are in agreement with the employer informants (EF and EB), who argued that trainees were only skilled to a basic level, and did not possess expertise in higher skills.

Conversely, T1 and T4, training course skilled in AutoCAD, although having joined the same company, the skills were not used. Specifically, T1 (who was supported in his assertion by T4) felt:

“we forgot all the training we received because we didn’t practise it, we have been kept idle without doing anything for nine months, we have never transferred any of this training to the workplace.”

Several other informants made similar observations, such as T3, who worked in the banking sector:

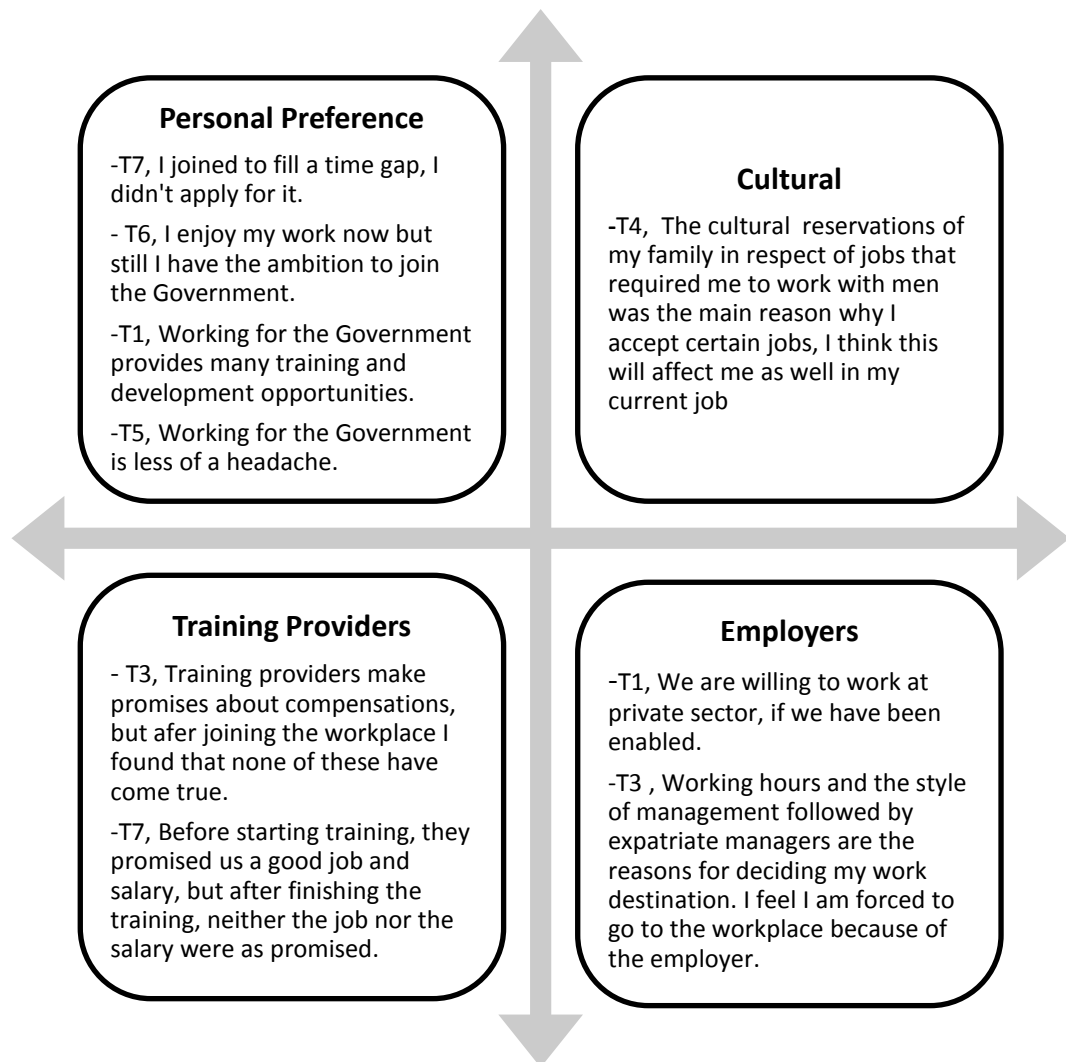
“I didn’t transfer any of the training contents to the workplace, this is because we learned one thing, and the workplace required something else.”

The reports of skills mismatch is a serious block to the NTP effectiveness. The employers seemed to be more complaining of the skills deficit than the trainees, although this might be attributed to the trainee informants having remained with their employers, and thus represented the positive outcomes of the NTP programme.

6.1.2 Motives to join NTP

The theme of motive emerged from the trainee data, that arose from their pre-enrolment experience, when they were job searching. From their discussions it is apparent what motivated them to take advantage of the NTP. The key motivating factors as presented in (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6. 2 Trainees' Motives for Joining the NTP



The desire to join the NTP and to work in the private sector was different among the various trainees, for example:

“the decision to join this training and to get the job opportunity was to fill the gap of time we experienced during our job search, we didn't apply for this opportunity, we received a call from the training providers and accordingly we joined.” (T7)

This trainee applied with a friend (T4), with the motivation being perceived as a form of support, which was especially needed as the family tried to persuade them against pursuing private sector employment.

Most of the trainee informants confirmed that private sector work, and by implication the NTP, did not feature in their original career plan:

“to be frank with you, I have the ambition to work in the Government, and therefore, if any opportunity comes, I will move.” (T6)

These observations parallel the comments of employer EB, who perceived Omani job-seekers as thinking of the private sector purely as a stop-gap. Nevertheless, T1 challenged this though:

“Government is not my preferred choice.”

“the work in the Government is described as ‘less headache’ compared to the private sector; in the Government nobody asks you why you did this and how you did it.” (T5)

Essentially, T5 is highlighting the lack of accountability of employers in the Government sector, and whilst no other comments were made, this lack of accountability can result in lower productivity.

Cultural predispositions can intervene in the motivation process for certain jobs, with one particular aspect relating to cultural expectations and gender:

“the cultural reservations of my family in respect of jobs that required me to work with men was the main reason why I accept certain jobs, I think this will affect me as well in my current job.” (T4)

The motive to join NTP was also seen to be damaged by some training providers who misguided their trainees or purposefully deceived them:

“during the presentation before commencing the training, they were encouraging us to join the training with promises of lots of incentives, but in reality everything was the opposite.” (T3)

“before signing the contract, the training institute exaggerated the prospected job. According to their promises, we expected a different type of job and work conditions. They told us that we would be supervisors and our salary would be OR 1,000, but when we started, it was just OR 350.” (T7)

“the work environment, particularly the working hours, the style of management followed by expatriate managers, and

the fairness in terms of financial compensation and incentives are among the reasons for not preferring the work destination ... I feel I am forced to come to the work, I am so annoyed and pessimistic. I wish to leave today rather than tomorrow, all these things because the company was not clear to us regarding the compensation” (T3)

“we are willing to work if we have been enabled and provided with the correct work environment” (T1)

These comments suggest that the issue with employers and training providers was widespread, as the trainees were hired and trained by different institutes. Essentially, the problems related to conditions in the workplace which did not match those ‘sold’ by the training providers as motivators, and in that sense, the trainees considered that the contract (tripartite agreement) had been broken.

6.1.3 Barriers to Implementation

The trainee informants identified numerous challenges to the implementation of the NTP, although the depth and length of the training period, featured:

“the current training is not well organised, I think we need much more systematic training that identifies our aspirations and matches them with the offered opportunities.” (T1)

“the training duration is not adequate to learn all the required skills for the workplace. After joining the workplace, I realised the need to learn how to use different software.” (T6)

The MoM follow-up practice was cited as a barrier by several trainee informants. In particular, T1, T4 and T6 blamed the absence of any MoM follow-up as the reason for the difficult positions they had to endure in the workplace:

“the real problem happened after finishing the training and when I started working at the company; unfortunately, the lack of follow-up by MoM is the main problem.” (T1)

Informants T1 and T4s’ employment was in a company when there were no real jobs for them. They were hired purely to enable the company to meet its Omanisation percentage:

“after we completed the training programme, we were recruited by this company; the HR manager stated clearly ‘we hired you to meet the Omanisation percentage and to hire expatriates.’” (T4)

These examples represent blatant employer manipulation, which does nothing for the morale of the new Omani recruits. Employers were equally cited as a barrier with respect to offering different salaries for Omanis and expatriates:

“the differences between the salaries paid to the expatriate compared to those given to Omanis, is the core challenges, because even though the Labour Law in Oman has stated the minimum salary to be OR 350, the expatriates, particularly the labour are given less than this.” (T5)

A further complication refers to the different attitudes that exist towards trainees, depending on whether the company was Omani owned or otherwise:

“the companies owned by Omanis are much more welcoming of Omani trainees and provide the required development and incentives to retain them. Conversely, those owned by foreign investors, assume the Omani employees to be a burden, and seek reasons to hire expatriates instead.” (T5)

Earlier informants supported the notion that a different attitude and culture exists in foreign-owned companies, with MoM2 and MoM6 finding that the environment created by expatriate managers to be demotivating. An earlier report by T3 referred to the expatriate style of management as being so oppressive that it was a struggle to attend.

Finally, the issue of living costs was raised by T3 and T5, in that the focus of business is in the capital city, where living is expensive:

“most of the companies are in the capital, hence, the living expenses compared with the income does not match, we end up paying more sixty percent for the fixed life expenses. This issue is integral for the programme’s success.” (T3)

Again, this issue was raised by the MoM (MoM4) as one that deterred trainees from wanting to join the NTP.

Summary

It is clear that the focus for the trainee informants concentrated more on the lived experiences, with aspects such as the relevance of the training content, particularly in relation to their eventual employment, being raised as an influential factor. The overall process and especially the perceived inequity of the recruitment process, was identified as a factor associated with policy implementation. With respect to barriers to implementation, one particular aspect concerned the structure of training and the locality of placements, which involved additional expense and living away from home. The absence of post-training evaluation equally formed a barrier, with the trainee informants placing blame with the Ministry, even offering the notion that this omission was deliberate, so as to avoid receiving negative feedback. In general, the trainees felt that they were the junior partners in the process and their voice was not always heard, nor was their situation taken into account. The factors that are summarised in Table 6.3 will be taken forward to the discussion chapter, where they will be given a voice, both in the narrative and the schematic figures. Having discussed the perceptions of three stakeholder groups, the next chapter considers those of the training providers, the institutes that provide courses.

Table 6.2 Factors and Barriers of Implementation – the Trainees

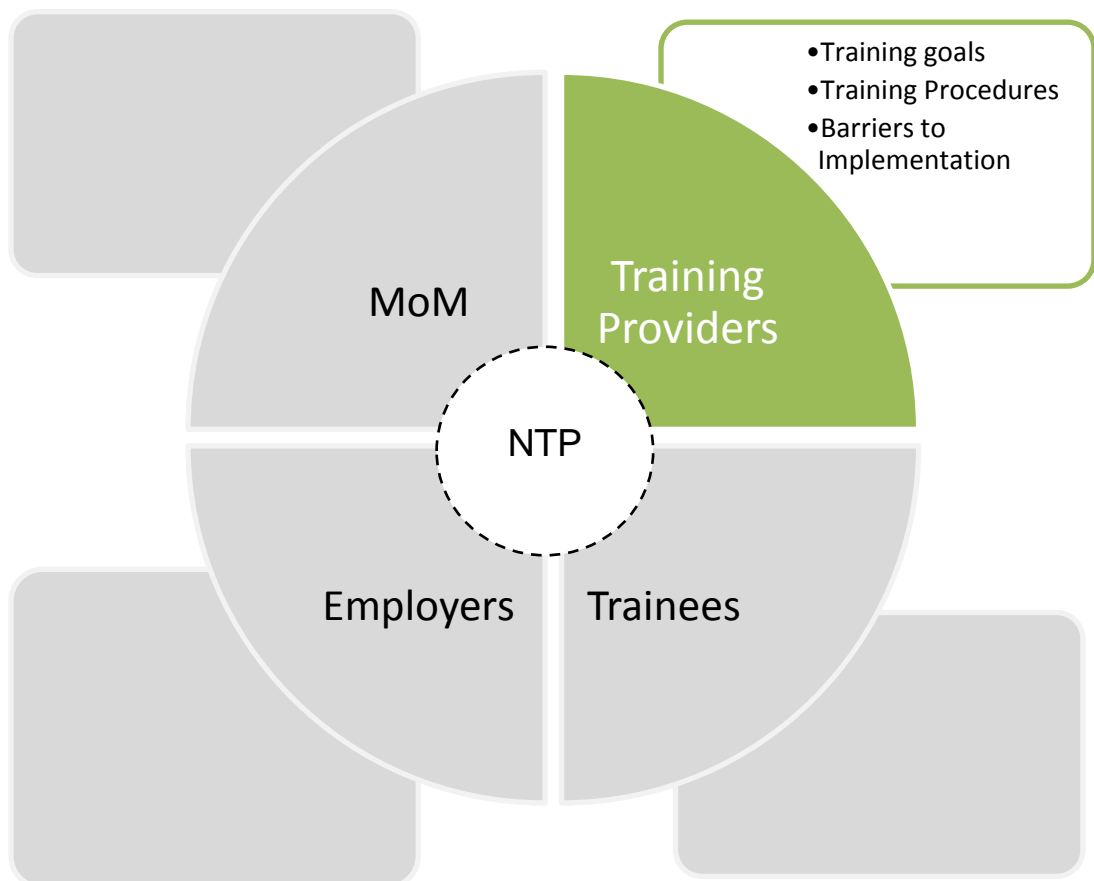
Trainee Themes	
Training process	Advertisement; Content of training; Implementation in the workplace
Motivation to join NTP	Enablers of implementation; Legislation and MoM regulations
Barriers to policy implementation	MoM evaluation; Employer preference for expatriate labour; training contract and structure; Government and project location

Chapter Seven: Findings – Training Provider

Overview

The participation of the training providers in this study was sensitive, as the findings have the potential to influence their business. Consequently, care was taken in the approach to them, and in confirming that the central purpose of the study was to identify areas of ineffectiveness over the entire NTP. This aim was to build a degree of mutual trust, although the researcher felt that due to him being a MoM employee, some training providers were guarded in their responses. The degree of disclosure concerning areas of weakness, either in the NTP regulations or the complicated MoM bureaucratic procedures was felt to be limited, with this being despite presenting details of LJMU's ethics protocol regarding confidentiality of data and participant anonymity. Figure 7. 1 indicates the three emergent themes that relate this stakeholder group.

Figure 7. 1 Factors Influencing NTP Implementation – Training Providers



7.1 Training Provider Informants

Nine training providers participated in the study, representing different occupational specialisms. All were at either managerial level, or involved in the delivery of training programmes as an instructor and had more than five years' experience with the NTP framework, and by default, a relationship with the MoM. Some experienced informants had contributed to the NTP development since its inception. Table 7.1 presents biographic details.

Table 7. 1 Background of Training Provider Informants

Informant	Training specialisation	Informant's experience
TP1	Technical - Crafts	20 years
TP2	Technical	25 years
TP3	Technical	5 years
TP4	Technical - Administrative	10 years
TP5 Group Interview (3 Informants)	Technical	12 years
		8 years
		15 years
TP6	Administrative - Crafts	7 years
TP7	Administrative - Crafts	23 years

Unsurprisingly, interviews with the training provider informants generated broadly similar comment to those of the other three stakeholders groups. In particular, the informants highlighted the challenges faced by the trainees with respect to their hesitancy in joining the NTP and private sector work in general. They also reflected on their experience with the MoM bureaucratic procedures.

7.1.1 Training Goals

The training provider informants considered the overall goal of the NTP, and particularly programme training goals, to be important to NTP success. They also recognised the need for convergence in harmonising goals across all stakeholders.

“the objective of this programme is very high and valuable, all what we need is that other stakeholders understand it very well.” (TP1)

There was agreement amongst the informants that the NTP was designed to develop the skills of Omani jobseekers, particularly school leavers and those who held the secondary school certificate. Some, however, felt the NTP was not solely about skills development but ascribed to instilling positive attitudes towards work, and promoting ideas about the culture of work and job respect.

“the objectives of the NTP are to develop and employ Omani job seekers in order to achieve Omanisation’. In addition, one of the other roles is to enhance the culture of job respect and love of work in the private sector. Each one has a role concerning the training and enhancement of the job respect culture among the citizens - the family, the community, and the trainees themselves.” (TP7)

Informant TP7 was aware of the damaging role society can play in generating negative attitudes towards private sector employment, and acknowledged that such attitudes can be harmful to the country’s economic vision. On this matter, most of the informants were clear, but it was equally appreciated that limitations were placed on their ability to meet the overall National goals:

“the number who have completed the training is satisfying, but the question is - how many of these trainees are effective in the workplace and implementing the training we delivered to them in the workplace? I am sceptical; we need research on that.” (TP4)

It was well understood that the NTP was aimed at solving the problems of unemployment and enhancing Omanisation in the workforce, but employers were seen to manipulate the, system, so as to gain approval for hiring expatriate workers:

“the deviation is in terms of the objectives of the NTP. We must stop the incentives to the employers which allow them to hire one expatriate for every four Omanis. This will demonstrate whether companies are recruiting to genuinely support NTP or just for hiring expatriate labour.” (TP5)

“the NTP is a prompt solution to the current problem, which is dealing with a generation expecting everything to be swift.”
(TP2)

“the NTP does not consider the orientations and preferences of the jobseekers; it is dealing with a current demand to solve a current problem through employment.”
(TP1)

TP1 also reported that apart from its main objective of training and hiring Omani citizens, the NTP was:

“a mechanism that has reduced labour turnover within companies, since the penalty clause obliges the trainees to remain in the company for the same training period.”

Such comments broadly match those made by MoM1, who considered the NTP as a tool to solve the unemployment problem.

7.1.2 Training Procedures

In discussing the overall design of training programme, including content and delivery, the training provider informants considered themselves to be facilitators of the training process and addressed several issues such as the readiness of their training institutes, robustness of the programmes' contents, and capability of their staff to maintain and deliver the curricula designed. In general, they were robust in defending their position and quick to criticise other stakeholders for any failures.

Opinions regarding the complexity of the current MoM procedures differed. Some informants held the view that, given the complications of trying to match the labour market requirements and existing jobseekers, the existing formalities and time delays were acceptable. Others considered the formalities as bureaucratic and time- consuming, and not adding to the process:

“the course of NTP action went through seven different departments.” (TP2)

Hence, the process could not be accelerated. However, long delays were reported to be responsible for:

“prolonging the waiting period of the jobseekers, which ends in their withdrawal from the initial list, and further delay in commencing the programme.” (TP7)

“we endure the costs of advertising and marketing for the NTP as well as conducting interviews, which consumes the time of the staff members responsible and on some occasions, the MoM does not approve the programme, and we end up making a loss.” (TP7)

Similar observations were made by employer EG, although the argument was rejected by MoM2 who insisted that formalities simply followed the natural process which complies with legal and financial legislation, and auditing requirements.

Comments on the overall MoM procedures with respect to designing training programmes, and the criteria established to determine the suitability of the training providers, TP1 asserted:

“the procedures of the MoM regarding the design of the training programme and the capacity and experience we ourselves bring to the programme, make it perfectly formulated.”

Indeed, the lengthy procedures suggest that thought and effort had been directed to each training course. There was also the issue of the curriculum, along with how it is designed for each course, and effectiveness of the design:

“the contents of the training courses are designed by training providers and companies, and are later authenticated by the curriculum department at MoM, we are aiming to maintain the match between the job requirements and the capabilities of the job seekers.” (TP2)

Again, this statement on content is contrary to MoM7:

“all the training courses are designed based on a comprehensive job description revision conducted by the experts of the MoM who based their curriculum design on the Gulf Arab Manual Common Vocational Classification and Description.”

Importantly, a concern expressed by trainees related to the degree to which their training courses provided them with skills the company required in their jobs adverts. Here, TP2 praised the training programme content:

“all the contents were matched with the job description; here we can assure the suitability of these contents to the prospected job.” (TP2)

Informant TP1 brought forward another argument to confirm that training was customised by the training providers to serve the precise needs and demands of the employers:

“we evaluate the trainees’ learning and we usually get a positive feedback. However, when asking the companies, they complain about the trainees’ reluctance to perform some tasks. When we go back to the trainees, we realise they are placed in the wrong job and environment. ...the content is approved and continually revised and updated by the MoM... [although] the companies have the right to amend the contents, which are basically customised to their needs.”

“the current role of the training providers in the process of the NTP is limited to training deliveries.” (TP6)

The training provider informants all considered their institutions to be performing as prescribed by the MoM, and are assessed as competent by the MoM, according to the Ministry’s evaluation procedures. Nevertheless, TP4 criticised the contents of the training programmes, asserting:

“Unfortunately the NTP programmes are usually repeated and have not been through any updates, the company requires the same materials and the MoM does not update or allow us to do so, so the changes in technology are not addressed at all. We are a training provider, we deliver, but we believe there can be a better delivery. Moreover, I think the cancellation of the on-job training is another negative part of the training content. This has affected the extent that trainees understand the taught material in practice. The biggest problem is that the company does not take on this role after hiring the candidate, and on some occasions they blame the training providers for any shortages related to the training provided to the trainees.”

The training is designed to include assessment by the MoM, but in this respect, TP1 argued that the timing was unreasonable:

“the evaluation should take place after training - I think that’s where the gap is in the overall delivery of the NTP, and that’s what makes it ineffective ... I do not see the current practices of evaluation are adequate. The follow-up during training is good, but the most important evaluation is to be conducted after completing the training and when joining the workplace, since that’s where all the problems occur – it’s from that point that the trainees start to complain, I have hundreds of cases to prove this claim.”

Further,

“to assure the training delivery, there should be a follow-up visit to the trainees during the first three months after completing the training programme, and in case we find any shortage attributed to the training, we can train them again.”
(TP5)

Training providers need to be capable of mounting programmes that deliver the skills required, indeed, TP4 stressed that:

“the better the readiness of the training programme, the better the trainees and consequently the delivery to the workplace.”

That said, both TP2 and TP4 emphasised the role of employers in matching jobs to candidates, and the training they received. Trainees need to be allowed to use the skills they have developed, and take responsibility for on-the-job training, to develop specific skills not learnt in training. The key point arising from these two informants was that employers need to provide an enabling, rather than a hostile, environment for trainees.

7.1.3 Barriers to Implementation

Similar barriers to NTP implementation were identified by the training provider informants as those perceived by the other stakeholder groups and were grouped around the main areas of MoM regulations, the motivation of trainees, and the barriers created by the employers. Again, these challenges emerged from the lived experience of the informants.

The informants were in agreement that the MoM’s bureaucratic procedures caused delays, which impacted negatively on the training programme:

“the time between interviews and the start of the training might exceed six months on some occasions, and this ends up in trainees’ withdrawal. We as training providers have done the marketing, held interviews, spent a lot of time on this and end up losing financially, and employers end up searching for other trainees to meet the Omanisation percentage.” (TP7)

This comment was echoed by TP4.

Another MoM barrier concerned the excluding of employers from its manpower identification process:

“the exclusion of employers in the design of training contents leads to a mismatch between the actual demanded skills and the supplied candidates, and this is considered a waste of resources.” (TP6)

Employer EF also identified this point as a hindrance, whilst other informants commented on the wider issue of manpower planning at a strategic level, which was felt to reduce the success of any NHRD initiative.

TP1 highlighted a particularly negative barrier:

“the absence of planning drives the private sector to manipulate the NTP to import expatriates; their recruitment of Omani is only to achieve the Omanisation percentage.”

This phenomenon was well appreciated by other stakeholder groups, including the employers themselves as already shown.

Moreover, the MoM was criticised for the outdated training course content:

“the outdated contents lead to a weakness in terms of the training outputs, and the certificate provided to the trainees does not have any international recognition that might help them to gain a job abroad.” (TP4)

The general desire of trainees to prefer public sector work affects the numbers wishing to participate in the NTP, was another barrier cited. The reasons for this reluctance have been cited earlier by other stakeholder groups, and were cited again by the training provider informants:

“the lack of desire and orientation of the jobseekers to the private sector is one reason for the current problems encountered with the NTP.” (TP4)

Some informants suggested that it is a lack of interest in the private sector, rather than the training itself, which discourages young jobseekers, pointing out that trainees can benefit from training institute courses even though they might not immediately put their learning into practice:

“the trainees joined the NTP considering it as bridge to move to the Government in the future. I think the regulation regarding allowing the employees mobility between the private and public sectors needs to be considered.” (TP1)

“the dominant culture in Oman among the young jobseekers is to want to work in the Government, and this trend is stimulated by friends and families.” (TP7)

Mobility of labour between the private and public sector was banned until 2006, wherein the Government decided to establish a single labour market. There is, however, an overwhelming lack of awareness among Omani youth about the private sector, and its opportunities. This barrier of ignorance has a negative impact on Omani youth:

“there is a general agreement about the very low level of awareness among jobseekers regarding the training and the work in the private sector. This absence of knowledge has led some of them to join the NTP just for the sake of receiving the monthly allowance, which is equivalent to GBP 260, inclusive of all expenses as they care about the amount they can receive during the training.” (TP5)

This observation was also made by MoM2, who had responsibility for interacting with trainees during their training periods. The use of the NTP in this way promotes low levels of commitment amongst those trainees who do join just to receive the allowances. Indeed, TP5, who worked as an instructor at a technical training institute, commented that:

“the commitment among trainees is very low and the absenteeism rate is very high ... the problem comes from the trainees who are not willing to work in the private sector, and from the private sector employers who search for reason not to employ the trainees because of lack of trust. This ends in a loss of skills and a waste of time and Government investment.”

The training provider informants, advanced the notion that employers and trainees need to share the blame for this ‘attitude’ barrier to the NTP

implementation. In this respect, TP4 aired the view that employers were not concerned about their duty to employ local labour, but were more interested in demonstrating to the Government that they had done that because of the quid pro quo situation subsequently accruing to them, in the approval to hire expatriate workers. Finally, this lack of any genuine interest shown by employers towards Omani trainees has resulted in little or no effort being made to provide a developmental environment for them:

“because trainees do not consider the NTP as an option for them, the role of the company is to attract them, to establish a welcoming environment, and to match their qualifications with the jobs assigned to them. However, employers don’t do this, and moreover, some companies, don’t care at all about the trainees’ experience or future development; they care only about achieving their Omanisation targets so they can receive the benefits of approval for expatriates.” (TP4)

“usually, the trainees are not recruited to the contracted job, instead they are given jobs at a lower level or with less importance for the company.” (TP5)

Summary

The training providers, along with the employers, were in a commercially sensitive position, as they depended on the NTP and the continued sponsorship from the Ministry, to remain as viable enterprises. Given their position, it is welcome that they identified factors that related to training procedures, although the attention was predominately on the Ministry’s failure to deliver and assess the programme. The training procedures similarly surfaced as a barrier to policy implementation, in particular the failure to evaluate, as did criticism for the motivation of trainees and their orientation to public sector roles. The training providers also expressed an opinion that the employers’ preference for expatriate labour was undermining their endeavours. It is apparent that the training provider informants held clear views on the factors of implementation as will be clearly articulated in the subsequent chapter, where their ideas will be contrasted to determine patterns and trends within the data. Table 7.2 summarises the factors identified by the training providers.

Table 7.2 Factors and Barriers of Implementation – the Training Providers

Training Provider Themes	
Training goals	Desire for policy implementation; Cooperation
Training procedures	Training design; Delivery and assessment
Barriers to policy implementation	MoM planning and evaluation; Trainees attitude-culture; Employers' preference for expatriate labour

Based on the above themes shown in table 7.2, the stakeholders' perception of which factors were more influential barriers to NTP implementation were analysed and shown in 7.3

Table 7.3 Overall Key Barriers to NTP Implementation – Four Stakeholder Groups

Barriers	MoM	Employers	Trainees	Training Providers
MoM (planning & evaluation)		✓	✓	✓
Employers (preference for expatriates)	✓		✓	✓
Trainees (attitudes & culture)	✓	✓		✓
Government (regulations & locations)	✓	✓	✓	
Training (content & structure)			✓	

The table above is taken forward to the discussion chapter and forms the building blocks for the schematic representation in Figure 8.2, which will be explained in greater detail.

Table 7.3 above identified the key barriers to implementation as perceived by MoM, Employers, Trainees and Training providers. Based on the analysis, employers, trainees and government regulations were identified by MoM as key barriers to implementation. In addition to government regulations and trainees as key barriers to implementation of NTP,

employers identified the role of MoM in planning and evaluation as constituting a barrier to NTP implementation. Similarly, the trainees suggested that MoM and government regulations pose an obstacle to NTP implementation. Trainees further showed that employers and training structure are notable barriers also. Finally, as shown in table 7.3, training providers submit that MoM, employers and trainees are key barriers to NTP implementation. The full implication of table 7.3 above will be articulated in further details and shown in figure 8.2.

In summary, the data presented in the last four chapters was gathered from the four stakeholder groups, and concerns their perception of the factors and barriers that are linked with the implementation of the NTP. Whilst informants recounted their NTP policy experiences from their respective positions, some areas showed broad similarities, although they are presented from a different angle, which was often one of self-interest. Whilst an element of discussion has been provided in reporting the findings and the associated summaries, attention now turns to the greater depth of analysis and discussion, which is contained in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the broader findings from the stakeholder interviews, and considers the extent to which the outcomes link with the existing public policy implementation and associated literature. The chapter is structured to answer the two research questions, and does so through drawing on themes that emerged from the empirical fieldwork. Following the introduction, clarity of policy is addressed, after which manpower planning and training design follow. Next, areas relating to implementation structure, skills demand and the quality of training are discussed. The subsequent themed areas concern the motives for joining the NTP, along with the training goals and procedures. After discussion of these themes, attention turns to the second research question, concerning barriers. Barriers are presented in relation to each stakeholder's perspective, with interconnecting themes being discussed.

The investigation of the factors affecting the implementation of the NTP generated rich data that illuminate the tensions among the stakeholder groups, particularly with respect to their positionality. At a fundamental level, for example, the MoM felt there was little reason for formal manpower planning, whereas the employers believed this to be the absolute bedrock of any strategy that sought to secure full employment. These divergences and beliefs were expressed within the interviews, which fostered a narrative approach that encouraged participants to tell their stories and share their lived experience. In researching the 'what' and 'how' of the NTP implementation the stakeholder stories were invariably linked, with similar issues being perceived from differing perspectives, often aligned to the particular interest of the group. Parsons (1995) argues that the policy network is constructed on the basis of actors' interdependency, which in itself complicates policy goals, and raises conflicts of interest. Hence, the stakeholder tensions that were evident within the different interpretations of the NTP issues were not surprising. As well as opposing views emerging between stakeholder groups it was apparent that intra group disagreement

existed, although in taking each story as that of the informants this added to the richness of the data.

8.1 Factors that Influence the NTP Policy Implementation – The perception

The following sections concern the first research question:

What are the factors influencing the implementation of the NTP policy in Oman, and how are these perceived by the NTP stakeholders?

Themes are presented in relation to factors that surfaced in the interviews, with each factor being addressed from different viewpoints. The discussion starts by looking at the clarity associated with the NTP policy implementation.

8.1.1 Key Factors Associated with the Ministry of Manpower

Clarity of the Policy

Clarity of the NTP's objectives was a central focus amongst the stakeholder groups, and whilst a consensus was apparent, a problem surfaced when the detail was discussed. As it stood, the policy statement was clear, with all stakeholders being aware of what the policy was designed to achieve. The problem that surfaced concerned the lack of detail, which caused variation in how the policy was implemented. It has been argued that the clarity of public policy needs careful drafting (McLaughlin, 1987), with it being stressed that for effective implementation, all parties need to know and understand the policy aims (Abas and Wee, 2015). The issue with the NTP policy is that whilst the aim of achieving the localisation of labour and contributing to the Omanisation vision was known, little detail existed as to the implications.

Further, the current implementation of the programme has unwritten targets, which formed a major discussion point. The targets were identified by the MoM, although the objection was that they were derived in the absence of any manpower planning that reflected current and future requirements. The MoM is responsible for supplying the private sector with its labour, both in

terms of quantity and quality, and thus plays a crucial role in establishing the overall labour market in Oman. Nonetheless, Al-Lamki (1998) advises on the need for manpower planning to involve a broader section of stakeholders, if the unemployment rates of young Omani graduates are to be remedied. The argument is that the MoM's policy creation cannot be discharged in the absence of an effective dialogue with others, especially with the employers. It is the employers who identify the skills required, and hence the ultimate target of the NTP trainees. Employers thus need to be properly involved in determining the real skills' demand, as it is their business plans that form the basis of their recruitment needs. As employers in the private sector are inherently concerned with production and profitability, they could bring a business-mind to the process of clarification, as opposed to placing it in the hands of administrators. Nonetheless, such differences in perspective are not surprising, as the public and private sectors invariably have different goals, interests, and organisational structures (Bult-Spiering and Dewulf, 2006).

First, the consensus within the MoM was agreement on the broad NTP policy aim, to develop the skills of young Omani jobseekers with a view to them gaining employment in the private sector, thereby achieving Omanisation targets. However, this broad aim is associated with a cascade effect, wherein each achievement depends on a previous achievement. For example, Omanisation targets are unable to be reached if the trainees do not possess the required job skills, and trainees are unable to acquire the relevant skills if the training provider is not aware of what the job entails. Further, it is difficult to recruit the correct number of trainees onto a programme if there is a lack of manpower planning. This domino effect stems not from a lack of clarity of the aims, but from the operationalisation of its implementation, with this factor having a considerable impact on the whole programme.

“we need more detailed objectives which can be measured and enable us as MoM officials to know whether we achieved these objectives or not.” (MoM4)

“the desired outcomes could be best achieved if we have clear objectives that are developed from the goal of the policy.” (MoM3)

“these objectives are general and we as MoM employees are facing difficulty in assessing our achievement.” (MoM2)

Even when the NTP aim is clear, clarity of policy objectives has long been considered an essential condition for effective policy implementation (Meter and Horn, 1975). Thus, even when objectives themselves existed, the stakeholders felt a need for these to be unambiguous. Informants from the MoM, who are responsible for implementing the policy, believed that beyond spelling out the objectives, consideration needs to be given as to whether the policy should remain linked to the Omanisation scheme. They argued that linking the training to targets that are achieved by employers, and using this as a measure of the policy implementation's effectiveness, could reflect a negative aspect of the policy in general. Indeed, the quality of the private sector candidates was considered highly suspect, with it being argued that more rigorous objectives were needed to underpin a training process that is necessary for successful NHRD. One vision was for a detailed written NTP policy, with detailed objectives, that would encourage all stakeholders to work in harmony.

With respect to the MoM role as the formulator and driver of the NTP, the MoM informants pointed out that responsibility for implementation rested more with the training providers and employers: their position was limited to the management and administration of the policy, and did not extend to the way it is actually delivered. The separation of policy implementers from the formulators corresponds with the top-down approach in public sector policy implementation (Gunn, 1978), and can “lead directly to policy failure” (Matland, 1995:148). Thus, a key factor that relates to clarity concerns the lines of responsibility, and yet a degree of synthesis between the stakeholders is involved.

To further explore the perception as to how implementation of the NTP was enacted, thoughts at the Director General level were sought. This conversation confirmed the top-down policy implementation (Hood, 1976), with the MoM having control of the Omani labour market and implementation of the Omanisation scheme.

“If the employer is seeking to recruit trained Omanis, and young Omanis are looking for a job, then our role is to formulate objectives to satisfy their demands without a need to include them in these detailed objectives.” (MoM1)

The MoM’s position is strengthened by the Ministry holding control of expatriate labour permits, which allows them to implement any policy, even where the objectives are not in the interests of the private sector, a point raised by employer informants from the private sector. In a classic early work concerning the success of public policy implementation, Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979:486) write of “target group compliance”. The top-down nature of the NTP implementation was identified as a factor by numerous stakeholders, including those in the Ministry.

*“the **ultimate** purpose of the NTP is to supply the required skills to the labour market and to increase the percentage of Omani citizens working in the private sector.” (MoM7)*
(emphasis added)

That is, the policy is more concerned about Omanisation, and whilst it is clear as to what it is intended to achieve, the issue surrounding its precise implementation caused confusion. There is the argument that public policy is invariably characterised by ambiguity, either in its goals or means, which is intended and serves the purpose of passing policy with minimum resistance to its implementation (Matland, 1995). Taking this as a model, it might be assumed that the problem lies within the MoM, and that the confusion is a ‘desired’ confusion. Nonetheless, the damaging factor is the lack of clarity surrounding the process of implementation itself.

Manpower Planning

The absence of a rigorous mechanism for identifying the skills needed for the Omani candidates to enter the NTP scheme was among the factors stakeholders identified as having influenced the NTP implementation. Rather than any national overarching strategy or plan, employers currently have responsibility for identifying their organisational manpower requirements. In an independent way, training providers are responsible for the delivery of courses, but only after having sought approval and meeting

the requirements of the MoM. Thus, the process is requirement driven, rather than strategic in nature.

“we are demand led because the market requirement is dynamic; therefore, the labour market which is driven by the private sector, plays the main role in shaping our strategies for training.” (MoM1)

Having an independent source, particularly one that was commercially orientated, to identify the training requirements led to disquiet amongst the stakeholders. Further, within the framework of network policy theory (Scharpf, 1997), the interdependence of various policy stakeholders is likely to lead to conflicts of interest. Hill and Hupe (2002) suggest that conflict can be overcome by having co-ordination and collaboration as the basis of policy implementation. However, adopting a training strategy in Oman that incorporated a large input from employers produced unexpected consequences. Indeed, the employers were accused of manipulating the situation, and abusing their power; for example, by claiming that certain job skills were required when this was untrue (MoM3 and MoM4). Evidence of this manipulative practice was also presented by trainees (T1 and T4), who were informed by the company HR manager that they had been hired solely in order for the company to gain approval to recruit expatriate staff. Essentially, genuine jobs did not exist for them.

Levin and Ferman (1986) argued that policy formulators use incentives and inducements to convert stakeholder reluctance into involvement and adoption. Whilst the opposite was the case with the NTP policy the principle remained, with the MoM providing the inducement of permitting employers to manage their manpower needs. Specifically, by entering the NTP scheme employers were incentivised by being permitted to hire expatriate workers along with Omani recruits. This incentive strategy was perceived to be flawed in that employers were permitted to place their organisational requirements above those of the Omani national interest, and can ‘create’ a need for skills that can be provided by Omanis in order to obtain their foreign worker permits. This form of policy manipulation is considered commonplace, with it being “possible to make policies more palatable by limiting the changes they bring about, by means such as harmless clauses,

or by providing remunerative incentives for essential actors” (Matland, 1995:157).

From an employer perspective (EG), the exploitation of some trainees arose because of the restrictions imposed by the MoM on hiring expatriate labour, which was a way of circumventing the system. Informants from the Ministry (MoM3) confirmed that companies wanting to employ additional expatriates had manipulated the scheme. On the one hand the straightforward exchange of employers taking four Omanis NTP trainees benefits the MoM in their Omanisation targets, whilst on the other employers are granted permission to recruit a foreign worker. However, there is a moral issue that relates to the damage the process does to both with respect to esteem and wasted time.

Whilst the MoM’s stated strategic role was to achieve a match between the demand for skills and their subsequent supply (Devans and Smith, 2013), in practice the MoM focuses more on implementation, and less on analysing the requirements expressed by companies. In addition, manpower planning in Oman is currently fragmented. Greater co-ordination and collaboration between the MoM and other Government agencies including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Public Authority of Manpower Register and Employment Department is likely to broaden horizons and establish a wider vision in respect to the skills required, the numbers available, and the demands of the private sector.

The MoM informants believed that the Ministry should have greater involvement in scrutinising employers’ manpower projections, so that they can be assured that employers are not participating in the NTP for the wrong reasons. The creation of a reliable manpower forecasting model is extremely challenging (Hoeckel and Schwartz, 2010), as any skills’ requirements depend on factors that are difficult to predict. One factor includes government policies, and a more stringent scrutiny of Omani workers’ requests would help to ensure that these are not aimed solely at removing Omanis from the unemployment register, or as a means for companies to hire expatriate workers. The informants wished that private

sector employers would hire Omanis, with a view to developing them for the future and retaining them within their companies.

Programme Design

The design of the NTP was amongst the perceived factors that influenced its implementation, with the training model, training content, evaluation practices, and the matching of needs being cited as important areas affecting implementation. There was no officially approved training model followed by the MoM to deliver this training, which was recognised by Ministry informants:

“there is no approved training model followed by the MoM to conduct the NTP; the current procedures were developed a long time ago, and have been followed by the Ministry since that time.” (MoM3)

This observation was also made by MoM2. Formal training models encompass a range of activities, specifically planning, implementation, and evaluation of the outcome (Armstrong, 2012), but it is apparent that the MoM do not follow such a model. Indeed, they manage the whole NTP project using informal procedures and have done so since the programme inauguration. This level of informality represented another example of ambiguity that was experienced across all stakeholder groups. This absence of detail compounded the ambiguity of the policy objectives. These factors were seen to present difficulties in evaluation, with the lack of clarity even extending to the MoM employees:

“these objectives are general and we as MoM employees are facing difficulty in assessing our achievement. The main objective is clear to us, training and then employment, but we need much more detailed tasks like targeting a specific number of trainees, and clearly identifying the specialisation of training.” (MoM2)

Such comments confirm the absence of a formal training model which establishes the full training process, and enables employees to identify whether the training outcomes meet their needs.

The Government's national development focus was perceived to be more towards vocational training, which was provided for by the Vocational

Training Centres (VTCs), whereby the NTP uses private training providers. This dual system, with both administered by the MoM, has different roles.

“these are two different philosophies and both of them are required, and this is because the demands of the private sector are not met by the [VTCs].” (MoM1)

The absence of an effective training direction may be due to the NTP being ‘mingled with employment’ and the shorter period devoted to training than the VTCs.

This issue of the duality of training provision was considered sensitive by some MoM informants, with it being evident that they did not wish to discuss it, preferring instead to restrict the conversation to the NTP. It may be that reluctance was due to the pressure that existed in the top-down culture (Hill and Hupe, 2008). It may also be that, as with other education systems in Oman, the capital investments were directed more to the VTC provision.

With respect to qualifications, there is a need for National Vocational Qualifications to form part of a National Occupational Framework (Devins and Smith, 2013). Within an infrastructure of systematic training skills shortages in the labour market, levels of competencies can be identified, with the required outcomes of training for each occupation being clarified. The MoM follows the Gulf Arab Manual Common Vocational Classification (MoM7), but this manual provides a description only of the occupation and does not reflect the best practice associated with it, or the expected outcomes. Moreover, the NTP training programmes delivered to young Omani jobseekers do not culminate in the award of a qualification that would lead to future career development.

Besides highlighting the importance of a robust training model for the implementation of the NTP, reference was made to the training content. Whilst the Ministry oversees the training content of national programmes, such as competency in the English language and Health and Safety, the NTP requires a different approach, as the specification varies with prospected jobholders. Nonetheless, the approval of the training content was unclear. This is not surprising as the Ministry informants showed little interest in the NTP programme content.

“I don’t want to see any contents, because if he is able to pass the practical test then it’s over because the content of the curriculum is assessed through that test.” (MoM1)

The Ministry appeared more interested in whether trainees pass or fail, than in the detail of what is taught, with this attitude being perceived to relate to the targets for Omanisation. Employers, on the other hand fell into two camps, with some confirming that they had input into the design of the curriculum, and others claiming that it did not reflect their full requirements and that a gap existed between it and their needs. Employers believed that they should have a greater voice in what skills were being taught, as it is they who are expected to bring trainees into their workforce. Indeed, since employment is the intended destination of the trainees, employer involvement in the design and implementation would facilitate an effective match between training and transfer to the workplace (Mann et al., 2014). Furthermore, observations were made with respect to the regular updating of all training curricula, so as to remain current with advances in technology and current practice. This would require the Ministry, in collaboration with training providers and employers, to keep abreast of trends within the labour market.

There is also a need for the trainees to enter the equation, as they are the ‘products’ in relation to the course content, while consideration of the cultural orientation of Omani youth appears lacking, with the conservative approach to allowing young females to participate in certain types of job and sector being cited (MoM3). Employers also acknowledged the need for an awareness of cultural attitudes; for example, the HR manager for a leading tourism company shared the problems he experienced in sourcing Omanis for hotel and resort work, since cultural predispositions consider certain occupational areas such as chefs and waiters to be below Omanis, or to be inappropriate because they may be required to handle alcohol, which is prohibited on religious grounds. This aspect of cultural norms is difficult to overcome as they are often entrenched, although a joint approach to mutual learning, as advocated by Spratt (2009), could provide a solution.

To deliver effective training, the trainer must adopt a variety of training methods and approaches to accommodate the divergent learning styles of

trainees (Sims, 1990). However, the real challenge facing the NTP policymakers and implementers is that the motivation amongst young jobseekers in Oman for private sector work, and hence the NTP, which is a route into that sector, is hardly existent. This emphasises the cultural orientations of young jobseekers, and the effect these have on their eventual motives for pursuing certain types of job needs consideration.

Another factor that impacted on the NTP implementation concerned the lack of a formally structured evaluation. With the exception of an assessment proforma, which is administered by the MoM in a meeting with the trainer and trainee, there is only a 'certificate of attendance' to testify to the training. Some in the Ministry felt that the training institute categorisation that it imposed was a sufficient guarantee of training provider quality. No formative or summative assessment was made at the end of the training programme, nor in the workplace. This shows that the NTP is not assessed as a policy since there is no proper evaluation of its output, and hence, there can be no feedback on the evaluation cycle. There is no such cycle, and the negative result of this was evident in comments from the training providers to the effect that the main problem with NTP implementation is what happens to trainees after joining their companies, to which the trainees concur.

The current limited evaluation practice results from the belief held by the NTP policymakers that evaluation is too time-consuming.

"I don't think we can go into details in the evaluation, we don't have adequate time to cover all these details ...We look to the issue from the perspective that, we aim to solve the issue of unemployment and we achieve this objective, this is indicated as one sign of programme success." (MoM1)

This falls into the assumption that because training appears subjectively to work, there is little need to conduct formal evaluation (Sims, 1993; Sanderson, 1995). However, in the case of the NTP, there is adequate evidence to suggest that the training does not always work, and it seems that MoM1 is not prepared to recognise this, being more interested in the statistics of getting the trainees employed, irrespective of whether they are useful to employers. In this analysis, whilst demotivating to trainees, it was seen as more important to remove young people from the unemployment

register. Nonetheless, evaluation would help ensure that these individuals had a fulfilling employment experience.

At the national level, some informants asserted that the need to account for expenditure calls for a rigorous evaluation effort.

“this evaluation is not sufficient to investigate the trainer’s capabilities; we need a much more structured training evaluation framework.” (MoM2)

On a wider scale, no formal evaluation of the policy has taken place in fourteen years. In developing a formal evaluation framework, consideration needs to be given to the stages involved. Focus could be on the training delivered and skills acquired, but to assist with the Omanisation in the private sector the transfer of the learning element also needs addressing. At present, the perception of all stakeholders is one of poor evaluation, with little integration.

8.1.2 Key Factors Associated with Employers

Implementation Structure

When assessing the implementation structure, employers play a key role. Indeed, they considered their involvement in the employment of Omani citizens as a commitment to the development of Oman’s economy through HRD. This attitude was prevalent amongst all of the employer informants.

“the objectives of the NTP are clear and as a company we are targeting the achievement of these objectives through the NTP”. (EJ)

Such divergence in objectives among the different parties is not unexpected, where certain public policies are unavoidably dialectic (Matland, 1995), with a solution not always being possible. Nonetheless, the Ministry appears to do little to consider these differences in stakeholder interests, or to re-align the NTP to make adjustments. The criticism from employers about the lack of attention to their interests was aired strongly, with an example being the tourism sector.

“The MoM does not consider the quality of the trainees, they are just looking to fill numbers.” (EG)

Again, this testifies to the MoM's preoccupation with achieving targets, rather than human development, with the comment being seen to resonate with the Ministry informants (MoM1). Linking the NTP to Omanisation is perceived as a problem factor, as the implications for the programme are that young Omanis are not developed sufficiently, with an example being drawn from the retail sector.

"the young people who join the programme seem to be forced ... they need awareness and induction, and proper development." (EG)

For employers who are concerned with profitability, the reluctance among young Omanis to learn skills was a concern, which was compounded by the Ministry's contentment of the evaluators with low and basic levels of achievement. These characteristics damage the NTP implementation, as employers experienced difficulty in integrating trainees within their company. This view, expressed from the tourism sector, returns to clarity, in that whilst the Government's intentions were identifiable in broad terms, the approach to the recruitment and training of jobseekers for particular sectors was misguided. This factor was compounded by the policy of enticing the private sector to assist with the Omanisation targets, incentivised through expatriate work permits. These actions were such that the trainees allocated to the tourism and retail sectors would be unsuitable, which would result in end costs to the employers because there would be little contribution towards productivity.

The construction sector experienced similar frustrations to tourism and retail, with the sector traditionally experiencing the greatest difficulty in meeting Omanisation targets, due to its negative image within Omani society. Indeed, the unique characteristics of the construction sector place it in an ideal position to contribute to the Omani economy, due to its commitment to infrastructure development, with the potential to absorb many unemployed young Omanis. However, the sector employs the greatest number of expatriates in Oman, which exceeded 2,000,000 in April 2006, representing more than 49% of the total workforce (NCSI, 2016). These observations for the tourism, retail and construction sectors illustrate the diversity of employment provision, and challenges in achieving the Omanisation targets.

Employers felt that an implication factor of the NTP was the failure to check if the manpower it provided as a result of the training process was suitable for the companies. Returning to evaluation, the absence of any follow-up plan was perceived as a seriously limiting factor, with which some trainees and training providers concurred. Within an HRD framework, a detailed training framework with a comprehensive evaluation strategy would be expected (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006). The perception was, however, that given Omani culture, the Ministry would favour formative assessments, although a consensus existed amongst the employers, trainees and training providers that a summative approach would add 'narrative' value. This and other issues are perceived to stem from a lack of clarity of roles. Causing particular disquiet was the ambiguous role of the Ministry, and the argument on clarity coincides with this. One employer summed up the Government's role as follows:

“the government role is limited to the policy's delivery, and the entire process is driven by the private sector, through the training providers and employers.” (EG)

This identifies the Ministry as an enabler and facilitator in terms of training implementation, with it financing and coordinating the programme. Reality reveals that the approach is fragmented and devolved to stakeholders who have their own interests to preserve.

There is a perceived Government trend toward mandated policy implementation, with other public sectors having reported a “shift from heavy-handed regulatory mandates...” (May, 1995:90) to encourage greater intergovernmental collaboration. Despite the advantages of this trend, the NTP required a more rigorous system with regulated procedures, which represented a more traditional approach (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981).

Skills supply and Demand

The current process of defining the supply and demand of skills was identified by the employers, and others, as a factor that directly contributed to the outcomes of the programme. The Omanisation link caused confusion and disenchantment with the employers, and whilst all stakeholders wished for a skilled workforce, and a reduction in Omani unemployment numbers,

their focus was more commercially oriented. The Ministry's role in NTP implementation is limited to providing the training infrastructure, in terms of financial aid, curriculum review, approval of training providers, and in-training assessment. It is the employers who determine the number of trainees required. This arrangement follows the World Bank recommendations (Bennell and Segerstrom, 1998) that vocational education and training in developing countries is the domain of individuals, enterprises and private sector training institutions, with government interventions being kept to a minimum. However, employers criticised the Ministry for excluding the private sector from its national planning, with the exercise often being undertaken by the public sector alone, and with a perceived focus on achieving Omanisation, rather than private sector needs. However, not all employers were in agreement that Government exclusion from manpower predictions was negative, and welcomed the top-down policy, since:

“NTP allows the employers to design the training programmes along with the training providers, without much interference from the Government on the number and type of trainees.” (EB)

Employers felt that skills demands could be sourced more economically through expatriates whose cultural disposition invariably leads to greater productivity than is possible with national workers. In this respect, as has been noted earlier, companies fabricate jobs for Omani jobseekers, with a view to satisfying their skills demand from overseas. The extent of this practice is unknown, which compounds the ambiguity in terms of implementation. As a general HRD initiative, employer involvement is considered important (Cooper, 2004), whether in implicit or explicit terms, as the efforts of the private sector in furthering NHRD are extremely valuable.

The diversity in Oman's economic sectors was also seen to place different pressures on the skills demanded, with this being most apparent in jobseeker preference for certain sectors. In addition to the public sector preference, oil and gas was a highly sought after destination, with construction, hospitality, and retail being the least preferred (NCSI, 2016). Essentially, cultural attitudes and pressures militate against the attractiveness of working as a chef, waiter, chamber maid, or a shop

assistant, with these ingrained attitudes being hard to change. Yet, whilst salaries and compensatory benefits make the oil and gas sector a preferred destination, employers (EF) felt that trainees entered this industry with blinkered vision, ignoring the associated risks and harsh working conditions. Interview data confirmed the low attraction for the hospitality and retail sectors, although claims were made that to achieve the Omanisation targets in these difficult sectors the Ministry directed unwilling trainees towards occupations in these sectors, which resulted in redundant skill sets and left employers with unfulfilled labour demands. This mismatch impacted negatively on unattractive sectors, with high staff turnover being reported. These observations contradict the Ministry's assertion that it allows employers to identify the skills needed. There is a dilemma, because without interference or strong incentives, Omani jobseekers will avoid unfavourable sectors or spend only a limited period of time in the position. It may be the case that financial recompense can override societal pressure, but this would require a shift in natural culture.

Irrespective of jobseeker preference for a particular sector, the process of identifying the skills demanded for an effective Omani workforce in all sectors requires collaboration between the Ministry and the private sector. One opportunity for addressing skills demands is to build a policy that addresses each sectors' demands and develops occupation-specific training (Protsch and Solga, 2016), whilst recognising that some sectors are unlikely to function without foreign workers. It would be unproductive, and against the national interest to force a sector that operates successfully with a large expatriate workforce to employ unwilling national labour. For example, it was argued that disaffected labour in flagship sectors that attract tourists could damage a country's image on an international level. This reports the current situation, which is perceived to have resulted from using the NTP to achieve Omanisation. Indeed, viewing NHRD as "the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills, and the capacities of all the people in a society" (Harbison and Myers, 1964:2), coincides with the Ministry's explanation of the NTP role. Employers perceived a pure focus on Omanisation targets to be short term, and not set at developing Omanis for the future. A damning indictment of the system was put forward by one employer.

“sometimes companies are not in need of a particular occupation or job, but because Omanisation is a condition, they hire Omanis just to meet the percentage, not because of a real need. On the other hand, the young Omanis do not care about learning and developing skills, rather they care about getting the salary. I know some Omani citizens are registered in companies and just appear on the records, when actually, they are sitting in their homes and getting their salaries paid for nothing – all to enable the company to hire expatriates.” (EB)

This is, indeed, an indictment of the system and illustrates a genuine need to recruit expatriates, and intransigence on the part of Government to recognise that Omani nationals are unlikely to perform well in certain industries, even with a relevant skill set. The situation is equally damning to the NTP as it precludes the development of a skilled labour pool, because trainees who are hired and enter non-existent jobs are denied the opportunity to practise the skills learnt in training. From the employers’ perspective it is a waste of resources that achieves a paper record of Omanisation targets, but which in practice is very different. This trend in the employers’ response to Government pressures is illustrative of policy network theory (Klijn, 1996), which highlights the degrees of interdependency between agencies, and argues that organisations rely for their survival on resources that are outside their control, with such actions being regulated through the development of rules that regulate resource distribution (Hill and Hupe, 2002).

In not acknowledging the genuine skills demands from employers, the Government was perceived as making the trainees the greatest losers in the NTP. A preoccupation with Omanisation targets was perceived as misguided in that the focus should concern the development of the national human resource, and it was this matter that caused tensions. Indeed, employers and others argued that the drive for strict Omanisation targets was damaging to the whole notion of enhancing the Sultanate’s human capability, as trainees have been left unemployed, demoralised, and disempowered.

Quality of Training

All stakeholder groups held a view on quality, although as is common in a complex network a tendency existed to apportion blame (Klij, 1996). At its fundamental level, the training process is enabled through Ministry funding, and the establishment of departments for training administration. Within the NTP, however, the employing companies represent the final destination of the training process, and this stakeholder group made the most forceful comments on the quality of training.

This degree of centralisation, and the accompanying issues of collaboration between the parties involved, represented a benchmark used to measure the quality of the training. From the policy perspective, such centralisation is highlighted in the paradox identified by Bannink and Ossewaarde (2011), where government centralises the financial risk, but decentralises the implementation of the policy, allowing the other stakeholders a degree of discretion. Such an approach allows the implementing agencies, who are best placed, to manage the operationalisation (Lipsky, 2010).

Evidence of such discretion was reported by employers through interviews and by the training providers, who followed up on the trainees' progress once the training programme was completed to assess the match between the training delivered and workplace skills. Another training provider (TP5) enhanced quality by repeating the training input with trainees who had been absent during the programme, even though the tripartite contract does not require this. As often happens in a network (Hill and Hupe, 2002), the employers did not completely agree that the programme 'graduates' were equipped with the necessary skills to meet their particular needs. Indeed, some (ED) claimed that further training courses were needed to remedy the trainees' shortcomings, with a particularly emphasis coming from the retail sector (EF). The efforts made by the training providers and employers suggest that greater collaboration existed within the private sector enterprises than with Government. This devolved responsibility, or at least action, supports that in public policy terms fruitful decisions are often made in crowded offices, where citizens and street-level bureaucrats meet (Lipsky, 2010).

Another benchmark by which the quality of training was measured relates to the curriculum content of the training provided. The area is steeped in confusion, with the Ministry asserting that the course content is a matter for the employers and training providers, yet it uses the outdated Gulf Arab Manual Common Vocational Classification as the basis for its negotiations with the training providers. Regardless, the product was reported as providing a curriculum that concentrates on developing basic employment skills, which requires delivery by the training providers. The objection of the stakeholders, particularly the employers, referred to the nature of the course not being communicated effectively, with a feeling of being 'tricked'. Part of organisational behaviour and HRD relates to effective communication between the parties involved in the policy implementation process (Hull and Hjern, 1987), which ideally would involve a bottom-up element (Winter, 2006). Several employers cited the lack of communication concerning the abilities that trainees would bring to the employment situation, believing that as they had been involved in the training process their requirements would have been taken into account. Employers placed the blame with the Ministry, which was responsible for underwriting training content that did not coincide with their job analysis (EE).

Representatives from the retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors argued particularly that the Ministry had little appreciation that recruitment in these two sectors was hampered by societal attitudes (EF and EG). They argued that these culturally based negative attitudes make the achievement of Omanisation targets more difficult to achieve in these sectors. The construction sector was in a similar position, but again the upwards communication failed to bring action.

“we reported this problem to the MoM, and their inspectors come to the site, but unfortunately we didn’t get any response from them thereafter.” (EI)

Communication equally entails active listening (Littlejohn and Foss, 2008), with it being seen that stakeholders in the construction sector felt unheard with respect to the low expectation of meeting Omanisation targets. The Ministry were perceived as adopting more of a supervisory rather than a

collaborative role, despite the NTP being considered a partnership between the four stakeholders.

In addition to the course content being cited as a benchmark for training quality, employers felt that training providers and employers are pitted at disharmonious poles. Employers bemoaned the lack of competency amongst training providers, particularly with respect to the trainers' qualifications, although it was highlighted that with regards to the NTP, the Ministry does not stipulate a minimum academic qualification for trainers, nor do they require experience, which may account for the trainees being unaware of what was expected in a specific sector. This policy contrasts with hospitality management trainers in the UK, who invariably hold a specialist degree and industrial experience. In another example of a top-down approach and contrary claims, the Ministry stated that the Training Quality Department assessed all the trainers' qualifications, quoting Article 43 of the Private Training Institute Bylaw, which lists the required trainer qualifications. In an example of policy and practice being at variance, one informant (EG) was able to identify an Omani trainer who had been exempted from the Bylaw. Regardless, trainer competence is strongly related to the training effectiveness (Bramley, 1996), although competence does not refer solely to academic or professional qualification.

Within the factor pertaining to quality, another point referred to trainer ability. Employers illustrated the argument by citing post-training measures of output, with some perceiving this as a measure of NTP implementation. One instance was advanced that concerned only six out of 40 NTP trainees having remained in the company. It was explained that the reasons for leaving were not seeking bigger and better opportunities, but related to being unable to do the job. Blame was attached to the training providers, although in a causal sense many compounding factors including inherent ability and the organisational culture could have influenced the trainees' decision to leave. In general terms, the employers perceived the NTP trainees were capable of performing certain basic tasks, although they were perceived not to be capable of attaining managerial level, which would tend to confirm the nature of recruitment and basic level of training provided through the NTP. In confirming the trainees' level, some employers (EH)

recognised they needed to provide specific training to raise the skills level of trainees, essentially, normal continuous professional development.

As an ancillary to the training quality, the training providers' ability to launch a course in response to manpower needs was criticised for the lengthy bureaucratic process. These delays impacted negatively on the trainees, some of whom failed to start the programme.

“the training institute follows the formalities of the MoM for funding and administrative approvals, which takes more than six months. After that period, the selected trainees have withdrawn from the programme.” (EG)

Employers and training providers pointed out that an unemployed Omani who is made a better offer is likely to take that opportunity rather than remain unemployed for six months until his or her training programme starts. The delays equally impacted on the training providers who incur financial costs in marketing and interviews, whilst the employers reported an impact on production and performance due to the post remaining unfilled. The latter point is compounded by the company being banned from hiring expatriate workers until Omani citizens are in place. The Ministry justify the lengthy recruitment process as being 'part and parcel' of a system that requires certain formalities relating to legal and financial matters, with one informant (EH) understanding the financial audit argument.

The last element in the quality of the training referred to the difference between desired outcomes and end results. In principle, objective-setting needs to commence with a clear understanding of what is expected as the end result (Kirkpatrick et al., 2011). In the NTP's case, some felt that an unreasonable gap existed between what were perceived as the unrealistic expectations of trainees, and the reality of what employment offered. An illustration is provided by one employer (EB), who felt that trainees from the NTP expected a good salary and position in the company as an entitled reward, merely because they were wearing Omani national dress. However, as the disillusionment of the actual situation emerged they would either leave or under-perform.

8.1.3 Key Factors Associated with Trainees

Training Process

The trainees themselves comprise the end ‘product’ of the NTP, and are well placed to present first-hand reflections on the training process (Karim el al., 2012). As a stakeholder group they focused on three key areas: selection, learning and training content, and finally the transfer of their skills into the workplace.

With respect to the selection process, the trainees felt that a number of factors impacted on their experience. Various methods were used to contact potential trainees, including telephone calls and text messages, which implies the absence of a definite policy concerning forthcoming training opportunities. Such an approach represents a fragmentation of accountability among stakeholders (DeGroff and Cargo, 2009), which results in ambiguity, and in turn, negatively influences the implementation of the wider policy. Trainees reported that an inconsistency in approach led to trainees receiving incorrect information, with an example being of training providers giving assurances of financial incentives that were not honoured by employers. It is difficult to determine whether the misinformation was a result of deceit, incompetence or poor practice but it resulted in negative consequences, for both the disappointed individual and the NTP programme as a whole. A possible source of misinformation surrounding recruitment is the deliberate enticement of potential trainees, through painting a rosy picture, returns to the aspect of satisfying the Omanisation statistics. However, the practice of disinformation amongst stakeholders who have separate interests is not uncommon (Parsons, 1995). In addition, trainees (T1 and T4) reported an absence of tests or interview during the recruitment process, with an impression being given of ‘going through the motions’ rather than any rigorous candidate assessment, although the misinformation was also passed on throughout the programme.

The issue of trainees’ willingness to join the NTP has featured highly in the arguments presented in this study, with it being perceived as an important element by all stakeholder groups. The matter of trainees being recruited without interview or tests of suitability was perceived as lax practice, which

contributed to issues during training and the subsequent high turnover. According to the Ministry, responsibility for assessing suitability lay with the private sector, the training providers and the employers. The Ministry cannot totally distance itself from responsibility, as prospective candidates are drawn from its database of unemployed individuals, with the explicit purpose of channelling them into the NTP. The situation provides a classic example of how stakeholders, as policy network actors, negotiate and re-negotiate to strengthen their personal interests (Rhodes, 2008).

Stakeholders invariably retain personal interests (Phillips, 2003), with this being no different for the current study; for example, the precedence seen in the trainee recruitment. Trainees were not immune from the phenomena, with some amongst their number accepting the training opportunity for opportunistic motives, such as perceiving it as a stepping-stone to public sector employment. For the NTP implementation to prosper, partisan interests need to be set aside, although this variation in terms of motives amongst the NTP actors is considered an integral part of networks (Hjern and Porter, 1981).

Course content has been addressed previously, although the trainees were able to comment on the lived experience. Many spoke in positive terms, describing the course as “*good*” (T2), or adding that they “*were interested in learning something new*” (T1 and T4). Nonetheless, there were criticisms raised regarding the areas of relevance and the paucity of practical training. One extreme example of relevance related to the course focusing on the English language, whereas Urdu was the language of the workplace (T3). This variation of views is not surprising, since the trainees followed the programme for diverse occupational areas, and during different times. However, for all training provision it is important that the content and materials are reviewed regularly (Armstrong, 2012), and that evaluation models determine both the suitability and effectiveness (Kirkpatrick et al., 2011). The Ministry assessment regimen is quite basic and comprises a question sheet (Appendix (II)), which is used twice, and a class interview, where trainees’ views about the programme are sought in an open forum. In business terms assessment and review is invariably of a more rigorous nature (Devins and Smith, 2013). The NTP model is perceived to fail the

trainees, especially with regard to the important transfer of learning to the workplace. However, the assessments need to match the specific needs of the sector or business, which vary. From the Ministry's perspective, and notwithstanding the lack of detailed clarity surrounding the NTP implementation, it would be normal for a return on investment (ROI) or return on expectation (ROE) to have been undertaken, with these being linked with the organisation's key performance indicators (KPIs), in this case Omanisation.

The last theme that trainees identified as of key importance to the training process concerned the extent to which they were able to transfer their learning to the workplace, which in itself is a complex issue (Bates, 2004). The trainees narrated different experiences in this respect, although generally a consensus existed of the curriculum being at variance to the workplace demands. Again, an extreme example concerned the software on the course being different from that used by the employer's company (T5). The claim was equally supported by employers (EF and EB), who observed that trainees had to be reskilled in the use of the company software systems. The cause may lie with poor financial support for upgrading software, or an element of incompetence, or indifference might be involved. With respect to the transfer of learning, there was a case where, despite receiving the appropriate AutoCAD training, trainees were kept idle for nine months, not being able to use the acquired skills. Here, the transfer failing rests with the employer, which again exemplifies the tripartite nature of NTP implementation. Returning to models of evaluation (Kirkpatrick et al., 2011), this questions what opportunities the trainees had to feedback to the Ministry, although given the potential response of a powerful employer, they may have been muted, even if the opportunity was given.

Certain sectors reported a positive transfer of learning, as was the case with trainees in the insurance sector (T6). Further, any gaps in the job requirements not covered in training were addressed by a supportive line manager, as part of ongoing development. This example better illustrates the spirit and ethos of the Omanisation and NTP initiatives.

Motives to join NTP

The NTP implementation depends on people, with an important aspect being the motives that drive trainees to join the programme. Thus, investigating motives from the trainees' perspective grounds the discussion. Four key factors were identified, relating to the trainees' orientation to public sector work, cultural influences, the influence of training providers, and the management style and structure of the potential employer's company.

There is nothing new about the preference of Omani citizens to work in the public sector. Indeed, almost twenty years ago a study showed that over 65% of Omanis preferred Government work (Al-Lamki, 1998). Having joined the workplace, some expressed a wish to move to Government work at the first opportunity. In one example, this desire had not diminished in the employee even after five 'satisfying' years of employment.

"I enjoy my work now, but still I have the ambitions to join the Government." (T6)

One reason for the attraction of public sector work relates to the lower working hours, although salary, status and structured personal development opportunities also feature. Thus, the overall reward package in the public sector is perceived as being superior, with the added belief that individuals are less accountable for their actions.

"working at the government is less headaches, nobody asked what did you do and why." (T1)

With employment conditions in Oman currently being harmonised, there is nothing to suggest that eventually the Omani public sector will not move further in the direction of the private sector.

Nonetheless, despite the variety of motives given, there is a desire to join the public sector, with the informants' motives for participating in the NTP not being guided by any feeling of the intrinsic worth of the programme; many were more concerned with filling a gap in their employment record that might ultimately lead to Government work.

This seemingly inherent desire to work for the Government is seen as the outcome of social programming. In the neighbouring state of the UAE, certain social and cultural influences determined the types of education and employment that nationals were willing to undertake (Wilkins, 2002a). Oman has cultural similarities to the UAE, and it is possible that the findings could broadly transfer to the Sultanate. Indeed, the employers in the current study reported a similar situation, as did the trainees. One example referred to gender, with one trainee (T4) feeling that her family expectations prevented her from work that involved close contact with men, which resulted in her having to reject several promising employment opportunities. Culturally in Oman, the family perceptions and pressures affect women's participation in the labour market (Hasani, 2015), with traditional culture projecting a stereotypical view of the woman, whose primary role is that of a wife and mother (Al-Lamki, 1999). Such pressures and expectations often override individual motives, and form another reason for females being attracted to the public sector, where greater protection is perceived to exist for women; or, alternatively, the pressures inhibit the desire to work at all. A third factor of the implication for the trainees concerns the misleading promotion of the programme, with particular reference to the marketing role played by training providers. Some painted an attractive picture of specific employment benefits, which failed to realise once they joined the company. In that the training providers offer places on the course they possess a high degree of power, which made it difficult for the trainees to challenge any misinformation. An element of naivety or ignorance might also have contributed to an acceptance of information.

“they [the training providers] were encouraging us to join the training with promises of various incentives, but in reality everything was the opposite.” (T3)

“before signing the contract, the training institute exaggerated the prospective job.” (T7)

One factor influencing policy implementation concerns the orientation of the stakeholders (Abas and Wee, 2015), with the trainees deciding to join the NTP based on the opportunities presented by the training provider. It would appear that the information was given to protect the training providers' own interests. Such behaviour by different actors, within policy implementation,

is not unusual (Hjern and Porter, 1981), with the motive for participation being based on expected outcomes, and in the training providers' case the anticipated outcome of a financial return. Further, their success in achieving that outcome depends upon their capacity to enrol a sufficient number of trainees on the training programme. What is damaging to the NTP implementation is when training providers and employers wrongfully entice Omani citizens to waste their time and spend public monies in order to develop basic skills that are not used in employment.

The fourth influence upon trainees' motives, in a negative way, relates to employers, who have acquired a poor reputation, although their image is often viewed in an implicit comparison with public sector managers. From the private sector employers' perspective, they require employee adherence to certain conditions, while possessing a strong work ethic and certain work capabilities. From the trainees' perspective the employers fail to provide the enabling environment.

"we are willing to work if we have been enabled and provided with the correct work environment." (T1)

"I feel I am forced to come to the work, I am so annoyed and pessimistic, I wish to leave today rather than tomorrow, all this because the company was not clear to us regarding the compensation."

Some trainees felt rejected; indeed, there were trainees who reported that they were hired simply to meet Omanisation targets, with there being no prospects for them in the company, whilst they were not considered as employable as an expatriate worker. Moreover, some felt that employers exploited them, or made them work long hours unnecessarily, and with little financial compensation. The matter of pay is relative, as Oman operates a minimum wage, although the comparison may be made with jobs where bonuses are paid. One major factor is the continuous comparison with public sector pay and conditions, although the Labour Law has recently been redrafted to assist in the convergence between the two sectors. Nonetheless, these partial harmonising changes seemed to have failed to impress the young Omanis in the current study, as they still perceived the

Government sector as providing more privilege and personal prestige, which culturally is important to Omanis.

It is unlikely that the private sector will ever be able to offer the same development opportunities as the public sector, since scholarships for study abroad for Government employees have long been a part of the Omani development programme. These scholarships are prestigious, and can include opportunities for a family to travel and accompany the employee during the entire period of study, often resulting in promotion on return home with a valued academic qualification, and overseas experience. The notion that the private sector would ever match such a benefit seems unlikely, and thus may add weight to the motives of young Omanis to aspire to public sector work.

8.1.4 Key Factors Associated with Training Providers

Training Goals

Once Government approves a training programme the private sector takes greater ownership, with the two key players being the training providers and employers, who are private for-profit establishments. Within the implementation of the NTP system, training providers had clarity of both the overall goal and their part within it. Whilst their aim to deliver quality training was clear, they held the view that they were making a contribution to the nation's economic development and sustainability, albeit indirectly. The institutes saw themselves as providing a public service, as their primary aim was to provide training for Government programmes. Thus, the mandate given to training providers identifies them within a policy network model as operating on a principal-agent relationship (May, 1995) with the Government.

Training providers reported that, in an informal sense, their role went beyond the official stated aim, in that they tried to generate a working ethos that was conducive to good practice.

“One of the other roles is to enhance the culture of job respect and love for the work. [to include] enhancement of

the job respect culture among the citizens; the family, the community and the trainees themselves.” (TP7)

“our role is twofold, attracting them for training and preparing them to work in the private sector with skills, knowledge and desire.” (TP4)

Another emerging factor related to the training providers’ expectation to raise awareness of opportunities in the private sector and advertise the training programmes. This marketing role was perceived as integral to the training providers’ success, as an absence of students would threaten financial viability and the sustainability of the instituters. Clearly, there is a financial imperative, but the training providers still maintained that it was the actual training that provided satisfaction. One provider stated that he sought to provide trainees with *“skills, knowledge and desire”* (TP4). Here, there is an attempt to influence culture, as the training providers aimed to instil ‘desire’, and although this value driven concept is difficult to evaluate, some trainees did comment positively on their course. A lack of desire in the workplace, however, may be attributed to various factors and to place a causal direction to training would be difficult.

In accepting the goal of their training role, the training providers found a shortcoming in the employers’ perceptions of the goals of the programme, which they illustrated by the practice of manipulating the NTP process to secure expatriate labour permits. At the same time, they exaggerated their own achievements in producing skilled trainees from an effective training programme. One element that fuelled the manipulation concerned the incentive given to employers, with a recommendation that these should be removed, although there might be a certainty naivety in this statement because without the work permit incentive scheme it is unlikely that the NTP as it stands would continue. The claims and counter-claims, along with apportioning blame, are common tensions that exist in policy implementation when multiple stakeholders are involved (Matland, 1995), especially when the balance of power is unequal. Whilst stakeholder tensions exist, it is testament to their commitment that the NTP programmes have continued to run for fourteen years. Indeed, there was awareness that

to achieve the goals, a degree of convergence and cooperation was required amongst the key stakeholder groups.

Others took a positive stance, declaring that the Omanisation targets were being achieved, as *“the number of Omani citizens working in the private sector increases”* (T2), although this refers only to statistical measures. Indeed, training providers felt particularly strongly about the negative way in which some employees treated trainees. Whilst the tripartite contract obliges the company to retain the employee for not less than one year, there is no stipulation that this time should be fruitful and beneficial to the trainee, although it is implicit in the contract. Examples of wasted talent in employment, which followed the training providers’ effort on the course, were felt to be demoralising from a professional trainers’ point of view.

Training Procedures

The training providers act as facilitators of the training implementation, in that they develop the skills of Omani jobseekers. Areas of significance have been addressed, but this section discusses key issues from the training providers’ perspective, whilst integrating them with comments from other stakeholder groups. Two intertwined areas were identified as being associated with NTP policy implementations: the process of agreeing course content and the issue surrounding evaluation. Once designed, the programme becomes the training providers’ ‘product’, and they are obliged to advertise the NTP to the general public, aiming especially at jobseekers, school leavers, and Omani youth.

Course content is perceived as being extremely important, both in terms of the institutions’ financial success and in the delivery of appropriately skilled trainees. However, the content is arrived via a lengthy bureaucratic procedure involving the Ministry, with the extended delay being reported as a factor that impedes implementation. The impact is twofold. First, from an economic perspective, training providers are not earning whilst they wait for a course approval; and second, the prolonged waiting period results in jobseekers withdrawing from their place, which in turn can delay the commencement of the programme (TP7). With regard to the actual content,

training providers are required to design a course for which the curriculum content accords to educational principles, and meets the skills demands of the target employment, which is done in collaboration with employers and the Ministry. Whilst the lengthy process of approval can be rationalised, a training provider (TP7) reported after the candidates had been recruited and the course prepared that the Ministry refused final approval, although it was argued by a Ministry informant that such a thing would never happen. Within policy implementation there is a need for the proper hierarchical integration of all implementation agencies (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981); however, whilst there is a degree of transparency in the process, the differences in power overrule this point and the training providers are penalised. In this instance, it is the for-profit commercial institutions that suffer, whilst the not-for-profit public sector remains in control. Yet, in terms of the NTP, without the support of the Government it is unlikely that they would flourish in the same way.

With respect to content, some training providers experienced complication in determining a match with the proposed job. Training providers are required to justify the relevance of content to the Ministry, and although initial curriculum building should involve employers, that was not always the case. The content is critical to the effectiveness of the course, although there is no systematic means of determining whether the content matches the employers' requirements; that is, there is no authentication from the Ministry. Employers and trainees reported several instances of the course content being inappropriate for the workplace. One incident related to an employer who implied that the training provider had adopted a generalist approach, and delivered generic mechanic skills, rather than the specialist focus that was agreed.

“we have training for specific jobs and provided details, but the training providers train all of them to be mechanics.” (EC)

When investigating policy implementation these claims and counter-claims are not unusual, with the advised coherent, integrated and harmonised process (Ryan, 1996) rarely being achieved.

Linking in to course content is the element of evaluation, which emerged as a factor amongst the training providers. Various assessment models are available that embrace a variety of inputs, and which range from summative to formative (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006). Being their professional area of expertise, the training providers were puzzled by the sparse level of evaluation, which it is felt impacted on the implementation of the policy. Ministry officials conducted two evaluations, although their 'tick-sheet' nature was considered rudimentary. There was report of training providers undertaking follow-up evaluations in the workplace, which was outside their tripartite contract, to ascertain how trainees felt their learning was being transferred.

“to assure the training delivery, we conduct a follow-up visit to the trainees during the first three months after completing the training programme.” (TP5)

It is the Ministry's remit to evaluate the trainees once they are placed, but employers and trainees reported that this rarely happens. Given the national investment in the NTP it is difficult to understand why a more rigorous audit does not take place. Some speculated that as it may uncover the abuses and anomalies within the system, and expose these to both the public and audit, it would thus damage the 'story' surrounding the Omanisation success.

The factors that have been discussed here have illustrated a number of areas that informants perceived key to NTP policy implementation. Within the broad discussion, each stakeholder group identified the importance of factors they perceived as relevant to their particular situation and an overview of these key areas is presented schematically in Figure 8. 1. The figure, which refers back to the preceding discussion and the summarises that followed each of the findings chapters, outlines the unique connections that were perceived by the informants.

The figure is situated within the overarching concept of public policy implementation, as perceived through the stakeholders' eyes and with respect to the National Training Programme of Oman. It illuminates the factors that each of the stakeholder groups perceived to be important. For clarity, different hashed lines are used to identify the factors associated with

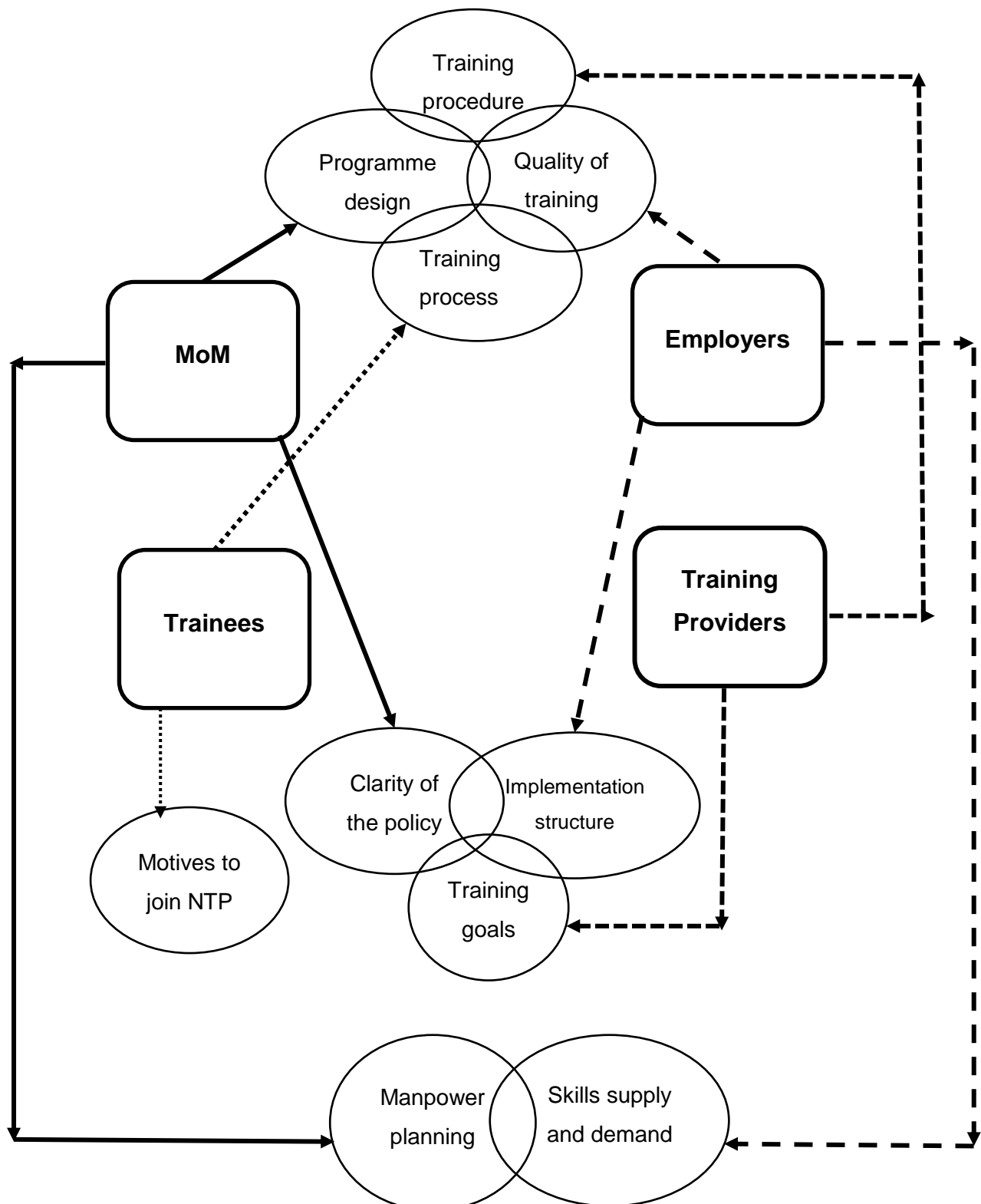
each of the four stakeholder groups, with the arrows indicating the pathway of the perceptions that flowed from each stakeholder group.

First, three factors were identified as being associated with the Ministry of Manpower, with it being perceived that they held responsibility for manpower planning, the clarity of the NTP policy and training design. As the discussion outlined, the Ministry failed in its endeavour to plan effectively, both in terms of manpower and in providing clear objectives for the National Training Programme. In a display of self-interest, as was the case with other stakeholder groups, the employers criticised the poor quality of training, the implementation structure and the skills demand. The latter is associated with the Ministry's failure to undertake effective manpower planning, their lack of involvement and the differential power that existed within the overall process that determined the skills requirement. In short, they were dissatisfied with the implementation structure and the lack of direct and credible involvement in determining the skills demanded by their organisation and, indeed, by the wider sector in which they operated. Perhaps in an effort to move any blame away from their organisations, employers equally perceived quality of training as a key associated factor, as this affected the skill set which the trainees' brought to the private sector. There was an equal tendency to place blame for the low quality of training on the training providers.

Two key points were associated with the training providers, with the first referring to the absence of clear training goals, which stemmed from the Ministry's failure to communicate on the clarity of policy. Equal concern was directed towards training procedures, with these again being associated with the Ministry's inability to determine a definitive design or procedures. Finally, the motives to join the NRP and the training provided were associated with the trainee stakeholder group. Some trainee informants questioned the relevance of the training provided, claiming that, in certain instances, it was not relevant to the role to which they were finally allocated. The trainee factor concerning their motivation to learn refers to a perceived and sometimes stated, preference for public sector roles, even though the programme was directed towards private sector work.

In summary, the figure serves to illustrate how each stakeholder group viewed the situation from their individual perspective and whilst a degree of empathy existed, in recognising others' viewpoints, the primary focus remained egocentric, especially with respect to the two commercially oriented stakeholder groups.

Figure 8. 1 Factors associated with implementation



8.2 Barriers to NTP Implementation

To address the second research question, informants' views were sought on what were perceived to be the key barriers to implementation.

What are the views of NTP stakeholders about the barriers impeding NTP implementation?

Whilst some of the areas covered relate to factors already identified, here they are covered from a different perspective, with the reasoning behind the barriers, and the way they impacted on NTP implementation, being sought. Whilst it is not within the scope of this thesis to present recommendations the informants, as involved actors, invariably offered 'solutions' to their perceived barriers, and where applicable these have been included here, as part of their voice. The barriers are discussed within the framework of stakeholder groups, with an overreaching schematic representation being presented at the end of the section.

Key Barriers – Ministry of Manpower

Ministry informants identified three key barriers to NTP implementation: the trainees' attitudes, employers' preference for expatriate workers, and Government infrastructure.

The first barrier relates to trainees' attitudes, and the existence of an inbuilt cultural desire amongst Omani jobseekers to pursue public sector careers, whilst showing a strong aversion to private sector work. This situation presents a nationwide problem for the Ministry, since it is charged with achieving Omanisation within the private sector.

“the desire of the young Omani jobseekers to work in the private sector is very weak.” (MoM3)

The claim was supported by many of the trainee informants, who confirmed their intention to move into the Government sector at the first opportunity, although those in the oil and gas sector were more content to remain. Given that NTP investment is underpinned by the requirement to Omanise the

private sector, the question of trainee preference creates a significant barrier to implementation.

One element associated with the trainees' attitude refers to the delivery centres being located in large cities, with this being a deterrent to some young Omanis who do not wish to leave their family home, or incur greater expense through excessive travel or higher accommodation costs.

Further, trainees confirmed this reluctance amongst some young jobseekers, reporting that they found it emotionally challenging to be parted from their family, whilst simultaneously incurring living expenses that were close to their monthly salary. It is not surprising that some accepted that remaining unemployed within their family home was acceptable, although it offered a "miserable existence" with little money. Certain officials at the Ministry were aware of the location issue, as were the employers, although they felt it required a strategic decision to address it.

"coming to the capital, leaving the family and incurring all these expenses, are among the reasons for not joining or continuing the programme." (MoM2)

An important barrier relates to employer preference for expatriate workers. One argument put forward relates to work ethic, with Omani youth being less willing than workers from overseas to accept the lower wages, longer work hours, and lack of job security. Expatriate workers, however, invariably come from countries that, in comparison to the oil-rich Middle-East are poor. Consequently, it is argued, they endure such poor work conditions, earning better salaries than are available at home, so that they can support their extended families (Al-Lamki, 1998). Young Omanis are not in the same position, with their families often being content to support them in unemployment, rather than have a son or daughter work in the 'poor conditions' offered by the private sector. Ministry informants were aware of the barrier, but again they felt that this fell outside their remit.

This attitude employers held towards Omani workers was deemed questionable by the Ministry, although it could be justified in that Omani workers are unable to do many expatriate jobs because they do not possess the skills and knowledge which employers require. In addition, once in work,

negative employee attitudes towards Omani workers caused a cycle which resulted in repeated absence, thereby giving the employer a genuine reason for dismissing them. This barrier concerning trainee status and treatment, which amounted to bullying, was known within the Ministry.

“in some organisations, they asked the trainees who joined the company after completing the training to clean bathrooms, distribute company brochures in streets or even work as a porter, even though they know that the person was trained in a certain technical occupation.” (MoM7)

This situation of trainees' attitude also involves the employers who 'played' the system by recruiting Omani trainees as a route to gaining expatriate work permits.

Further, evidence came from within the Ministry (MoM4 and MoM6), and from the trainees (T1 and T3). Such malpractice, by all parties, results from a poor implementation strategy that fails to acknowledge the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the programme's outcomes. Particular emphasis, which is currently missing, refers to follow-up assessment of trainees in the workplace by competent HR-oriented officials from the Ministry, to assess the transfer of learning and also the conduct of employers.

The Government's formulation of the NTP is seen as another obstacle to proper implementation, in as much as the qualification awarded at the end of training is neither recognised nor understood; thus, *“trainees might not be able to use it in the future”* (MoM3). Rather than a Certificate of Completion, efforts might be made to align the programme within the overall Occupational Standards Centre project, or provide credits that can be transferrable within the Omani educational system.

With respect to employee terms and conditions associated with the NTP, Ministry informants felt that the country's Labour Law could be revisited to consider providing financial incentive, both to encourage jobseekers to accept work in more expensive areas, and to address differences in attractiveness between different economic sectors, for example, the low trainee take-up in construction and tourism.

Key Barriers – Employers

The three key barriers to implementation perceived by employers are as follows: the Ministry being responsible for the design of training; Government regulations, particularly in relation to public sector recruitment and performance appraisal; and the desire of trainees for public rather than private sector work.

The employers felt that a key barrier to implementation related to the Ministry's failure to recognise the sectorial requirements for labour, adopting instead a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. For example, in the tourism sector there is little acceptance that the jobs and salaries offered are therefore less desirable to trainees (EG). From the employers' perspective, this lack of recognition presents a barrier to both NTP implementation and Omanisation in general. It was perceived that, in general terms, there is a lack of awareness amongst Omani jobseekers regarding the different job options available (Al Lamki, 1998). Barriers were highlighted by three informants (EC, ED and EI), who all operate within the construction sector. Due to employees working long hours in a harsh and hazardous external environment, there is difficulty in convincing Omani citizens to consider the sector. The barrier is compounded by no financial incentives being available, and the families of young Omanis seeing the work as low status.

Thus, the programme design treats all sectors in a similar way, whilst it is recommended that during policy implementation some appreciation of different treatment is required (McLaughlin, 1987). This employer barrier is claimed to have its roots in the psychological distance between the Ministry and the construction companies, with one informant (EC) who was general manager of a leading construction company feeling that the Ministry was totally disconnected from the real world of construction work, and had failed to communicate properly when complexities or misunderstanding arose. Again, the collaborative element of policy implementation is missing (Friedman and Miles, 2006). What is called for is that Omanisation targets are revised to recognise the availability of jobseekers' preparedness to enter

difficult sectors, with training being managed according to sectorial needs. To ease this barrier, it was felt that the Ministry needed to enhance the image of these sectors, and provide greater awareness of the benefits of working within such industries.

The employers extended their criticisms beyond the Ministry and NTP, to the entire Civil Service, whose overly sympathetic attitude towards workers within the public sector generally was perceived as a barrier, in that it encouraged the divide between the public and private sectors, and instilled a lack of desire on the part of trainees to even contemplate the private sector as an employment destination. The attractiveness of the Civil Service approach to performance appraisal came in for particular criticism (T1, T3, T5 and T6). According to Civil Service Law, performance appraisal is limited to the subjective and emotional judgement of the assessor, rather than the perceived rigorous scientific appraisal of the private sector. However, the employers ignored the cultural element associated with the argument that was highlighted by the Ministry informants.

The source of the public sector preference debate was also attributed to a failing in the country's basic education system (EC, EF and EG), in that it was argued that the environment in which education takes place is staffed by public sector employees, in the form of teachers and others. Here claims emerged of barriers to policy implementation being associated, possibly in a subconscious manner, at an early age. The notion was also presented that for the trainees' parents and grandparents, particularly the older generation, the major source of employment was the public sector, and hence it is still viewed in a more positive light, which is passed on to the children at an early age. One employer considered any change in attitude as follows:

“the biggest challenge is the shared idea within the community either with children or parents about the work in the private sector.” (EB)

The dominant desire to work in the public sector forms a critical barrier to NTP implementation, which has remained unchanged for almost twenty years (Al-Lamki, 2000). As has been outlined, the barrier is partly cultural, with it being observed that social prestige is important for Omanis, and that

traditionally this is not associated with private sector employment. As an Arab country Oman shares, along with neighbouring Middle-Eastern countries, a pre-occupation with individual status, position in society, education, and personal contacts (Wilkins, 2002b), with these ingrained attitudes being seen in the cultural orientation of Omani jobseekers. In addition, religious barriers are present in some sectors, for example, the tourism sector where the handling of, or association with alcohol would prevent followers of Islam from taking certain jobs (Wilkins, 2001). This point refers back to Omanisation targets, and the need to reflect what is culturally acceptable in Arab and Islamic populations. Along with cultural aspects, employers cite philosophical and social issues, arguing that if Omani youth are exposed to aspects of other cultures that are at odds with their own, they may prefer these 'alternative' lifestyles, which may ultimately dilute the Omani culture and traditions. Presented in this form, the cultural barrier of heritage can be viewed as a traditional protectionist stance.

Coupled with the cultural and traditional aspect, employers found the trainees' work ethic to present another barrier to the effective implementation of the NTP. The root is difficult to determine, but it is felt that as many are coerced into joining the private sector they arrive with a negative attitude. Employers felt that discontentment was compounded by seeing others achieve better salaries, longer holidays, and a more comfortable work-life balance in the public sector, which led to perceiving themselves as 'losers' or at least less prosperous. Surprisingly, employers were not blameless, with some accusing other employers of damaging the private sector's image through poor work practice that alienated young employees. Nonetheless, the poor work ethic of many Omani youth was perceived as a barrier to NTP implementation.

Finally, to a certain extent the Ministry was seen to impact on the situation, in that they were perceived as sacrificing the emotional well-being of some jobseekers in order to reduce the unemployment statistics, and effectively forcing them into areas not of their choosing. The extent of the barrier is illustrated by some companies experiencing over 80% turnover in trainees after training (E1).

Key Barriers – Trainees

The trainees provided a rich account of the barriers they perceived as impeding the NTP implementation, and identified four key areas: structure of training model, evaluation practices, preference for expatriate labour, and financial hardship

Rather than the structure of training, it was the failing within the structure that represented the barrier. From a personal perspective, the inconsistent process associated with recruitment was felt to be damaging. The trainees reported that an absence of interviews, for some trainees, created a feeling of unusualness, in that they were not being treated equally. Further, policy-makers need to be aware that when cohorts gather together experiences are shared and such inconsistencies create an atmosphere of mistrust. One perceived negative side of the interviews, along with the initial course meeting, was some trainees receiving false information, either as a direct mistruth or in the form of incentives that were not realised later. In this situation the employer or training provider are in a position of coercive power (Ravens, 1992), and thus some trainees joined courses in which they had little interest. However, the impact can arise later in the form of disappointment and demotivation in the actual job and circumstances. The trainees spoke with friends on apprenticeships and other programmes and were able to compare their experiences. One area that differed and was raised as a barrier referred to the lack of formal evaluation. In particular, trainees felt aggrieved at the lack of evaluation once they were in the workplace, and felt let down by the Ministry, as a follow-up evaluation would have exposed some of the malpractices that the trainees' had experienced.

“the real problem happened after finishing the training and after starting work at the company. Unfortunately lack of follow-up by the MoM is the main problem.” (T1 and T4)

Indeed, whilst the training providers were seen to uphold their part of the tripartite contract, certain employers were not as honourable. In this respect, the trainees held the Ministry responsible for their negligence, in allowing poor treatment and the uncomfortable situations they experienced in the

workplace. As well as monitoring the employers, an evaluation process can provide valuable formative and summative feedback (Bramley, 1996), which the trainees claimed would have been welcome.

Again, in speaking with friends, the trainees were aware that a formal training model was missing from the NTP programme, which contributed to the above barriers. The trainees felt that a model that took into account all aspects of the activity, such as the role and planning of training, its design, implementation, and evaluation (Clarke and Lehaney, 2000), would have reduced some of the barriers highlighted.

The second area that caused concern referred to the employers' general preference to employ expatriate workers. This point has been raised before, but here it is presented from the important lived experience perspective of the trainee. Where employer preference was strong, it left employees feeling discriminated against because they were of Omani origin. Whilst for some the discrimination was a 'felt' experience, for others the different treatment of Omani and foreign workers was based on direct actions. In one respect the Omani trainees were better off as their pay was controlled by the Minimum Wage Regulation which guaranteed 350 Omani Rial (£664) per month. However, the Regulation only applies to Omanis, with employers allowed to negotiate payment with foreign workers who generally are prepared to work for much less than the Omani minimum wage.

"the difference between the salary paid to the expatriate compared to the higher one given to the Omani, is the core of the challenges." (T5)

From an economic point, it is understandable for employers to recruit the lowest cost labour; however, there is the additional attitude that Omani youth were considered inferior workers by some employers. One employer (EB), who had worked in the same company for the last 23 years, argued strongly that most Omanis were unwilling to work in the private sector, just seeing it as a transit point. The constituency of the perceived barrier varied in relation to the nationality of the employer. More favourable conditions were reported when the employer was an Omani, with a harsher reality being present when the employer was an expatriate.

“the companies owned by Omanis are much more welcoming to Omanis, and provide the required development and incentives to retain them.” (T1)

These contradictions are not unexpected, since in any policy implementation conflict can occur between the different stakeholders (Abas and Wee, 2015), it is just that the lack of implementation structure (Ryan, 1996) is impacting negatively on trainees, who are at the forefront of the Omanisation initiative.

One solution would be to harmonise all wage minimums, so there is no difference between foreign and Omani worker pay. However, the trainees perceived a number of scenarios. Employing an expatriate worker would cost the employer more and the worker would welcome the rise; however, given the work ethic argument, employers would be likely to continue employing expatriates. Then, if a raft of jobs did appear due to an expatriate exodus, it is unlikely that there would be sufficient skilled Omani labour to fill the void. That said, if there were many more Omanis working in the private sector, the stigma of such work may disappear gradually, as the private sector labour market would be almost totally localised.

The final key challenge that trainees faced refers to an economic barrier. Many NTP projects are concentrated in the capital and other main cities, which incur higher living costs for those trainees whose home is in the country's interior, such as T3:

“most of the companies are in the capital. Hence, the life expenses compared to the income do not match. We end up paying more than sixty per cent of our salary for the fixed life expenses.” (T3)

The NTP policy does not differentiate between jobseekers whose home is a few metres from the training location, and those whose home and family are many hundreds of kilometres away. This is perceived as arbitrary and unjust. Nonetheless, given the failings of the programme already outlined, and that the trainee will be away from their family and home, it is clear that using 60% of income on 'life expenses' requires strong commitment from trainees, of which not all were able to give.

Key Barriers – Training Providers

Within our last stakeholder group three key barriers were perceived: Ministry procedures, the lack of 'desire' for trainees to join the NTP, and employer behaviour.

The training providers deal directly with the Ministry, declaring that the procedures and bureaucracy formed a genuine obstacle as they were both exhaustive and time-consuming, which impacted on their ability to provide an effective service.

“between interviews and the start of the training might exceed six months on some occasions.” (TP7)

Whilst the Ministry acknowledges that the process is long, it justified this by explaining the need to complete numerous steps, which include securing finances and completing the legal formalities. From a commercial perspective, the training providers queried the delay which would be seen as unacceptable in the private sector, particularly given the ability to carry out transactions electronically. It may be that the observations of many informants who reported the lax attitude in the public sector had introduced an element of inefficiency into the process.

Within the bureaucratic framework, training providers felt that a lack of involvement in planning created barriers to implementation. They felt unfair criticism had been made toward them with regards to the course content, for not establishing a match between curricula and skills required in the jobs, although they pointed out that their involvement was not always sought by the Ministry. The MoM flatly denied this, claiming that the course content was, in collaboration with employers, the training providers' responsibility. It may be that the Ministry is under-resourced (TP1), or ill-equipped to undertake manpower planning, with the accuracy of the employee database being questioned; nonetheless, the delays impacted on the training providers' ability to implement the NTP policy.

In line with the Ministry and employers, the individual motives of trainees caused concern. However, the training providers took a different perspective, arguing that the lack of desire related to joining the actual private sector,

rather than a direct criticism of the training programme, which provided them with specific skills and did not diminish from the quality of the training. The Ministry were seen as complicit in supporting this move, as in 2006 the Government allowed employees to move from the private to the public sector. Given the small size of the Omani labour market, it was acknowledged that the movement of expertise between the two sectors would enhance the performance of both sectors. That said, and as has been outlined before, the predominant aim of jobseekers is to work in the public sector.

“the dominant culture in Oman among the young jobseekers is to work in the government, and this trend is stimulated by friends and families.” (TP7)

Whilst the phenomenon is historical (Al-Lamki, 1998), the training providers who worked closely with the trainees for a year felt that the reasons for disillusionment lay with their actual experience of the private sector. They also argued that as the jobseekers were between the ages of 16 and 20 years old, their life experiences had not yet fully formed, with their unwillingness to join the private sector being put down to an idealistic aspiration (TP5). They have a certain idealised vision and are disappointed when the reality does not match this, so they fall back into just claiming the Government training allowance.

In a circle of blame, the training providers see the employers' behaviour as a significant challenge to NTP implementation, especially their compulsion to achieve Omanisation percentages, rather than internalising the true ideal of developing young Omani nationals.

“some companies don't care about trainees and their future development, they care about Omanisation achievement only.” (TP5)

The argument of employer misuse of trainees has been cited before, with them being given jobs other than those stipulated in the tripartite contracts; indeed, TP5, MoM4, MoM7, T1 and T4 all referred to this practice.

In the last section, important areas which relate to those barriers that are likely to impede NTP implication have been discussed. Each of the key

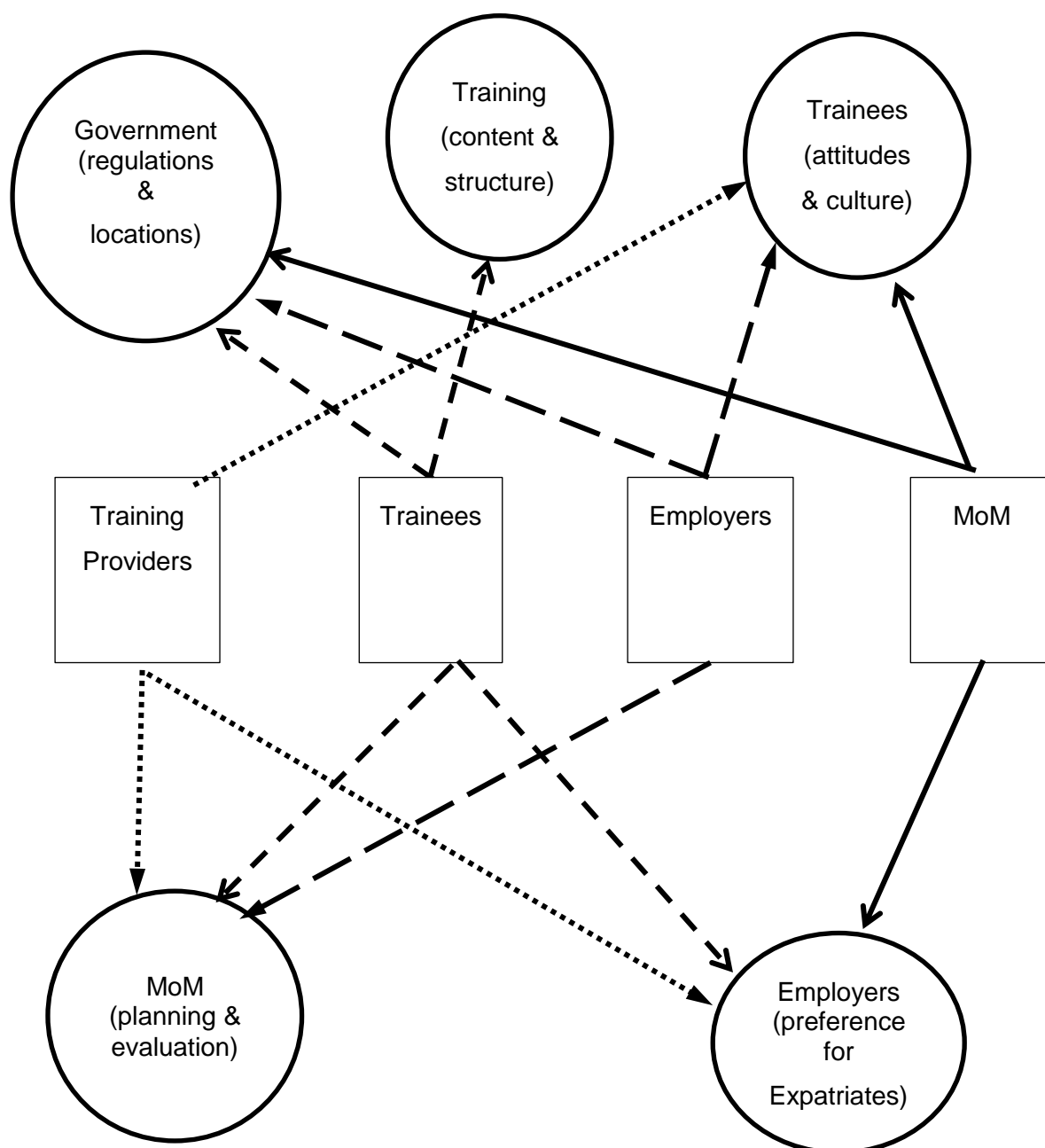
stakeholder groups identified barriers that they perceived to be specific to their situation, with these being illuminated in an overarching schematic presentation in Figure 8. 2. As with the previous summary figure, associated with factors, the figure, in drawing from the discussion and the summaries that followed each of the findings chapters, illuminates the unique interrelations associated with public policy implementation. To aid clarity, different hashed lines are used to identify each of the four stakeholder groups', with the arrows showing the pathway to the barriers that they perceived as being key to policy implementation.

Within the overarching concept of public policy implementation and with the National Training Programme of Oman being perceived through the stakeholders' eyes; five areas emerged as key barriers. Four barriers emerged as with three citations each; the Ministry's planning and evaluation; trainee attitudes' and culture; employers preference for expatriates and Government regulations and locations. First, the Ministry's failure to plan and evaluate effectively, was perceived as a key barrier by all stakeholder groups, apart from the Ministry itself. Following a similar pattern, the trainee attitudes' and culture, particular in relation to their preference for public sector work, were identified as a key barrier by the Ministry, the employers and training providers. For both of these perceived barriers it is apparent that an element of self-preservation is evident, in that the blame for certain failings was being attributed to others.

Government regulations and locations were perceived as a key barrier by the employees, trainees and the Ministry, although here an element of self-blame is apparent, with the Ministry officials accepting that the regulations were somewhat bureaucratic in nature. The fourth key barrier identified relates to the employers' preference for expatriate workers, which was cited by trainees, training providers and the Ministry. However, whilst the Ministry acknowledged that some employers engaged in less of the spirit of the Omanisation, there was no apparent action to address the issue, hence it remained as a barrier. Finally, the training content and structure was only identified as a barrier to policy implementation by the trainee stakeholder group. Again, the self-interest aspect emerged, with a particular element

being related to the inappropriateness of some of the training to the job for which they were destined.

Figure 8. 2 Barriers impeding NTP implementation



Summary

In discussing the implementation of the NTP programme a number of areas have been visited. The two research questions provided the framework for discussions, and within them the different perspectives on implementation from each of the four key stakeholder groups were assessed. As is common within public policy implementation theory, a number of differences and

contradictions were identified and discussed, as were the areas of agreement. It is apparent that the Omani culture has influenced the policy implementation and at times produced negative results. Of particular note is the common consensus that young Omani's prefer public sector work, which is thought to align both to cultural factors and the work ethic of trainees with a preference towards what they perceived as a less demanding and more secure working context. There is also evidence that the Government has perpetuated the situation by lifting restrictions on the movement between the private and public sectors. The discussion also considered the practice of employers implementing the policy in a way that exploited the Omanisation programme, by using it to gain the employment of expatriate workers, with Government again choosing not to evaluate the workplace aspect of the programme. Within the various factors and barriers, it has become clear that the trainees, as the ones with the least power in the implementation process, have become the victims of Omanisation, which is enacted through the NTP. Within the chapter, two schematic figures have also been presented that summarise the key discussion, and so the focus now moves on to the final concluding chapter.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter draws the thesis to a close. An overview of the key themes taken from the discussion first provides an outline of the key points that relate to the research questions. Following on, the wider area associated with the concepts of public policy implementation are presented, with the discussion taking in the wider view of the overall aim. Next, the contributions to theoretical knowledge are presented, with these including public policy implementation theory and the conceptual elements of using stakeholder theory for evaluation. Moving on, the limitations of the study are presented, after which the implications for further research are outlined. The chapter finishes with concluding comments, which provide a final contextual perspective.

9.1 Key Areas Associated with the Implementation

In the previous chapter, the factors and barriers to policy implementation were discussed from each stakeholder group perspective. In this concluding section the key factors associated with the barriers are reviewed, by synthesising the discussion under key themes.

Ministry planning and evaluation

Manpower planning drew criticism from a range of stakeholders, with this being related to a lack of clear operational objectives, and the MoM's failure to evaluate the final implementation of the programme in the workplace. Claims of a lack of direct involvement in planning, particularly from the for-profit private sector, led to reporting lines and responsibilities being unclear. In itself, the overall aim provided a clear vision; however, the failure to provide detailed clarity was resented by the private sector, who felt that at times they were operating 'blind' in the NTP process. The situation is not dissimilar to previous studies that have emphasised the importance of clarity in implementing policy, and where clear objectives have been identified as a factor in achieving desired policy outcomes (McLaughlin, 1987; Ryan, 1996;

Abas and Wee, 2015). This factor was stressed by the informants, even those working for the Ministry.

The Ministry operated in a top-down manner (Hood, 1976), which on occasions resulted in key private sector operators being excluded from the manpower planning process. It is apparent that the Ministry favoured more of a command and control approach, which maintained the focus on a national, rather than an operational level, in the pursuit of Omanisation targets. The disproportional degree of power that the Ministry held over the private sector enterprises was generally accepted, as rather than working in the true sense of partnership the private sector was dependent on the Government for their economic stability, and existence. Thus, whilst the Ministry held the authority over implementation, the private sector provided the expertise (Colebatch, 1996).

With respect to manpower planning, a degree of ineffectiveness was apparent in the systems the Ministry used, with astonishment being expressed at the lack of modernisation, the absence of electronic communication, and the persistence with paper-based bureaucratic processes that do not mirror the modes of working in modern private sector organisations. Further, policy implementation was actioned through bureaucratic means. Indeed, the implementation structure formed a barrier to effective policy implementation, along with the determination to provide quality training, with both having been highlighted previously (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981; McLaughlin, 1987; Murphy and Garavan, 2009; Levin and Ferman, 1986; Hill, 2012). Thus, the lack of operational clarity associated with the NTP, along with the poor level of consultation and involvement in planning, emerged as a key barrier to policy implementation.

Whilst a policy needs to remain flexible and respond to the dynamic work environment (Cho and McLean, 2004), it is the objectives that provide the purpose, scope, and methodologies, including the evaluation framework (Bamberger et al., 2012). In this respect the current study found that the limited evaluation undertaken of the programme impacted negatively on its implication. Indeed, understanding the goal and objectives of a policy is essential to that policy's implementation (Elmore, 1985), and yet the

operational element of these was unclear. Whilst policy implementation is in itself a stage of evaluation (Prokhovnik, 2005), and a 'tick sheet' approach was used, the assessment of a transfer of learning failed to exist, with this creating a strong barrier to implementation. The testing of any causal theory is difficult (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981); however, the loop needs to be closed if a greater understanding is to be achieved.

It is not always clear who should conduct the evaluation, with this confusion being equally apparent in the NTP implementation, and causing both confusion and frustration. In searching for reasons for this barrier to exist, a suggestion was that it would become self-defeating for the Ministry, whilst raising questions where they would prefer not to know the answers. This process of senior officials not wishing to evaluate policy implication because it may damage their 'story' or produce unwanted information has been highlighted previously (Dawson, 1995). In addition, any evaluation of the NTP implementation may equally provide unwelcome information for the private sector enterprises, which could damage their business financially. However, whilst the less rigorous evaluation techniques are stated as a barrier to NTP implementation, it may be that the reality of such a move might be unwelcome by all parties, except possibly the trainees themselves.

Training Content

Policy implementation was equally hampered by the content of the various courses. The broad aim of the NTP was to place young Omanis in the workplace, yet to gain buy-in from employers the skills provided by the training needed to match the requirements of the job. Various inter-partner criticisms were raised, with blame being answered with counter-claims, but the mismatch between training content and the real world of work remained a major barrier to implementation. Unsurprisingly, the trainees raised this point, because as well as feeling that they had learned inappropriate skills, they felt inadequate and unwanted by their employer. Whilst it is apparent that some young Omanis were not able to demonstrate the possession of those skills demanded by their companies, they had obtained basic skills that could contribute to general nation-building, albeit not in their placement organisation. In resolving this barrier, which is key to the Omanisation

initiative, the various stakeholders would be advised to adopt a 'best fit' approach (Murphy and Garavan, 2009), rather than what appears to be one that more closely aligns to 'best practice'.

Employer Preference for Expatriate Workers

The general preference by employers to recruit expatriate workers was perceived as a barrier to policy implementation by all stakeholder groups, other than the employers themselves. Indeed, in their economic environment, private sector employers operate an input–output model, with a view to maximising profit (Pülzl and Treib, 2007). Thus, they selected talent that best fitted their particular business, which was often represented by overseas workers whose work ethic and tolerance of difficult conditions for low pay was recognised. This employer preference is not only damaging to the NTP, but impacts negatively on the wider national picture of unemployment. Considerable criticism was raised that that employers were playing the 'game' (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000) by entering the NTP scheme, with the ulterior motive being to gain access to expatriate work permits; in effect conforming to the letter, rather than the spirit of the scheme. To a certain extent, it appears that the Government may have colluded in this, particularly as employers and the Government are bound together in 'mutual dependency' (ibid) to achieve Omanisation. Whatever the reality is, it is the trainees who have become collateral damage. Indeed, some reported that they felt discriminated against in their own country, because of their nationality.

Trainee Attitudes

Examining the motive of stakeholders leads to a greater understanding of policy implementation (Deibert et al., 2006), with the focus on the current study being the trainees. Trainees are the 'product' that progresses through the NTP system, and thus they are valuable. Actors have various goals and motives (Lipsky, 2010), but in exploring the trainees' perceptions, major barriers to implementation emerged. The specific criticism related to many trainees, and indeed Omani youth, declaring a preference for public sector work. The process of attitude is linked to basic socio-cultural values (Hill and

Hupe, 2003), and the preference for Government jobs in Arab states has been highlighted previously (Al-Sayyed, 2014). The current issue is that such preferences are damaging the NTP, which aims to place young Omanis in private sector work. This lack of trainee motivation to join the NTP and the private sector in general has been confirmed previously (Al-Lamki, 1998; Al-Hamadi et al., 2007; Ayman et al., 2007). The consensus within the current study supports previous findings, with the other stakeholder groups confirming this lack of willingness to join the private sector.

Employees' negative attitudes toward the private sector evidenced themselves in a lack of interest in enrolling on the programme, withdrawal from the training part way through, and in turnover once in employment. This is particularly worrying as it is the experience of the working conditions that is responsible for the disillusionment. It is important not to over-generalise the situation, as there are Omanis working in the oil and gas sector who are content with their placement. Conversely, the retail and tourism sectors with their less prestigious image and comparatively poor pay and conditions feel the pro-public sector preference the strongest.

The use of an inducement to increase the level of contribution to a particular policy has previously brought mild acceptance (Levin and Ferman, 1986; Burby, 2003), although in the current case the public sector preference remained strong. The general objections to private sector work stem predominately from societal pressure, that perceived public sector jobs to be more prestigious, and which give the individual higher status. In addition, the less strenuous working conditions and unrivalled benefits available to Government workers added to the attraction. The situation, however, may also be an unexpected outcome of the Government relaxation of the transfer of employees between private and public sectors, in 2006.

In presenting the barriers from the implementation process, this is not to say that benefits did not accrue. Indeed, many Omanis gained skills that were previously not available to them, and which rendered them more

employable, if they were given the opportunity. Having drawn together the key barriers, attention next turns to the key points surrounding the more theoretical aspects of policy implementation.

9.2 Public Policy Implementation

Within the stakeholder perceptions, the NTP formed the case under investigation; however, the primary theoretical focus was on policy implementation in an Omani context. This returns to the research aim that drove the study, and which is now concluded in a wider context.

The aim of the current study was to investigate the implementation of the NTP, through the perceptual voices of the four key stakeholder groups.

Within the broad umbrella of public policy implementation theory a variety of approaches can be found. Most apparent in the Ministry's framework was the top-down approach, which emerged as a concept in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Sabatier, 1986). As is apparent in the current case, the approach distinguishes the formulation and implementation of policies, and adopts a clear command and control strategy (Hill and Hupe, 2008). The advocated process of devising clear and specific goals that can be readily applied was not present, and although the placing of implementation responsibility in an agency was apparent, it is questionable as to how 'sympathetic' they were to the policy's goals (Matland, 1995). In addition, the authoritative language used by the Ministry, particularly at the executive level, reinforced the top-down nature of the stakeholder relationships. Whilst the bottom-up approach (Lipsky, 2010) was not apparent, a mix of mechanisms was used to coerce and secure the cooperation and compliance of employers to implement this policy. In the case of the NTP, the remunerative policy was used solely for employers involved in the NTP (Levin and Ferman, 1986), with incentives being offered in the form of permits to hire expatriate workers. However, the root of the coercive mechanisms was found in the Omanisation policy, which obliged companies to comply with the scheme.

Inherent in the top-down theory of implementation is the concept of power (Matland, 1995), with the unequal distribution of power being seen to lie

within the Ministry. This is illustrated when a lack of commitment to the NTP led to one company being banned from recruiting expatriate labour; hence, compliance was found to be an important issue. The element of control is present in Contextual Interaction Theory (CIT), which resides within policy implementation theory in that it addresses the dynamic processes that drive the social interaction (Bressers, 2007). Through this theory, the outcomes of the processes are seen to go beyond inputs, to take account of the actors' characteristics, and in particular their objectives, information and power (Bressers et al., 2000). Thus, the theory argues that the characteristics of the stakeholders shape the process of implementation, although this is not the case of the NTP. The reason lay in the 'control' element, whereby the top-down environment tended to suppress the other stakeholders' characteristics. Control is also present in policy network theory, where one element concerns power-dependency (Rhodes, 2008), which recognises that different actors within the network depend on the resources of each other to achieve their goals. A form of mutual dependency (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000) existed, wherein each group of actors needed to implement the NTP, and to a certain extent 'survive'. Whilst differential control was apparent in the NTP, and particularly the Ministry, there was also evidence that the private sector stakeholders, and to a lesser extent the trainees, employed strategies that 'played the game' (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000:431) to assist in the exchange process.

Policy implementation equally concerns network theory, which proposes the need for a synergetic model to assess the amount of collaboration among the various actors in the process (Weiss et al., 2002). Here, the actors' knowledge, skills, and thoughts are combined in a partnership synergy to assist with an effective process. The conceptual differences to network theory have been seen to present geographical differences with, for example, Anglo-Saxon scholars viewing the process as a model of relations between the state and society (Börzel, 1998). The theory concerns how actors in a policy network share common interests within a non-hierarchical framework of interdependency, along with the need to co-operate in order to achieve a common goal. In particular, the policy needs to define the accountability of the various actors, and the extent to which government

might compromise on its traditional hierarchical position for the good of the policy implementation (DeGroff and Cargo, 2009). In the NTP case, the collaboration and consultation between actors displayed an element of control that served to disrupt the process. Nonetheless, in line with many other government organisations around the world, the control element of top-down approaches is not unusual in public services (Smith and Larimer, 2016). Indeed, in returning to the top-down approach, in the case of the NTP the four stakeholder groups were positioned in different quadrants on Matland's (1995) ambiguity–conflict matrix. They had different objectives, the bottom lines of which were articulated as either reducing unemployment or making profit.

There is a noticeable absence of network theory in the Arab context, with the current study of the NTP in Oman adding to a gap in the literature. The study, in addressing interactions between key stakeholder groups illustrates a partnership, which is referred to in Arabic as '*Sharaka*', whereby the Government and private sector collaborate within a network relationship, characterised by interdependency. Despite the imbalance of power, a higher goal of national development exists between the stakeholder groups, although not in equal proportions.

Summary

These qualitative observations, and the findings surrounding the implementation of policy expand the literature in this field which, when viewed from the network perspective, can be very hard to guarantee because of the limited support from involved actors (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). Disregarding the interests of various actors will lead to non-compliance, high monitoring and enforcement costs, and societal resistance (Zheng et al., 2010). However, in the case of the NTP, there is no real resistance to the policy or to its implementation, as there is evidence that all stakeholders show compliance with the policy but that there are intervening factors that limit their efforts to engage in policy implementation.

9.3 Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge

It is considered that a particular issue with insider research relates to showing explicit links between theory and data, with the process essentially relating to 'sense-making', or the explanation of theory, rather than testing it as per the positivist domain (Trowler, 2012). Nonetheless, in viewing human behaviour through a microscope, as opposed to a telescope, it is possible to make connections between insider research and theoretical concepts. In this way the current study extends knowledge in a number of fields, with the most noteworthy being in the area of policy implementation theory, in that the study identified and analysed the NTP policy implementation. In addition to the implementation of public policy, stakeholder theory was used as a tool to gather the perceptions of key actors. Finally, broad concepts surrounding HRD were investigated and the illumination of various elements makes a contribution to knowledge, while with the current study being conducted in Oman, an additional contextual factor is added to the contributions.

Public policy implementation theory contains a collection of theories, with the current situation in Oman being explored in relation to the country's NTP. As part of Omanisation, in the nationwide initiative to up-skill Omani youth with a view to replacing expatriate workers, different aspects of the theory were illustrated, particularly the varying perceptions on implementation. Specifically, knowledge was added and a gap in the literature addressed for Public Policy Implementation (Winter, 2006), Network Theory (Wachhaus, 2004), and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Freeman, 2002).

Although outside its original focus, stakeholder theory has been used for the last ten years (Phillips and Phillips, 2016). The current study employed the theory as a method with which to gather the perceptions of the key actors. In this way, a contribution is made to stakeholder–evaluation theory, in that its use has been expanded (Birckmayer and Weiss, 2016).

Although the National Training Policy of Oman provided the case for the investigation, rather than the direct means of study, the findings make a contribution to the literature on HRD, and particularly the national versions of this. In investigating perceptions of the NTP and elements of the HRD

process, including evaluation and course content, these are able to contribute to the field. As with other areas, the setting of the study in a Middle-Eastern context adds a further dimension to the HRD literature and addresses a previously vacant gap.

9.4 Contribution to the Practice Agenda

The primary aim of the current study was to explore and build on, the theoretical concepts surrounding public policy implementation. However, during the study process, a number of contributions to practice emerged, in relation to National Training Programme and these are now shared, from the perspective of an insider researcher. Whilst these indicators for practice are drawn from the stakeholder groups' perceptions, caution needs to be exercised in viewing these in a generalizable way that goes beyond the qualitative findings of the current study.

In assessing the implementation of Oman's National Training Programme the area for practices are limited to two key areas; the clarity of terms, including evaluation, and the role of government. These areas, which are drawn from the barriers identified in the current study, suggest, although not in a generalised way, areas that may provide indicators for the wider practice of NHRD programmes. It is, however, important to note that a National HRD programme needs to adopt a 'best fit' approach, rather than a 'best practice' perspective, and one that is sensitive to institutional and cultural characteristics (Murphy and Garavan, 2009).

Aims and Objectives

Various requirements for NHRD objectives have been developed specifically for developing economies, with a particular focus being that NHRD needs to create a balance in relation to political, economic, social and educational opportunities (Lynham and Cunningham, 2006). In this respect, whilst the principal objective of Oman's National Training

Programme is to train Omani jobseekers for employment in the private sector, this aim had not been codified in a discrete policy document. Yet, one of the most common factors that corresponds with previous studies is the importance of policy clarity prior to its implementation. Indeed, in terms of practice, the clearer the policy goals, the greater likelihood of the desired outcomes being achieved (McLaughlin, 1987; Abas and Wee, 2015). Further, according to Elmore (1985), the successful governance of policy implementation requires clarity in terms of the policy's context. Consequently, the current study has highlighted the need for a NHRD programme to be designed as a discrete and robust policy, with clear aims and objectives, and a clear description of the roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder group. In addition, the identification of a NHRD programme is likely to benefit from involving different stakeholders, including Labour Unions, particularly with an Arab context (Al-Sayyed, 2014), as these parties can encourage greater goal commitment and reduce the chance of partisan clashes emerging (Provan and Lemaire, 2012).

Particular attention needs to be paid to the programme's title, with a negative example being Oman's National Training Programme, which, whilst giving the appearance that it concerns training, it is, in practice, a tool to facilitate Omanisation and promote national skills development.

Evaluation

With respect to clarity, a particular challenge is to balance the rigidity of the objectives with a degree of exactitude that allows a methodical evaluation of the process (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981). The lack of consensus amongst stakeholders in the current study as to how evaluation should be achieved is not unusual (Hill, 2012). Nonetheless, in terms of practice, it is difficult to evaluate a programme without clarity of terms, especially when diverse perceptions from the public and private sector are involved (Hjern and Porter, 1981). However, if the policy is properly conceived with clear goals and objectives, then the conflict can become manageable, with confusion over stakeholder responsibilities, begin reduced. Further, the importance of establishing the extent to which a programme has been

implemented as planned is considered crucial (Ryan, 1996). The practice of evaluation is particularly important when the goal is an effective use of resources, or in justifying expenditure on training (Elwood, et. al., 2012). The evaluation element was broadly absent from the current case study, although the absence of any declared objectives would have made any such evaluation a challenging undertaking.

Role of Government

The World Bank argues that Vocational Education and Training in developing economies is best left to individuals, enterprises and private sector training institutions, with government interventions being kept to a minimum (Bennell and Segerstrom, 1998). Various governments, such as South Korea and China (Yang et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2009; Alagaraja and Wang, 2012), underpin their NHRD initiatives by appointing a Minister to oversee NHRD policy, with the post-holders playing a key role in establishing HRD policies, and their related strategies.

One clear challenge for developing economies is to balance the process of satisfying the demand for national skilled workers, by supplying jobseekers that are willing to acquire those skills, with many countries around the world attempting to balance this particular equation (Stewart et al., 2013). The current case study adopted a public-private partnership approach, through which the Ministry of Manpower facilitated the implementation of the Omanisation scheme. In practice, the primary role of the Ministry was to provide the infrastructure to conduct the required training and yet, to the detriment of the training courses and indeed, the employability of trainees, they intervened directly in the course design. Thus, the roles of various stakeholders needs clarification, which follows on from the lack of clarity discussed in the first section. Indeed, even when the government takes on the role of sponsoring training, which is to be applauded, there is, in practice, a need for a more structured implementation process to operationalise the training.

Flexibility

One particular challenging area relates to the level of rigidity that exists in the NHRD objectives. The training model needs to be part of a dynamic process, yet still incorporate important timelines and a clearly defined action plan. In addition, a NHRD programme needs to be able to respond quickly to emergent needs and not mimic other public policies that may be ineffective. Barriers to this challenge are often bound up with bureaucracy, centralisation and a top-down approach of policy implementation, where senior management have a tendency to dictate (Sabatier, 1986), and adopt a statutory language of command and control (Hill and Hupe, 2008).

Manpower Planning

Whilst global and economic change makes it challenging to establish high levels of accuracy in forecasting the manpower requirements (CEDFOP, 2010; Khoong, 1996), it is the role of government to forecast the skills and quantities needed to meet economic needs (Stewart et al., 2013). This aspect was broadly absent in the current study and yet it is at the heart of practice and operationalising a NHRD policy. The endeavour to address manpower planning to ensure that a NHRD programme produces skilled workers in the quantities and in particular occupational areas that are required by employers is an important element of policy. In terms of practice, the challenge is to match the required manpower with the capacity of the NHRD policy to produce this, so that the right quality and quantity of manpower can be supplied both to the private and public sectors.

Training Design

Another aspect that relates to practice is determining the training design associated with NHRD programmes, especially in relation to role responsibilities. This importance of training design has been highlighted previously (Levin and Ferman, 1986; McLaughlin, 1987; Murphy and Garavan, 2009) and the stakeholders in the current study were critical of the Ministry for not playing a more active role, particularly in the area of evaluation. An appropriate way forward would be to devise an evaluation model that defines the role and responsibilities of the policy's stakeholders, and which is founded on an effective manpower planning exercise and clear policy objectives.

Certification

Another issue that concerns practice refers to an absence of a 'credential' system, with certification being perceived to be of value (Stewart et al., 2013). Indeed, in the current study the skills acquired on the National Training Programme, did not receive proper accreditation within the country's overall vocational qualification system. In this way, the trainees' level of competency can go unrecognised within the national qualifications framework, even when a standardised framework exists. Further, this lack of formal recognition can present a barrier to the foundation of a nation's trained and skilled manpower, and demotivate those trainees' already on programmes, whilst equally acting as a possibly barrier to initial participation.

In summary, a lack of clarity and a disregard for the interests of various stakeholders can lead to the practice of non-compliance and societal resistance (Zheng et al., 2010). In the Omani NHRD case, there was little resistance to the NTP policy or to its implementation, although as is the case in many relationships, in terms of practice, each stakeholder found sufficient in the arrangement to maintain their continued involvement, although within this situation of mutual dependency, some were perceived to gain more than others.

9.5 Limitations

Research studies invariably have limitations, with this being expected to some extent, since studies are conducted within a particular framework that, of necessity, ignores other areas of potential interest. In identifying the limitations of the current thesis, the aim was to illustrate potential pitfalls, and explain how these were addressed.

Being an insider researcher, and in a position of authority within the Ministry, an awareness was held that the key stakeholders, who were to a large extent dependent on the Ministry for financial stability, may be hesitant about an enquiry that focused on 'success' or 'effectiveness'. It was felt that

these areas would bring forth fabrications or a refusal to engage; hence, the researcher was careful not to introduce them into the study.

One area of concern related to the paucity of literature that existed on policy implementation in a Middle-Eastern context. Studies on Western cultures in Europe, the UK and the USA exist, as do Eastern studies involving China, Malaysia and Singapore. Whilst these provided contextual outlines, the Arab focus was predominately absent. Although this paucity limited the initial search and concept building, ultimately it was not of great significance as the qualitative approach eventually adopted sought to understand the issues in depth, and from the actor's perspective rather than making any external comparisons.

Whilst not a limitation of the study in itself, the use of a qualitative strategy may limit the impact it has in Oman. Omani culture, especially in the public sector, is symbolised by hypothesis testing and statistics, with other forms of research being valued less. Nonetheless, an exploratory stance was adopted to gain a greater in-depth understanding of the issues involved, with this being done in the realisation that the outcomes would not be generalisable, as the Omani culture might expect.

A further potential limitation relates to a second issue surrounding the insider researcher. the researcher had worked for the MoM for twelve years, and been involved with elements of the NTP, including two key stakeholders: the employers and training providers. Both of these actor groups are commercial in nature, and to a certain extent are dependent on the Ministry for ongoing income; thus, some of the questions posed by the researcher might have been perceived as sensitive. At times, it was felt that the sensitivity tempered the responses of both the training providers and employers, and so as not to over-antagonise the situation, answers were sometimes guarded, especially with the employers. However, whilst the employers' frustration may have been greater than what they expressed, it was taken as their 'story' and truth.

9.6 Implications for Further Research

Building on the current research and projecting forward, there are a number of areas that would provide fruitful research, with these remaining predominately in the Middle-Eastern context.

Having explored policy implementation through the qualitative method, which provided insights into the network of actors associated with the NTP, a raft of studies could further explore some of the findings in a quantitative form, which would prove beneficial in determining the national picture, and which aligns more with Omani culture. Such studies would provide opportunities for further qualitative studies that would take a more in-depth look at key issues, with a particular area of interest being to conduct exit interviews with those trainees who departed the Programme early.

The current study highlighted the Omani predisposition to avoid private sector work or certain occupations, due to cultural and/or religious reasons. A logical extension would be a study that focuses on those Omani citizens who have secured work in the hard-to-recruit sectors, to be undertaken using an ethnographic approach that captures their experience as to how they adjust to these 'low prestige' jobs.

Finally, it is recommended that parallel research is undertaken into other public policies in Oman; particularly those that involve public–private partnerships. A similar methodology and approach using template analysis is recommended, as it would be fruitful to understand the perceptions held by key stakeholder groups.

Concluding Comments

This chapter has drawn together the primary themes that emerged from the study, and in this final section some overarching comments are provided, which consolidate the contextual element.

As a small developing country wishing to build a modern territory, at the outset the Sultanate of Oman had little option but to welcome expatriate workers. This was in keeping with neighbouring states, and other countries

that were emerging from colonialism. As the country developed, the negative side of foreign workers emerged, with local people feeling undervalued, and so a programme of localisation of labour commenced. However, twenty-one years of Omanisation has failed to equip Omani nationals with the required skills to compete with the ever-increasing number of expatriate workers. Indeed, statistics show an increase in expatriate numbers to represent half of all Omani inhabitants (NCSI, 2016). In bold terms, the various initiatives to Omanise the private sector workforce, of which the NTP is one, have in many ways failed.

That said, the Programme's policy addressed the growing unemployment crisis among Omani youth, and has without doubt upskilled the Omani youth and increased their presence in the private sector; thus meeting the requirements of some private sector employees.

A pertinent question relates to the lack of Ministry enthusiasm for monitoring or evaluating the key post-training aspect of the NTP, particularly given the large financial investment made by the Government. Certainly, a rigorous evaluation by the Ministry would have revealed issues of employer malpractice, or at least those not following the Omanisation vision in the spirit of the initiative. It may be that the two key actors in the policy network – the Ministry and employers – were prepared to tolerate this situation in order to achieve their own interests: the Ministry in achieving its 'paper' targets for Omanisation, and the employers having a route to valuable expatriate work permits.

As the third actors in the tripartite policy, the trainees were seen to be seduced by the cultural notion that society gave higher status to public sector workers than their colleagues in the private sector. Whilst it may be the case that public sector aspirations reduced their commitment to the NTP, it was apparent that many, undeservedly, came to represent the collateral damage that surrounded the failings of the programme; at least this is how many perceived it to be.

In explaining the concepts associated with the implementation of national policy, there was no intention for the current research to contribute directly

to the national development of people in the Sultanate of Oman. Nonetheless, it is hoped that by illuminating certain perceived barriers to implementation, or even just through undertaking this study, an awareness is raised that might stimulate discussion amongst policy holders.

Bibliography

Abas, M. A. & Wee, S. T. 2015. A Review of the Factors that Influence the Good Governance Practices: An Insight towards Sustainable Solid Waste Management. *International Journal of Conceptions on Management and Social Sciences*, 3(2), pp. 1-7.

Aguinis, H. & Kraiger, K. 2009. Benefits of training and development for individuals and teams, organizations, and society. *Annual Review Psychology*, 60(74), pp. 451-476.

Al-Dosary, A. S. & Rahman, S. M. 2005. Saudization (Localization) – A critical review. *Human Resource Development International*, 8(4), pp. 495-502.

Al-Hamadi, A. B. & Budhwar, P. 2006. Human Resource Management in Oman. In: Budhwar, P. & Mellahi, K. (eds.) *Managing Human Resource in the Middle-East*. UK: Global HRM, Routledge, Abingdon. pp. 40-58.

Al-Hamadi, A. B., Budhwar, P. S. & Shipton, H. 2007. Management of human resource in Oman. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(1), pp. 100-113.

Al-Lamki, S. 1999. Paradigm shift: A perspective on Omani women in management in the Sultanate of Oman. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, 2(2), pp. 1-30.

Al-Lamki, S. M. 1998. Barriers to Omanization in the private sector: The perceptions of Omani graduates. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(2), pp. 377-400.

Al-Lamki, S. M. 2000. Omanization- a three tier strategic framework for HRM and training in the sultanate of Oman. *Journal of Comparative International Management*, 3(1), pp. 55.

Al-Sayyed, N. M. 2014. Critical Factors affecting Human Resource Development in the Arab World. *Life Science Journal*, 11(4), pp. 113-123.

Alagaraja, M. & Wang, J. 2012. Development of a National HRD Strategy Model: Cases of India and China. *Human Resource Development Review*, 11(4), pp. 407-429.

Alvesson, M. (2009) 'At-home Ethnography: Struggling with Closeness and Closure' in Ybema, S., Yanow, D., Wels, H. and Kamsteeg, F., eds., *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexities of Everyday Life*, London: Sage, 156-174.

Anderson, V. 2007. *The value of learning*. UK: CIPD.

Anderson, V. 2013. *Research methods in human resource management*. 3rd ed. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Armstrong, M. 2012. *Handbook of human resource management practice*. 12th ed. London: Kogan Page.

Aycan, Z., Al-Hamadi, A. B., Davis, A. & Budhwar, P. 2007. Cultural orientations and preferences for HRM policies and practices: the case of Oman. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(1), pp. 11-32.

Azamn. 2014. Government Report: Three Millions total number of people in Oman at the working age- 55% not in the workforce. Azamn: Muscat, Oman.

Balogh, B. 2013. How to Measure Human Capital. *Network Intelligence Studies*, 1(1), pp. 21-36.

Bamberger, M., Rugh, J. & Mabry, L. 2012. *RealWorld Evaluation: working under budget, time, data, and political constraints*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: SAGE.

Bannink, D. & Ossewaarde, R. 2011. Decentralization: New Modes of Governance and Administrative Responsibility. *Administration & Society*, 44(5), pp. 595-624.

Barrett, S. & Fudge, C. 1981. *Policy and action: essays on the implementation of public policy*. London: Methuen.

Barrett, S. M. 2004. Implementation Studies: Time for a Revival? Personal Reflections on 20 Years of Implementation Studies. *Public Administration*, 82(2), pp. 249-262.

Bates, R. 2004. A critical analysis of evaluation practice: the Kirkpatrick model and the principle of beneficence. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 27(3), pp. 341-347.

Becker, G. S. 1962. Investment in Human Capital- A theoretical analysis. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 70(5, Part 2), pp.9-49

Becker, G. S. 1993. The economic way of looking at behaviour, (Nobel Lecture). *Journal of Political Economy*, 101(3), pp. 385-409.

Bee, F. & Bee, R. 2003. *Learning needs analysis and evaluation*. 2nd ed. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Bennan, P. 1978. The Study of Macro- and Micro-Implementation. *Public Policy Analysis*, 26(1), pp. 57-84.

Bennell, P. & Segerstrom, J. 1998. Vocational education and training in developing countries- has the world bank got it right? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 18(4), pp. 271-287.

Bennett, E., James, S. and Grohmann, P., 2000. Joint venture public-private partnerships for urban environmental services. *Report on UNDP/PPPUE's Project Development Facility (PDF)(1995–1999). PPPUE Working Paper Series*, 2.

Berge, Z. L. 2008. Why it is so hard to evaluate training in the workplace? *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 40(7), pp. 390-395.

Bhattacharya, P. 2016. Inter-team contests with power differential, [*Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*](#), 132(Part A), pp. 157-175.

Bickman, L. B. & Rog, D. J. (eds.) 2009. *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Birckmayer, J.D., & Weiss, C.H. 2000. Theory-based evaluation in practice-What do we learn? *Evaluation Review*. 24(4), pp 407-431

Blaikie, N. W. H. 2003. *Analyzing quantitative data: from description to explanation*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Blair, R. 2002. Policy Tools Theory and Implementation Networks: Understanding State Enterprise Zone Partnerships. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 12(2), pp. 161-190.

Bonner, A. and Tolhurst, G., 2002. Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation. *Nurse researcher*, 9(4), pp.7-19.

Börzel, T. A. 1998. Organizing Babylon – on the different conceptions of policy networks. *Public Administration*, 76(Summer), pp. 253-273.

Bramley, P. 1996. *Evaluating Training Effectiveness: Benchmarking Your Training Activity Against Best Practice*. UK: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.

Brannick, T. and Coghlan, D., 2007. In defense of being “native”: The case for insider academic research. *Organizational research methods*, 10(1), pp.59-74.

Brans, M., 1997. Challenges to the practice and theory of public administration in Europe. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 9(3), pp.389-415.

Bressers, J.T.A., Klok, P.J. and O'Toole, L.J., 2000. Explaining policy action: A deductive but realistic theory. Paper to be presented at the IPSA World Congress, Quebec, 2000 Special Session 44: Regulative policy strategies for fragmented societies.

Bressers, H., 2007. Contextual Interaction Theory and the issue of boundary definition: Governance and the motivation, cognitions and resources of actors. *External report ISBP EU-project, ISSN 1381, 6357.*

Bryman, A. 2012. *Social research methods*. (4th ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2011. *Business research methods*. (3rd ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Budhwani, N. and McLean, G.N., 2005. Human resource development in community development: A case study within a religious community. In *AHRD 2005 conference proceedings* (pp. 1215-1222).

Bult-Spiering, M. & Dewulf, G. 2006. *Strategic Issues in Public-Private Partnerships: An International Perspective*, Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Burby, R. J. 2003. Making Plans that Matter: Citizen Involvement and Government Action. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 69(1), pp. 33-49.

Burns, R. B. 2000. *Introduction to research methods*. (4th ed). London: SAGE.

Cameron, S. & Price, D. 2009. *Business research methods: a practical approach*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development.

Cassell, C. 2015. *Conducting Research Interviews for Business and Management Students*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Cassell, C. & Symon, G. 2004. *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Cepeda, G. & Martin, D. 2005. A review of case studies publishing in Management Decision 2003-2004. *Management Decision*, 43(6), pp. 851-876.

Chaaban, J. 2010. Job Creation in the Arab Economies: Navigating Through Difficult Waters. New York: United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States.

Cho, E. & McLean, G. N. 2004. What We Discovered about NHRD and What it Means for HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 6(3), pp. 382-393.

CIPD. 2014. *Evaluating learning and development* [Online]. UK: CIPD. Available: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/evaluating-learning-talent-development.aspx> [Accessed: March 25, 2015].

Clarkeson, M. E. 1995. A Stakeholder Framework for Analyzing and Evaluating Corporate Social Performance, *Academy of Management Review*. 20(1), pp. 92-117

Clarke, S. & Lehaney, B. 2000. *Human centered methods in information systems: current research and practice*. Hershey; London: Idea Group Pub.

Clemens, M., 2013. *Seize the Spotlight: A Case for Gulf Cooperation Council Engagement in Research on the Effects of Labor Migration* (No. id: 5567).

Coghlan, D., 2007. Insider action research doctorates: Generating actionable knowledge. *Higher Education*, 54(2), pp.293-306.

Colebatch, H. K. 1998. *Policy*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Collins, M. E., Amodeo, M. & Clay, C. 2007. Training as a factor in policy implementation: Lessons from a National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(12), pp. 1487-1502.

Collis, J. & Hussey, R. 2009. *Business research: a practical guide for undergraduate & postgraduate students*. (3rd ed). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Colombo, S. 2012. The GCC Countries and the Arab Spring. *IAI Working Papers*. Roma: Istituto Affari Internazionali.

Cooper, S. 2004. National Governance and Promising Practices in Workplace Learning: a Postindustrial Programmatic Framework in Canada. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 6(3), pp. 363-373.

Costley, C., Elliott, G.C. and Gibbs, P., 2010. *Doing work based research: Approaches to enquiry for insider-researchers*. UK: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. 2013. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. (3rd ed). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. 2014. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (4th ed. [international student edition]). UK: SAGE.

Cummings, W. K. 1995. The Asian Human Resource Approach in Global Perspective. *Oxford Review of Education*, 21(1), pp. 67-81.

Cunliffe, A. L. 2014. *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about management*. (2nd ed). UK: Sage.

Curtis, B. & Curtis, C. 2011. *Social Research: A Practical Introduction*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Das, K.C. and Gokhale, N., 2010. Omanization policy and international migration in Oman. *Migration and the Gulf*, pp.63-66. Washington, US.

Dawson, R. P. 1995. Evaluation of training in local government. *Journal of Management Development*, 14(7), pp. 36-47.

DeGroff, A. & Cargo, M. 2009. Policy implementation: Implications for evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, (124), pp. 47-60.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. 2008. The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. *In: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. (3rd ed). London: SAGE. pp. 1-42.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. 2011. Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research *In: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. (4th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 1-42.

Devins, D. & Smith, J. 2013. Evaluation of HRD. *In: Gold, G., Holden, R., Iles, P., Stewart, J. & Beardwell, J. (eds.) Human Resource Development Theory and Practice*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 159-189.

DeLeon, P. & DeLeon, L. 2002. What Ever Happened to Policy Implementation? An Alternative Approach. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 12(4), pp. 467-492.

Donaldson, T. & Preston, L. 1995. The Stakeholder Theory and the Corporation: Concepts, Evidence, and Implications. *Academy of Management Review* 20(1), pp. 65-91.

Dunn, K. and Mondal, A.H., 2011. *Report on the Review of the Decent Work Country Programme: Bangladesh 2006-2009*. ILO.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Jackson, P. 2015. *Management research*. (5th ed). London: SAGE.

Eichhorst, W., Rodríguez-Planas, N., Schmidl, R. & Zimmermann, K. F. 2012. *A Roadmap to Vocational Education and Training system around the world*. Germany: IZA Discussion Paper No. 7110.

Eisenhardt, K.M., 1989. Building theories from case study research. *Academy of management review*, 14(4), pp.532-550.

Elmore, R.F., 1985. Forward and Backward Mapping: Reversible Logic in the Analysis of Public Policy. In *Policy implementation in federal and unitary systems* (pp. 33-70). Netherlands: Springer.

Elwood, F., III, H. & Naquin, S. 2005. A Critical Analysis of HRD evaluation models from a decision-making perspective. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 16(2), pp. 257-280.

Eseryel, D. 2002. Approaches to Evaluation of Training: Theory & Practice. *Educational Technology & Society*, 5(2), pp. 93-100.

Estrella, M. & Gaventa, J. 1998. Who counts Reality? Participator Monitoring and Evaluation: Literature Review (Vol. 70). Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Famighetti, R. (ed.) 1997. *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*. Jersey City, NJ: Almanac.

Farjad, S. 2012. The Evaluation Effectiveness of Training Courses in University by Kirkpatrick Model (Case Study: Islamshahr University). *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, pp. 2837-2841.

Finegold, D. & Soskice, D. 1988. The Failure of Training in Britain: Analysis and Prescription. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 4(3), pp. 21-53.

Fischer, F. 2003. *Reframing public policy: discursive politics and deliberative practices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fitzpatrick, J. L., Sanders, J. R. & Worthen, B. R. 2012. *Program evaluation: alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. (4th ed). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Flude, M. & Sieminski, S. 1999. *Education, training and the future of work II: Developments in vocational education and training*. London: Routledge.

Flyvbjerg, B. 2011. Case Study. In: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (4th ed). USA: Sage Publications, Inc. pp. 301-316.

Forstenlechner, I., Madi, M. T., Selim, H. M. & Rutledge, E. J. 2012. Emiratisation: determining the factors that influence the recruitment decisions of employers in the UAE. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(2), pp. 406-421.

Freeman, R. E. 1984. *Strategic Management: a stakeholder approach*. Boston: Pitman.

Friedman, A.L. & Miles, S. 2002. *Developing Stakeholder Theory*. *Journal of Management Studies*. 39(1), pp. 1–21.

Friedman, A.L. & Miles, S. (2006). *Stakeholders: Theory and Practice*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Gill, I. S., Fluitman, F. & Dar, A. 2000. *Vocational education and training reform: matching skills to markets and budgets*. Washington, DC: World Bank/Oxford University Press.

Government of Singapore. 2014. *Tripartism in Singapore* [Online]. <http://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/tripartism-in-singapore> Singapore: Ministry of Manpower. [Accessed: 12 May 2014].

Golden-Biddle, K. and Locke, K., 1993. Appealing work: An investigation of how ethnographic texts convince. *Organization science*, 4(4), pp.595-616.

Graf, L. 2013. *The hybridization of vocational training and higher education in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland*. Berlin & Toronto: Budrich UniPress Ltd. Opladen.

Gray, M. 2011. A Theory of "Late Rentierism" in the Arab States of the Gulf. Doha, Qatar: Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

Greene, J. C. (ed.) 1997. *Participatory Evaluation*. Greenwich, CT: JAI

Greener, I. 2011. *Designing social research: a guide for the bewildered*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Grieves, J. & Redman, T. 1999. Living in the shadow of OD: HRD and the search for identity. *Human Resource Development International*, 2(2), pp. 81-102.

Griffin, R. 2012. A practitioner friendly and scientifically robust training evaluation approach. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 24(6), pp. 393-402.

Grubb, W. N. & Ryan, P. 1999. *The roles of evaluation for vocational education and training: plain talk on the field of dreams*. London: Kogan Page.

Guba, E. G. 1990. *The Paradigm dialog*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. 1989. *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. 1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage Publications. pp. 105-117.

Guerci, M. & Vinante, M. 2011. Training evaluation: an analysis of the stakeholders' evaluation needs. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 35(4), pp. 385-410.

Gunn, L.A., 1978. Why is implementation so difficult. *Management Services in Government*, 33(4), pp.169-176.

Hammersley, M. 1992. *What is wrong with ethnography? Methodological explorations*. London: Routledge.

Hanf, K. & Scharpf, F. W. 1978. *Interorganizational policy making: limits to coordination and central control*. London: Sage.

Hansen, M.B. and Vedung, E., 2010. Theory-based stakeholder evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 31(3), pp.295-313.

Hanushek, E.A., Schwerdt, G., Woessmann, L. and Zhang, L., 2017. General Education, Vocational Education, and Labor-Market Outcomes over the Lifecycle. *Journal of Human Resources*, 52(1), pp.48-87.

Harbison, F.H. and Myers, C.A., 1964. *Education, manpower, and economic growth: Strategies of human resource development*. Tata McGraw-Hill Education.

Hasani, M. 2015. *Women's Employment in Oman*. PhD thesis. The University of Queensland.

Hawamdeh, S. 2014. Qualitative interviewing: methodological challenges in Arab settings. *Nurse Researcher*, 21(3), pp. 27-31.

Hayfield, N. and Huxley, C., 2015. Insider and outsider perspectives: Reflections on researcher identities in research with lesbian and bisexual women. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(2), pp.91-106.

HEAC. 2016. *Press Release: Registration procedures and students admission for the academic year 2015/2016* [Online]. Muscat: Higher Education Acceptance Centre. Available: http://heac.gov.om/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=242&Itemid=&lang=en [Accessed: 28 Oct 2016].

Heclo, H. H. 1972. Policy Analysis. *British Journal of Political Science*, 2(1), pp. 83-108.

Her Majesty's Treasury. 2003. The Green Book. Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government, London: Her Majesty's Treasury.

Hill, M. J. 2012. *The public policy process*. (5th ed). London, UK: Routledge.

Hill, M. & Hupe, P. 2002. *Implementing Public Policy: Governance in Theory and in Practice*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hill, M. J. & Hupe, P. L. 2008. *Implementing public policy: an introduction to the study of operational governance*. (3rd ed). London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hill, W. L. & Jones, T. M. 1992. Stakeholder agency theory, *Journal of management Studies*, 29(2), pp. 131–154.

Hjern, B. & Porter, D. O. 1981. Implementation Structures: A New Unit of Administrative Analysis. *Organization Studies*, July(2), pp. 211-227.

Hodge, G. A. & Greve, C. 2007. Public–Private Partnerships: An International Performance Review. *Public Administration Review*, 67(3), pp. 545-558.

Hoeckel, K. and Schwartz, R., 2010. Learning for Jobs OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training. *Austria: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*.

Hofstede, G. H., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M. 2010. Cultures and organizations software of the mind: international cooperation and its importance for survival. (3rd ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Holton, E. F. 1996. The Flawed Four-Level Evaluation Model. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 7(1), pp. 5-21.

Holton, E. F. 2005. Holton's Evaluation Model: New Evidence and Construct Elaborations. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7(1), pp. 37-54.

Hood, C. 1976. *The limits of administration*. London: Wiley.

Howlett, M. & Ramesh, M. 2009. *Studying public policy: policy cycles and policy subsystems*. (3rd ed). Don Mills, ONT; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hull, C.J. and Hjern, B., 1987. *Helping small firms grow: An implementation approach*. Croom Helm,.

Hupe, P. 2014. What happens on the ground: Persistent issues in implementation research. *Public Policy and Administration*, 29(2), pp. 164-182.

Hyett, N., Kenny, A. & Dickson-Swift, V. 2014. Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9(23606), pp. 1-12.

ILO. 2012. Rethinking Economic Growth: Towards Productive and Inclusive Arab Societies, States. Beirut: International Labour Organization.

ILO. 2012b. Upgrading informal apprenticeship: A resource guide for Africa. Geneva.

IMF, 2009. Middle East and Central Asia. *World Economic and Financial Surveys* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2007), figure B, 9, p.36.

Insurance, P. A. o. S. 2014. *Statistics* [Online]. PASI Oman. Available: <https://www.pasi.gov.om/en/Pages/Home.aspx> [Accessed 22 April 2014 2014].

Ismail, S. & Azzahra Haris, F. 2014. Constraints in implementing Public Private Partnership (PPP) in Malaysia. *Built Environment Project and Asset Management*, 4(3), pp. 238-250.

Jankowicz, A. D. 2005. *Business research projects*. (4th ed). London: Thomson Learning.

John, P. 1998. *Analysing public policy*, London, UK: Continuum.

Johnson, P. & Clark, M. 2006. *Business and management research methodologies*. London: SAGE.

Jordan, A.G. and Richardson, J.J.J., 1987. *Government and pressure groups in Britain*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Karim, M. R., Huda, K. N. & Khan, R. S. 2012. Significance of Training and Post Training Evaluation for Employee Effectiveness: An Empirical Study on Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd, UK. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(18), pp. 141-148.

Keeley, J. & Scoones, I. 2014. *Understanding environmental policy processes: cases from Africa*, London; Sterling, VA: Routledge.

Khoong, C. M. 1996. An integrated system framework and analysis methodology for manpower planning. *International Journal of Manpower*, 17(1), pp. 26-46.

Kim, S. B., Lee, Y. H. & Jung, D. Y. 2009. Comparative Study of National Human Resource Development Plan Implementation Systems in Korea, the United States, and Japan. *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies*, 23(2), pp. 171-188.

King, N. 2004. Using templates in the thematic analysis of text. In: Cassell, C. & Symon, G. (eds.) *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research* (ed). London: Sage. pp. 256-270

King, N. 2012. Doing Template Analysis. In: Symon, G. & Cassell, C. (eds.) *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. London: Sage Publications. pp. 426-450.

Kirkpatrick, J. D. & Kayser, W. 2011. Creating Roe: The End is the Beginning. *Training and Development Journal*, 65(11), pp. 60-65.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. & Kirkpatrick, J. D. 2006. *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. USA: Berrett-Koehler.

Kirkpatrick, D.L., 1959. Techniques for evaluation training programs. *Journal of the American Society of Training Directors*, 13, pp.21-26.

Klijn, E. H. 1996. Analyzing and Managing Policy Processes in Complex Networks: A Theoretical Examination of the Concept Policy Network and Its Problems. *Administration & Society*, 28(1), pp. 90-119.

Klijn, E. H. & Koppenjan, J. F. M. 2000. Public Management and Policy Networks: Foundations of a network approach to governance. *Public Management*, 2(2), pp. 135-158.

KPMG. 2014. *Analysis of Oman's 2014 Budget*. Muscat, Oman: KPMG.

Kuhn, T.S. 1962. *The structure of scientific revolution*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Kumar, R. 2014. *Research methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners*. (4th ed). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Lawless, A., Sambrook, S. & Stewart, J. 2012. Critical human resource development: enabling alternative subject positions within a master of arts in human resource development educational programme. *Human Resource Development International*, 15(3), pp. 321-336.

Lecy, J. D., Mergel, I. A. & Schmitz, H. P. 2014. Network in Public Administration: Current scholarship in review. *Public Management Review*, 16(5), pp. 643-665.

Lee, M. 2004. National Human Resource Development in the United Kingdom. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 6(3), pp. 334-345.

Levin, M. & Ferman, B. 1986. The Political Hand: Policy Implementation and Youth Employment Programs. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 5(2), pp. 311-325.

Lewis, T. 2009. Towards reclaiming the high ground in the discourse on vocationalism in developing countries. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 29(6), pp. 558-564.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. 1985. *Naturalistic inquiry*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A. & Guba, E. G. 2011. Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and Emerging Confluences, Revisited. In: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. USA: Sage. pp. 97-128.

Linder, S.H., 1999. Coming to terms with the public-private partnership a grammar of multiple meanings. *American behavioral scientist*, 43(1), pp.35-51.

Lipsky, M. 2010. *Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York, NY: The Russell Sage Foundation.

Littlejohn, S.W. & Foss, K.A. 2008. Theories of Human Communication, 9th Ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Lockheed, M. E. 2009. Evaluating Development Learning: The World Bank Experience. *Evaluation*, 15(1), pp. 113-126.

Luciani, G. (ed.) 1990. *The Arab State*. USA: University of California Press.

Lynham, S. A. & Cunningham, P. W. 2006. National Human Resource Development in Transitioning Societies in the Developing World: Concept and Challenges. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 8(1), pp. 116-135.

Mabbett, D. (ed.) 2005. *Making policy, shaping lives*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Mace, S. L., Venneberg, D. L. & Amell, J. W. 2012. Human Trafficking: Integrating Human Resource Development Toward a Solution. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 14(3), pp. 333-344.

Mahdavi, H. 1970. The patterns and problems of economic development in rentier states: the case of Iran. In: MA, Cook. (ed.) *In Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. pp. 428-467.

Majone, Giandomenico, and Aaron Bernard Wildavsky. "Implementation as evolution." (1978).

Mann, A., Stanley, J. and Archer, L., 2014. *Understanding employer engagement in education: theories and evidence*. Routledge.

Mark, M. M. 2001. Evaluation's Future: Furor, Futile, Or Fertile? *American Journal of Evaluation*, 22(3), pp. 457-479.

Mathie, A. & Greene, J. C. 1997. Stakeholder participation in evaluation: how important is diversity? *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 20(3), pp. 279-285.

Matland, R. E. 1995. Synthesizing the Implementation Literature- the ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 54(2), pp. 145-174.

Maurer, M. 2010. *Skill Formation Regimes in South Asia: A Comparative Study on the Path-Dependent Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training for the Garment Industry*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Maxwell, J. A. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. (2nd ed). UK: John Wiley & Sons.

May, P. J. 1995. Can Cooperation Be Mandated? Implementing Intergovernmental Environmental Management in New South Wales and New Zealand. *The Journal of Federalism*, 2(1), pp. 89-113.

May, P. J. 2014. Implementation failures revisited: Policy regime perspectives. *Public Policy and Administration*, 30(3-4), pp. 277-299.

Mazmanian, D. A. 1989. *Implementation and Public Policy*. (Reprint edition). USA: UPA.

Mazmanian, D. A. & Sabatier, P. 1981. *Effective Policy Implementation*. Lexington USA: Lexington Books.

McDonnell, L. M. & Weatherford, M. S. 2016. Recognizing the Political in Implementation Research. *Educational Researcher*, 45(4), pp. 233-242.

McGrath, S. 2012. Vocational education and training for development: A policy in need of a theory? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 32(5), pp. 623-631.

McGuire, D. 2011. *Foundations of Human Resource Development. Human Resource Development: Theory and Practice*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

McLaughlin, M. W. 1987. Learning From Experience: Lessons From Policy Implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 20(9), pp. 171-178.

McLean, G. N. 2004. National Human Resource Development: What in the World Is It? *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 6(3), pp. 269-275.

McLean, G. N., Kuo, M. H., Budhwani, N. N., Yamnill, S. & Virakul, B. 2012. Capacity Building for Societal Development: Case Studies in Human Resource Development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 14(3), pp. 251-263.

McLean, G. N. & McLean, L. 2001. If we can't define HRD in one country, how can we define it in an international context? *Human Resource Development International*, 4(3), pp. 313-326.

McMeeking, L. B., Basile, C. & Brian Cobb, R. 2012. An organizational model to distinguish between and integrate research and evaluation activities in a theory based evaluation. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 35(4), pp. 508-516.

Mercer, J., 2007. The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: Wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(1), pp.1-17.

Merriam, S.B., 2009. Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation: Revised and expanded from qualitative research and case study applications in education. *San Francisco: Jossey-Bass*.

Mertens, D. M. 2015. *Research & Evaluation in Education and Psychology*. USA: SAGE.

Meter, D. V. & Horn, C. V. 1975. The Policy Implementation Process: A Conceptual Framework. *Administration & Society*, February(6), pp. 445-488.

Micklewright, J. 1999. Education, inequality and transition. *Economics of Transition*, 7(2), pp. 343-376.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M. & Saldana, J. 2014. *Qualitative data analysis: a methods sourcebook*. (3rd ed). USA: Sage Publication Inc.

Ministry of Finance. 2016. *Financial Reports* [Online]. Muscat: Ministry of Finance. Available: <https://mof.gov.om/english/> [Accessed: 28 Oct 2016].

Ministry of Information. 2014. *Oman* [Online]. Oman: Ministry of Information. Available: <http://www.omaninfo.om/english/> [Accessed: 12 Feb 2015].

Ministry of Manpower. 2010. Bylaw of the Private Training Institutions *In: Ministry of Manpower 490/2010*. Muscat: Ministry of Manpower.

Ministry of Manpower. 2016. *About the Ministry* [Online]. Muscat: Ministry of Manpower. Available: <http://www.manpower.gov.om/Portal/About.aspx> [Accessed: 25 Oct 2016].

Ministry of Education & Bank, W. 2012. Education in Oman, The drivers for Quality. Muscat: Ministry of Education.

Mitchell, R.K., Agle, B.R. and Wood, D.J., 1997. Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of management review*, 22(4), pp.853-886.

Moran, M., Rein, M. & Goodin, R. E. 2006. *The Oxford handbook of public policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K. & Spiers, J. 2002. Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), pp. 1-19.

Murphy, A. & Garavan, T. N. 2009. The Adoption and Diffusion of an NHRD Standard: A Conceptual Framework. *Human Resource Development Review*, 8(1), pp. 3-21.

Nabli, M.K., 2007. Long-term economic development challenges and prospects for the Arab countries. *Breaking the Barriers*, p.1. Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris: World Bank

Nadler, L., & Nadler, Z. 1989. *Developing Human Resources*, Third Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Naimi, R. A, Personal Communication, August 2014. *Re: National Training Programmes in Oman*.

NCSI. 2016. *Monthly Statistical Bulletin* [Online]. Muscat: National Centre for Statistics and Information. Available: http://www.ncsi.gov.om/NCSI_website/viewPublication.aspx?id=2159 [Accessed: 17 Apr 2014].

O'Toole, L. J. 2004. The Theory-Practice Issue in Policy Implementation Research. *Public Administration*, 82(2), pp. 309-329.

O'Toole, L. J. 2000. Research on Policy Implementation: Assessment and Prospects. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10(2), pp. 263-288.

O'Toole, L. J. 1997. Treating network seriously: practical and research-based agendas in public administration. *Public Administration Review* 57(1), pp. 45-52.

Oketch, M. O. 2007. To vocationalise or not to vocationalise? Perspectives on current trends and issues in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(2), pp. 220-234.

Osman-Gani, A. M. 2004. Human Capital Development in Singapore: An Analysis of National Policy Perspectives. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 6(3), pp. 276-287.

Oswick, C. 2012. Discourse Analysis and Discursive Research. *In: Cassell, C. & Symon, G. A. (ed.) Doing Template Analysis. Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. London. pp. 473-491.

Parsons, W. 1995. *Public policy: an introduction to the theory and practice of policy analysis*. UK: Edward Elgar Pub.

Patton, M. Q. 2008. *Utilization-focused evaluation*. (4th ed). CA, USA: Thousand Oakson.

Patton, M. Q. 2015. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (4th ed). London: SAGE.

Peräkylä, A. & Ruusuvuori, J. (eds.) 2013. *Analyzing Talk and Text*. USA: Sage.

Phillips, J.J. and Phillips, P.P., 2016. *Handbook of training evaluation and measurement methods*. Routledge.

Phillips, R. 2003. *Stakeholder Theory and Organizational Ethics*. Oakland, CA, Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Pineda, P. 2010. Evaluation of training in organisations: a proposal for an integrated model. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 34(7), pp. 673-693.

Pressman, J. & Wildavsky, A. 1974. Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; or, Why It's Amazing That Federal Programs Work At All, This Being a Saga of the Economic Development Administration as Told by Two Sympathetic Observers Who Seek to Build Morals on a Foundation of Ruined Hopes. *Policy Sciences*, 5, pp.481-484.

Prokhovnik, R. 2005. *Making policy, shaping lives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Protsch, P. and Solga, H., 2016. The social stratification of the German VET system. *Journal of Education and Work*, 29(6), pp.637-661.

Provan, K.G. and Lemaire, R.H., 2012. Core concepts and key ideas for understanding public sector organizational networks: Using research to inform scholarship and practice. *Public Administration Review*, 72(5), pp.638-648.

Pülzl, H. & Treib, O. 2007. Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics and Methods. In: Fischer, F., Miller, G. & Sidney, M. S. (eds.) *Implementing Public Policy*. USA: Taylor & Francis Group, LL. pp. 89-108

Punch, K. 2014. *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*. (3rd ed). London: SAGE.

Quinlan, C. 2011. *Business research methods*, Andover: South-Western Cengage Learning.

Quintini, G. and T. Manfredi (2009), "Going Separate Ways? School-to-Work Transitions in the United States and Europe", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 90, OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/221717700447>

Rae, L. 1991. *Techniques of training: a guide for managers and practitioners*. (2nd ed). UK: Gower.

Ragin, Charles C. 1992. "Cases of 'What Is a Case?'" In *What Is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, ed. Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ratha, D., De, S., Dervisevic, E., Eigen-Zucchi, C., Plaza, S., Wyss, H., Yi, S. & Yousefi, S. R. 2014. *Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Raven, B.H., 1992. A power/interaction model of interpersonal influence: French and Raven thirty years later. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*.

Rendall, M. and Weiss, F.J., 2016. Employment polarization and the role of the apprenticeship system. *European Economic Review*, 82, pp.166-186.

Rhodes, R. A. W. 2008. Policy Network Analysis. *In: Goodin, R. E., Moran, M. & Rein, M. (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. London: Oxford University Press. pp. 423-445.

Robbins, M. and Jamal, A., 2016. The state of social justice in the Arab world: The Arab Uprisings of 2011 and Beyond. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, 8(1), pp.127-157.

Robson, C. & McCartan, K. 2016. *Real world research: a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings*. (4th ed). Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley.

Ross, M. L. 2001. Does Oil Hinder Democracy? *World Politics*, 53(3), pp. 325-361.

Rossi, P. H. & Freeman, H. E. 1993. *Evaluation: a systematic approach*. (5th ed). UK: Sage.

Russ-Eft, D. 2005. In Search of the Holy Grail: Return on Investment Evaluation in Human Resource Development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7(1), pp. 71-85.

Russ-Eft, D. F. 2014. Human resource development, evaluation, and sustainability: what are the relationships? *Human Resource Development International*, 17(5), pp. 545-559.

Ryan, N. 1996. A comparison of three approaches to programme implementation. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 9(4), pp. 34-41.

Rynes, S. & Gephart, R. 2004. From the Editors; Qualitative Research and the Academy of Management Journal. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(4), pp. 454-462.

Sabatier, P.A. and Mazmanian, D., 1983. Policy implementation. *Encyclopedia of Policy Sciences*. Marcel Dekker, New York.

Sabatier, P. & Mazmanian, D. 1979. The Conditions of Effective Implementation: A Guide to Accomplishing Policy Objectives. *Policy Analysis*, 5(4), pp. 481-504.

Sabatier, P. A. 1986. Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches to Implementation Research: A Critical Analysis and Suggested Synthesis. *Journal of Public Policy*, 6(1), pp.21-48.

Sadler-Smith, E., Down, S. & Field, J. 1999. Adding value to HRD: evaluation, Investors in People and small firm training. *Human Resource Development International*, 2(4), pp. 369-390.

Salamon, L. M. 2000. The New Governance and the Tools of Public Action: An Introduction. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, 28(5), pp. 1611-1674.

Sanderson, G.I.I.I., 1995. Objectives and evaluation. *Handbook of training and development*, pp.113-144.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. 2014. *Research methods for business students*. (6th ed). Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Scharpf, F. W. 1997. *Games Real Actors Play. Actor-Centered Institutionalism in Policy Research*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Schultz, T. W. 1962. Reflections on Investment in Man. *The Journal of Political Economy*, LXX(5), pp. 1-8.

Schutt, R. K. 2011. *Investigating the social world: the process and practice of research*. (7th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: London: Pine Forge.

Scriven, M. 1991. *Evaluation thesaurus*. (4th ed). USA: Sage.

Scriven, M. 1967. *The Methodology of Evaluation*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Sekhri, N., Feachem, R. & Ni, A. 2011. Public-Private Integrated Partnerships Demonstrate The Potential To Improve Health Care Access, Quality, And Efficiency. *Health Affairs*, 30(August), pp. 1498-1507.

Selway, M. 1997. Muscat Opens its Gates. *Accountancy*, 119(1246), pp. 22-24.

Shah, N. M. 2008. Recent Labor Immigration Policies in the Oil-Rich Gulf: How Effective are they Likely To Be? Geneva: ILO.

Shavit, Y. & Müller, M. 1998. *From School to Work: A Comparative Study of Educational Qualifications and Occupational Destinations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Silverman, D. 2013. *Doing qualitative research*. (4th ed). London: SAGA Publication.

Sims, R. R. 1990. Adapting Training to Trainee Learning Styles. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 14(2), pp. 17-22.

Skinner, D. 2004. Primary and Secondary Barriers to the Evaluation of Change: Evidence from Two Public Sector Organizations. *Evaluation*, 10(2), pp. 135-154.

Smith, J.K. and Heshusius, L., 1986. Closing down the conversation: The end of the quantitative-qualitative debate among educational inquirers. *Educational researcher*, 15(1), pp.4-12.

Smith, K.B & Larimer, C.W. 2016. *The Public Policy Theory Primer*, 3rd Ed, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Spratt, K. 2009. Policy Implementation Barriers Analysis: Conceptual Framework and Pilot Test in Three Countries. Washington DC: Futures Group International, Health Policy Initiative Task Order 1.

Stake, R. E. 1995. *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (ed.) 2005. *Qualitative case studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Steiner, G. A., & Steiner, J.F. 1997. *Business, Government, and Society: A Managerial Perspective*. 8th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Stewart, J., Beardwell, J., Gold, J., Iles, P. & Holden, R. 2013. The Scope of HRD and National HRD Policies and Practice. *In: Gold, J., Holden, R., Iles, P., Stewart, J. & Beardwell, J. (eds.) Human Resource Development Theory and Practice*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 3-24

Swailles, S., Said, L. G. A. & Fahdi, S. A. 2012. Localisation policy in Oman: a psychological contracting interpretation. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 25(5), pp. 357-372.

Swanson, R. A. 1999. HRD theory, real or imagined? *Human Resource Development International*, 2(1), pp. 2-5.

Symon, G. & Cassell, C. 2012. *Qualitative organizational research: core methods and current challenges*, Los Angeles, CA; London: SAGE.

Taras, M. 2005. Assessment– Summative and Formative- some theoretical reflections. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 53(4), pp. 466-478.

Thelen, K. 2007. Contemporary challenges to the German vocational training system. *Regulation & Governance*, 1(3), pp. 247-260.

Thomason, G. F. 1988. *A textbook of human resource management*. UK: Institute of Personnel Management.

Times of Oman. 2014. Oman's population passes landmark figure. *Times of Oman*, <http://timesofoman.com/article/32872/Oman/Omans-population-passes-landmark-figure>, Accessed 22nd January 2016.

Tomé, E. 2009. The evaluation of HRD: a critical study with applications. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 33(6), pp. 513-538.

Trowler, P. (2012) *Doing Insider Research in Universities*, Kindle edition ed.: Amazon Kindle edition.

Tynaliyev, U. M. & McLean, G. N. 2011. Labour migration and National Human Resource Development in the context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. *Human Resource Development International*, 14(2), pp. 199-215.

UNDP. 2015. HDI values and rank changes in the 2013 Human Development Report. USA: UNDP.

UNESCO. 2014. *Technical and Vocational Teachers and Trainers in the Arab Region: A Review of Policies and Practices on Continuous Professional Development*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNDP.2009. National Evaluation Capacities. *In*: Way, C., ed. The International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities. Casablanca: United Nations Development Programme.

Unluer, S., 2012. Being an insider researcher while conducting case study research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(29), p.1.

Uriah, O. A. & Wosu, J. I. 2012. Formal Education as a Panacea for Sustainable National Development: A Theoretical Discussion. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 5(2), pp. 130-137.

Valeri, M. 2005. The Omanisation Policy of Employment: An Omani Economic Dilemma. *The Gulf Monarchies in Transition*. Paris: Sciences Po.

Van Meter, D.S. and Van Horn, C.E., 1975. The policy implementation process: A conceptual framework. *Administration & Society*, 6(4), pp.445-488.

Vogt, W.P. and Johnson, R.B., 2015. *The SAGE Dictionary of Statistics & Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide for the Social Sciences*. Sage publications.

Wachhaus, T. A. 2011. Anarchy as a Model for Network Governance. *Public Administration Review*, 72(1), pp. 33-42.

Wang, G. G. & Spitzer, D. R. 2005. Human Resource Development Measurement and Evaluation: Looking Back and Moving Forward. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7(1), pp. 5-15.

Wang, G. G. & Swanson, R. A. 2008. The idea of National HRD- An analysis based on economics and theory developmnet research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 7(1), pp. 79-106.

Weinberger, L. A. 1998. Commonly held theories of human resource development. *Human Resource Development International*, 1(1), pp. 75-93.

Weiss, C.H. 2007. Theory-based evaluation: Past, present, and future. *New Directions for Evaluation*. 2007(114), pp. 68-81

Weiss, E. S., Anderson, R. M. & Lasker, R. D. 2002. Making the Most of Collaboration: Exploring the Relationship Between Partnership Synergy and Partnership Functioning. *Health Education & Behavior*, 29(6), pp. 683-698.

Wettenhall, R. 2003. The Rhetoric and Reality of Public-Private Partnerships. *Public Organization Review: A Global Journal* 3(1), pp. 77-107.

Wexley, K. N. & Latham, G. P. 1991. *Developing and training human resources in organizations*. (2nd ed). NewYork: HarperCollins.

Wilkins, S. 2001. Training and development in the United Arab Emirates. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 5(2), pp. 153-165.

Wilkins, S. 2002a. Human resource development through vocational education in the United Arab Emirates: the case of Dubai Polytechnic. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 54(1), pp. 5-26.

Wilkins, S. 2002b. The implementation of NVQs in the Sultanate of Oman. *Education + Training*, 44(3), pp. 144-152.

Wilson, J. P. 2012. International human resource development learning, education and training for individuals and organizations. (3rd ed). London: Kogan Page.

Winter, C. 2006. Implementation. *In*: Peters, B. G. & Pierre, J. (eds.) *Handbook of public policy*. London: SAGE. pp. 151-166.

Wolter, S. C. & Ryan, P. 2011. Apprenticeship. *In*: Hanushek, E. A., Machin, S. J. & Woessmann, L. (eds.) *Handbook of the Economics of Education*. San Diego: North Holland. pp. 521-576.

Worthen, B. R. & Sanders, J. R. 1987. *Educational evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Yang, B., Zhang, D. & Zhang, M. 2004. National Human Resource Development in the People's Republic of China. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 6(3), pp. 297-306.

Yin, R. K. 2014. *Case study research: design and methods*. (5th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Zerovec, M. & Bontenbal, M. 2011. Labour Nationalization Policies in Oman: Implications for Omani and Migrant Women Workers. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 20(3-4), pp. 365-388.

Zhang, X., Cheung, E., Chan, A. P. C., Lam, P. T. I., Chan, D. W. M. & Ke, Y. 2012. A comparative study of critical success factors for public private partnerships (PPP) between Mainland China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. *Facilities*, 30(13/14), pp. 647-666.

Zheng, H., Jong, M. D. & Koppenjan, J. 2010. Applying Policy Network Theory to Policy-Making in China: The Case of Urban Health Insurance Reform. *Public Administration*, 88(2), pp. 398-417.

Zimmermann, K. F., Biavaschi, C., Eichhorst, W., Giulietti, C., Kendzia, M. J., Muravyev, A., Pieters, J., Rodríguez-Planas, N. U. & Schmidl, R. 2013. Youth Unemployment and Vocational Training. *Foundations and Trends in Microeconomics*, 9(1-2), pp. 1-157.

Zukoski, A. & Luluquisen, M. 2002. Participatory Evaluation: What is it? Why do it? What are the challenges? Community-based public health: Policy and practice USA: The California Endowment.

APPENDICES

Appendix (I)

Numbers of Omanis and Expatriates in the Private Sector - July 2016

Economic Sector	Omani	Non-Omani	Total working in the sector	% of Omani Citizens
Agriculture & Hunting Forestry	1,210	90,953	92,163	1.3
Fishing	40	5,895	5,935	0.7
Mining & Quarrying	27,011	18,934	45,945	58.8
Manufacturing	23,079	208,808	231,887	10.0
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	2,781	968	3,749	74.2
Construction	53,120	656,402	709,522	7.5
Wholesale, Retail Trade & Repair of Motor Vehicles, Motorcycles, and Personal & Household Goods	34,092	232,424	266,516	12.8
Tourism - Hotels and Restaurants	7,116	107,859	114,975	6.2
Transport, Storage & Communication	16,804	65,388	82,192	20.4
Financial Intermediaries	14,733	4,092	18,825	78.3
Real Estate & Renting, and Business	23,064	87,764	110,828	20.8
Education	5,432	14,541	19,973	27.2
Health & Social Work	1,759	9,757	11,516	15.3
Other Community , Social and Personal Services Activities	1,678	49,795	51,473	3.3
Private Households with Employed Persons	0	189,934	189,934	0.0
Extra Territorial Organisations and bodies	0	981	981	0.0
Total	211,919	1,744,495		11
Total Working in the Private sector	1956414			

Source: Adapted from (NCSI, 2016)

Appendix (II)

NTP Evaluation Form

Directorate general of occupational standards and curriculum development	Theoretical and Practical Assessment form								Institute name..... Phone Number..... Specialisation..... Exercise name.....			
Trainee Name.....	Assessment mark				Assessment mark				Assessment mark			
Evaluation Criteria	0	3	7	10	0	3	7	10	0	3	7	10
1. Ability to read the drawings and other instructions related to the practical exercise												
2. Determine the appropriate methods for job accomplishment												
3. Select the appropriate tool for job accomplishment												

4. Select the most appropriate tools and machines for job accomplishment												
5. Prepare and adjust the tools and machines for job accomplishment												
6. Follow the correct order for job accomplishment												
7. Perform the job according to the approved standards												
8. Finalise the job according to the approved standards												
9. Perform the job as planned												
10. Follow the required job behaviour												
11. Follow the HSE procedures												

12. Perform the job within the allocated time												
13. Awareness of the link between theory and practice												
Source: Translated from Arabic Version, Department of Private Training Institutions												

Participant Information Sheet

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

Title of Project: Evaluation of Public Policy Implementations: an investigation into the National Training Programme at the Ministry of Manpower, Oman.

Name of Researcher and School/Faculty: Ali Al Harthy (Liverpool Business School)

INTRODUCTION: You are being invited to take part in a research study. Prior to your decision to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you like more information. Take time to decide if you want to take part or not.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors influencing the implementation of the national training programme in Oman. This is part of a PhD study to find out to what extent the current practice of national training programme in Oman is effective from the perception of its stakeholders and to explore the factors influencing the implementation process and the challenges encountered with its implementation.

2. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect your rights/any future treatment/service you receive.

3. What will happen to me if I take part?

Your participation in the study is by being involved in semi-structured interviews that would serve as the primary source of data. The interviews would last approximately 30 minutes to one hour, and would focus on the study.

4. Are there any risks / benefits involved?

There are no risks involved in this research. However, your contribution will enhance this study by providing the required information which will enable the researcher to explore areas of strengths, weaknesses and obstacles encountered in performing this programme.

5. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The interview will be recorded, and later transcribed before analysis. During and after the study, the recorded interview material and transcription will remain locked up in research cupboard with accessibility only to the researcher. All information provided will be used only in the manner allowed by you.

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee.

Contact Details of Researcher:

Ali Al Harthy,

Liverpool John Moores University,

a.s.alharthy@2013.ljmu.ac.uk

Contact Details of Academic Supervisor:

Dr. Aileen Lawless

Liverpool John Moores University,

A.Lawless@ljmu.ac.uk

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Evaluation of Public Policy Implementations: an investigation into the National Training Programme at the Ministry of Manpower, Oman.

Name of Researcher and School/Faculty: Ali Al Harthy (Liverpool Business School)

I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily

☐

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights.

☐

2. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential

☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study (**interview**)

☐

4. I understand that the interview will be audio / video recorded and I am happy to proceed

☐

5. I understand that parts of our conversation may be used verbatim in future publications or presentations but that such quotes will be anonymised.

☐

Name of Participant:	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher : Ali Al Harthy	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent: (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature

Appendix (V)



29th June 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Mr Ali Al Harthy

Person No: 669678

This is to confirm that the above named student is studying at Liverpool John Moores University, enrolled on the MPhil / PhD Business Programme.

Ali is now at the stage in his research where he will be collecting data and it would be very beneficial to him if you could support and cooperate with him.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Yusra", written over a horizontal line.

Dr Yusra Mouzoughi
Programme Leader

ljmu.ac.uk

The Liverpool Business School
Redmonds Building, Brownlow Hill, Liverpool, L3 5UG.

Scanned by CamScanner

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Manpower
Directorate General of Planning and
Development



سلطنة عُمان
وزارة القوى العاملة
المملكة العمانية للتخطيط والتنمية

Ref. No. :

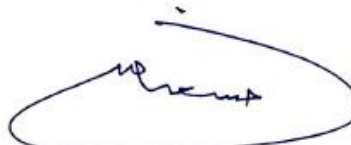
Date :

الرقم : ١٨٠٢٠٠
التاريخ :
الموافق : ٢٠١٥/٧/١٢ م

إلى من يهمه الأمر

تشهد وزارة القوى العاملة بأن الفاضل / علي بن سيف الحارثي يعمل لدينا اعتباراً من : ٢٠٠٤/٤/١٢ م ، وقد تم إيفاده في بعثة دراسية على نفقة وزارة هذه الوزارة إلى جامعة (Liverpool John Moores) بالملكة المتحدة خلال الفترة : من ٢٠١٣/٩/١٦ م ، وحتى : ٢٠١٧/٩/١٧ م لنيل درجة الدكتوراه في تطوير الموارد البشرية ، (موضوع الدراسة :- تقييم برامج التدريب الوطنية الممولة من قبل وزارة القوى العاملة) .
لذا نأمل التكرم بتقديم التسهيلات اللازمة التي يحتاج إليها الباحث لإجراء الدراسة الميدانية .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام


عيسى بن حمدان العامري
مدير مساعد دائرة تنمية الموارد البشرية



ص ب : ٤١٣ مسقط - الرمز البريدي : ١٠٠ - سلطنة عُمان - هاتف : ٢٤٣٤٤٣٩٨ - فاكس : ٢٤٣٤٤٣٢٠

P.O Box : 413 Muscat - Postal Code : 100 - Sultanate of Oman - Tel : 24344398 - Fax : 24344320

Scanned by CamScanner

Appendix (VII)

Interview Guiding Questions

The following questions were used as guideline for the researcher to approach the topic as experienced by the informants. Each of the categories involved in this study were asked questions that much related to their position within the implementation process.

MoM Officials:

1. Tell me about your experience regarding the implementation of the NTP.
2. How do you think the MoM were successful in the implementation process?
3. How clear are the objectives of this training to you and to the other involved stakeholders?
4. What is the process of identifying the supply and demand of the manpower required? How?
5. What are the models used to deliver this training? How?
6. Does the current delivery (network) of NTP effective? How? Why?
7. Do you think the government should continue sponsoring such programme? Why? Why not? Is there any duplication with other existing programmes?
8. Would you explain the barriers encountered in programme's implementation?

Employers

1. Tell me about your experience as a company contributing in the recruitment of Omani job seekers through NTP.
2. How clear the NTP objectives to you?
3. How satisfied with the process of manpower supply? Do you think MoM considered your requirements?
4. How the NTP structure influence the implementation process? how effective (network) delivery?
5. How satisfied with the training design?
6. What are the challenges impeding proper NTP implementation?

Trainees

1. Can you share your experience being a trainee in NTP?
2. How beneficial the NTP is? How training meets your demands and expectations?
3. How simple/complicated the training procedure?
4. How do you respond to the other arguments stating that Omani job seekers does not want to work at the private sector?
5. What are the barriers do you think required rectification to progress with the NTP? How?

Training Providers

1. How can you explain you experience at NTP?
2. Is NTP policy clear to you? How?
3. How complicated and bureaucratic dealing with MoM in terms of NTP implementation?
4. How effective and satisfied with the current training design?
5. What do you think about the motivation of the Omani job seekers to join NTP? How?
6. What are the challenges obstructing effective programme implementation? how can we better the process?

Appendix (VIII)

اسم المعهد :
رقم الهاتف :
التخصص :
اسم التمرين :

استمارة تقييم الأداء العملي والنظري

المديرية العامة للمعايير المهنية
وتطوير المناهج
دائرة إعداد وتطوير المناهج

الرقم	عناصر التقييم	اسم المتدرب				سلم التقدير				سلم التقدير				ملاحظات	
		0	3	7	10	0	3	7	10	0	3	7	10		
1	يقرأ المخططات والرسومات والتعليمات المتعلقة بالتمرين العملي .														
2	يحدد طريقة العمل الملائمة لتنفيذ العمل المطلوب .														
3	يحدد ويختار المواد اللازمة لتنفيذ العمل .														
4	يحدد ويختار المكان والأجهزة والعدد والأدوات لتنفيذ العمل .														
5	يجهز ويضبط المكان والأجهزة لتنفيذ العمل .														
6	ينفذ خطوات العمل حسب التسلسل الملائم .														
7	ينفذ خطوات العمل حسب المعايير الفنية المعتمدة .														
8	ينجز إنهاءات العمل حسب المعايير الفنية المعتمدة .														
9	يحقق العمل عند الانتهاء منه الهدف المطلوب منه .														
10	يلتزم المتدرب بالسلوك المهني الذي تتطلبه طبيعة العمل .														
11	يطبق تعليمات وشروط الصحة والسلامة المهنية في موقع العمل .														
12	ينهي العمل ضمن الوقت المتوقع للتمرين .														
13	يدرك المتدرب المعلومات النظرية المرتبطة بالأداء العملي .														
	المجموع الفرعي	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	المجموع النهائي	0				0				0					
	الدرجة النهائية %	0.00				0.00				0.00					

التوصيات :	1	4
	2	5
	3	6

اسم المقيم : الوظيفة : التوقيع : التاريخ :
201 / / م