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## **How Neoliberal is the Philosophy of Education in Oman? A Corpus-Based Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Neoliberal ideas on education are reflected in the discourses of educational philosophies worldwide. This article attempts to analyze the corpus of the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman to find out the extent to which the document is influenced by the neoliberal agenda on education. This question is answered by using (i) the Bakhtinian concept of words as ideological signs and (ii) the methodology of corpus-based analysis. The concordances and collocations of the selected high-frequency words are identified and analyzed in the corpus with the help of WordSmith Tools. The analysis shows that the neoliberal agenda is present in how Oman is presented to the international community as a modern, neoliberal state but is absent in the conceptualization of the principles and goals of education that emphasize the integrated growth of learners whose identities are rooted in the Islamic tradition, and the Omani heritage and culture. The results have important implications for policy-makers, administrators, and practitioners.

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## 1. Introduction

In a chapter titled “The Philosophy of Education and Educational Practice”, Pring (2010) discusses what it means to be educated in today’s world and argues that it is important to examine the language we use to talk about education and its implications for how it shapes our ideas on education. By critically examining the Nuffield Review of Education and Training 14–19 for England and Wales, Pring (2010) contrasts two discourses on education. The first one uses the ‘management language’ of the neoliberal discourse, such as *targets, audit, delivered, efficiency gains, consumer, and inputs*. The second one emphasizes a more humanistic approach to education and is centered around the following words and expressions: *trying to make sense of reality, seeking understanding, and exploring what it means to be human*. The ideas borrowed from the second discourse are used in Pring’s (2010) definition of an educated person. Pring (2010, p. 63) states that in today’s world, an educated person is,

one who has a sufficient grasp of those ideas and principles to enable him or her to manage life intelligently, who has the competence and skills to tackle practical tasks, including those required for employment, who has a sense of community and the disposition to make a contribution to it, who is morally serious in the sense that he or she cares about fairness and responsibility to others, who is inspired by what has been done by others and might be done by oneself, and who has a sense and knowledge of self-confidence and resilience in the face of difficulty.

Pring (2010) further states that the development of such an educated person that is accessible to everyone should be the aim of education.

In what follows, we present an analysis of the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman (hereafter, *The Philosophy of Education*, The Education Council, 2017) for the purpose of understanding how the language used in the text of the Philosophy of Education shapes the country’s discourse on education. Specifically, we are interested in investigating the following research question: To what extent, if any, has the text of the Philosophy of Education been

influenced by the use of the ‘management language’ found in the modern, neoliberal discourse on education? We answer this question by using the theoretical framework of Bakhtin (see Vološinov, 1973) on ideology and language, specifically the theoretical construct of words as ideological signs and the methodology of corpus-based discourse analysis. We believe that the answer to this question has important implications for policy-making and educational practices in Oman.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the main theoretical constructs of Bakhtin’s circle (Brandist, 2002; Vološinov, 1973) of words as ideological signs. Section 3 sets the context for the study with a description of the philosophy of education in Oman and the neoliberal agenda on education. Section 4 describes the methods and procedures of the study, i.e., its research question and the methodology used to analyze the data. Section 5 is a data analysis together with the results of the study, which is followed by the conclusion and a discussion of the results in section 6.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

As mentioned previously, neoliberal ideas that drive the political, economic, and social reforms in many countries throughout the world have received the status of common-sense assumptions in the course of globalizing the meaning of education (on globalization, localization, and glocalization, see in particular Bauman, 1998). They are not questioned partly because the proponents of neoliberalism present their agenda through concepts that appeal to many people. These concepts are expressed through words and expressions, such as *freedom, personal choice, wealth and prosperity, consume, consumer, economic growth, and free markets*. To assist us in the analysis of the Philosophy of Education for the purpose of understanding the extent to which the neoliberal agenda is expressed in the document, we use the idea of words as ideological signs by Bakhtin’s circle (Brandist, 2002; Vološinov, 1973). According to Bakhtin and Vološinov (Vološinov, 1973), ideology is not subjective, and it cannot originate in the mind of an individual; consciousness becomes consciousness only when it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content. In their work, ideology and sign are equated; wherever a sign is present, ideology is present too. By claiming

that the word is the ideological phenomenon par excellence, words are considered to be ideological signs. Words are socially ubiquitous. According to Bakhtin (see Vološinov, 1973), similar to the ideological signs in the established, dominant ideology, words can reflect, change and distort reality and therefore, they are inseparable from the living practices.

### 3. The Context of the Study

The purpose of this section is to outline the context of the study and present a summary of the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman, one of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries located in the southeast part of the Arabian Peninsula. The current Philosophy of Education has been revised with the aim of aligning it with the National Strategy for Education 2040 (Secretariat General of the Education Council, 2018), continuous developments and reforms that have been taking place in Oman since 1978, the year of publication of the first Philosophy of Education in Oman. The period of continuous economic, social, and educational reforms is known as the Omani Renaissance. In the area of education, these reforms resulted in the development of the two-cycle basic public education system, an increase in the literacy rate, which presently constitutes 98.6% in the age group of 15 to 24 years, equal access to male and female students to secondary and post-secondary education, development of the country's tertiary system (Issan, 2010; Nasser, 2020; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022). The first edition of the Philosophy of Education acknowledges the achievements of past educational reforms and sets objectives for future development.

At present, Oman, as is the case with many other GCC countries, faces many challenges that arise from the urgent need to diversify the economy, increase non-oil revenue and maintain fiscal sustainability (Ministry of Finance, 2021, pp. 7-13). In the 2022 budget, the deficit is estimated at the level of 1.55 billion Omani Rials, which constitutes 15% of the total revenue and 5% of the country's GDP. The deficit will be partly financed through external and domestic borrowing and partly through the country's reserves. The budget projects a decrease in public spending by 0.3 % as compared to the level of government spending in 2021; however, it promises to maintain the level of spending for basic public

services, such as education, health, housing, and social welfare. This level of spending corresponds to 40% of the current total expenditure projected in the 2022 budget (p. 49). 75% of the total revenue for the 2021 budget was generated through oil and gas, and only 25% constituted non-hydrocarbon revenue. Despite the fact that the current unemployment rate in Oman is at a low level of 5%, there is an increase in unemployment, particularly among university and college graduates. The Philosophy of Education acknowledges these challenges that the country faces and sets as its goal the development of the major principles of education that would prepare the future generations of Omanis to address these challenges.

#### 3.1. The Philosophy of Education: A Brief Overview

The first revised edition of the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman has been developed by the Education Council (General Secretariat of the Education Council, 2017). The Education Council, a policy-making body, sets out a number of principles and objectives for the purpose of bringing a quality shift in the Omani educational system. The Philosophy of Education comprises three sections: (i) an introduction, (ii) sources for the Philosophy of Education, and (iii) the principles and objectives of the Philosophy of Education. The introduction starts with a quote from the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said that highlights the dedication of the Omani State to the process of educational reforms. The outcomes of the reforms are the development of an educated population that is ready to contribute to the development of the State and to meet the challenges of the modern world. This quote taken from His Majesty's speech at the UNESCO general conference (General Secretariat of the Education Council, 2017, p. 4) sets up the document agenda that is reflected in the document's main sources and principles.

Ten main sources mentioned in the document constitute the basis of educational reforms in teaching and learning and include the following: The Islamic religion, the thoughts of His Majesty the Sultan, the basic statute of the State, Omani civilization, Omani society, the future vision of the State, modern educational thought, characteristics of learners, international conventions and charters, and contemporary

international issues. The description of the ten main sources is followed by the 16 principles that serve as teaching and learning objectives to be achieved by Omani educational institutions. These principles emphasize the importance of learner growth, Omani culture, values, and identity, respect for national and international human rights and duties, education for sustainable development, equality in education, the relevance of education to job market needs, education for a knowledge-based economy, research and innovation, entrepreneurship, education for peace and mutual understanding, and life-long learning.

In a chapter on educational reform in Oman, Nasser (2020) briefly discusses the philosophical position of the Ministry of Education that goes back to a white paper published in 1978. The Ministry's vision then was to develop an educational system that would emphasize cultural traditions, Islamic values, Omani identity, and holistic development of the individual (on the role of culture in the personal and social welfare, see in particular Nurutdinova et al. (2021)). For the purpose of preparing young Omanis to live and work in the context of modern global economies, this philosophical position prioritized the development of critical thinking skills, collaboration, and a positive attitude towards schooling. It emphasized students' responsibilities for their own learning and independent learning. This philosophical position was reflected in the educational reform that introduced a two-cycle structure from grade 1 to grade 10, improved school curricula with a focus on science, mathematics, English, and computer skills, and introduced innovative teaching and assessment practices. One of the drawbacks of Nasser's chapter, which provides a comprehensive review of the educational reform in Oman, is that the author does not really discuss the philosophy of education. Instead, he demonstrates how the philosophical position taken by the Ministry of Education of the Sultanate was realized in innovative teaching and assessment practices.

To the best of our knowledge, there was only one study that critically examined the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman (Kooli et al., 2019). By using a descriptive-analytical method, Kooli and his colleagues (2019) analyzed the Philosophy of

Education against the following philosophical schools of thought in education: essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism. As a result of their analysis, the researchers concluded that the developers of the Philosophy of Education combined the modern educational principles that reflect the needs of a knowledge-based society (e.g., *knowledge production*), as outlined in the UNESCO documents, with the principles of Islam. In their work, Kooli et al. (2019) equated the principles of a knowledge-based society with progress without any critical examination of these principles. In addition, their research did not provide any evaluation as to how these principles are realized in the text of the Philosophy of Education. This paper attempts to address this gap.

### 3.2. The Neoliberal View of Education

The educational policies and philosophies of many countries embrace the discourse of neoliberalism that is centered around the concepts of *free market*, *commodification*, *globalization*, *knowledge-based economy*, and *human capital*. These concepts are prevalent in the discourses of major international donors, e.g., the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, whose financial assistance is contingent upon economic, political, and social reforms that lead to free market economies, privatization, and reducing government support (International Monetary Fund, 2022). Neoliberalism promotes ideas that emphasize a shift from state-managed economic policies to a policy of decentralization, liberalization, and deregulation of the financial market and outsourcing the production of goods and services.

In an article that presents an overview of the history and the current state of neoliberalism, Centeno and Cohen (2012) state that neoliberalism equates freedom and liberty with political systems that value private property rights, deregulation, and limited governance. The ideas of neoliberalism are ubiquitous; they permeate modern political, economic, and social discourses and are seen in today's world to possess the authority of absolute truths (i.e., an orthodoxy) or natural laws (e.g., the gravitational laws of physics). Following Thatcher's TINA statement (There is No Alternative!) (Thatcher, as cited in Centeno and Cohen, 2012, 5.10), neoliberalism as a

philosophy, an economic policy, a way of thinking and living a modern life, is often presented as a set of common-sense assumptions that are natural and inevitable.

Neoliberal concepts and ideas are reflected in educational discourses, for example, in the policies and educational philosophies of educational systems throughout the world (see, e.g., Danvers, 2019; Davies and Bansel, 2007; Down, 2009). These ideas can be summarized as follows. The neoliberal philosophy of education views learners as human capital, whereas knowledge and skills that are to be acquired by these learners constitute a commodity that is valued inasmuch as it can create economic growth and development. Tsogas (2012) explains that just as labor becomes a special commodity that can be bought and sold for money in a labor-based economy, knowledge in a knowledge-based economy becomes the main source of wealth creation. Tsogas (2012, p. 385) further states that during the era of cognitive capitalism, “knowledge, affect, and immaterial labor [intellectual work] are emerging as the dominant forms of organization in both the spheres of work and society”. The difference between living and producing ceases to exist, and it leads to the creation of new social practices, for example, the practice of life-long learning or the requirement for constant adaptation and change. At the time of cognitive capitalism, there was no clear separation between the labor- and non-labor hours.

Within this framework, the goal of education is to facilitate learners’ development into autonomous, self-regulating, and market-knowledgeable entrepreneurs. Future knowledge workers should take responsibility for their learning and equip themselves with knowledge and skills that would enable them to succeed in extremely competitive and volatile job markets. Education is also viewed as a type of private investment that can be measured for its cost-effectiveness by ensuring that it adheres to certain standards and outcomes. Knowledge and skills that add a competitive edge in the job market for a future knowledge worker are preferred over other less cost-effective ones.

#### 4. Methodology

The methodology of corpus-based discourse analysis is used in this study to analyze the

corpus of the Philosophy of Education. According to Flowerdew (2012) and Baker (2006, p. 9), this methodology uses corpora (i.e., large bodies of texts) and different corpus processes that manipulate the corpus data in a certain way (e.g., to obtain frequency lists, as in Heidari et al. study (2020), concordances, collocations). Data is manipulated for the purpose of identifying patterns that show the use of language in the construction of discourse. By using the methodology of corpus-based discourse analysis, we analyzed the language patterns used in the corpus of the Philosophy of Education for the purpose of answering the following question: To what extent, if any, has the leading document on education in the Sultanate of Oman been influenced by the neoliberal agenda on education? The analysis of the corpus consists of 3,350 words on the Philosophy of Education in Oman. The software WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2010) is used to conduct the analysis. WordSmith is a lexical analysis software that consists of three major components: (i) Concord, (ii) KeyWords; (iii) WordList. The tool Concord identifies the concordances of a given word or phrase (i.e., it allows the researcher to see the context of a specific word or phrase). The tool KeyWords identifies the keywords used in the corpus and the tool WordList creates a list of words found in the corpus.

#### 5. Data Analysis and Results

Our analysis starts by identifying the list of words used in the corpus. Table 1 in Appendix presents a list of words used in the corpus with their frequencies in descending order. For the purpose of this paper, our analysis is limited to analyzing the following words: *education* (69), *educational* (18), *development* (38), *learners* (22), *knowledge* (17), *skills* (14), *Omani* (22), and *Oman* (20). The word *education* has been selected for the analysis, as it has the highest frequency of 69 tokens. The adjective *educational* (18 tokens), which is derived from the noun *education*, has also been included in the analysis. The word *development* (38 tokens) has been chosen as the second high-frequency word. For the purpose of this paper, we limit our analysis only to selected nouns and adjectives. Therefore, the verb *develop* (26), which is the third highest-frequency word, has been excluded from our analysis. The adjective

*Omani* (22 tokens) and the noun *Oman* (20 tokens) are the next highest frequency keyword. The word *learners* has the same frequency as the word *Omani* (i.e., 22 tokens). In addition to the high-frequency keywords, we have also focused our analysis on the words *knowledge* (17) and *skills* (14) as nouns that are semantically related to the concept of education.

In order to understand how these words are used in the corpus, the concordances and collocations of the frequently used words have been identified and examined. This analysis is important in understanding the context of their use and their role in constructing the discourse of the Philosophy of Education.

### ***Education (69)***

The word *education* has the highest frequency of 69 tokens. In the corpus, it collocates with the following lexical items: *Philosophy, Sultanate, Oman, develop, and development*. The high frequency of this word is explained by the fact that it is used in the title of the document (i.e., ‘the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman’) that is referenced throughout the document. An analysis of the concordances of the word *education* shows that this lexical item is used in the context of developments and reforms that aim to promote a quality shift in the educational system of Oman (e.g., ‘attention to the development and reform of education in Oman’, ‘significant steps to help develop the education system’).

### ***Educational (18)***

The adjective *educational* has a frequency of 18 tokens. The word *educational* is used in a context that describes the process of education (e.g., ‘educational stages and pathways’), policy, institutions (e.g., educational institutions), and objectives (e.g., ‘educational objectives’). When the adjective *educational* modifies the nouns *thought, philosophy, and research*, it collocates with the adjectives *modern* or *current* (e.g., ‘current educational research’, ‘modern educational thought’).

### ***Development (38)***

In the corpus of the document, the noun *development* patterns with the adjective *sustainable*. In addition, it has the following modifiers: *continuous, comprehensive, economic,*

*technological, future, successive, knowledge, and human* (e.g., ‘comprehensive development of the learner’).

### ***Learners (22)***

The word *learners* collocates with the word *integrated*. An analysis of the concordances of the word *learners* shows that the Philosophy of Education promotes learners’ growth and development (e.g., ‘develop integrated personality’). Learners should grow and develop in an integrated way (e.g., ‘develop abilities, skills, talents, and interests of learners’). According to the document, the Omani educational system should aim at providing learners with a comprehensive education that, in addition to equipping them with knowledge and skills, should include the development of learners’ aesthetical taste and promote a sustainable healthy lifestyle. Comprehensive education should make learners aware of their religious obligations. It should promote a sense of citizenship (e.g., ‘the aim of ethics in education is to develop learners into good citizens’), make learners aware of their rights and responsibilities, develop their critical thinking skills and instill a culture of research and innovation (e.g., ‘to train learners to observe, analyze, experiment’).

### ***Knowledge (17)***

The word *knowledge* has a frequency of 17 tokens. There are a number of contexts where the word *knowledge* is used in the corpus of the Philosophy of Education. The first context emphasizes the importance of obtaining knowledge and scientific thinking, as this is a valued goal in Islam (e.g., ‘Islam calls for people to obtain knowledge and scientific thinking’). Knowledge is also used in relation to obtaining the knowledge of thinking critically through the process of acquisition of higher-order thinking skills. In the second context, the word *knowledge* is used in reference to local and traditional knowledge for sustainable development (e.g., ‘encourage the production and development of local knowledge’). The word *knowledge* is also used in reference to the knowledge society, technology, and economy (e.g., ‘technology knowledge, knowledge-based economy, knowledge society’). In the corpus, the word *knowledge* collocates with the word *skills*. The collocation of *knowledge and skills* is mainly

used in a context that discusses the importance of equipping learners with competencies and skills needed to address the challenges of the modern world and knowledge and skills for sustainable development (e.g., ‘certain knowledge and skills are needed when confronting natural disasters and managing water and food security’).

#### **Skills (14)**

The word *skills* is used in a variety of contexts. For example, in some contexts, the word *skills* is related to research and critical thinking (e.g., ‘develop skills of research, inference and investigation’), while in others, it is related to the integrated skills of learners (e.g., ‘abilities, skills, talents, and interests of learners’). The word *skills* is also used in the context of job readiness. For example, it is stated in the Philosophy of Education that every learner should acquire basic *job skills* that are needed in order to be competitive in the local and international markets. Certain *skills* are essential and are to be acquired for the betterment of the knowledge society and for the development of learner’s mental, physical, intellectual, and social characteristics.

#### **Oman (20)**

The word *Oman* has a frequency of 20 tokens; it collocates with the following lexical items: *Sultanate, education* (e.g., ‘education in Oman’, ‘the Sultanate of Oman’). The word also occurs in reference to the people who lived in Oman at the beginning of civilization, to the strong ties of Oman to other societies and cultures, and to the importance of developing an education system that values the Omani heritage and culture (e.g., ‘maintain and develop of Oman’s civilization heritage’).

#### **Omani (22)**

The word *Omani* has 22 tokens, and it collocates with the words *society, identity, and aspirations*. The collocation of *Omani society* is used in a context that discusses the challenges of modern Omani society (e.g., ‘the development requirements of Omani society’). Altruism, peace, and social security characterize Omani society. Concordances of the collocation *Omani identity* are used in the context of the Islamic faith, and a strong sense of national identity (e.g., ‘reinforce concepts, such as citizenship and Omani identity’); on the concept

of national identity, see in particular Sahraee and Khayatan, 2019). The text also emphasizes the need to address the future aspirations of the Omanis (e.g., ‘the needs and aspirations of the Omani people’).

## **6. Discussion**

The analysis of the corpus of the Philosophy of Education shows that the language used in the neoliberal discourse is present in the description of Omani society. In the Philosophy of Education, Omani society is described as modern, knowledge- and technology-based. In the corpus, development is described as comprehensive, continuous, and successive, as it encompasses all aspects of Omani society: human, economic, and technological. The goal of the development is to address the challenges of the modern world, which are globalization and technological advancement. This description is very much in line with the neoliberal discourse of knowledge-based and technology-based modern societies that face many challenges. The description highlights the neoliberal concept of change and development, thus promoting the goal of education, which is to address the needs of ever-changing markets.

In the corpus, the presence of neoliberal thinking is less prevalent in the contexts of the use of the following words and collocations: *learners, knowledge, skills, Oman, and Omanis*. An analysis of the multiple contexts of the word *learners* shows that the goal of education is not only to equip learners with the knowledge and skills needed to address the challenges of the knowledge-based economy but also to facilitate their integrated growth and comprehensive development. The goal of education is to help learners in the development of their talents, interests, aesthetic tastes, and their ability to lead healthy and sustainable lifestyles.

This comprehensive development of learners is ensured by educational institutions that introduce knowledge and scientific thinking, as these are known in the Islamic tradition. In the corpus, the word *knowledge* is also used to refer to local and traditional knowledge, the acquisition and development of which is important for sustainable development. The importance of knowledge and skills that help confront natural disasters and water and food security is also emphasized. It is true that in the corpus of the document, the words *knowledge,*

*skills*, and the collocation of *knowledge and skills* are used in contexts that emphasize the importance of the acquisition of knowledge and skill for the purpose of satisfying the needs of the knowledge-based economy, which is in line with the neoliberal way of thinking. However, the important message communicated in the discourse of the Philosophy of Education is that the Omani educational system should equip learners with knowledge and skills for the development of learners' intellectual, mental, physical, aesthetical, and social characteristics and for the betterment of the Omani society. Omanis drive their identity from Islam and from their culture and heritage. The document emphasizes the importance of preserving the Omani heritage and culture by building a strong sense of citizenship and a sense of belonging to the Islamic, Arab, and Omani identity. The education system should encourage pride in Omani identity and history.

The focus on the comprehensive development of learners means that the discourse of the Philosophy of Education diverges from the neoliberal discourse on education in that it promotes education that facilitates the integrated development of learners for the purpose of living their lives in meaningful ways and for the betterment of the international, national and local communities.

The results of the present study seem to be in line with the results obtained by Kooli et al. (2019), who position the Philosophy of Education in Oman between the two major philosophies of education, such as Perennialism and Progressivism. These two major educational philosophies are based on the principles that emphasize the integrated growth of learners, education of human rights and duties, accountability, education for peace, mutual understanding, and life-long learning, among other things (p. 46). The results of the study also show that the revised version of the Philosophy of Education reflects the original philosophical position taken by the Ministry of Education, which is discussed in Nasser (2020). What makes the analysis undertaken in this study different from those of Kooli et al. (2019) and Nasser (2020) is that neither of these two studies draws our attention to the contradictions found in the description of the modern neoliberal State of Oman, on the one hand, and the philosophical principles included in the

Philosophy of Education, on the other. In the philosophical position taken by the Ministry of Education and the corpus of the Philosophy of Education, the description of the neoliberal economy is centered around the concepts of change, development, and competitiveness, which are the prerequisites for the successful functioning of the modern, neoliberal state. In the description of the educational system, on the other hand, the emphasis is on the educational systems that value tradition, cultural heritage, and societal cohesion, which may resist the change and development required by the market-oriented neoliberal economy. Furthermore, the focus on the integrated development of learners may be in conflict with the need to equip young people with specific knowledge and skills needed for the job market. Promoting sustainable development may be in conflict with the consumer culture prioritized by the neoliberal economy. One potential area for future research is to investigate how the ideas of the Philosophy of Education are interpreted by administrators, teachers, and local communities in Oman. What discourse, neoliberal or humanistic, prevails in strategic plans, curricula, and course learning outcomes of the Omani educational institutions? Can these discourses (i.e., neoliberal vs. humanistic) be reconciled? These important questions need to be addressed in future research.

In this study, we tried to answer the following research question: To what extent, if any, has the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman been influenced by the neoliberal agenda on education? To answer this question, we selected and analyzed the concordances and collocations of the high-frequency words in the corpus of the document. Our analysis shows that the words and collocations associated with the neoliberal discourse are present in the description of the country. Oman is presented to the international community as a knowledge-based economy that is faced with many challenges caused by globalization and technological advancement.

The discourse of constant change and development as an important prerequisite for the successful development of a modern, neoliberal state has also been emphasized. Our analysis demonstrates that the neoliberal discourse is less prevalent in the description of



the educational system that is designed to meet these challenges. The text of the Philosophy of Education diverges from the neoliberal agenda of viewing knowledge and skills as a commodity. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of knowledge and skills for the purpose of integrated growth and comprehensive development of learners whose identities are rooted in the Islamic tradition and the Omani heritage and culture. The Philosophy of Education provides guidelines for educational policies that, in their turn, serve as blueprints for the teaching practice. The document sends a very important message. Education should not be interpreted in the narrow 'neoliberal' sense of equipping young people with knowledge and skills for getting jobs, but rather the goal of education should be the comprehensive development of young people for the betterment of the local and international communities. It is our belief that this humanistic goal of education reflected in the discourse of the Philosophy of Education should be considered by policy-makers, administrators, and practitioners. This paper focuses on the Philosophy of Education in Oman. In a future study, one might focus on the Philosophies of Education in the other GCC countries to find out if conclusions similar to the one arrived at here can be drawn. The results gained from such a study can be used to examine whether the philosophies of education in the GCC as a political and geographical block are equally influenced by the neoliberal agenda on education.

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## Appendix 1

**Table 1**

*Key Words and their Frequencies in the Corpus of the Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman*

Word	Frequencies*
education	69
development	38
develop	26
Omani	22
learners	22
society	20
Oman	20
objectives	18
educational	18
Sultanate	17
principle	16
knowledge	16
social	14
skills	14
reinforce	14
State	12
awareness	12
human	11
rights	10
culture	10
modern	9
Islam	9
values	8
other	8
quality	8
national	8
learning	8
identity	8
economic	7
technological	6
security	5

sector	5
scientific	5
public	5
justice	5
growth	5
citizenship	5
Shura	4
intellectual	4
equality	4
thought	3
teaching	3
heritage	3
belonginess	3
Arabic	3
women	2
religion	2
innovation	2
initiative	2
globalization	2
families	2
faith	2
Arab	2
ability	2
abilities	2
well-educated	1
wealth	1
teachers	1

\* Frequencies of grammatical words or function words (e.g., *a*, *the*, *and*, etc.) have been excluded from the analysis.