

BEYOND THE HORIZON & BACK: THE SULTAN QABOOS SCHOLARSHIP



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Related literature

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The late Sultan Qaboos bin Said Taimour of Oman made education a national priority upon taking the throne in 1970. This emphasis included opportunities for higher education study. A distinction of Qaboos' vision was the support and encouragement of an international academic experience.

01 INTRODUCTION

This research chapter examined reflections of five Omani citizens who were awarded the Sultan's scholarships for international study. They studied in either Australia or the United States. Each graduated and returned home to live and work in Oman.

02 OBJECTIVE

To gain an understanding of the long-term impacts of studying abroad on Omani citizens in relation to the modern Omani renaissance.

03 METHODOLOGY

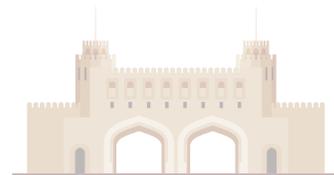
Using a qualitative research study method to capture data and through narrative inquiry to support oral history telling, the researcher implemented semi-structured interviews with each participant.

- One, 1-hour video interview
- Five participants (n=5).
 - 3 Female, 2 Male
 - Two recently graduated within 5 years
 - Two graduated 10-15 years prior
 - One studied in the early 1980s

04 ANALYSIS

- Anonymized recruitment with informed consent. Confidential storage set-up. Pseudonym assignment.
- Transcription application utilized to preserve authenticity of data. Multiple, in-depth transcript reviews.
- Inductive analysis and axial coding. Capture and synthesize main themes for conceptual coding.

Three themes emerged from all 5 interviews. First, all participants believed that the experience of study abroad led to an **independence** they had not experienced. Second, the participants all expressed a feeling of **embodying** the very essence of "being Oman." Third, each participant articulated that their experience was a direct result of **Qaboos vision**.



05 RESULTS/FINDINGS

- **Independence.** The participants newly experienced independence continues to play a factor in their lives after their study abroad.
 - "Even this sense of independence and confidence that I have now, and the strength I have now I don't think would be this strong if it was not for my experience in the U.S."
- **Identity.** Their renewed sense of national identity fosters their motivation to be engaged in their communities.
 - "Living the life, the daily life, the lived experience of a western person, or western culture was different, and it made me realize there are different experiences in the world and different ways to be."
- **Influence.** The participants' belief in the Sultan's vision inspired them to find ways to encourage study abroad in their professional and personal lives.

06 CONCLUSION

Studying abroad can foster personal development beyond acculturation. Participants in this study believe their experience impacted their personal growth in ways which they continue to apply in their daily lived experiences and they attribute it directly to Qaboos' vision for Oman.

Further exploration of the transformative impacts of studying abroad will be explored in the researcher's doctoral dissertation. The study will return to Oman and focus on connections of the study abroad experience to life-long development of the participants and will be underpinned by three themes: reflective application, making meaning, and identity.