

**SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING IN OMAN:
TEACHERS' CONCERNS AND LEVELS OF USE IN THE
ADOPTION OF STUDENT-CENTERED TEACHING APPROACH**

by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

December 2007

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

DEDICATION

For the greatest family:

My dear wife who fill my heart with love and life with beauty, and our beloved kids: Yousuf, Mohammed, Yaqeen and Tuqa, for being part of this amazing journey to get “our” doctorate! And trust that they will see value in the pursuit of knowledge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of a doctorate degree is an enormous undertaking. I extend my appreciation to a number of people who enabled me to complete this dissertation.

I gratefully acknowledge the Ministry of Education in Oman, the principals, the Social Studies teachers whose willing participation in this study was so crucial. My many thanks go to the teachers involved in this study for their time and effort they allocated.

I am also grateful to my supervisor, *Dr. Shuki Osman*, for the many hours he devoted supervising my research study. His sound guidance, sincere interest and inspiring suggestions on the drafts of this work, and constant support and useful feedback, so readily provided throughout my research study have been invaluable. I would like also to express my thanks to *Dr. Khadijah Zon* for her assistance and encouragement throughout my project. I would also like to thank *Associate Professor Dr. Abd. Rashid Mohammed*, the Dean of School of Educational Studies. Furthermore, I would like to express my appreciation for the support offered by the staff in School of Educational Studies at USM.

I have been very fortunate to work with outstanding individuals who have encouraged and inspired me. I would like to thank all of my friends, especially *Rashid* and *Salim* for their faithful companionship and great support during my study.

Finally, I wish to give a special thank-you to my family for their continuous support back home, throughout this research endeavor. To my mother, brothers, and sisters for teaching me how to value learning and encouraging me to achieve that which I thought was unachievable. To my wife for her patience and unswerving love and understanding.

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

Abbreviations used in this study are listed below for reference:

<i>S-CTA</i>	Student-Centered Teaching Approach
<i>SoC</i>	Stages of Concern
<i>SoCQ</i>	Stages of Concern Questionnaire
<i>LoU</i>	Levels of Use
<i>LoUSA</i>	Levels of Use Self-Assessment
<i>LoUIS</i>	Levels of Use Interview Schedule
<i>LoUI</i>	Levels of Use Interview
<i>CBAM</i>	Concern-Based Adoption Model
<i>MANOVA</i>	Multivariate Analyses of Variance
<i>ANOVA</i>	Univariate Analyses of Variance

**PENGAJARAN PENGAJIAN SOSIAL DI OMAN: KEPERIHATINAN DAN
TAHAP PENGGUNAAN GURU-GURU DALAM PENGAMBILAN
PENDEKATAN PENGAJARAN BERPUSATKAN PELAJAR**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidik keperihatinan dan Tahap Penggunaan guru-guru Pengajian Sosial dalam pengambilan dan pengamalan pendekatan pengajaran berpusatkan pelajar (S-CTA) dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran Pengajian Sosial di sekolah sistem Pendidikan Asas di Oman. Dua dimensi Model Pengambilan dan Pengamalan Berasaskan keperihatinan (CBAM), iaitu dimensi Tahap Kekhuatiran (SoC) dan Tahap Penggunaan (LoU) difokuskan dalam kajian ini. Sampel kajian ini terdiri daripada 525 orang guru Pengajian Sosial di 170 sekolah Pendidikan Asas. Subsampel untuk ditemuduga dalam kajian ini terdiri daripada 13 orang guru yang dipilih daripada sampel asal. Dua instrumen iaitu Borang Soal Selidik Tahap keperihatinan (SoCQ) dan Tahap Penggunaan Penilaian Diri (LoUS-A) digunakan untuk mengutip data daripada sampel. Kemudiannya, instrumen yang ketiga iaitu Temu Bual Tahap Penggunaan (LoUA) dijalankan keatas subsampel 13 orang guru.

Penemuan utama menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru Pengajian Sosial dalam kajian ini sedang mengalami keperihatinan Diri dan keperihatinan Tidak Berkaitan yang tinggi dalam pengambilan dan penggunaan S-CTA dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Keperihatinan yang paling tinggi dalam kalangan guru-guru dalam kajian ini adalah pada tahap (Kesedaran) manakala kekhuatiran yang kedua tertinggi adalah pada tahap (Maklumat). Dari segi Tahap Penggunaan (LoU) S-CTA, guru-guru Pengajian Sosial dalam

kajian ini didapati terkelompok pada tahap penggunaan, iaitu (Penggunaan Mekanikal) dan (Rutin).

Perbezaan jantina yang signifikan pada (SoC dan LoU) menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru perempuan menunjukkan keperihatinan SoC dan Penggunaan LoU yang lebih tinggi berbanding guru-guru lelaki. Disamping itu, perbezaan ketara yang dikenalpasti antara 3 kumpulan yang berbeza pengalaman mengajar dalam sistem Pendidikan Asas dalam Keperihatinan Pengurusan dan Tahap Penggunaan. Keperihatinan bahawa guru-guru yang mempunyai pengalaman mengajar antara 4 – 6 tahun adalah lebih tinggi daripada guru-guru yang mempunyai pengalaman yang lebih lama atau kurang daripada 4-6 tahun. Sebaliknya, penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tidak terdapat perbezaan signifikan antara semua kumpulan mengikut tahap pengalaman mengajar dalam sistem Pendidikan Umum, pengkhususan dan kelayakan iktisas dari segi SoC dan LoU. Terdapat perhubungan positif antara kekhawatiran guru-guru Pengajian Sosial dan Tahap Penggunaan mereka dalam pengambilan dan pengamalan S-CTA dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa penyertaan dan penglibatan guru-guru Pengajian Sosial dalam pengambilan dan pengamalan S-CTA dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran mesti digalakkan. Dapatan SoC dan LoU boleh membantu pengendali latihan membuat perubahan menyesuaikan intervensi untuk membantu guru-guru mencapai tahap pelaksanaan S-CTA yang lebih tinggi. Adalah dicadangkan bahawa intervensi mesti mengambilkira keperluan segera guru-guru dalam pelaksanaan S-CTA untuk pengajaran dan

pembelajaran. Implikasi untuk kajian selanjutnya telah dicadangkan dan instrumen kajian ini mungkin menjadi instrumen yang berguna kepada pengkaji lain yang mengkaji perubahan dan inovasi pendidikan.

**SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING IN OMAN:
TEACHERS' CONCERNS AND LEVELS OF USE IN THE
ADOPTION OF STUDENT-CENTERED TEACHING APPROACH**

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate Social Studies teachers' concerns and their Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning at the Basic Education schools in Oman. Two dimensions of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), Stages of Concern (SoC) and Levels of Use (LoU) are employed. A sample of 525 Social Studies teachers from 170 Basic Education schools participated in this study. Sub-sample for the study comprised 13 teachers from the original sample. Two instruments namely the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) and the Level of Use Self-Assessment (LoUS-A) were administered to collect sufficient data from the sample. Subsequently, the third instrument, Level of Use Interview (LoUA) was administered to the sub-sample.

The major findings suggest that the Social Studies teachers in this study were experiencing intense Unrelated and Self Concerns in the adoption of S-CTA in teaching and learning. The most intense concern among the teachers in this study was at the (Awareness) stage while the next highest concern being at the (Informational) stage. In terms of LoU of S-CTA, the Social Studies teachers in this study were clustered in the (Mechanical Use) and the (Routine) user levels.

Significant gender differences in the two (SoC and LoU) show that females seem to be exhibiting higher SoC, and higher LoU as compared to males. In addition, significant differences were identified between the three groups of teaching experience in Basic Education: in Management Concern and Level of Use it appears that teachers with 4 to 6 years of teaching experience were higher than teachers with more or less experience. On the other hand, the findings showed there are no significant differences between all groups of teaching experience in General Education, specialization and qualification in both SoC and LoU. Positive relationship prevails between Social Studies teachers concern and their Levels of Use in the adoption of S-CTA in teaching and learning.

Based on the results of the study, it showed that participation and involvement of Social Studies teachers in the adoption of S-CTA in teaching and learning should be encouraged. The findings of SoC and LoU can help change facilitators to tailor interventions to help teachers achieve higher levels of implementation. It is recommended that interventions should be made to address teachers' immediate needs in implementing S-CTA for teaching and learning. Implications for further research were suggested and the study instruments may be valuable tools for others studying educational change and innovations.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This research is in the area of curriculum implementation. According to King (1991), it was only after the mid-1960s that curriculum implementation gained its importance in educational research. Before that, the success of implementation was determined by comparing the outputs against the inputs of a particular curriculum. There were no considerations given to the processes involved during implementation, whether or not teachers completely understood or use the new programs. Disregard for implementation aspects has been one of the main reasons why many educational changes have failed (Fullan, 1982). However after mid-1960s, curriculum implementation gained researchers' attention and "the importance of documenting the processes that led to outcomes" was recognized (King, 1991).

According to Fullan (1982), implementation is "the process of achieving something new into practice." King (1991) identified curriculum implementation as a process seeking to improve education, which is the "processes of teaching and learning of a written curriculum into classroom situations" (Marsh & Willis, 2003). In implementing a curriculum, a curriculum plan is translated into reality when teachers execute it with students through teaching and learning processes. Curriculum implementation, according to Southern African Development Community (SADC) (2000), involves putting prescribed textbooks, syllabuses and subjects into action. It implies the translation of

“exogenous or endogenous ideas into action” (Hurst, 1983) so that an innovation can be put into actual practice in classroom situations (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977; Marsh & Stafford, 1988; Marsh & Willis, 2003).

This research is about curriculum implementation by the Ministry of Education of Oman. Oman as a developing country is currently in the course of reforming its educational system by introducing the “Basic Education” curriculum. This new curriculum has been put into action since 1998. All related documents have been published, and seminars, workshops, and training courses have been conducted for teachers, plus supporting resources and materials provided to them in order to realize full implementation of the curriculum. One of the school subjects involved is Social Studies. Like other school subjects, the Ministry of Education has been working to promote the implementation of Social Studies new curriculum among teachers in the country, through various processes involving revised textbooks, teaching aids, teaching methods and strategies, teachers' training, classroom activities and evaluation.

1.1.1 Educational Reform (Basic Education System)

Educational reforms in a country will have impact on both on the society and on people's daily lives. As in many other developed countries, there has been increasing demands on the Ministry of Education in Oman to carry out educational reforms that generate new content and ways of teaching and learning in order to prepare its citizens for the development of its society and to meet the needs of the 21st Century. The ministry has expressed strong

concern for the quality of curriculum and its effects on teaching and learning processes. As emphasized by the Omani' Minister of Education:

"In planning the Basic Education subsystem, the Ministry of Education has taken a holistic view of educational development. Due to the inter-relationships and interactions occurring between the different elements involved in the educational process, it has considered all the elements of the educational system as integral parts of the whole which cannot be isolated or developed piecemeal. ... The reform encompassed the whole of the Basic Education curriculum, with all its constituent parts, and included the introduction of new subjects, as a response to modern needs, and an update of teaching method. Access to technology and modern aids were provided to support the efforts of the teachers. ... Manpower planning in all its categories was also reconsidered at the ministry, and an active strategy was established for training and continuing professional development." (Ministry of Education, 2001a, pp. 2-3).

In response to these educational reform, major efforts in the education system was initiated in early 1998, beginning with the introduction of a new education system called "Basic Education" under the 'Educational Development Project'. Basic Education has been described as a

"Unified ten-year education, provided by the government for all children of school age. It meets their Basic Education needs in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, enabling them to continue their education or training based on their interests, aptitudes, and dispositions, and enabling them to face the challenges of their present circumstances and future developments, in the context of comprehensive social development." (Ministry of Education, 2001b, p. 1).

The goals of introducing the Basic Education system are as follows:

- a. Building the whole personality of Omani people to be able to interact positively with the present and future.
- b. Realizing the holistic development of Omani society.
- c. Emphasizing the individual adaptation and sharing of modern life.

- d. Emphasizing the Omani people's adaptation of scientific thinking in life and interaction with the modern science and technology (Ministry of Education, 2005b).

1.1.2 Oman's Social Studies Teachers and Curriculum Implementation

Teachers are at the center of implementing a curriculum. Fullan (1982) stated that curriculum implementation depends on what teachers do and think. They are the ones that deliver the curriculum to the students and bring about learning to happen in classrooms. They decide what teaching strategies will be employed, and how the chosen strategy will facilitate learning in the classroom. Their decisions have an effect on the success or failure of any teaching and learning strategy. Thus, the teacher is a crucial factor to the successful outcome of curriculum implementation.

In Oman, the Ministry of Education has developed the new Social Studies curriculum, and since 1998 has been working to implement it throughout the whole country. It involved many initiatives such as improving teaching strategies, methods and styles to suit the newly developed curriculum, and emphasizing on the learner as the center of the teaching and learning process (Ministry of Education, 2005c, p.7; Ministry of Education, 2005e, p. 10; Ministry of Education, 2005g, p. 13; Ministry of Education, 2005h, p. 10; Ministry of Education, 2005i, p. 14; Ministry of Education 2005j, p. 13).

The authorities at the Ministry of Education, in their efforts to ensure success of its curriculum, have taken many initiatives to improve teachers'

effectiveness while implementing the curriculum. For instance, Social Studies teachers are asked to work with their colleagues and senior teachers to integrate student-centered approach within the curriculum. They have to apply student-centered approach as emphasized in the curriculum. Such approach means that teachers have to (i) use teaching aids and activities which ensure the accomplishment of the specific curriculum goals, (ii) carry out follow-ups during the application of the curriculum under different educational situations, (iii) manage their classes using methods that develop self-learning, promote self-management and encourage independence, and (iv) follow up learners' development and academic progress using different evaluation methods, such as diagnostic methods.

1.1.3 Teaching and Learning Strategies: Student-centered Approach

Under Basic Education curriculum, it is rationalized that during the formative stage, the learner's habits of mind, work, and behavior and most of what is acquired during this early period remains into his or her later stages of study, and will also remain as a personal repertoire in his/her regular or productive life. This is the rationale behind the crucial role of teaching and learning strategies and methods to make the process of education alive and active, and is deployed in the curriculum in all its vital dimensions (Ministry of Education, 2001a, p. 12).

Consequently, it is recommended that teachers should not limit themselves to one strategy, method, or technique, but diversify their teaching and use the various teaching and learning strategies, methods, and techniques judiciously and purposefully. These strategies should be employed

according to the needs of learners and the nature of their learning-teaching situation, in which subject requirements are specifically interwoven. Individual differences are positively honored, so that all learners develop simultaneously. They ultimately reach the desired levels of mastery or excellence at their own pace, and within the constraints of their own circumstances (Ministry of Education, 2001a, pp. 12-13).

This means that the entire curriculum, and its complete implementation, is learner-centered. Teachers attend to the common needs of learners as well as their individual needs, in a holistic manner that encompasses their physical, affective, social, and intellectual development. In addition, learners continue their growth and development and gradually become socialized into the demands of society and organized social life.

Generally, it is obvious that the main reform in the Basic Education curriculum is in teaching methodology, which is to move away from the teacher-centered teaching style and to adopt a student-centered teaching approach in all subjects, and place the students as the most important element in the teaching and learning process.

1.1.4 Social Studies Teachers' Training

Most Social Studies teachers in Oman have a bachelor's degree in education. Some teachers even have the master's degree. It is the government's policy to improve the quality of the teachers through various teacher education programs. To meet this goal, many Social Studies teachers graduated either from Sultan Qaboos University or College of Education under

the Ministry of Higher Education, while some of them graduated from overseas universities. This shows that most Social Studies teachers within the Basic Education school system have a good professional background.

Practically, to make the Basic Education curriculum fruitful and to secure its implementation and guarantee its educational outcomes, the Ministry of Education has geared all available ways and means towards those ends. This includes appropriate replanning and retraining of specialized human resources, and providing the necessary logistics on time in order to achieve the prescribed aims and reach the expected outcomes. Under the new system, the role of a teacher is no longer to impart knowledge, but to be a designer of educational experience, as a guide, a coach, and a facilitator. A teacher needs to accurately diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of the learners and provide a scaffold for them to move ahead in their development. He or she provides students with the necessary self-learning skills, including locating and using knowledge in a way that induces the learner to internalize the ethics of work, mastery, and creativity (Ministry of Education, 2001a, pp. 15-16).

To achieve the above goals, the Ministry of Education has adopted a student-centered teaching approach as a teaching and learning strategy. Since 1998, there have been ongoing efforts to promote the use of student-centered teaching approach in Basic Education schools. Several training centers under the Human Resources Administration and Educational Supervision Administration at ministry level, and the training departments at regional education offices, and the Social Studies Curriculum Development

Department at the ministry were involved (Ministry of Education, 2002e). Support to encourage Social Studies teachers teaching with student-centered teaching approach, has usually been in the form of in-service training, seminars, workshops, meetings, courses, resource packages, and visits by Social Studies supervisors. Therefore, it can be inferred that all Social Studies teachers in Basic Education schools are involved with some form of student-centered teaching approach or have at least a concern with it.

1.1.5 Factors Influencing Teachers' Curriculum Implementation

In recent years many researches have turned to exploring the factors which influence curriculum implementation by teachers. A number of studies have identified various factors within the classroom that affect teachers' decision about the teaching and learning process. The factors are divided into two main categories: (1) Extrinsic factors such as administrative support, time, learners, instructional resources and society groups. (2) Intrinsic factors, such as teachers' knowledge, attitude, beliefs, motivation, self-efficacy, and concerns. Fullan (1991) identified a list of crucial factors which would affect successful implementation of an innovation and hence the desired changes. A total of nine factors are categorized, according to their nature, into three groups, namely, characteristics of change; local characteristics and external factors. These factors are: need, clarity, complexity, quality / practicability, district, community, principal, teacher, and government and other agencies.

It appeared that most studies conducted to investigate factors which influence curriculum implementation by teachers concentrated on the extrinsic factors such as availability of resources, professional support, and training,

whereas only a few studies investigated the intrinsic factors (Fulton, 1997). However, according to Hord et al. (1987) “the single most important factor in any change process is the people who will be most affected by the change” (p.29). As change is a personal experience, the school system and change facilitators need to consider it when implementing a new teaching strategy. To successfully implement the student-centered teaching approach, consideration of what the implementation will mean to teachers’ personal beliefs and values toward use of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning is of great concern (Dexter, Anderson & Becker, 1999). Personnel must be given the necessary training to ease their concerns about the new teaching strategy so that the change process can be accomplished and successful implementation of the new approach will occur (Wyman, 2003). Only when teachers are comfortable with the new approach will they begin to adopt and use it. It is therefore important for the Ministry of Education (i.e. curriculum planners, curriculum designers, curriculum developers, supervisors, principals) to understand teachers’ concerns on the innovation and their Levels of Use, which might lead to the formulation of better policies and practices pertaining to the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.

1.1.6 Social Studies Teachers' Concerns and Levels of Use

As teachers play an important role in the process of change, they need to learn continuously and to master the ways to integrate new ideas or teaching approach with the subjects they teach. More importantly, they have to accept the principle of innovation. Without teachers’ acceptance, we cannot

expect student-centered teaching approach innovation to be implemented successfully. The success of the educational innovation depends much on what teachers' concerns are, what teachers think and what they actually do. It is the responsibility of the government and the school administrators to pay attention to their concern to promote implementation of an innovation.

Hall, Wallace and Dossett (1973) postulated that the concerns or attitudes individuals have about a change are an important dimension in the change process. Veen (1993) pointed out that for any educational innovation, it is important to realize that it is not the view of the innovators about the merits of the innovation that matters, but rather it is the view of the teachers about the innovation that is critical. In the case of this current study, we need to study Social Studies teachers' concern and Levels of Use of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning. Many researches have postulated the importance of knowing teachers' concerns and Levels of Use in the implementation of curriculum innovation (Har, 1996; Desmone, 2005; Savage, 2000; Wan, 2002; Ying, 2001; Edmondson, 2005; Ford, 2006).

Consequently, it is important to examine Social Studies teachers' concerns and their Levels of Use of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning. Teachers' concerns may probably inhibit the use of student-centered teaching approach in the classroom. Of course, school principals, Social Studies supervisors, and change facilitators are delighted to see the success of Social Studies curriculum implementation by using this innovation. So they should always have a good command of what

Social Studies teachers are concerned about and their Levels of Use in the implementation process of it, and immediately address any problems before it is too late.

1.1.7 Theoretical Framework

Related literature on curriculum change and implementation gives a clear explanation on why an implementation of innovation fails or succeeds. Several studies support the notion that full implementation of curriculum innovation requires high concern and Levels of Use of teachers. In other words, deficiency of teachers' concerns and their Levels of Use may be the cause of failure of any implementation of curriculum innovation. For Hall and Hord (2001, 1987) teachers' concern involves the feelings and perceptions about the innovation and the change process in teachers' implementation of a program. The process of change can be more successful if those feelings and perceptions of the individual are considered. Hence, teachers' concerns, and their Levels of Use are described as critical elements to determine whether the implementation of innovation will be successful or not.

The research model in this study focused on the relationship between Social Studies teachers' concerns and Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning, and with other related factors. This model is based on the Theory of Concern, and Concern-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) by Hall et al. (1973). (See figure (3.2) in Chapter Three).

1.2 Problem Statement

In 1998 the Ministry of Education in Oman introduced its Basic Education system to improve the overall quality of education in the country. It involves various aspects such as: 1) Curriculum planning, design, implementation, and evaluation, (2) Personnel at various levels: principals, supervisors, and teachers, and (3) Many types of facilities: instructional technologies, teaching approaches, instructional materials, provision of training courses for teachers, and new schools.

In practice, as part of implementing the new Basic Education curriculum the Ministry of Education has adopted the student-centered teaching approach as a strategy for teaching and learning. Consequently, the use of this approach requires teachers to adopt a different teaching principle, develop a different pedagogy, use a set of materials, assess learners with a new rating technique and monitor a new learning mode (Man, 2001).

Like other school subjects, Social Studies curriculum efforts have been planned under the Basic Education educational reform to support implementing student-centered teaching approach as a strategy for teaching and learning of Social Studies in the schools. For that, documents have been published; meetings, workshops, seminars and training courses have been organized; and supporting resources and materials such as textbooks, maps, atlases, and many instructional resources have been provided to the schools.

Teachers are the cornerstone of an educational system and are the most important agents for curriculum implementation. They determine the success or failure in implementing curriculum change during the process of

teaching and learning (Wan, 2002). Consequently, the Department of Social Studies Curriculum in Oman has conducted training for Social Studies teachers' to improve the quality of teachers' use of student-centered teaching approach. A major problem that emerges is whether teachers can handle the entire changes placed on them as implementers of the newly introduced teaching approach.

As in any curriculum implementation, there is no guarantee of success in the use of the student-centered approach by Omani teachers. Previous reports by the Ministry of Education show that the level of teachers' teaching with student-centered teaching approach is below expectation. (Ministry of Education, 2005k; Ministry of Education, 2005l; Ministry of Education, 2005m). In addition, in the Ministry reports, it appears that the students' achievement is under acceptable levels (Ministry of Education, 2004). Also, experts of Social Studies curriculum emphasized that Social Studies teachers have not reached the maximum use of student-centered teaching approach inside their classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2001c; Ministry of Education, 2002d; Ministry of Education, 2003b; Ministry of Education, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2005n). Therefore there is a need to look into and address the reasons why the use of student-centered teaching approaches within Social Studies classrooms has not reached acceptable expectations.

There is also a need to pay attention to the related factors that influence Social Studies teachers' implementation of student-centered approach in their practice. Educational research has confirmed that there are many factors that influence curriculum implementation at the starting of a new

educational reform (Conroy, 1998). In response to this challenge researches have been encouraged to investigate and explore the intrinsic factors such as teachers' attitudes, motivation, knowledge, awareness, beliefs, thinking, and concerns (Fullan, 1992; Lewthwaite, 2001; Ho-yee, 1992; Helen, 2001; Ma, 2001; Mei, 2003; Man, 2001).

In the same vein, some researchers have stated that investigating teachers' factors is necessary before implementing any educational innovation. For instance, Hall and Hord (2001) found that is important to discover and identify teachers' concerns and their levels of innovation use within an educational reform. Similarly, researchers have found that the lack of implementation of curriculum innovation can be the result of teachers' concerns plus their behavior in the teaching and learning process not matching the expectations of authorities of curriculum development (Ridgway, 2005; Peter, 2003; Wyman, 2003; Wan, 2002; Sun, 2001; Keung, 1995).

It seems that the availability of training programs, teaching materials and related tools in schools for Social Studies teachers is not enough to get full utilization of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning. There are other reasons that contribute to the process and influences teachers' implementation such as their concerns and their Levels of Use. In turn, many surveys find it necessary to look at those factors of teachers when investigating curriculum implementation (Fullan, 1992; Lewthwaite, 2001; Ho-yee, 1992; Helen, 2001; Ma, 2001; Mei, 2003; Man, 2001).

Therefore, after almost 9 years of adopting student-centered teaching approach within teaching and learning process under the Basic Education program in Oman, at what Stages of Concern are Social Studies teachers in Basic Education schools in Oman, and at what Levels of Use are they? Are there any differences in the Stages of Concern and Levels of Use among them, and on what bases?

Thus, to answer such questions, it is necessary to conduct a study to investigate the Social Studies teachers' Stages of Concern and their Levels of Use that influence their utilization of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning to reach the full implementation of Social Studies curriculum despite the efforts of the government to improve the quality of education throughout the country.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study was to address the Social Studies teachers in the Sultanate of Oman and to identify the factors related to adoption of student-centered teaching approach, implemented as a part of the Basic Education curriculum. Specifically this study aimed:

- To find out the Social Studies teachers' concerns and Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- To develop a profile of Social Studies teachers based on their concerns and Level of Use in adopting student-centered approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.

- To examine the relationship between the concerns of Social Studies teachers and their Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- To determine if there is any relationship between Social Studies teachers' concerns in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning, and their teaching experience, gender, specialization, and qualification.
- To determine if there is any relationship between Social Studies teachers' Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning, and their teaching experience, gender, specialization, and qualification.

1.4 Research Questions

The findings of this study were analyzed to address the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1 What are the Stages of Concern of Social Studies teachers in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning?

RQ1a. Do Social Studies teachers' concerns vary among teachers according to their teaching experience in General Education?

RQ1b. Do Social Studies teachers' concerns vary among teachers according to their length of teaching experience in Basic Education?

- RQ1c. Do Social Studies teachers' concerns vary among teachers according to their gender?
 - RQ1d. Do Social Studies teachers' concerns vary among teachers according to their specializations?
 - RQ1e. Do Social Studies teachers' concerns vary among teachers, according to their qualifications?
- RQ2 What are the Levels of Use Social Studies teachers have in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning?
- RQ2a. Do Social Studies teachers' Levels of Use vary among teachers according to their teaching experience in General Education?
 - RQ2b. Do Social Studies teachers' Levels of Use vary among teachers according to their length of teaching experience in Basic Education?
 - RQ2c. Do Social Studies teachers' Levels of Use vary among teachers according to their gender?
 - RQ2d. Do Social Studies teachers' Levels of Use vary among teachers according to their specializations?
 - RQ2e. Do Social Studies teachers' Levels of Use vary among teachers according to their qualifications?
- RQ3 Is there a relationship between Social Studies teachers' concerns and their Levels of Use of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning?

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

This study was designed specifically to answer the above questions, and was translated into the following hypotheses for statistical purpose:

- H of Q1.a There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' teaching experience in General Education regarding the average mean of teachers' concerns in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- H of Q1.b There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' length of teaching experience in Basic Education regarding the average mean of teachers' concerns in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- H of Q1.c There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' gender regarding the average mean of teachers' concerns in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- H of Q1.d There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' specializations regarding the average mean of teachers' concerns in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- H of Q1.e There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' qualifications regarding the average mean of teachers' concerns in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.

- H of Q2.a There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' teaching experience in General Education regarding the average mean of teachers' Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- H of Q2.b There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' length of teaching experience in Basic Education regarding the average mean of teachers' Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- H of Q2.c There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' gender regarding the average mean of teachers' Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- H of Q2.d There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' specializations regarding the average mean of teachers' Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- H of Q2.e There are no significant differences between Social Studies teachers' qualifications regarding the average mean of teachers' Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.

H of Q3 There is a relationship between Social Studies teachers' concerns and their Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.

1.6 Rationale for the Study

The study came as a response to the following:

- The reports from Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman have indicated that Social Studies teachers' teaching performance are still under expectation (Ministry of Education, 2005k; Ministry of Education, 2005l; Ministry of Education, 2005m; Ministry of Education, 2001c; Ministry of Education, 2002d; Ministry of Education, 2003b; Ministry of Education, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2005n).
- The results of the recent educational researches and studies emphasized factors which influence teachers about the implementation of curriculum. These studies have indicated that teachers' concerns and levels of innovation use are one of the most important factors that influence teacher's decision regarding the implementation of curriculum (Ridgway, 2005; Peter, 2003; Wyman, 2003; Wan, 2002; Hall & Hord, 2001; Sun, 2001; Keung, 1995).
- Little attention has been accorded, especially in Oman, to the structure and function of teachers' concerns and their levels of innovation use and the need for a deep understanding about these issues (Al-Hashmi, 2004; Al-Belushi, A. S. 2003; Alkindi, 1997).

- There is a concern of the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman about the utilizing of new teaching methods and approaches. This concern appears in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in the teaching and learning process and the ongoing efforts to provide schools and teachers with related devices.
- The adoption of student-centered teaching approach has begun since 1998. It is necessary for the situation to be reviewed occasionally so as to give change facilitators information on what interventions should be addressed especially, since the innovation is a long-term process and there is a long way to run towards the success of it.
- Recommendations of several studies in Oman to investigate internal factors such as teacher's concern as an important factor which influence the curriculum implementation process (Al-Belushi, A. S. 2003; Alkindi, 1997; Al-Hashmi, 2004; Al-Gabri, 2002).
- There is not any study – at least to the knowledge of the researcher – regarding Social Studies teachers' concerns and their Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning in Oman.

1.7 Significance of the Study

It was anticipated that the results of this study would:

- Provide the Ministry of Education in Oman with current data that will aid the Ministry in making better policy decisions and applying educational strategies with greater certainty regarding the implementation of curriculum in schools.

- Offer clarifications for the Ministry of Education to facilitate change more effectively for the benefit of the teachers and students.
- Inform school officials, policy makers, service providers, and educators themselves in Oman about the Social Studies teachers' concerns, and their Levels of Use. This may be of value for the authorities to take into consideration and to enhance the positive factors and to avoid the factors that affect Social Studies teachers' teaching negatively.
- Provide information about the factors which influence teachers to implement curriculums, in order to improve the teaching process in schools.
- Help the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education in Oman to develop teacher's preparation program and in-service training programs to energize and sustain teachers' concerns and their Levels of Use in Social Studies teaching and learning.
- The study results could hopefully add to the literature and try to fill the research gap in the area in general and in Sultanate of Oman in particular as a foundation for the research community to proceed with further research on the curriculum implementation and teaching and learning effectiveness.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study had been conducted with the following limitations:

- Although there are many factors that may affect teachers' actual adoption of student-centered teaching approach in the classroom setting, this study essentially investigated the Social Studies teachers'

concerns, and their Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.

- This study only looked at the Social Studies teachers' concerns, and their Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning in government Basic Education schools.
- The data was collected from all eleven educational regions in the Sultanate of Oman by using Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ), Levels of Use Self-Assessment (LoUS-A), and Levels of Use Interview Schedule (LoUIS) as survey instruments of the study.
- The results of the study were only representative of the concerns and Levels of Use in the adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning of this survey population.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

For purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made:

- Participants understand the instruments.
- Participants respond honestly to the instruments.
- The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ), Levels of Use Self-Assessment (LoUS-A), and Levels of Use Interview Schedule (LoUIS) are the appropriate instruments for this study.
- Participants responding to the survey are representative of student-centered teaching approach teachers in the Sultanate of Oman.

1.10 Definitions of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms had been defined:

Concerns-Based Adoption Model: A model based on research about educational dissemination and change (Hall & George, 1979). The model is premised on the assumption that change is an ongoing, personal experience and was developed for describing the concerns that professionals may have about an innovation (Bailey & Palsha, 1992). In this study, it is a model to identify Social Studies teachers concerns and their Levels of Use in adoption of student-centered teaching approach in Social Studies teaching and learning.

Concern: As defined by Hall, George, and Rutherford (1998) it is "a state of mental arousal that is influenced by past experience, perceptions, and degree of involvement with an innovation". Wan (2002) defined it as "the mental construct represented by thoughts, feelings, and considerations directed toward a specific task or issue". Additionally, Hornby and Cowie (1992) as in Sun (2001) cited that concern is a "relation or connection; something in which one is interested or which is important to one".

Stages of Concern: They are "categories of concern identified by adopters of innovations as Refocusing, Collaboration, Consequence, Management, Personal, Informational, and Awareness" (Hall et al., 1998).

Peak Stage of Concern: It is the stage of the Concern-based Adoption Model, which has the highest score (0-35) on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire and therefore the most intense concern of the individual.