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Attitudes Related to Social Studies
With Young Adolescents
in the
Sultanate of Oman

By

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Sciences
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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of Omani students towards social studies in the last three grades of the second cycle of Basic Education (approximately ages 14-16). Generally, school education in Oman has been a focus of government attention and many changes have been implemented in recent years. Social studies, like other subjects, have major changes in the curriculum, teaching methods, time allocations and assessment.

However, in Oman, social studies does not share the high profile of subjects like mathematics and the sciences. There is a mismatch in Oman in that the government sees social studies as a vehicle for developing citizenship but the curriculum and assessment are set very much in terms of content to be learned and recalled. There is also the tendency for the subject area to be seen by education planners in the context of careers while the development of attitudes relating to studies in the area are neglected.

This study reviews briefly the place of attitudes in education and how these can be assessed. A survey was implemented with 618 Omani students (300 girls, and 318 boys) drawn from grades 8, 9, and 10. The goal was to develop a picture of how these pupils perceive many aspects of their experiences in social studies. It was also possible to compare the responses by gender and by age.

Generally, there are positive attitudes of students toward their social studies lessons in Oman. They say they find them interesting, easy, enjoyable, and important lessons. However, they do not seem to want to study more social studies in higher education because it does not help them to move into a career.

Girls and boys have little dissimilarity of attitudes toward social studies. However, boys are less positive about social studies lessons while girls say they cope better but are less sure of practical work. Furthermore, girls have slightly more positive view in studying more social studies in high schools or university. In addition, boys tend to be more aware of social studies applications in life. This largely reflects the greater career opportunities for boys in Omani society.

With such a large sample, the survey has offered an overall picture of the situation in schools in the Sultanate of Oman. It has pinpointed some areas of concern and offers an agenda for future work as well as action in the education system in Oman.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my disabled father who always encourages me to be the best I can be and to fight hard for what I believe.

My mother who actually gives me the love and encouragement to go ahead in my study.

The very caring, giving, loving man, my husband, Saif.

My sweet daughter Al-Sheikhah and my loved son Qaboos.

My sister, Eman who has helped me along the way.

Acknowledgements

I thank Allah who provides me with the strength and wisdom to complete this work.

I should like to show my gratitude to Professor Norman Reid, my supervisor, for his encouragement and continuous guidance during the research.

My thanks are due to the Ministry of Education in Sultanate of Oman for facilitating the conduct of the questionnaire.

I also really appreciate the social studies teachers and the students who spared their time and participated by answering the questionnaire.

Special thanks go to my parents, whose love and prayers have sustained me at every moment.

Most of all my special appreciation goes to my beloved husband, Saif, for his endless support and for being a patient listener to my complaints.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In developing a school educational system, there has always to be a balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of wider society. The individual learners will not only need to be prepared for life beyond school including the world of work but also to be enabled to develop as individuals so that they are capable of taking their full place in society, understanding themselves and the world around. School leavers need to be equipped to take their place as full members of their society, seeing something of their place and role in that society. In other words, personal development and citizen development are two aspects of the key goals for school education.

All school subjects may have important roles to play in achieving such goals. In Oman, however, there is considerable emphasis on academic knowledge and science-related qualifications. The development of the individual and emphasis on citizenship tended to be neglected in the past. Although the Ministry of Education in Oman expressed considerable interest in citizenship education and recognised that the social subjects area of the curriculum was important for this, the status of social subjects remained low. However, there have now been numerous changes in curricula and textbooks of these subjects in recent years (see chapter 2).

Nonetheless, no studies have explored whether the aims for citizenship education were being fulfilled. Indeed, there seem to be no studies which have looked at how students are reacting to their experiences in the social subjects area: do they enjoy lessons? Is social studies important for them in their life and future? How do they see the role of social studies? This study seeks to explore answers to these types of questions by asking the students how they perceive many aspects related to their learning in social subjects.

1.2 Justifications for this Study

There are numerous justifications for this study but the first is very personal. Firstly, when I was student I did not like social studies. However, I had to study it to move from one level to another. Surprisingly I studied geography, which is part of social studies, in higher education. Yet, that was not my choice. When I graduated from secondary school and had high grades, the expectation in Omani culture was that I would train as a teacher. It is the expectation also for girls with good grades in the arts areas to study geography, history, or English language in an education college. Thus, this is what my father selected for me.

After that, I worked as a social studies teacher and geography teacher for three years. Since then, I have been a developer of social studies curricula and this is my current career. However, social studies does not satisfy me and, given the chance, I would change my subject of interest. If I feel this way, is this true for others?

Secondly, most studies of students' attitudes relate to science education. This is simply because uptakes in certain science subjects (especially physics and chemistry, along with mathematics) are matters of concern in many countries (see Ramsden, 1998, for an overview of the situation in England and Reid and Skryabina, 2002a, for an overview of the very different situation in Scotland). There are major gender differences in some countries (eg England: Harvey and Stables, 1986) and fewer gender differences in others (eg Reid and Skrabina, 2002b).

On the other hand, there is little research effort in measuring attitudes toward social studies. However, in one recent study, Chiodo (2004) in the United States of America found that students have negative attitudes toward social studies. These negative attitudes were attributed to several factors such as curricular content, teaching methods, and classroom environment. This study seeks to help to fill a gap in what is known.

Thirdly, it is sometimes asserted that there is a tendency to give scientific subjects greater attention than humanity subjects like social studies. In a New Zealand context, Barr (1993) argued that social studies *'does not share the high profile of subjects like mathematics and science'*, considering that this trend existed not only at school but also in all society. It has to be admitted that the emphasis on the sciences relates to job opportunities which are very

subject based: industrial chemists, physicists controlling much high technology industry, engineers etc. However, in a country like Oman which is not an industrial country with a strong scientific base, do such attitudes exist?

Fourthly, from 1998 the education system in Oman has been changed totally. This has involved curricula, textbooks and teaching methods. Some subjects were added while others were deleted (see next section). Does this change the perceived role of social studies at school level?

1.3 Education System in Oman

In 1970, his majesty Sultan Qaboos assumed power in Oman. Since then all sectors of life have been changed and developed. Thus, the educational system received much attention because it is considered vitally important in any change process in a society. It witnessed major developments. In particular, in 1997, a general education system was replaced by a basic education system (Ministry of Education, 2004). In addition, education is free for all citizens at all stages. This section will offer an outline of the educational system in Oman and discuss the status and assessment of social studies in the Omani educational system.

1.3.1 The General Education System

General Education means free education for all citizens who are aged between 6 and 17 years. It consists of three levels: primary, preparatory, and secondary (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Primary Education

Primary education usually starts at six years of age and continues until eleven years. It comprises six levels. The curriculum of this stage consists of Islamic Education, Arabic Language, Mathematics, General Sciences, Social Studies, English Language, Physical Education, Arts and Music. This stage aims to help children to learn basic skills and knowledge which will help them in their life and prepare them to study at the next level.

Preparatory Education

Pupils who pass primary education successfully are admitted to this preparatory level. Their age range is between 13 and 15 years (three years) during which students learn the same subjects present in the previous stage but at a more advanced level.

Secondary Education

Students who complete their preparatory education successfully are admitted to three secondary education grades. Normally, the age range is between 16 and 18. In the first year of this level, students would study both science related subjects (Mathematics, Biology, Physics and Chemistry) and arts related subjects (Arabic, History, Geography and Civic Education). In addition, Islamic Education, English Language, Physical Education, Art, Music and Family Education (last subject just for girls) are taken by all. Then, for the last two years of secondary education, the student can choose one of either the arts stream in which students learn Arabic (more deeply than science streams), History, Geography, Civic Education, General Sciences and uncomplicated Mathematics; or the science stream in which students learn Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Arabic. Moreover, Islamic Education, English Language, Physical Education, Art, Music and Family Education (last subject just for girls) are taken by both streams (Al-Kindi, 2005). This level aims to prepare students for higher education, and employment and to be interactive citizens in society.

1.3.2 Basic Education

A major development has occurred in the education system with the replacement of general education by basic education. This process aims to change the education system comprehensively. Basic education is defined as:

"A unified ten years education provided by the government in the sultanate of Oman for all children of school age. It meets their basic education needs in terms of knowledge and skills, enabling them to continue their education and training according to their interests and dispositions. It also prepares them to face the challenges of present circumstances and future development in the context of comprehensive social development"

(Ministry of Education, 2001, p.1).

Basic Education has been divided into two cycles depending on the students' age, characteristics and growth needs in each cycle.

The First Cycle

The first cycle is considered as a foundation stage. It lasts for four years. The students' age in this cycle lies between 6 and 10. This cycle seeks not only to provide students with basic knowledge and skills but also to develop their attitudes and values to complete their following study. The curriculum involves Islamic Education, Arabic Language, English Language, Mathematics, Sciences, social studies (just for two last years of this stage), Physical Education, Art Education, Music Education, Environmental Life Skills, and Information Technology.

The Second Cycle

This stage has six levels (grades 5-10). The age of students is between 11 and 16. They learn the same subjects as in the first cycle but at a more advanced level to widen their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the aim is to teach them communication and learning skills, modern technology and critical thinking.

Secondary Education

This level covers the final two grades (11 and 12). Students learn both compulsory and elective subjects. This stage is designed to prepare pupils for higher education and for life and work.

Generally, the current education system aims to achieve goals in teaching communication and learning skills, critical thinking, science and modern technology. The curricula have been changed totally to include theory and practical. Furthermore, curricula seek to concentrate on problem solving, world issues and how to deal with real life situations. Moreover, all schools are equipped with a learning resource centre, with audio-visual systems, computers and other technical equipment.

The structural changes are shown in figure 1.1.

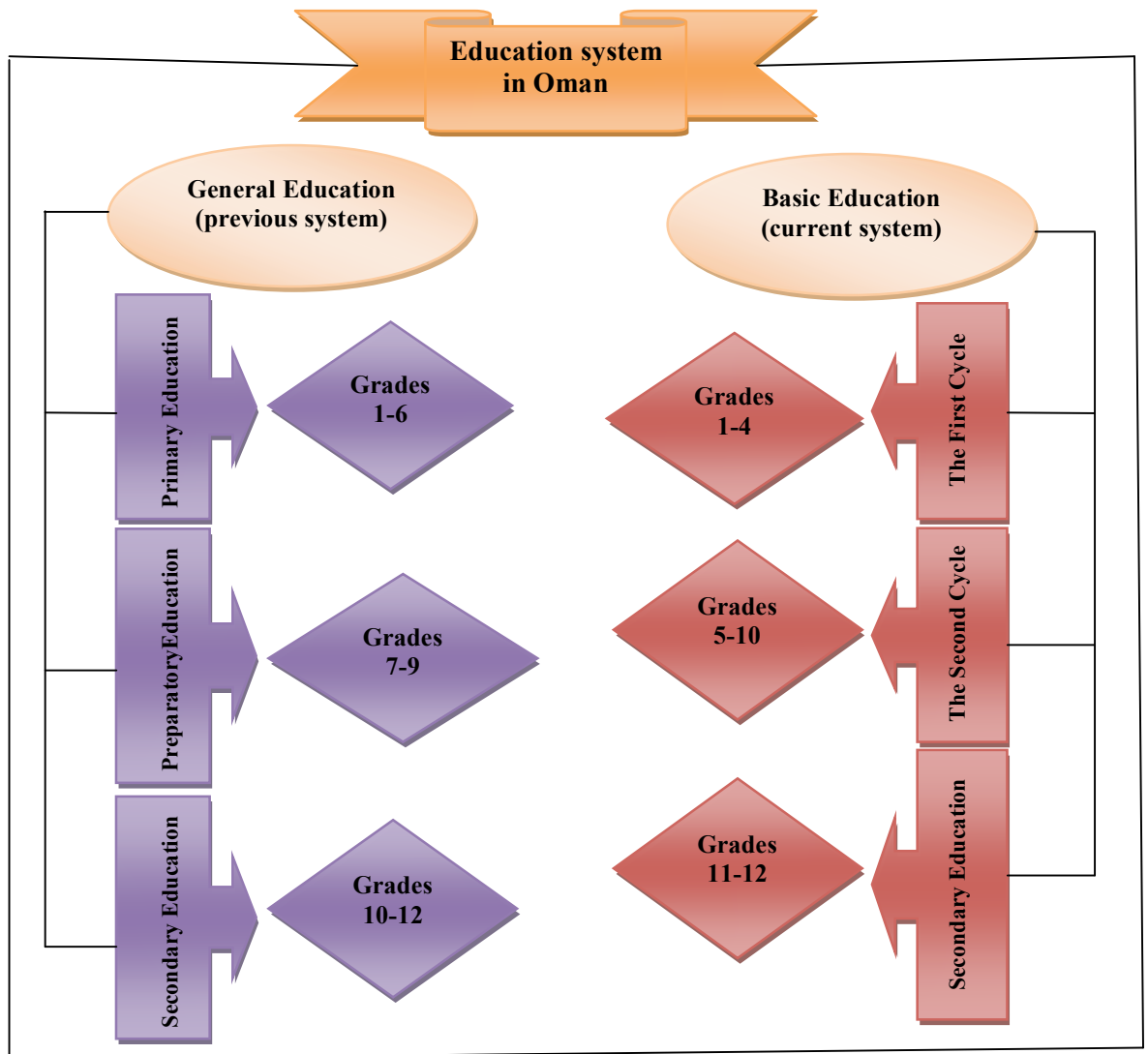


Figure 1.1 Education System in Oman

In Oman, social studies is taught as one discipline up to age 16: in other words, one teacher teaches the entire course. Above about age 16 (grades 10, 11 and 12), the separate disciplines of geography and history are taught by separate teachers. It is important to note that, at university level, the qualifying degree is in social studies and individual students can specialize to some extent in geography or history. Thus, teachers are equipped to teach social studies rather than just one discipline.

1.4 Aims of This Study

It is assumed in this study that social studies has an important part to play in the education process. The study seeks to explore how students see things in Oman using the techniques and approaches which have been found to offer fairly precise insights in the area of the sciences (eg Reid and Skryabina, 2002a). Specifically, the major goal of this study is to achieve a general idea of development in Omani students' attitudes in relation to social studies from ages 14 to 16 and to look at differences between girls and boys in their opinions and interests. These ages are chosen in that, at this time, key educational decisions are to be made and attitudes seem to be crystallizing fairly strongly.

1.5 Study Overview

This thesis starts by offering a general picture of social studies in both world and local (in Oman) contexts. Two chapters discuss briefly the nature and role of attitudes and how measurements can be made. The study involved 618 Omani students from three age groups. A wide range of data was collected and considered statistically to see how attitudes relating to social subjects developed with age and varied with gender. The final chapter offers an overview of the findings and discusses some implications, with suggestions for further work.

Chapter 2

Social Studies

2.1 Introduction

Among academic subjects, social subjects, science subjects, languages and mathematics are major components in the school curriculum. Traditionally, social subjects include subjects like geography, history, civic education, as well as economics and, in Scotland, modern studies. Social studies is a main subject area in many educational systems in the world. Thus, this chapter intends to give an overview about social studies in terms of its definition, history, components, aims and content in both global and Omani contexts.

2.2 Global Aspects

Social studies as a subject area was first introduced in schools in the United States of America approximately 108 years ago. Indeed, Duplass, (2007) observed that ‘social studies’ as a term was unknown prior to the 1900s. It is a subject area often associated with developing citizenship. The 1916 Committee on Social Studies Report in the US, for instance, highlighted that “*the focus of the new social studies was civic education...[and] the production of the 'good citizen'”* (Saxe, 1992, p.158, cited in Grant, S & Vansledright, 1996). Since then, this subject has been widely developed and exported from the United States of America to several countries in the developing world. Therefore, it is a relatively new school subject in the developing world. Speaking in a Nigerian context, Busari (1992) stated that social studies was introduced in Nigeria in 1981 as a compulsory subject at both primary and junior secondary schools while economics, geography, government and history took their place at senior secondary.

2.2.1 The Definition of Social Studies

In 1992, the Board of Directors of the National Council for Social Studies, the primary membership organization for social studies educators in the US, adopted the following definition for social studies:

“Social Studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology,

economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.”

(<http://www.socialstudies.org/>)

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand provided a rather similar definition of social studies which is as follows:

“Social studies is the systematic study of an integrated body of content drawn from the social sciences and the humanities. It enables students to develop their knowledge and understandings of the diverse and dynamic nature of society and of how interactions occur among cultures, societies, and environments. Students develop and apply skills as they investigate society, explore issues, make decisions, and work cooperatively with others. The understandings and skills they develop enable them to participate in society as informed, confident, and responsible citizens.”

(Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 1997, p.7)

These two descriptions reflect the views of many. Indeed, the definition of the Ministry of Education in New Zealand is based on the definition of the National Council of Social Studies, USA, perhaps recognizing that social studies as a school subject has been developed in USA (see section 2.2). From these two definitions, it is clear that social studies can be seen as a multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary subject. In other words, it is sometimes taught as one discipline mostly called social studies while at other times it is taught in separate disciplines such as history, geography, civic education, economics and so forth. Social Studies relates to citizenship but depends on the social sciences.

2.2.2 The Aims of Social Studies

Many have associated social studies with the preparation for citizenship and democratic life (Grant, & Vansledright, 1996; Busari, 1992; Janzen, 1995; Griffiths, 1990; Patrick, 1986). Griffiths (1990), for example, argued that the main function of social studies, as is stated by some experts in the field, is to develop citizens who are ‘*Informed critics of the state as well as active participants in its development*’. Grant & Vansledright (1996) expressed their belief in the importance of social studies by arguing that social studies’ role ‘*centres on the knowledge, values, skills students develop through substantive study in history, geography and the social sciences*’. Barr, Barth, & Shermis (1977) identified three main functions of social studies: citizenship transmission, social studies as social science and social studies as reflective inquiry. Social studies as social science refers to

the nature of social studies which depends on studying the relationship between the human and his social environment. This involves studying the past, present and future of this human and the way he/she has been organized his/her life in its social, cultural, political and economic aspects. On the other hands, social studies as reflective enquiry means that social studies is not only about knowledge transmission but is also about developing students' ability to think critically in the issues which they encounter in their life. Janzen (1995) stated that there are six approaches involved in social studies: cultural transmission; social action; life adjustment; discovery; inquiry; and multiculturalism.

2.2.3 The Content

In many countries, social studies involves three main components: history, geography and civics. In Scotland, social studies themes are introduced through subjects such as Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE), History, Geography, Modern Studies. However, social studies is a broad field which covers historical, geographical, civic, economic, social, cultural aspects. Such aspects can be covered by different subjects, which are differently named in the world.

In the 1990s, in the United States of America, where social studies was developed and flourished, several frameworks were developed in order to help both curriculum developers and teachers to design and handle social studies. The Texas Social Studies Framework (1999) is one typical framework and it provides eight strands of social studies. These strands are summarized in the following table.

Table 2.1 The Eight Strands of Social Studies in Texas

Subject	Contents
History	People, events, and issues from the past influence the present and the future. Students learn how individuals and societies interact over time in order to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to make effective decisions in life.
Geography	Relationships among people, places, and environments result in geographic patterns on Earth's surface. Students can compete in the global economy, ensure the viability of Earth's environments, and comprehend the cultures of the diverse people who share the planet through an understanding of geographic relationships.
Economics	People organize economic systems to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Students make effective decisions as consumers, producers, savers, investors, and citizens by understanding economic systems including the benefits of the U. S. free enterprise system.
Government	People create systems of government as well as structures of power and authority to provide order and stability. Students recognize ways individuals and governments achieve their goals by understanding the purposes, structures, and functions of political systems.
Citizenship	Citizenship in the United States requires an understanding of and commitment to civic

	responsibilities, rights, and ethical behavior. People fully participate in society when they understand civic ideals, citizenship practices, and the basis of our constitutional republic.
Culture	People develop, learn, and adapt cultures. Students develop an appreciation and respect for the variety of human cultures in the community and around the world by exploring the similarities and differences between people.
Science, Technology, Society	Advances in science and technology affect the development of society. Students understand changes in ways people live, learn, and work—past, present, and future—through analyzing the relationships among science, technology, society, and the environment.
Social Studies Skills	Social studies skills are necessary in order to acquire, organize, and use information for problem solving and decision making. Students apply social studies knowledge and skills to become competent problem solvers, decision makers, and independent lifelong learners.

The content of social studies must be meaningful and reflective of students' experience and environment in order to help students to be more highly informed about their indigenous culture, heritage, and societal systems (Griffiths, 1990). Yet, values and attitudes often receive little attention, especially in developing countries. Objectives, which are related to these aspects, are mostly treated as merely intellectual exercises.

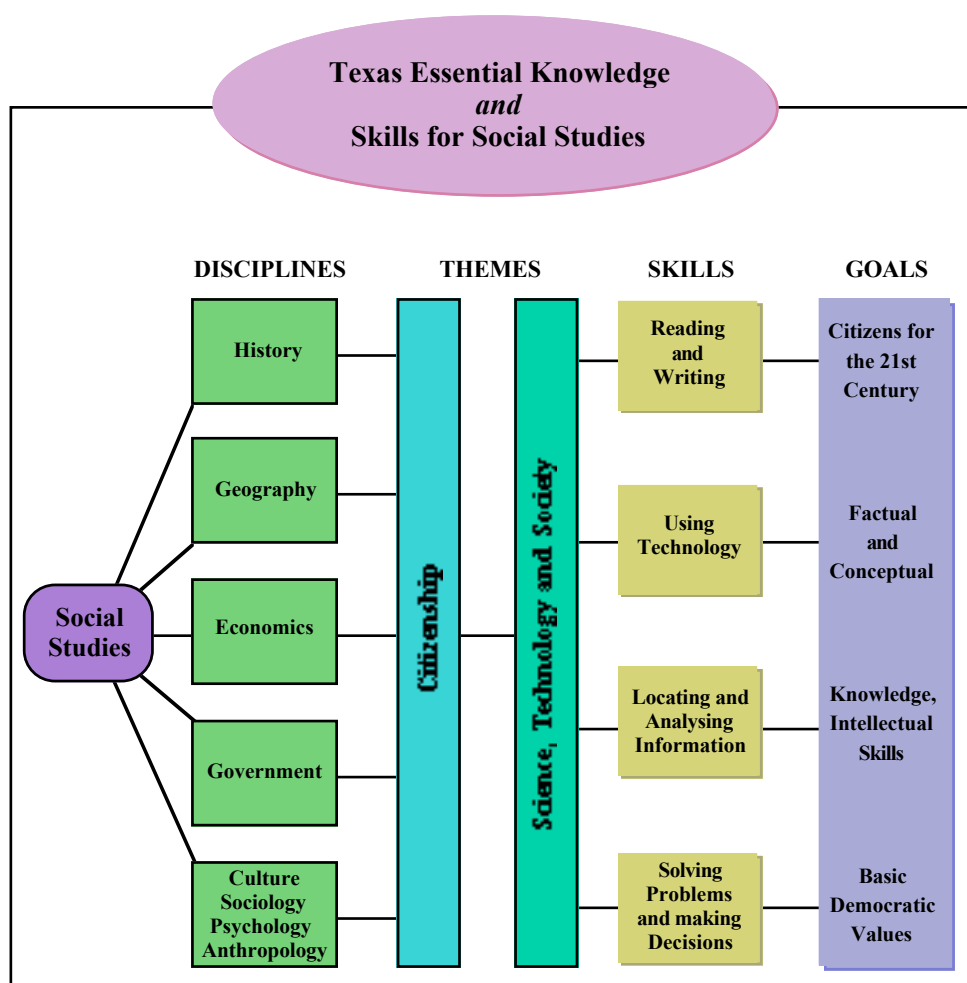


Figure 2.1 Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies: Disciplines, Themes, Skills, and Goals (p.11)

2.2.4 The Difficulties Facing Teaching Social Studies

As a school subject, social studies has sometimes encountered some status difficulties and these can influence its value in comparison to other subjects. There is the belief that social studies is an additional subject, which supports the role of other subjects. Barr (1993) confirmed the existence of such claims in a New Zealand context, saying that social studies '*does not share the high profile of subjects like mathematics and science*'. Similarly, Chiodo (2004) stated that many policymakers and elementary teachers viewed social studies as '*enrichment*' or a '*second-ranked*' subject. This view influenced the student attitudes towards the subject, particularly in the United States of America, where researchers have repeatedly found that students have negative attitudes toward social studies (Chiodo (2004). These negative attitudes can be attributed to several factors such as curricular content, teaching methods, and classroom environment.

Such views may reflect pedagogical issues. Teachers may focus on superficial learning which only gives high priority to facts instead of providing in-depth study of the issues included in the social studies curriculum. Evidence from the United States of America shows that teachers and school authorities emphasized chronologically presented content, and teaching styles favouring lecture, recitation, and a heavy use of textbooks (Barr, 1993). Indeed, there is over-reliance on using textbooks in teaching and learning. Instructional materials, mainly textbooks, structure 90 percent of instructional time in American schools (Barr, 1993).

Such drawbacks lead students to develop negative attitudes towards the subject in that the over-emphasis on factual recall does not appeal to learners. Indeed, this problem is in no way confined to social subjects but is widely reflected in the sciences and other disciplines (see Oraif, 2007) and runs counter to the innate tendency in learners to seek to make sense of what is presented rather than simply memorise it.

Zhao and Hoge (2005) have recently conducted a study to investigate students' attitudes towards the subject. They conducted their study in three different school districts in northeast Georgia, USA. Fifty pre-service teachers in their elementary social studies curriculum and methods classes interviewed students from kindergarten to fifth grade at their field-placement schools in order to identify how students perceived social studies as well as finding out how much they knew about some basic social studies content. The study findings confirmed previous research findings as the students almost universally

hold negative attitudes toward social studies and do not understand the importance of social studies or its relationship to their lives.

The teaching approach was thought to be main factor behind the formation of these negative attitudes as teachers failed to convey to the students the importance of social studies and did not provide their students with any real-life opportunities to appreciate and understand this subject area. In addition, the textbook-centred, fact-memorisation approach to social studies is another factor behind these negative attitudes.

2.3 Social Studies in the Sultanate of Oman

2.3.1 Historical Development

The modern Omani education system started in the early 1970s and, at this stage, textbooks were borrowed from some other Arabic-speaking countries which are similar to the Omani environment. As education evolved and there was an increasing concern for citizens to contribute to development, the Ministry of Education started the process of preparation of Omani curricula, which reflect mainly the reality of Omani society, environment, and national objectives. Textbooks of social studies were first introduced in 1984 and provided for all levels by 1992 from first grade of primary to the end of secondary. One book deals with social studies in all branches of history, geography and civic education from first grade to sixth grade at primary stages. Then in middle school and secondary schools each of these three branches has its own textbooks. There are constant adjustments and amendments to these books in an attempt to reflect societal developments. Nonetheless, the tendency is for the textbook to define what is to be taught and learned rigidly.

In 1998, social studies was abandoned in grades 1 and 2. Several topics relevant to social studies have been introduced through other subjects such as Islamic education, Arabic, English, science, mathematics and life skills. Examples of these themes are: historical stories of the life of Prophet Muhammad, some of the achievements of Sultan Qaboos in Oman, stories about some Arab and Muslim scientists, and topics on the family.

2.3.2 The General Principles of Social Studies

Some general principles for the social studies curricula have been developed (Ministry of Education, 2003a):

- (1) *The geographical location of the Sultanate of Oman*: the importance of its geographical location in both past and present in addition to the effect on economics and the way society has developed.
- (2) *Omani environments and natural wealth*: diverse environments in the sultanate shaped by the diversity of the surface and climate. Therefore, each unique environment resource and wealth, including marine, agricultural, mountain, and desert are discussed.
- (3) *The needs of Omani society*: these needs arise because of the continuing development of sciences, technology and economic development.
- (4) *Omani heritage and history*: showing the history of Oman, its civilization and those periods which reflect the identity of the heritage of Oman, which has maintained its own cultural traditions and customs of Arab Muslim countries.
- (5) *The Arab and Islamic world*: to underline its history and geographical position and highlight the role of the Sultanate of Oman in the Arab-Islamic context.
- (6) *The contemporary world and its challenges*: social studies curriculum takes into account modern challenges, such as enormous information growth, technological development, the requirements to achieve a balance between population growth and available resources, the relationship between the local and global, and economic growth and its consequences.
- (7) *The requirements of world peace*: to highlight the role of the Sultanate towards the peace in the world.

2.3.3 The General Aims of Social Studies

Social studies in Oman aims, in general, to build a good citizen by means of achieving the following goals (Ministry of Education, 2003a):

- (1) Developing students' feelings of belonging to their homeland and pride in its civilization.
- (2) Developing citizenship based on correct understanding of the country's social, economic and political systems, and respecting the statutes of the State.

- (3) Raising the learner to uphold the identity, habits, and inherent traditions of Oman.
- (4) The learner should realize the importance of geographical location of the Sultanate of Oman and its impact upon the past and present.
- (5) Developing student awareness of the most important historical events of the national, Arab and Islamic world and their consequences.
- (6) Learners should be aware of the Earth systems' components and their impact on human life.
- (7) Developing students' environmental awareness, and their trends towards the optimum exploitation of natural resources and conservation.
- (8) Developing positive trends with students towards the issues and problems of contemporary global environment and population.
- (9) The learner has to understand economic problems, social challenges of population and their impact on the life of Omani society and prosperity.
- (10) Developing willingness of students to participate in activities, events and to volunteer in community service.
- (11) Recognizing the importance of the family and its role in building society.
- (12) Pride in Omani culture and heritage and respect for the culture and heritage of others.
- (13) Enhancing student feelings that they belong to the Arab and Islamic world and the values and principles of peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the nations and peoples of the world.
- (14) Developing learners' ability to use the scientific method of thinking and solving problems in situations facing them in everyday life.
- (15) Developing trends of students towards work, production, perfection, savings, consumption of goods and the optimum use of leisure time.

This list of aims is very comprehensive and draws from many dimensions of history, geography, and civic education with considerable concentration on the last one. Moreover, they focus on students' social behaviour and how they deal with local and world problems. The aims tend very often to have a strong attitudinal edge, perhaps suggesting an underlying idea that simply teaching facts will encourage attitude development. Research on attitude development shows that this is highly unlikely (see chapter 3). The reference in section 14 of the development of the scientific method of thinking is curious. This is extremely difficult to describe (Al-Ahmadi and Oraif, 2008)

while evidence suggests very strongly that such an aim is unattainable below a certain age, reflecting the nature of cognitive development (Reid and Serumola, 2006, 2007, Al-Ahmadi, 2008).

However, the key matter is: how can these aims be achieved? This will be discussed further in the final chapter.

In addition, general aims are narrowed to be specific targets for both cycles of basic education and secondary. Then they are narrowed further to be goals of each textbook for each specific grade. After that, the goals are set for each lesson: the behavioral aims (so-called) expected to be achieved after the implementation of the lesson are specified.

2.3.4 Content of Social Studies

Social studies curricula in Oman are built on three main areas:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|----------|-------------------------|
| (1) <i>Geography</i> : | Population | Natural | Maps |
| (2) <i>History</i> : | Ancient | Medieval | Modern and Contemporary |
| (3) <i>Civic education</i> : | National | Social | Civilian Human |

Figure 2.2 views the topics of social studies in Oman.

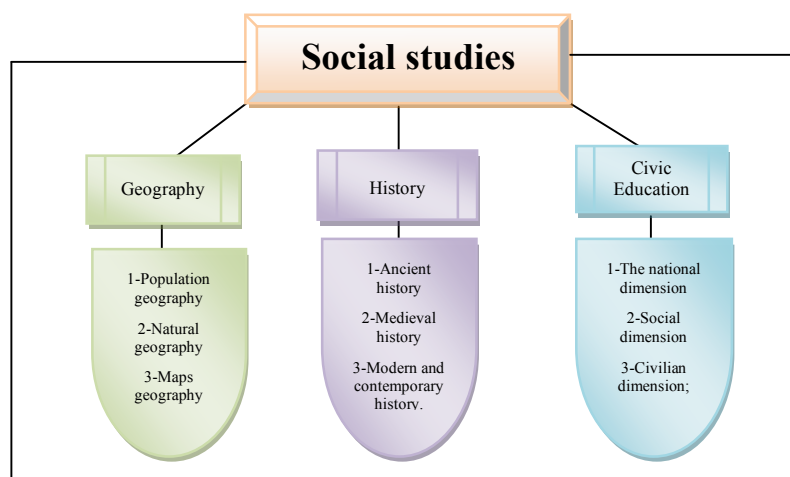


Figure 2.2 Social Studies in the Sultanate of Oman

From these three areas, and according to such principles and aims, the textbooks are written for each level with regard to learners' ages by a team including teachers, members of a college of education and staff from social studies' curricula department of the Ministry of Education. The following table summarises the content of social studies for each grade.

**Table 2.2 Contents of Social Studies in Oman Curricula in Each Grade
(Ministry of Education, 2003,b)**

Cycles	Grades	Subjects	
First cycle	1	No social studies	
	2	No social studies	
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The home (its components, cleaning, and forms of Omani of houses) - The family (members, rights and duties, forms of families) - Clothing (depending on the kinds of seasons of the year) - School (components, its members, how to maintain it) - Village (kinds, natural features, the population in each type, values and habits of the people, the village) - History of Village (castles, ancient and modern working tools, and history of education and health) - The city (its components, transport and communications, services, activities of the population, administrative management, the history of Omani cities) 	
	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -My home land (President, geographical location, administrative divisions of Oman, the Omani areas in some details) - Natural wealth in Oman (metals, eg. copper, oil, gas, agriculture, livestock and fish) - The population (agriculture, industry, fishing, trade, grazing, unions) - Omani figures from history. 	
Second cycle	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Arabian peninsula (its location, size, geography, vegetation, climate, sea and bays, water resources, oil resources). -Countries of the Arabian Peninsula (Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and Yemen) in terms of location, area, population, resources and their importance. - Some ancient civilizations of Arabian Peninsula (Oman, Dilmun, and Yemen) - The emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula (the Arabs before Islam, the emergence of Islam, the Islamic state, Islamic people of Oman, the rise of Islamic Caliphate and its evolution) - Oman in its region (Gulf Cooperation Council, cooperation between Oman and the countries of Arabian peninsula). 	
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Arab world (geography, area, development, vegetation, climate, water resources, mineral resources) - some countries of Arab world (some Arab countries in terms of: location, area, population, resources and their important) - Landmarks of ancient civilizations in the Arab world (Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Oman relations of these ancient civilizations) - States from Islamic history (the Umayyad, Abbasid State) - Oman in its Arab context (League of Arab States, friendship with the West) 	
	7	Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the universe (the solar system, planets, galaxies, comets, the sun and the earth) - Covers the earth system (air, water, land and biosphere) - Hemisphere (longitudes, latitudes, thermal areas) - Movement of the Earth and its manifestations (night and day, four seasons, tides) - Distribution and ground water - Seas, oceans, lakes and rivers.
		History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colonisation of the Arab homeland (the colonial past, UK, French, Italian) - Independence of the Arab nation and liberation movements. - Arab-Israeli conflict (the history of the conflict, the peace accords). - The conditions of the Arab world under the Ottoman Empire.
Civic Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Omani modern Renaissance (justification for the presidency, citizens, government formation, development of social services) 	
8	Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The weather and climate (temperature, pressure, humidity, precipitation, wind, measuring devices) - Meteorological stations . - Climatic regions in the world (tropical - wet and dry - the Mediterranean and mountain regions, Arctic cold) - Water (water cycle, water resources in Oman, water pollution, examples of water pollution, and water conservation) 	
	History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The history of Oman (State Elyaarbah family ruled Oman earlier, the State of Al Bo Saeed family, which currently govern Oman) - European Renaissance (concept, the role of Islamic civilization in it, the coup and its industrial, geographical discoveries and their implications, and the French Revolution) 	
	Civic Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutions of the state administrative apparatus (the Council of Ministers, civil service institutions, military institutions and 	

Cycles	Grades	Subjects		
	9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> civilian) - Regulations of the State - Tours of Sultan, the Consultative Council, A' Shura (deliberation) Council, the State Council. 	
		Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - geographic population (concept, access to sources of demographic data) - Structure of the population (age, quality, social and economic) - Population growth and density (concept, births and deaths, long life, population density in the world, population growth and lack of resources) - Environmental problems (desertification, erosion of beaches, tropical storms and hurricanes, global warming). 	
		History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First and Second World Wars (reasons, the parties involved in the war, events and results) -- History of Abadi (one Islamic sect prevailing in Oman) -- Omani empire in East Africa (inception, the manifestations of life under the government of Oman, the Omani government there) 	
		Civic Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oman in Islamic context (OIC cooperation) - Oman in the World (United Nations, sectors cooperation). 	
	10	Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Composition of the Earth (mountains and plains, distortions and fracture, earthquakes, volcanoes, rock types) - Erosion (erosion and the resulting forms) - Population (the population explosion and its effects, family planning, savings and rationalization of consumption) 	
		History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maritime history of Oman (shipbuilding, shipping routes, Omani ports, sea tools, famous Omani sailors, naval Omani contemporaries). - World powers and blocs (the Soviet Union, USA, EU, Japan, China, the Asian tigers - Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia -) 	
		Civic Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the rights and duties of the Omani citizen, rights and duties of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the evolution of the judiciary in Oman 	
	After basic Or secondary	11	Basic Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - economic geography (natural resources, agriculture, industry, transport and communications, trade, tourism) - This is my home land 1 (picture overview of Oman, Omani ancient history, Omani society and social development, economic activity, the Omani culture, the statute of the state, citizens and state institutions) .
			Optional Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Islamic civilization (origins, characteristics, manifestation of Islamic civilization in Asia and Indian Ocean coasts, the impact of Islamic civilization in Europe)
		12	Basic Subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is my home land 2 (Omani history, environment, population, employment and production, tourism, citizens, civil society, self-reliance, the private sector, the Omani youth, and the modern history of Oman)
Optional Subjects			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The world around me (created Earth, global civilization, events changed the course of history, world heritage, culture of peace, human rights, energy resources, cultural diversity, the culture of dialogue, international organizations, global issues) - Geography and modern techniques (cartography and evolution, and uses digital maps, geographic information systems, remote sensing). 	

This overall curriculum plan is translated into the school organization. Even with such an overloaded curriculum, the time allocation compares unfavourably with subjects like mathematics, Islamic studies, and languages. The table 2.3 shows weekly lessons of all subjects for both cycles in basic education.

Table 2.3 The Basic Education Programme: Weekly Lesson Timetable
Source (Ministry of Education, 2006)

Subjects	Number of weekly periods in each grade									
	First Cycle				Second Cycle					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Islamic education	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
Arabic language	12	11	10	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
English language	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mathematics	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
Sciences	3	3	3	5	5	5	6	6	6	6
Social studies	-	-	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4
Physical education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Art education	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Music education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-
Environmental life skills	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Information technology	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total weekly period	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40

2.3.5 Assessment of Social Studies in Oman Educational System

The school academic year is made up of two semesters; in the middle of each semester teachers produce written descriptive reports of the students' performance at that period to explain the strengths and weaknesses of the students and required procedures to assist them, and give these reports to students' parents. Then at the end of each semester teachers provide parents with certificate degrees resulting from student exams, projects and activities. Grades are distributed according to the following :

Table 2.4 Learning Elements and Assessment in Oman (Ministry of Education, 2007)

Elements of learning	mental skills 60%	practical skills 40%	Degrees	
			Grades 3-9	Grade1 10
Oral activities (during the educational situation of dialogue and discussion)			15	5
Writing activities(student file containing the ongoing work of writing, graphics and activities)			15	10
Project (researches, reports, figurative, paintings)			10	5
Quizzes(at least two tests in the classroom of teacher preparation)			30	20
The final test (comprehensive test throughout the school district)			30	60
Total elements degrees			100	100

This assessment is applied in each semester separately. Then at the end of the school academic year, the average degree is calculated . The result is not written in numbers, but in symbols equivalent to what are shown in table 2.5.

**Table 2.5 Grades in Oman for Students
(Ministry of Education, 2007)**

Marks %	Grades	Description
90 - 100	A	excellent
80-89	B	very good
65 - 79	C	good
50 - 64	D*	acceptable
49 - or less	E	needs help
* D is the minimum level of student performance of 50% and below is considered failing.		

This assessment and lessons distribution are for the first and second cycles of basic education. However, the secondary education (grades 11 and 12) assessment and lessons distribution systems are quite complex. They will not be discussed further here as this study will concentrate on three last grades of second cycle (8, 9 and 10).

2.4 Summary

Social studies, as an area of study, had its origins in the United States over a century ago and has appeared as an integral part of the curriculum in schools in Oman in the past 40 years. One of the early aims of social studies was the development of good citizens. Social studies includes studies in history, geography, civic education, economics, societies, and cultural aspects.

Social studies in the Sultanate of Oman has similar goals but adds on Arabic and Islamic dimensions and is presented under three areas: history, geography, and civic education. Currently, there is a strong interest in citizenship education by the Ministry of Education in Oman. To achieve goals in citizenship, the tendency has been made to create a highly overcrowded curriculum (see table 2.2). However, the time allocations for social studies compare unfavorably with those for Islamic studies, mathematics, or Arabic language and it has been completely removed from first and second grades of primary school.

There is considerable inconsistency between the goals of social studies' education in Oman and the way it is taught, learned and assessed. The curriculum is content driven and overcrowded, leaving little scope for the implementation for the wider goals associated with preparing students for full participation in Omani society. Assessment gives rewards for the correct recall of facts and information rather than for development of the students as a good citizen.

This study seeks to see if the goals of social studies are being achieved or if implementation of incorrect strategies makes this difficult. This was done by considering the attitudes and perceptions of students relating to their studies.

Chapter 3

Attitudes

3.1 Attitude Definitions

The concept “attitude” has a long and complex history and agreed definitions have emerged only slowly. For many years, different researchers have been defining it each according the way in which the term is used in a specific context. This section traces through some of the definitions during the period of the 20th century as a series of numerous successful studies appeared.

Attitude was described as “*the affect for or against a psychological object*” by Thurstone (1928). This was the first serious attempt at some description and, indeed, the first attempt at establishing that attitudes can be measured. Likert (1932) described attitudes as “*the certain range within which responses move*”. While Thurstone emphasised affect, the stress for Likert was on responses or behaviour. This has been a continual problem with attitudes. They are not simply affect (emotion) and they are not the same as behaviour. They involve affect and they may well lead to specific behaviour.

In 1935, Allport (page 810) gave a more useful description which joined ideas from Thurstone and Likert and spoke about “*a mental and neural state of readiness to respond, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects with which it is related*”. This definition is still commonly used today. It proposes that attitudes *might* influence behaviour.

Many other descriptions followed. Krech and Crutchfield (1948) regarded attitude as an aspect of problem solving: thus people learn something new, while Doob (1947) described attitudes as “*attempts at solution*”. This means that attitudes, involving some kind of evaluation and analysis, enable a person to make sense of events and situations assisting them to know how to react.

Later, Wall (1968) distinguished between expressed interests (like-dislike) and manifested interests (evidenced by hobbies) as an attempt to describe attitudes in line with the attitude-behavior controversy. Eagly and Chaiken (1993, page 1) offered a useful description when they described attitudes as, “*A psychological tendency that is expressed*

by evaluating a certain entity with some degree of favour or disfavour.” This reflects the approach of Oppenheim (1982) who said that an attitude is a “state of readiness, a tendency to act or react in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli”.

The key word in the Eagly and Chaiken description is that of evaluation. Attitudes may involve cognitive, affective and behavioural (experience) dimensions but, fundamentally, the person, in developing an attitude, is evaluating some person, event or object. Reid (1978) reviewed what was known at that time and developed a pictorial way of describing an attitude (figure 3.1).

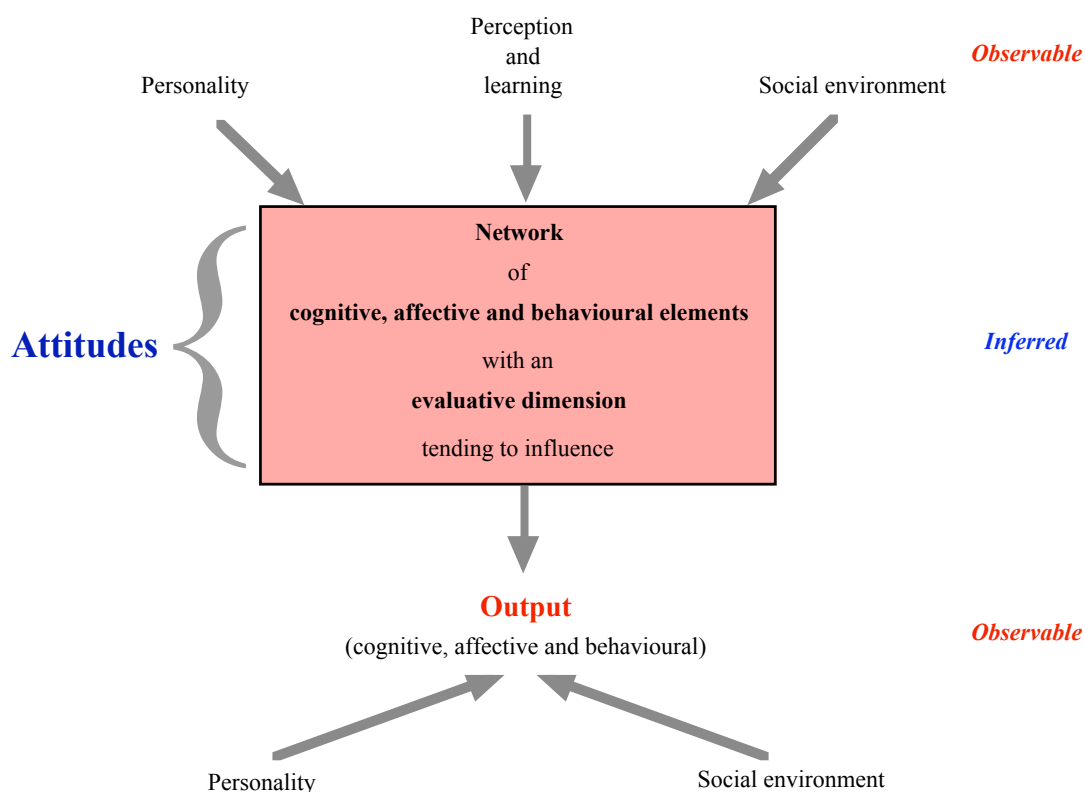


Figure 3.1 Description of Attitude (derived from Reid, 1978)

According to this approach, attitudes can be described by means of the following characteristics:

- Attitudes involve cognitive, affective and behavioral elements, with an essential evaluative dimension.
- Attitudes are learned and they can develop with new input of a cognitive, affective or behavioral nature.
- Attitudes are developed as the person brings evaluation and judgment to bear on facts, emotions and behaviour.

Many of the earlier descriptions of attitudes dealt with the relationship which exists between attitudes and behaviours (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Fazio, 1995).

Today, the common conception of attitudes represents an evaluative integration of cognitions and affects experienced in relation to an object (Holland *et al.*, 2002; Petty *et al.*, 2003; Reid, 2003).

3.2 Importance of Attitudes

Attitudes are highly complex but their importance lies in the way they can influence behaviour. It is worth recognising that attitudes are possibly influenced by personality (McClintock, 1958). Moreover, they have a purpose and the development of them enables a person to make sense of occurrences and life (Kelman, 1958). Thus, attitudes have direct relationships to people and their life.

Katz (1960) developed the emphasis on the purpose of attitudes and, much later, Reid (2003) summarized and simplified these ideas. Overall, attitudes enable people to make sense of:

- *The world*: in concepts of knowledge, feelings and behaviours.
- *Themselves*: put beliefs, feelings and behaviours in some kind of logical and rational meaning.
- *Relationships*: deciding satisfactory patterns of social interaction.

In looking at the way attitudes develop, this summary is important in that attitudes will only change if the person, consciously or sub-consciously, sees a gain in making the change. This gain will arise if the new attitudes makes more sense of the world around.

3.3 Attitudes, Beliefs and Opinions

One of the great difficulties in the area of attitudes is the diversity of language used by different authors. This has led to some confusion. In an attempt to clarify the language used, Oraif (2007) developed a hierarchical model (figure 3.2). She saw attitudes as groups of beliefs directed towards someone or something while groups of attitudes might be seen as some kind of value system.

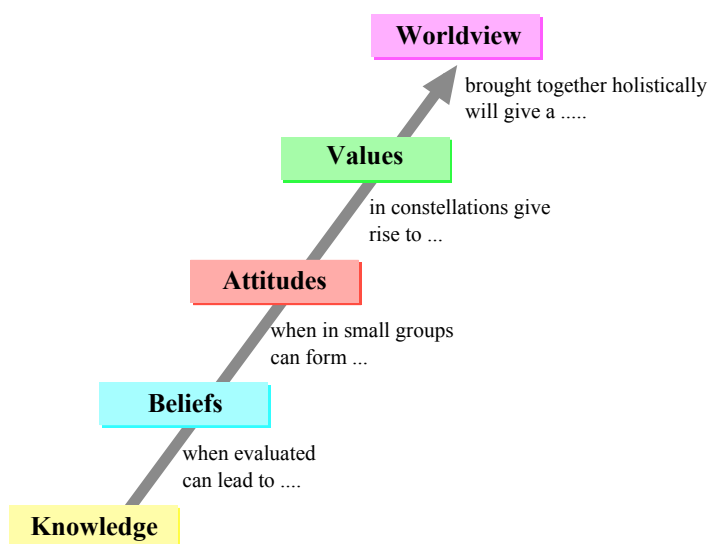


Figure 3.2 Beliefs and Attitudes and Values (after Oraif, 2007)

3.4 Attitude Development

There are many underlying models which have attempted to interpret the way attitudes develop and change. The variety arises because attitude development can occur in widely different contexts. It is important to recognise that education has no role in enforcing prescribed attitude change. The better way is to look at attitude development where the learner is enabled to develop attitudes on a well informed basis, set in the context of rich educational experiences. Despite the complexity of attitude development, it is possible to look at attitude development under four broad headings in an educational context. Here, the learner is the focus but may be influenced by some kind of communication. The four aspects are:

- The purpose of attitude change
- The communicator who brings about attitude change
- The communication which brings about attitude change
- The mechanism of attitude change

Katz (1959) stated that attitudes have purposes. Thus, any effort to change attitudes must take into account the learner's needs and the change must have value for the learner. In other words, if the change of attitudes does not bring benefit for people, it may be opposed.

The communicator is one of the more powerful influences which can change and develop attitudes. The influence of parents is very powerful with very young children. On the other hand, teachers influence primary aged children very strongly. The powerful effect of teacher influence continues during the secondary stage while the influence of parents diminishes (Skryabina, 2000). The key thing is that the communicator must have credibility (Reich and Adcock (1976).

As for communication, it has to be understood. However, Reich and Adcock, (1976) note that there is no certainty that the person will change their attitude even if the communication is understood. McGuire (1968) focusses on comprehension and there need to be opportunities for thinking to allow the learners to appreciate implications. The communication must be *perceived* as relevant, generating motivation to pay attention. In addition, the learner needs to be actively involved with the incoming information. Group work and, especially, role play have been found to be very effective (Janis and King, 1954; King and Janis, 1956). Overall, the communication is best seen in terms of active involvement.

Heider (1944) and, later, Osgood (1967) appreciated the importance of the learner holding consistent views. Festinger (1954) took this much further when, in his brilliant work, he developed the key idea of dissonance which he described as some kind of inconsistency between attitude and behaviour. The word has been used more widely to talk of inconsistencies held by the learner (Reid, 2006).

Reid (1978) took the idea of dissonance and developed a set of teaching resources as an attempt to develop some social attitudes in relation to school chemistry. He found considerable attitude development and he attributed this to the generation of dissonance in the students. In 1980, Reid talked about internal mental interaction or what he called 'intra-activity'. He used this word to describe internal interaction within the memory involving previous content and the new learning, feeling or experiences in the situation of learning (see Reid 1980; Johnstone and Reid 1981). Role play offers considerable scope for the development of this internal mental interaction: intra-activity. Figure 3.3 shows how Reid (1978) saw the concept of intra-activity.

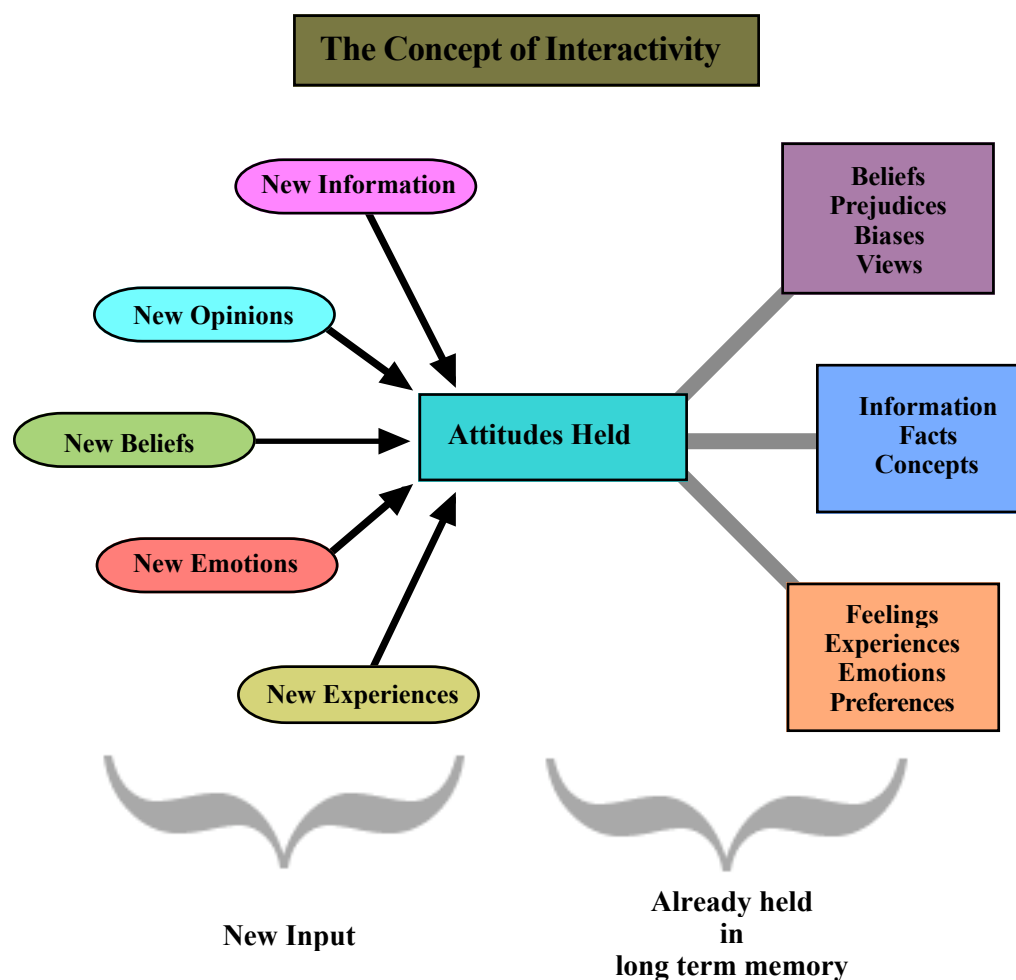


Figure 3.3 The Concept of Intra-action

The key point to be drawn from figure 3.3 is that attitude development will only occur if new input (which may come in many forms) actually mentally interacts (what Reid called intra-activity) with attitudes already held in long term memory.

The amount of research which has been conducted to explore the ways attitudes change and develop is very considerable. This has been reviewed in great detail in Eagly and Chaiken (1993). Some of the main findings can be summarized in figure 3.4. This is presented in terms of five aspects: the new input given, how it is received by the person, the nature of the attitude held by the person already, how the person processes the new information and whether there are any gains to be made in the possible attitude development.

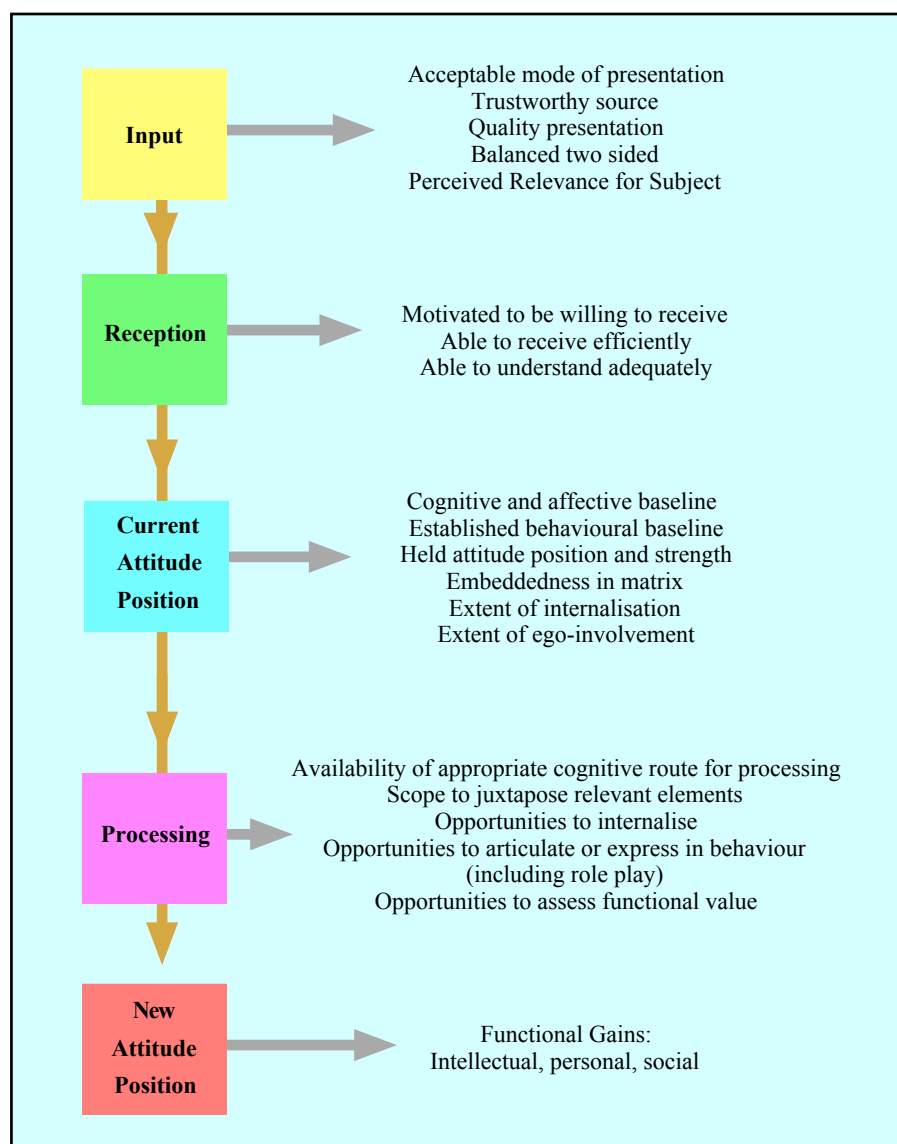


Figure 3.4 Summary of the Research in Development of Attitudes

3.5 Attitudes and Behaviour

While behaviour is not the same as attitude, it is very clear that attitudes can influence behaviour. Work was undertaken to explore this and to see the extent to which attitudes were important and what the other factors might be. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggested that behaviours are influenced by their behavioural intentions, the kind of behaviour studied being what they called volitional behaviour: behaviour under the person's control, deliberate, thought-through behaviour.

They considered two factors: the attitude of person toward the behaviour (AB) which is built up on many beliefs toward the behaviour (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981), and the

subjective norm of the person (SN). By subjective norm they were describing what the person thought others would think of the behaviour in question (Skryabina, 2000). An example illustrates this. Suppose that a student has the choice of whether to take a course in physics or not. One factor is the student's attitude to physics and everything related to the learning of physics. The other factor is what the student thinks others (who are important to the student) will think if he/she takes the course in physics.

The subjective norm is described by Crawley and Black (1992) as the importance of the perceived views of others for students. They mentioned some examples of people who may influence students:

- ❖ Parents/ guardians,
- ❖ Brothers/ sisters,
- ❖ Current teacher,
- ❖ Friends,
- ❖ Counsellors.

However, in 1985, Ajzen found that the two factors were not sufficient to account for behaviour intention. Thus, he expanded his model to what he called the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Ajzen (1985) brought in a third factor, what he called "Perceived Behavioural Control". In simple terms, this considers the factors which make the behaviour possible. In the example above, the student might not be able to take physics if previous marks were not good enough or the timetable did not work well.

The theory of planned behaviour can be described graphically (figure 3.5).

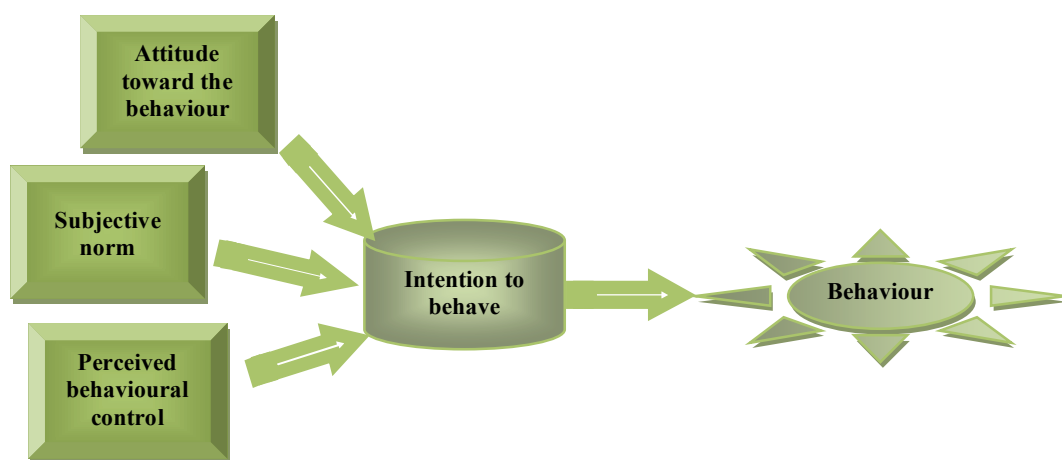


Figure 3.5 Theory of Planned Behaviour (after Eagly and Chaiken, 1993)

3.6 Issues in Education

Social studies teachers will tend to be competent persons who have knowledge of the fundamentals of their subject, who possess skills in solving problems and who hold positive attitudes to their subject. Consequently, it might be supposed that they are able to support the development of student attitudes toward social studies. Yet, the reality is that they are more likely to emphasise the presentation of social subjects content, with little stress on the implications, functions or importance of social studies in the lives of the students.

Mostly, Omani students learn social studies without knowing why they study it, while most teachers focus on finishing the social studies textbook content on schedule. Allport (1961) made the important point that, if teachers ignore attitude development, attitudes will still develop with students. However, Khan and Weiss (1973) analysed the factors influencing attitudes in an educational context and showed how important the teacher was.

Mager (1962) laid great emphasis on the setting of goals and targets. Indeed, he argued that, without objectives, the teacher may end up at the wrong destination and not even know it. Teachers need goals and these need to be attainable. Nonetheless, teachers are not employed simply to impart information and meet such targets. Wolke (1973) makes this point very forcibly, seeing teachers as far more than trainers; teachers are more than subject instructors with the task of enabling their students to achieve set cognitive objectives.

Reid (1978, page 40) criticized the approaches of both Mager and Wolke. Mager focuses very much on cognitive skills, ignoring other outcomes while Wolke seemed to be arguing for no clear set of aims and objectives at all. Social subjects teaching needs some kind of set of aims and objectives. However, these must include goals which are not simply cognitive skills. Attitude outcomes have their important place.

Reid (2003, page 32) has shown four wide areas of attitudes development in teaching and learning related to students:

- (a) *Attitudes toward subjects being studied;*
- (b) *Attitudes towards study itself;*
- (c) *Attitudes towards the implications arising from them being studied;*
- (d) *The so-called scientific attitude.'*

In the context of social studies, the first three will be very important. Indeed, the kinds of themes covered in social studies curricula will involve many topics and themes for which social attitudes will be an important aspect.

Much research has been carried out in the first three areas (eg. attitudes to a subject: Reid and Skryabina, 2002; attitudes to learning: Perry, 1999; Al-Shibli, 2003; social attitudes: Reid, 1978). However, almost all of them are in science. Thus, their findings do not give any insights relating to social studies. Nevertheless, they help researchers who are looking for students' attitudes relating to social studies by showing the methods and approaches to measure them.

Of course, as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) indicates, attitudes arising from social studies teaching and learning will be very important: they will influence future behaviour and this may include future social behaviour (see section 3.4)

3.7 Summary

This chapter has illustrated the development of definitions of attitudes. Attitudes are not only important for people in general but also for students in the context of learning. Attitudes enable individuals to make sense of their world, themselves and their relationships. They strongly influence behaviour. Indeed, in an educational setting negative attitudes towards any aspects of the learning process may hinder learning very considerably. There are, of course, attitudes towards subjects to be studied. However, there are also attitudes towards learning in general as well as attitudes which will develop concerning topics and themes included in a curriculum, anything from pollution, nuclear energy, population control to the ethics of genetics developments and political structures.

Attitudes cannot be ignored by curriculum planners and teachers. The attitudes of learners will develop through school studies. It is better if the curriculum is organised so that this development can take place on a sound cognitive base rather than being haphazard and a matter of chance.

Chapter 4

Attitude Measurement

4.1 Introduction

Because of the internal nature of attitudes, the measurement of them is difficult. Thus, researchers cannot measure them directly but must infer attitudes from responses or indicators which may be cognitive, affective, and/or behavioural. In an educational setting, measurement of attitudes depends largely on analysis of responses to written surveys or interviews. In this, attitudes are not too different from the test measurements which are a normal part of teaching and learning: these rely on written responses to test questions or, occasionally, to the verbal responses in interviews.

In education, most attitudes are multifaceted in nature and measurement approaches which seek to reduce a range of measurements to a single number lose important detail. This has been discussed by Gardner (1975, 1995, 1996) and, more recently, in some detail by Reid (2006). This chapter considers some approaches to attitudes measurement, some methods which can be used, issues of validity and reliability, some errors or problems with measurement, and then will outline the procedures used in this study.

4.2 Measurement Instruments

Henderson (1978) suggests that attitudes can be measured by four general approaches: records, sociometric procedures, self-reports and reports from others. Each is now discussed briefly.

(a) Records

Records are a systematic way to record incidents and such events might include: attendance and enrolment reports, signing sheets, library check-out records, permission slips, counsellor files, inventories, staff reports. In essence, aspects of behaviour are being recorded and attitudes are then inferred. Such an approach is of limited value in education although, in one area it has been found useful: the decision to select a course in a subject or enrol in the course is often taken to be an indication of attitudes towards a subject. The weakness of the whole approach is that behaviour is not completely controlled by attitudes held. The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) shows that there are other factors and it is important to take these into account.

(b) Sociometric procedures

Sociometric procedures are instruments to gain information of social structure groups simply by asking questions of group members, answers to which have a bearing on their attitudes related one to another. Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p. 35) quote a typical kind of request of this sort:

'Name three people with whom you'd like to work in a committee.'

The information gained by sociometric procedures gives replies to questions like these:

- *Who are the group leaders?*
- *Who are the popular members of the group?*
- *What are the friendship patterns of the group?*
- *Which of its members does the group reject?*

(Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, p 35)

This approach can be used fairly easily with groups of people and can give useful information. However, it is not so easy to use with large numbers of school students in that they do not form a cohesive group.

(c) Self reports

This technique consists of all the tools which enable a person to report on his/ her own attitudes either in written form or orally. This is the most widely used approach and can offer very accurate pictures of the attitudes of large groups. It is important to have large samples. It is also important to note that responses may reflect what the sample would like the situation to be as well as what it actually is (Danili, 2004).

(d) Reports of others

The feelings, beliefs, or attitudes are described by observers. It is possible to use surveys for this but polls, journals, diaries and records can be used. The problem is to make clear deductions given that the information may be highly complex and may not accurately reflect what is actually in the heads of the individuals.

As the questionnaire is the instrument mostly used by researchers today, this will be discussed in detail in the following section.

4.3 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is,

“A method of gathering information from a number of individuals, a "sample", in order to learn something about the large population from which the sample is drawn.”

(Ferber, cited in May, 1997, p. 85).

Questions are asked and the respondents answer in writing (or by using pictures). Very often, responses involve ticking boxes or writing a short sentence. It is important that the language is clear and unambiguous and that the layout of the questions allows the respondents to answer easily (McNeill, 1990). Oppenheim (1966) specifies that a good questionnaire requires much care in selecting the kind of questions, in the design, piloting, as well as in the way the survey is conducted.

Generally, questionnaires can employ two general types of questions: open-end and closed. Open-end questions allow the respondents to express their opinions in their own words. Such questions can lead to in-depth study specially of individual issues (Blaxter et al., 1996). However, they are very time-consuming and difficult to read and interpret. Closed questions are much easier for respondents and are much quicker to summarise and analyse. However, they sometimes do not allow the respondents to say exactly what they think.

Henderson (1987) notes some advantages of questionnaires which are summarized here:

- They permit anonymity, thus increasing the chances of receiving responses that genuinely represent a person's beliefs or feelings.
- They permit a person a considerable amount of time to think about his answers before responding.
- They can be given to many people simultaneously.
- They provide greater uniformity across measurement situations than do the interviews. Each person responds to exactly the same questions.
- In general, the data they provide can be more easily analysed and interpreted than the data received from oral responses.
- They can be mailed as well as administered directly to a group of people, although, with mailing, it is difficult to get a good return rate.

4.4 Methods of Measurement

The first serious attempt at attitude measurement came with Thurstone when, in 1928, he argued that '*attitudes can be measured*'. This marked a major change in thinking among psychologists. His method involves the following steps:

- Collect a wide range of statements (about 100-150) related to the attitude under consideration.
- Edit them down to about 40-60 statements, seeking that each statement should have validity, with the range covering a wide range of opinion and including neutral positions.
- Find around 300 people who can give opinions relating to the attitude under consideration.
- The 300 were each asked to divide these statement into 11 categories: from extremely negative to extremely positive, including neutral. The aim was that the interval between each category should be equal.
- Select those statements where the 300 were in agreement. This gives about 20 statements.
- Respondents were asked to pick those statements with which they agree. Their score was the sum of the category values of the statements chosen.

In this way, Thurstone (1928,1929) opened the door to attitude measurement. Other methods have followed, building on his work. The problem with his approach is that it is cumbersome and time-consuming. It is rarely used today although an ingenious adaptation has been developed and is worth further consideration (Bennett *et al*, 2001).

An example used by Bennett *et al*, (2001, page 838) illustrates the approach:

'I like it when the lecturer gives us small tasks to do in lectures.

- A. I AGREE with this statement because it improves my understanding.
- B. I AGREE with this statement because it improves my concentration.
- C. I AGREE with this statement because I learn better in a group.
- D. I DISAGREE with this statement because discussions are for tutorials.
- E. I DISAGREE with this statement because it increases the noise and wastes time.
- F. I DISAGREE with this statement because in a big class some students do not participate.
- X. None of the above statements reflects my view, which is

Likert (1932) developed a new approach which has been widely used for over 70 years. Eisir (1988) describes his approach:

"Likert's method of summated rating is far less onerous in terms of the procedure one needs to go through to select items for inclusion in the scale. Instead of trying to get an even coverage of position continuous through from the anti to the pro extreme, Likert's method requires simply two groups of items, one group containing items that are relatively close to the anti extreme. These items are then presented to subjects who record their levels of agreement in terms of a scale such as strongly disagree/ disagree/ undecided/ agree/ strongly agree. These ratings are then scored numerically as 1 to 5 (or -2 to +2) for the pro items, but are scored in the reverse direction (5 to 1 or +2 to -2) for the anti items. Each subject's attitude score is simply the sum of these ratings over the total score, of disagreeing strongly with an anti item is the same as that of agreeing strongly with a pro item".

The scoring method is open to much criticism (Reid, 2006) but the format of the questions has been found to be versatile and is much used. An example (taken from this study) illustrates the format:

(5) Tick **one** box on each line to show your view .

	Strongly Agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
(a) It is essential that every pupil learns some social studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) I should like to study more social studies in high school or university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Using a textbook is more useful when you study than using your notebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Memorising is very important in social studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Doing an examination in social studies is stressful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Social studies is related to my life.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Social studies is useful for my career.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Each question is asking about a different aspect and it is important to analyse each question on its own.

Oppenheim (1982), thinking of the Likert method as a scaling method where an overall score is obtained, has shown that the approach has good reliability. However, he understands reliability as internal consistency where the items are designed on the basis of the attitude being measured being seen as uni-dimensional. Uni-dimensional attitudes are rare in education. This will be discussed later.

Osgood *et al.* (1967) explored semantic meaning and found that such meaning could be resolved into three dimensions, one of which appeared to be attitudinal. Heise (1970) appreciated that, "*Osgood's method is eminently suitable in terms of sample, administration, easy design, high reliability and validity when compared to other methods.*" The method was called "the semantic-differential method" (Osgood *et al.* 1967) and is widely used today.

The respondent ticks one of a series of boxes which are placed between adjectives or adjectival phrases (or even sentences as in Al-Shibli, 2003). An example used in this study illustrates the design.

Think of yourself when studying social subjects.

Tick one box on each line to show your view.

I feel I am coping well	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	I feel I am not coping well
I am enjoying the subject	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	I am not enjoying the subject
I find it very hard	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	I find it very easy
I am obtaining many new skills	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	I am not obtaining many new skills
I hate practical work	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	I am enjoying practical work
I like the teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	I dislike the teacher
It is definitely my subject	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	It is definitely not my subject

In the original method, the number of boxes was seven. However, they were modified by Heise (1970) to four or five points. This modification makes this method quicker and easier for both the respondent and the analyser and also suitable for younger respondents (Reid, 1978).

Reid (2003) discusses another approach which he calls '*rating questions*'. The following example shows how this was used in the study described here.

Here is a list of eight modern day issues.

Place them in order, using the letters, showing which is most important for yourself.

- (A) The problem of global warming
- (B) Using water resources efficiently in Oman
- (C) The problem of energy for the world when the oil runs out
- (D) Air pollution
- (E) World poverty and malnutrition
- (F) Saving the world's tropical forests
- (G) Equality between men and women

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
most important						least important

In this example, the respondents place all the responses in order from A to G. A method to analyse such questions was devised by Serumola (2007) and will be used here.

However, there are many other forms of rating questions and one is shown below:

There are many reasons why you have to study social subjects.

Tick the three which are most important for you.

- Studying social studies applications in life
- Learning about how people behave
- Explaining natural phenomena
- Preparing for a career
- Learning about the important events in history
- Studying about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens
- Studying how social studies can help me in life
- Studying about environment problems and how to solve them.

This offers insights into how the respondents see their studies in terms of purpose and offers insights into the attitudes they hold relating to social subjects and their place in an educational experience.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

Eagly and Chaiken (1993, page 28) summarise the meaning of reliability and validity as,

"The reliability of a measuring instrument refers to the extent to which that instrument yields consistent scores or values over repeated observations. The validity of a measuring instrument refers to extent to which that instrument measures what it claims to measure"

Thus, validity is the extent to which the test measures what it is intended to measure while reliability is the extent to which the measurement gives similar outcomes if repeated under similar circumstances.

Validity has more importance. Therefore, researchers have to know what they are measuring. Thus, investigators seek to check the validity by several approaches. Schebeci (1984) tried to achieve it by asking groups of experts while Shah (2004) undertook sample interviews. Bennett *et al.* (2001) aimed for it by developing questions after talking to respondents as well as by relating outcomes to independent observations.

Reliability can be checked by test and re-test under equivalent circumstances. However, Reid (2006) shows that reliability is usually assured by using large samples, careful pre-testing, making sure that conditions of testing are good. In addition, Oppenheim (1982) notes that the length of the measure can improve reliability. Nonetheless, validity is much more important than reliability. If a test is not valid then it cannot be reliable.

4.6 Method Used in This Study

This study seeks to explore student attitudes in relation to studies in social studies by making a wide range of measurements with three populations in Oman, at age 14, 15 and 16 approximately. The questionnaire used aimed to employ a variety of approaches, depending on those developed by Likert (1932), Osgood *et al.* (1967) and those described by Reid (2003). This follows the recommendation proposed by Reid (2006, page 20) when he said that,

“There are numerous paper-and-pencil approaches: based on Likert, Osgood as well as rating questions and situational set questions; interviews can offer useful insights.”

Bell (1991) argues that selecting the appropriate instrument depends on the nature, context, aims and the number and kind of respondents in the study. Therefore, a questionnaire is used here because the study aims to measure a wide range of attitudes with over 600 students drawn from three year groups. The aim was to develop an overall picture and to see how attitudes were developing with age and experience (Vulliamy *et al.*, 1990). In addition, it was also an aim to explore how boys and girls differed in their attitudes towards their studies.

The analyses adopted two approaches. In the first the data are presented descriptively and then interpreted. For example,

For the statement, ‘*Geography is an extremely boring subject*’, pupils were invited to respond on a five point scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’.

The data are considered as percentages for clarity:

Geography is an extremely boring subject				
<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>neutral</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
37	10	13	11	29

Table 4.1 Sample Data

This can be interpreted as indicating that there was some polarisation of views, with quite large proportions holding strong views one way or the other.

The second approach compared sub-groups of the population. For example, if the sample was divided into girls and boys, the data are:

Geography is an extremely boring subject					
	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>neutral</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
girls	33	9	16	11	32
boys	41	11	10	10	27

Table 4.2 Sample Gender Data

These two distributions of responses can be compared to see if they are statistically different.

It is also possible to compare students by year group to see if attitudes are changing or developing:

Geography is an extremely boring subject					
Year Group	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>neutral</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
8	38	6	16	11	31
9	41	10	12	12	15
10	31	14	12	10	34

Table 4.3 Sample by Year Group

Then these frequency patterns can be compared statistically using chi-square as a contingency test and this will be discussed later.

Chapter 5

Survey of Pupil Attitudes in Oman

5.1 Introduction

It has been noted that the Ministry of Education in Oman has a considerable interest at the moment in what they call citizenship education and they tie this tightly to the curriculum area of social studies at school. No work has been carried out in Oman to explore if social studies is making a contribution to this. While the study conducted here was exploratory to see how the pupils aged 14-16 reacted to their experiences in the social subjects areas, it is hoped that the outcomes would throw some light on the idea of citizenship education as seen by the pupils.

This survey is implemented in eighteen schools of second cycle education. The schools were selected randomly and represented a cross section of all Omani schools in terms of catchment area. The study sample is shown in figure 5.1.

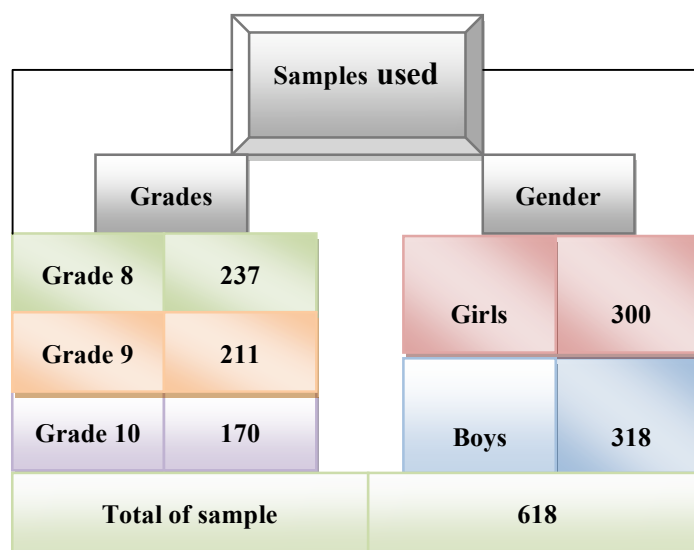


Figure 5.1 Samples Used in the Study

Grades 8 to 10 were chosen in that they are critical years in coming to informed educational choices. The aim was to gain an overall picture of pupil perceptions. In choosing a large sample from the three years, it is possible to observe any developments with age as well as compare the views of boys and girls.

This survey was implemented in April (the school academic year starts in November). The students took approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete the survey. It was stressed to the pupils that their responses would not affect their school grades in any way. In this way, it was hoped that an honest picture would emerge.

The questionnaire was developed, following the guidelines offered by Reid (2003). Firstly, the broad areas of interest, in terms of the aims of this project, were listed. Many questions were developed in various formats and these were refined. The set of questions was then given to experienced teachers for comment and the questionnaire modified slightly in the light of comments. Finally, the whole questionnaire was translated into Arabic and the translation checked.

By taking these steps, it was hoped that the validity was high while, by using large samples under good conditions, the reliability was assured (Reid, 2003). Questions 1 to 3 use 6 response spaces, in an attempt to avoid neutrality while question 5 uses 5 response spaces in that a neutral position is helpful. The questions of the questionnaire are shown below in the English version. It is shown in both languages in the original layout (with the full instructions) in the appendix.

- (1) Think of your social subjects (eg geography, history) lessons.
Tick one box on each line to show your view.

I like social studies lesson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I hate social studies lesson
Boring lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting lessons
Easy lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complicated lesson
I'd like to spend less time on social studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I'd like to spend more time on social studies
Enjoyable lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Boring lessons
Useless lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Important lessons

- (1) Think of yourself when studying social subjects.
Tick one box on each line to show your view.

I feel I am coping well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel I am not coping well
I am enjoying the subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am not enjoying the subject
I find it very very hard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I find it very easy
I am obtaining many new skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am not obtaining many new skills
I hate practical work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am enjoying practical work
I like the teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I dislike the teacher
It is definitely my subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is definitely <i>not</i> my subject

- (3) Different students prefer different school subjects

Indicate your preference for subjects by ticking one of the boxes in each line below

Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arabic
History	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	English
Biology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Geography
History	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mathematics
Islamic Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Geography
Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Studies

- (4) There are many reasons why you have to study social subjects.

Tick the **three** which are most important for you.

- Studying social studies applications in life
- Learning about how people behave
- Explaining natural phenomena
- Preparing for a career
- Learning about the important events in history
- Studying about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens
- Studying how social studies can help me in life
- Studying about environment problems and how to solve them.

- (5) Tick **one** box on each line to show your view.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
(a) It is essential that every pupil learns some social studies.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) I should like to study more social studies in high school or university.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Using a textbook is more useful when you study than using your notebook...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Memorizing is very important in social studies.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Doing an examination in social studies is stressful.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Social studies is related to my life.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Social studies is useful for my career.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Social studies help me to know the developments in my homeland.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Social studies help me to better knowing my homeland.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- (6) School subjects may be able to help you get a job later in life.

Tick the **two** subjects which you think will help you **most**.

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Social studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Islamic studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |

- (7) Think about life in the future

Tick the box showing what you would **most** like to be.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A football player | <input type="checkbox"/> A computer game programmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A geography teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> A researcher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A scientist | <input type="checkbox"/> An engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A historian | <input type="checkbox"/> A politician |

- (8) Different people find that different things attract them to study subjects.

What attracts **you** to study social subjects.

Tick as many as you wish.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> What I see on television | <input type="checkbox"/> My social studies lessons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibitions, demonstrations, festivals | <input type="checkbox"/> The opinions of my friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parents | <input type="checkbox"/> My teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books I have read | <input type="checkbox"/> Anything else (please indicate) |

- (9) Here is a list of eight modern day issues.

Place them in order, using the letters, showing which is most important for yourself.

- (A) The problem of global warming
- (B) Using water resources efficiently in Oman
- (C) The problem of energy for the world when the oil runs out
- (D) Air pollution
- (E) World poverty and malnutrition
- (F) Saving the world's tropical forests
- (G) Equality between men and women

 most important least important

- (10) What do you think is the most important thing you learn in your social subjects courses ?

5.2 Analysing Data

Responses to each part of each question for all 618 were entered into a spreadsheet. Codes for age and gender were included, allowing for analysis. SPSS software generated frequency data. Chi-square comparisons were carried out using a programme built on a spreadsheet.

There major analyses were completed. Firstly, the overall patterns for all the sample are discussed in this chapter. The aim here is to offer a picture of the overall perceptions of pupils of these ages in relation to their studies in social studies. In the following chapter, the response patterns of boys and girls are compared, using chi-square as a contingency test. After that, the next chapter discusses the trends by age, again using chi-square as a contingency test.

The chi-square statistic is used to compare response patterns of two or more groups. This statistic is non-parametric in that it does not assume any particular distribution pattern. Where there is a control group, chi-square as a test of 'goodness of fit' can be used. In this study, there is no control group and chi-square is used as a contingency test (see appendix). One of the conditions for using chi-square is that no frequency drops too low. In this study, a category limit of 5% or 10 (whichever is more critical) was used. Chi-square must be calculated using frequencies but, for clarity, all the data are shown in this and subsequent chapters as percentages. In this and the next two chapters, colour is used to highlight important aspects of the patterns of the data.

Question 1

This question explores concepts of how students look at their lessons when they have studied social studies.

(1) Think of your social subjects (eg geography, history) lessons.						(%, N = 618)
I like social studies lesson	57	26	11	3	2	2
Boring lessons	5	4	8	13	22	48
Easy lessons	41	29	15	7	5	3
I'd like to spend less time on social studies	10	13	18	13	17	30
Enjoyable lessons	52	26	12	5	2	3
Useless lessons	8	3	2	10	13	65

Table 5.1 Question 1 data

The vast majority of the student hold positive attitudes toward their social studies lessons. They find them interesting, easy, enjoyable, and important lessons. Therefore, they like social studies and tend to some extent to want to spend more time on studying it.

Question 2

This question asks them to think about themselves as they study social studies.

(2) Think of yourself when studying social subjects.						(%, N = 618)
I feel I am coping well	61	21	11	3	2	3
I am enjoying the subject	58	23	11	4	2	2
I find it very hard	4	5	13	13	27	37
I am obtaining many new skills	57	23	10	4	2	3
I hate practical work	10	8	13	10	22	38
I like the teacher	77	11	5	2	2	3
It is definitely my subject	32	29	19	7	4	8

Table 5.2 Question 2 Data

Looking at how they see themselves in learning social studies, there is much that is positive. More than fifty percent of them feel that they are coping well and enjoying the subject. This might be because they like their teachers and find the subject easy. Furthermore, they say they are obtaining many new skills and enjoying practical work. A good proportion of them regard social studies as 'their' subject.

Question 3

This question looks at various combinations of subjects which they study to see how social studies is viewed.

(3) Different student prefer different school subjects							(%, N = 618)
Mathematics	37	10	13	11	5	24	Arabic
History	39	9	12	7	7	28	English
Biology	29	7	13	10	8	34	Geography
History	30	7	11	9	8	34	Mathematics
Islamic Studies	50	9	13	9	5	16	Geography
Mathematics	22	5	13	12	9	39	Social Studies

Table 5.3 Question 3 Data

The most marked observation is the extent of polarization, with pupils holding a strong preference for one subject *or* the other. Indeed, the second and fifth boxes are not used much: they either have a *very strong* preference or *very little* preference. The strong attraction of Islamic Studies is apparent, reflecting Omani society culture which considers that Islam influences every part of life.

Question 4

This measures why they need to study social studies. In Questions 4, 6 and 8 students can tick more than one box and, therefore totals do not add to 100% (tables 5.4,5.6, 5.8).

(4) There are many reasons why you have to study social subjects.		(%, N = 618)
Studying social studies applications in life		32
Learning about how people behave		9
Explaining natural phenomena		57
Preparing for a career		13
Learning about the important events in history		70
Studying about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens		34
Studying how social studies can help me in life		12
Studying about environment problems and how to solve them		59

Table 5.4 Question 4 Data

The most important reasons for studying social subjects relates to the important events in history, environment problems and how to solve them and explaining natural phenomena. In addition, many of them also rate highly rights and responsibilities of the citizens and studying social studies applications in life. For example, learning social studies might help student to deal with some crucial issues that relate to his/her life. For instance, Omani students study in social studies that they have to conduct a medical test before marriage in order to avoid the diseases that run in the family. Another example, by

studying social studies students become aware that wise consumption is necessary in dealing with resources of water, food, and electricity (see table 2.2, page 17). It is interesting to note the low rating for learning how people behave while social studies is not particularly important for careers, the students showing that they are aware of that.

Question 5

This question considers a diversity of issues.

(5) Tick <i>one</i> box on each line to show your view	(% , N = 618)				
	SA	A	N	D	SD
It is essential that every pupil learns some social studies	3	3	8	43	44
I should like to study more social studies in high school or university	7	11	21	40	22
Using a textbook is more useful when you study than using ... notebook	5	11	14	33	38
Memorizing is very important in social studies	6	7	10	32	45
Doing an examination in social studies is stressful	19	28	20	19	13
Social studies is related in my life	3	4	21	42	30
Social studies is useful for my career	3	5	25	36	31
Social studies help me to know the developments in my homeland	2	2	9	33	54
Social studies help me to better knowing my homeland	2	2	5	32	58

Table 5.5 Question 5 Data

Some of the responses are very revealing. They do not see the importance of social studies for all and they do not see it as useful for a career or to help them understand their own country or even being related to their lives. Social studies perhaps does not open many career opportunities in a direct sense but it is surprising, and sad, that they do not see the subject area as helping them to make sense of their own country or their lives.

Their reaction to examinations is as expected but it is very surprising that memorization is not seen as the key to success. It is possible that they are confusing memorisation with understanding, a common feature in the middle east. Clearly, they find it interesting and want more but the textbooks are not the more favored way of learning.

In the Omani learning system, social studies does not occupy a key position as judged by the time allocated to the subject and its role in assessment. Furthermore, it is normal that most of them will not want to go on to study more social studies in high school or university. Subjects related to medicine and the sciences tend to adopt a higher profile in Omani education.

Question 6

Tick the **two** subjects which you think will help you **most**.

(6) School subjects may be able to help you get a job later in life. (% , N = 618)					
English	Social studies	Arabic	Islamic studies	Sciences	Mathematics
75	13	7	9	36	59

Table 5.6 Question 6 Data

With two choices, the total adds approximately to 200%. English is in at the top, reflecting its importance for all kinds of careers in all societies. Subjects which underpin medicine, science, and technology also rate highly. Indeed, mathematics and sciences are considered as very important in Oman. However, the importance of social studies, Arabic, and Islamic studies is fairly low. The question considers what they perceive as ‘need’. It is likely that the responses reflect perceived need largely in terms of career opportunities.

Question 7

Tick the box showing what you would **most** like to be.

(7) Think about life in the future (% , N = 618)								
Football player	Geography teacher	Scientist	Historian	Islamic studies teacher	Computer game programmer	Researcher	Engineer	Politician
11	12	18	3	10	5	29	7	4

Table 5.7 Question 7 Data

Table corrected and text modified

The high status of the researcher and scientist is very clear, reflecting their perceived role in society. The attraction of being a football player might simply reflect their interests at this age. Being a teacher seems to have a fairly constant rating. Politicians and historians are rated at a low level while being an engineer also has a fairly low rating. Of course, the word ‘engineer’ has many meanings, covering a wide range of occupations.

Question 8

This question looks at different things that attract them to study social studies.

(8) Different people find that different things attract them to study subjects.		(% , N = 618)	
What I see on television	54	My social studies lessons	65
Exhibitions, demonstrations, festivals	22	The opinions of my friends	13
My parents	23	My teacher	52
Books I have read	53	Anything else	25

Table 5.8 Question 8 Data

It is evident that the most important factors that attract students towards social studies are their lessons, television programmes and books, and their teachers. A similar question used in Scotland in relation to physics (Skryabina, 2000) showed the key power of the teacher and what went on in the class as well as the perceived career potential of physics. Books and television have more impact for social studies because of the accessibility of the subject through such media. As with physics, other factors are of lower impact.

Question 9

Here is a list of eight modern day issues.

Place them in order, using the letters, showing which is most important for yourself.

(9) Here is a list of eight modern day issues.	(% , N = 618)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The problem of global warming	17	18	15	15	13	10	12
Using water resources efficiently in Oman	12	16	15	18	13	12	14
The problem of energy for the world when the oil runs out	5	9	12	16	17	23	19
Air pollution	6	9	17	16	17	19	17
World poverty and malnutrition	6	10	11	16	19	21	17
Saving the world's tropical forests	22	24	20	12	12	7	4
Equality between men and women	33	14	10	8	9	8	18

Table 5.9 Question 9 Data

Most of the students state that the equality between men and women and saving the world's tropical forests are the most important issues. They also see the problem of global warming is significant. However, it is strange that they not regard the problem of energy for the world as very important. What happens to Oman when the oil runs out when their country depends so much on its oil income? This might reflect lack of awareness or knowledge about this issue. Equally, the low ratings for air pollution and poverty and malnutrition may simply reflect young people growing up in a country where energy is very cheap, pollution is, as yet, no great problem and there is little poverty.

Question 10 was open-ended. The pupil responses were grouped into categories and the responses are summarized in table 5.10.

Table 5.10 Responses to Question 10

(10) What do you think is the most important thing you learn in your social subjects courses ?								
	Topics	Subtopics	All % (618)	Gender %		Grades %		
				Girls (300)	Boys (318)	8 (237)	9 (211)	10 (170)
Knowledge	Civic Education	Oman society and improvements	8	8	9	11	10	3
		Oman history	11	10	13	12	15	5
		Rights and responsibilities	3	3	2	5	2	1
		World conditions	5	4	5	2	7	5
		Total	27	26	28	30	35	13
	Geography	Weather, seasons, natural phenomena, physical geography	13	15	12	10	12	21
		Global warming	2	3	2	0.2	0	9
		Environment	5	7	3	6	4	6
		Pollution	3	2	4	4	2	2
		Desertification	1	1	1	0.3	0	3
		Water resources and problems	4	5	4	10	1	0.2
		Energy resources	0.3	1	0.1	0.3	0.4	1
		Population	3	2	5	1	9	1
		World economics	2	1	3	0	3	5
		Total	35	35	35	29	30	50
	History	History of (Islamic civilization, Arab, European and World)	18	18	19	11	19	14
		Islamic sects	1	1	1	0	0	3
		Geography Innovations	2	2	2	4	1	0
		Total	21	20	23	15	20	17
Grand Total			83	81	85	83	85	80
Skills	Maps	4	5	3	3	3	6	
	Solving problems.	2	2	3	2	2	2	
	Implements in the life	1	1	2	1	1	1	
	Thinking for future	0.3	0.1	1	0.2	0.7	0	
	Participation of society	3	5	0.3	2	2	5	
		Total	11	13	8	9	9	15
Values	Total	6	7	7	8	9	5	

The data of table 5.10 is presented visually in figure 5.2 (overleaf). This shows that ~83% of responses of the students indicate that knowledge is the most important thing for studying social studies. However, there are only ~11% for skills and ~6% for values. This seems to confirm the common idea which regards social studies as a subject to be memorised (Barr, 1993). Thus, if assessment continually over-emphasises the recall of information, students should not be blamed if they do not find the subject of interest, perhaps because it does not help them to improve their skills and values related to the practicalities of daily social life.

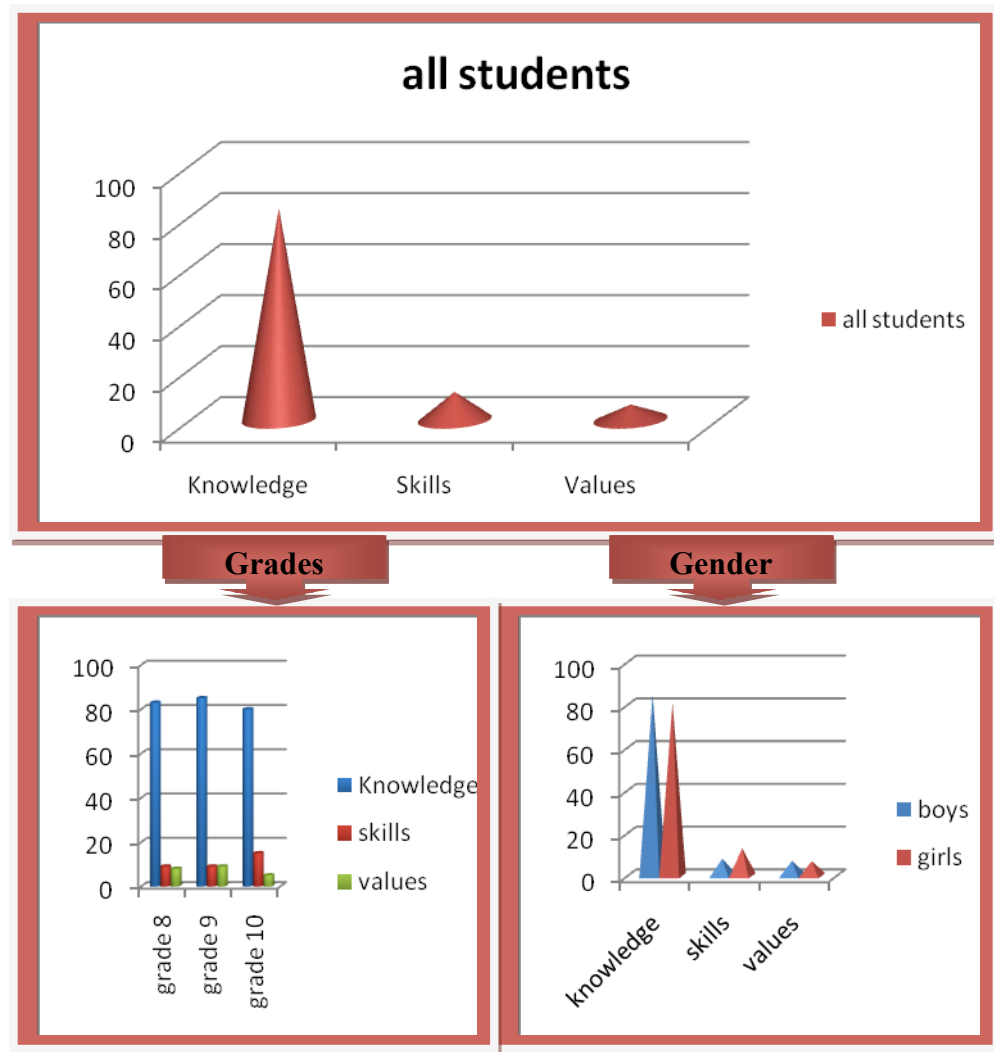


Figure 5.2 Students' Responses to Question 10 (%)

Unfortunately, this perception is totally inconsistent with the general aims of social studies put forward by the Ministry of Education in Oman (see chapter 2 pages 14-15). Their goals are to develop students' attitudes and awareness of various issues in Omani society as well as the wider world. The students see acquisition of knowledge as the key. This almost certainly reflects the way the subject is taught and the way it is assessed. The development of attitudes and skills does not necessarily follow from the acquisition of knowledge.

This is a serious issue in that the courses merely give information and knowledge regardless of the other important desirable outcomes. Therefore, it is unlikely that student attitudes are being developed in any consistent way.

5.3 Conclusions

Generally, there are positive attitudes of the students toward their social studies lessons. They find them interesting, easy, enjoyable, and important lessons. Thus, they like social studies and would like to spend more time on studying it. On other hand, they do not see the area as useful for a career or to help them understand their own country or even being related to their lives. Therefore, they dislike to study more social studies in higher education, perhaps seeing its lack of career potential in Oman society. Moreover, they prefer Islamic studies more than others because of Omani culture.

It appears that they like to study social studies to learn about historical events and environmental problems and how to solve it. In addition, there is an acceptable percentage of them would like to be a geography teacher. It reflects the status of this role in Omani society.

There is a clear pattern of what attracts students towards social studies: their lessons, television programmes and books, and their teachers. It is interesting to note that television and books have little influence in attracting students towards the physical sciences (Reid and Skryabina, 2002a). Of course, social issues can make great television while the physical sciences are much more difficult to present in terms of accessible and attractive television programmes.

In general, students consider that the most important issues are the equality between men and women and saving the world's tropical forests. They also think that the problem of global warming is important. Nonetheless, it is strange that they do not look upon the problem of energy for the world when the oil runs out while their homeland almost depends on its oil income. It is quite possible that cheap energy is assumed and there is little emphasis in the curriculum on the consequences for the country when oil and gas run out, perhaps because this is seen as too far in the future.

Having looked at the overall trends and patterns, the differences in the responses of boys and girls are now discussed.

Chapter 6

Gender and Social Studies

6.1 Introduction

Reid and Skryabina (2002b), in a physics study in Scotland, found that boys and girls were, overall, equally attracted to the themes of physics although the specific themes of interest varied. On other hand, Suzuki (2007), in a biology study in Japan, found few differences of attitude relating to biology between boys and girls. Girls had a slightly greater interest in the human side of biology and boys were more attracted to the impact of biology on society and the world around. The teacher was more important for the girls in biology while the Reid and Skryabina study found that the teacher was *much* more important in physics for the girls. Suzuki noted that the gender differences had considerable implications for the way the curriculum is constructed and lessons are organised and delivered in schools as well as the way textbooks are written and the subject is examined in formal examinations.

In the present study, an attempt was made to see if social studies showed any similarities with these previous studies. Unfortunately, it is quite difficult in this study to compare girls and boys responses for each grade group because of sample size.. Thus, all boys' responses were compared with all girls' responses. Chi-square was used as a contingency test (no control group). See appendix for more detail. The following table shows details of the sample used in this study.

Sample Used	
<i>Girls</i>	300
<i>Boys</i>	318
<i>Total</i>	618

Table 6.1 Samples Used

The data are presented as percentages for clarity. However, actual frequencies were used in all statistical calculations. Each question's part is considered independently. The chi-square value, degrees of freedom used and statistical significance are shown. Colour is used to highlight significant results.

6.2 Analyses and Discussion

Question 1

Think of your social subjects lessons. *Tick one box on each line to show your view.*

(1) Think of your social subjects lessons		%						χ^2	df	p
I like social studies lesson	boys	60	23	10	3	1	3	3.8	3	ns.
	girls	53	30	12	3	2	2			
Boring lessons	boys	6	6	8	11	18	51	11.7	4	<0.05
	girls	4	2	9	14	25	45			
Easy lessons	boys	44	27	15	6	4	4	2.7	4	ns
	girls	38	31	15	7	6	3			
I'd like to spend less time on social studies	boys	9	11	17	13	18	32	3.6	5	ns
	girls	11	14	19	12	16	27			
Enjoyable lessons	boys	55	23	11	5	3	4	5	3	ns
	girls	49	30	12	5	1	2			
Useless lessons	boys	7	3	2	12	13	63	2.5	2	ns
	girls	8	3	2	8	12	66			

Table 6.2 Question 1 Data (%)

Thinking of social studies classes, boys and girls have similar perceptions in the majority of cases while boys tend to think social studies lessons are slightly more boring than girls do.

Question 2

Think of yourself when studying social subjects. *Tick one box on each line to show your view.*

(2) Think of yourself when studying social subjects.%		%						χ^2	df	p
I feel I am coping well	boys	55	23	14	3	2	4	11.8	3	<0.01
	girls	67	18	7	2	3	2			
I am enjoying the subject	boys	59	22	9	5	2	2	1.9	3	ns
	girls	56	24	12	3	2	3			
I find it very hard	boys	5	6	14	15	26	35	5.1	4	ns
	girls	3	5	13	12	28	39			
I am obtaining many new skills	boys	59	23	10	4	2	2	3	3	ns
	girls	56	23	9	5	3	5			
I hate practical work	boys	6	7	13	13	25	36	18.8	5	<0.01
	girls	14	9	12	8	18	40			
I like the teacher	boys	75	13	5	2	2	4	0,2	2	ns
	girls	79	8	5	2	2	3			
It is definitely my subject	boys	33	28	20	6	5	7	2.5	4	ns
	girls	32	30	18	8	4	9			

Table 6.3 Question 2 Data (%)

There are few differences between boys and girls when thinking about themselves when studying social studies. Girls feel that they are coping better, perhaps because they are more interested in learning. Girls like practical work less.

Question 3

Different students prefer different school subjects

Indicate your preference for subjects by ticking one of the boxes in each line below.

(3) Different student prefer different school subjects								χ^2	df	p	
Mathematics	boys	33	9	16	11	6	26	Arabic	8	4	ns
	girls	41	11	10	10	4	23				
History	boys	40	11	14	5	7	24	English	10.9	5	ns
	girls	38	6	10	8	6	32				
Biology	boys	24	8	15	12	8	34	Geography	10.6	5	ns
	girls	34	6	10	8	7	34				
History	boys	32	10	12	9	8	30	Mathematics	6.7	5	ns
	girls	28	6	10	9	8	39				
Islamic Studies	boys	48	9	15	11	4	12	Geography	13.7	4	<0.01
	girls	51	8	10	6	5	20				
Mathematics	boys	17	4	14	14	11	42	Geography	15.1	4	<0.01
	girls	28	5	13	10	7	37				

Table 6.4 Question 3 Data (%)

Boys and girls differ only in two parts. While girls and boys prefer Islamic Studies compared with geography, girls like to study geography slightly more than boys. Indeed this preference of Islamic study is normal because of Islam's status and importance in Oman. On other hand, it is a matter of concern that both boys and girls prefer geography in comparison with mathematics. Perhaps they find mathematics too difficult, giving poor grades. Generally, their responses probably relate to thinking about study not career.

Question 4

There are many reasons why you have to study social subjects.

Tick the **three** which are most important for you.

(4) There are many reasons why you have to study social subjects.			χ^2	df	p
Studying social studies applications in life	boys	36	6.4	1	<0.05
	girls	27			
Learning about how people behave	boys	11	3.7	1	ns
	girls	6			
Explaining natural phenomena	boys	54	1.1	1	ns
	girls	59			
Preparing for a career	boys	13	0.1	1	ns
	girls	12			
Learning about the important events in history	boys	67	3.6	1	ns
	girls	74			
Studying about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens	boys	35	0.3	1	ns
	girls	33			
Studying how social studies can help me in life	boys	13	0.7	1	ns
	girls	11			
Studying about environment problems and how to solve them	boys	53	9.5	1	<0.01
	girls	65			

Table 6.5 Question 4 Data (%)

Again, the views are very similar with only two items showing any statistical difference. Boys see that studying social studies applications in life is a slightly stronger reason to study social studies. Girls are more interested in environmental problems and how to solve them.

Question 5

Tick **one** box on each line to show your view.

(5) Tick one box on each line to show your view							χ^2	df	p
		SA	A	N	D	SD			
It is essential that every pupil learns some social studies	<i>boys</i>	3	4	9	43	42	1.1	4	ns
	<i>girls</i>	3	3	7	42	45			
I should like to study more social studies in high school or university	<i>boys</i>	6	6	25	41	22	19.1	4	<0.001
	<i>girls</i>	7	16	17	39	21			
Using a textbook is more useful when you study than using your notebook.	<i>boys</i>	6	14	17	30	32	23.0	3	<0.001
	<i>girls</i>	3	7	10	36	44			
Memorizing is very important in social studies	<i>boys</i>	6	8	12	33	41	5.8	4	ns
	<i>girls</i>	5	7	8	30	50			
Doing an examination in social studies is stressful	<i>boys</i>	22	24	25	19	10	17.0	4	<0.01
	<i>girls</i>	16	33	16	19	16			
Social studies is related in my life	<i>boys</i>	4	4	18	45	29	4.1	3	ns
	<i>girls</i>	2	4	24	38	31			
Social studies is useful for my career	<i>boys</i>	4	5	25	33	34	4.7	3	ns
	<i>girls</i>	3	4	25	40	28			
Social studies help me to know the developments in my homeland	<i>boys</i>	2	2	12	31	53	8.4	4	ns
	<i>girls</i>	1	1	6	36	55			
Social studies help me to better knowing my homeland	<i>boys</i>	3	3	5	31	59	1.1	4	ns
	<i>girls</i>	2	2	5	33	57			

Table 6.6 Question 5 Data (%)

There are some interesting differences showing in the data in table 6.6. Girls have a slightly greater tendency to be more interested in studying more social studies in high school or university. For boys, qualifications open more doors than are available for girls. With social subjects, the only opportunities arise from teaching these subjects and this is an acceptable career option for girls.

Furthermore, boys and girls differ in studying styles; while girls tend to use textbooks in their studying, boys like to use notebooks.

Generally, at these ages, boys do not care so much about study; thus, doing an examination in social studies is not so stressful for them. On other hand, the examination is stressful for girls because they are more interested in studying, largely arising from social customs and pressures.

Question 6

School subjects may be able to help you get a job later in life.

Tick the **two** subjects which you think will help you **most**.

(6) School subjects may be able to help you get a job later in life			χ^2	df	p
English	boys	66	28.3	1	<0.001
	girls	84			
Social studies	boys	17	7.1	1	<0.01
	girls	10			
Arabic	boys	8	0.8	1	ns
	girls	6			
Islamic studies	boys	12	6.0	1	<0.05
	girls	6			
Sciences	boys	34	1.1	1	ns
	girls	38			
Mathematics	boys	63	3.4	1	ns
	girls	55			

Table 6.7 Question 6 Data (%)

The responses of boys and girls to this question really reflect career requirements in Omani society where boys can get careers without high qualifications because there are much greater openings for boys. The social expectation is to limit girls to careers like teaching, nursing, and, sometimes, management employment in some ministry. Thus, girls see English language as more important than boys, in career terms. Perhaps, the girls see studying English as a way to open more doors for a wider variety of careers

In Omani society, if a girl studies social studies, the expectation is that that she will move in become a social studies teacher. Oman's population is about 2.5 million (Ministry of Information, 2002) and the number of school students is over 0.5 million, with just over 1000 schools (Ministry of Education, 2006). There is a limited opportunity to become a teacher of social studies (and also of Islamic Studies), both of which areas tend to be very much areas for girls to consider. Thus, job opportunities for girls following social studies are, indeed limited.

Question 7

Think about life in the future

Tick the box showing what you would **most** like to be

(7) Think about life in the future %		
Football player	Boys	19
	Girls	3
Geography teacher	Boys	8
	Girls	17
Scientist	Boys	10
	Girls	27
Historian	Boys	1
	Girls	6
Islamic studies teacher	Boys	12
	Girls	9
Computer game programmer	Boys	5
	Girls	6
Researcher	Boys	32
	Girls	25
Engineer	Boys	9
	Girls	5
Politician	Boys	5
	Girls	3

Table 6.8 Question 7 Data (%)

It is not possible to analyse this question using chi-square since so many of the percentages are too low (see appendix). The considerable differences in some percentages reflect the career opportunities in Omani society. Nonetheless, it is puzzling that the percentage of girls wanting to be scientists is so much higher: is this an aspiration to what is perceived as a prestigious career, arising from some frustration?

Question 8

Different people find that different things attract them to study subjects.

What attracts **you** to study social subjects. Tick as many as you wish.

(8) Different people find that different things attract them to study subjects.			χ^2	df	p
What I see on television	boys	51	2.5	1	ns
	girls	57			
Exhibitions, demonstrations, festivals	boys	18	4.2	1	<0.05
	girls	25			
My parents	boys	21	0.5	1	ns
	girls	24			
Books I have read	boys	54	0.1	1	ns
	girls	52			
My social studies lessons	boys	67	0.5	1	ns
	girls	64			
The opinions of my friends	boys	15	2.3	1	ns
	girls	11			
My teacher	boys	51	0.5	1	ns
	girls	54			
Anything else	boys	23	0.6	1	ns
	girls	26			

Table 6.9 Question 8 Data (%)

Again, gender differences are small.

Question 9

Here is a list of eight modern day issues.

Place them in order, using the letters, showing which is most important for yourself

(9) Here is a list of eight modern day issues.								χ^2	df	p	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
The problem of global warming	boys	14	19	16	17	13	10	11	5.2	6	ns
	girls	20	18	15	13	12	11	12			
Using water resources efficiently in Oman	boys	11	15	15	19	14	11	16	3.9	6	ns
	girls	12	18	15	16	13	13	12			
The problem of energy for the world when the oil runs out	boys	7	9	9	14	16	24	21	7.1	5	ns
	girls	3	10	14	17	18	21	16			
Air pollution	boys	7	7	15	16	14	20	20	9.3	5	ns
	girls	4	12	18	17	20	17	13			
World poverty and malnutrition	boys	8	12	11	15	20	18	16	12.1	5	<0.05
	girls	4	8	11	17	19	25	17			
Saving the world's tropical forests	boys	16	22	22	11	15	9	5	22.5	5	<0.001
	girls	28	26	17	13	9	5	3			
Equality between men and women	boys	36	16	11	9	9	8	10	30.4	5	<0.001
	girls	29	11	10	7	9	8	27			

Table 6.10 Question 9 Data (%)

Looking at modern day issues, boys think that world poverty and malnutrition are a little bit more important than girls. In addition, girls see saving the world's tropical forests is a more important modern issue. It is possible that girls are more attracted to events and images which are shown in media news. It is surprising that boys see the issue of equality between men and women important more than girls. Of course, some of these differences can be explained in terms of the greater maturity of girls at these ages. The girls tend to be more socially aware and are thinking more in terms of adults in thinking about responsibilities and issues of life.

6.3 Some Conclusions

Overall, girls and boys have few dissimilarities of attitudes toward social studies. However, more boys tend to think that social studies lessons are poor while girls hate practical work although girls say they cope better than boys. These differences may well be related to teaching styles and differences in resources in a system where girls and boys are educated totally separately.

Furthermore, in the Omani system, boys take examinations less seriously at these ages and they are seen as less stressful as a result. With their greater maturity, it might be that girls care more about study and getting higher grades at these ages.

Both girls and boys agree that social studies lessons and what they see in television help them to study social studies. However, girls think that exhibitions, demonstrations and festivals also help them in studying social studies. This may be because girls are more influenced by events and images around them.

It appears that boys and girls do not have enough awareness of modern issues of the world. This might be as a result of their experiences in social subjects classes. Although the government has high ambitions for citizenship, the curricula tend to be heavily overloaded, with textbooks and examinations laying great emphasis on the correct recall of the maximum amount of information.

Boys have a more positive view of studying social studies in high schools or university and they think it will help them to get a job. Furthermore, they see social studies applications in life. This is because of the very different career opportunities for boys and girls in Omani culture and society. There are very much greater openings for boys while there is an implicit hierarchy of subjects in terms of perceived value.

Having looked at gender and attitudes relating to social studies in Oman, the next stage is to consider how such attitudes change with age. This is the theme of the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Grades Analyses

7.1 The Approach Adopted

During grades 8, 9 and 10, the pupils are moving through adolescence and through a period of their school where the foundations for important decisions for the futures may well be established. The sample involved pupils from these three grades (figure 7.1).

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Sample</i>
8	237
9	211
10	170

Table 7.1 Samples Used

As before, the patterns of responses are compared using chi-square as a contingency test. For clarity, data are shown as percentages although all statistical calculations are based on frequencies.

7.2 Question Analyses

Each question is now considered in turn and the chi-square values comparing the three year groups are shown. Colour coding is used to highlight outcomes where the differences in response patterns are significant. It would have been possible to calculate three chi-square values for each item: grade 8 compared to grade 9; grade 9 compared to grade 10; grade 8 compared to grade 10. This is more complex but pinpoints any differences more precisely. However, the method chosen here compares all three distributions and this gives an overall picture of differences (see appendix).

Question 1

This question looks at their views of social studies lessons.

<i>(1) Think of your social subjects lessons</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>%</i>						χ^2	df	p
I like social studies lesson	8	61	30	6	1	1	2	18.8	2	<0.001
	9	59	22	12	4	1	2			
	10	47	27	17	5	2	3			
Boring lessons	8	3	6	7	11	18	56	16.0	4	<0.01
	9	6	3	9	13	27	43			
	10	5	4	9	16	21	45			
Easy lessons	8	48	25	11	8	5	3	6.7	2	<0.05
	9	37	32	19	4	6	2			
	10	37	31	15	9	5	4			
I'd like to spend less time on social studies	8	12	11	18	14	16	30	4.5	5	ns
	9	9	12	18	14	18	29			
	10	9	15	18	11	18	29			
Enjoyable lessons	8	57	26	8	5	2	3	5.3	2	ns
	9	55	22	14	5	1	4			
	10	42	32	14	6	3	3			
Useless lessons	8	6	4	2	6	12	70	0.2	2	ns
	9	9	2	2	11	13	62			
	10	8	2	2	14	12	61			

Table 7.2 Question Data(%)

Differences with age are not marked but their engagement declines with age and lessons become less interesting.

Question 2

(2) Think of yourself when studying social subjects.	Grade	Year	%						χ^2	df	p
I feel I am coping well	8	1	61	18	11	4	3	3	4.6	2	ns
	9	2	66	19	9	1	1	3			
	10	3	55	26	12	2	2	2			
I am enjoying the subject	8	1	63	21	8	3	2	3	6.4	2	<0.05
	9	2	57	25	10	5	2	1			
	10	3	51	24	15	4	2	4			
I find it very hard	8	1	6	6	11	11	25	41	6.7	3	ns
	9	2	2	4	14	14	28	37			
	10	3	4	7	16	15	28	31			
I am obtaining many new skills	8	1	62	21	9	3	2	3	1.8	2	ns
	9	2	57	21	10	6	1	4			
	10	3	52	28	11	3	4	2			
I hate practical work	8	1	11	8	11	6	21	42	5.8	2	ns
	9	2	8	6	12	10	27	38			
	10	3	11	9	15	17	17	32			
I like the teacher	8	1	79	10	3	2	1	5	7.1	2	<0.05
	9	2	81	9	4	1	2	3			
	10	3	69	14	8	4	4	1			
It is definitely my subject	8	1	36	32	14	8	3	7	12.4	2	<0.01
	9	2	31	30	19	6	7	7			
	10	3	28	24	27	7	4	10			

Table 7.3 Question 2 Data (%)

Also there are no big differences between grades as to how they think of themselves when studying social studies subjects. However, seeing the subject area as 'my subject' declines with age and this is to be expected as their interests for the future begin to develop more clearly.

Question 3

(3) Different student prefer different school subjects							%	χ^2	df	p	
Mathematics	8	38	6	16	11	3	28	Arabic	5.5	3	ns
	9	41	10	12	12	6	19				
	10	31	14	12	10	7	27				
History	8	39	6	11	9	7	27	English	4.1	2	ns
	9	39	12	14	5	4	27				
	10	39	8	9	5	9	29				
Biology	8	25	3	17	10	8	38	Geography	16.3	2	<0.001
	9	31	7	13	12	8	29				
	10	32	12	7	8	8	34				
History	8	30	7	12	10	6	35	Mathematics	2.1	3	ns
	9	38	9	10	9	10	35				
	10	32	7	11	9	9	32				
Islamic Studies	8	51	5	16	11	3	15	Geography	6.4	2	<0.05
	9	46	13	13	8	8	13				
	10	52	9	8	7	4	21				
Mathematics	8	22	4	17	11	8	38	Geography	8.2	2	<0.05
	9	22	4	13	14	9	37				
	10	23	6	8	9	11	43				

Table 7.4 Question 3 Data (%)

In only one comparison is there any marked difference. This relates to the balance between biology and geography where the views of the oldest age group are markedly more polarized. This may simply reflect the specific curricula in these two subjects at that level. Thus, the biology curriculum in year 9 may be particularly attractive by comparison with the geography curriculum.

Question 4

(4) There are many reasons why you have to study social subjects.	Grade	%	χ^2	df	p
Studying social studies applications in life	8	30	0.5	2	ns
	9	32			
	10	33			
Learning about how people behave	8	12	5.3	2	ns
	9	7			
	10	6			
Explaining natural phenomena	8	45	31.1	2	<0.001
	9	56			
	10	73			
Preparing for a career	8	9	10.8	2	<0.01
	9	19			
	10	10			
Learning about the important events in history	8	69	4.0	2	ns
	9	75			
	10	67			
Studying about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens	8	40	35.5	2	<0.001
	9	41			
	10	15			
Studying how social studies can help me in life	8	14	1.1	2	ns
	9	12			
	10	10			
Studying about environment problems and how to solve them	8	56	39.6	2	<0.001
	9	47			
	10	78			

Table 7.5 Question 4 Data (%)

In a number areas, there are differences between age groups and this may be influenced by two factors: specific topics and themes covered in the courses at each grade; increasing maturity and awareness of issues in life around as this grows with age. Thus, explaining natural phenomena is a reason of increasing importance with age and environmental problems also show increasing importance as a reason. It is puzzling why rights and responsibilities suddenly diminish in importance in grade 10.

Question 5

(5) Tick <i>one</i> box on each line to show your view	(%)						χ^2	df	p
It is essential that every pupil learns some social studies	8	5	2	7	41	45	7.0	2	<0.05
	9	1	2	11	40	45			
	10	2	5	5	48	40			
I should like to study more social studies in high school or university	8	8	8	19	40	25	3.5	3	ns
	9	5	13	20	41	20			
	10	5	12	24	40	19			
Using a textbook is more useful when you study than using your notebook.	8	5	6	19	31	39	15.0	3	<0,01
	9	8	13	10	36	33			
	10	1	14	12	31	43			
Memorizing is very important in social studies	8	6	5	9	30	50	7.0	3	ns
	9	4	9	10	37	41			
	10	7	9	12	28	44			
Doing an examination in social studies is stressful	8	19	26	19	22	14	9.7	4	<0.05
	9	23	26	20	19	12			
	10	15	35	22	15	13			
Social studies is related in my life	8	4	5	25	35	32	9.1	2	<0.05
	9	3	3	21	43	29			
	10	1	4	15	51	29			
Social studies is useful for my career	8	3	5	25	31	37	9.5	2	<0.01
	9	3	3	21	44	29			
	10	4	7	31	34	25			
Social studies help me to know the developments in my homeland	8	2	3	8	29	57	4.3	2	ns
	9	1	1	11	31	56			
	10	1	2	9	42	46			
Social studies help me to better knowing my homeland	8	3	1	6	25	64	19.9	3	<0.001
	9	1	3	5	29	62			
	10	2	4	5	45	45			

Table 7.6 Question 5 Data (%)

In quite a number of items, there are some differences although these are usually not large. It is sad that understanding more of their homeland diminishes with age and this is consistent with seeing the subject as less related to life. As might be expected examination stress grow slightly with age.

Question 6

(6) School subjects may be able to help you get a job later in life.	Grade	%	χ^2	df	p
English	8	73	2.6	2	ns
	9	79			
	10	73			
Social studies	8	17	6.2	2	<0.05
	9	13			
	10	9			
Arabic	8	9	4.9	2	ns
	9	9			
	10	4			
Islamic studies	8	10	1.3	2	ns
	9	7			
	10	9			
Sciences	8	27	17.6	2	<0.001
	9	37			
	10	48			
Mathematics	8	63	2.4	2	ns
	9	56			
	10	58			

Table 7.7 Question 6 Data (%)

There are few differences with age here although the growth of importance in career terms of the sciences is apparent, matched by a fall in social subjects.

Question 7

(7) Think about life in the future	Grade	%
Football player	8	12
	9	14
	10	6
Geography teacher	8	11
	9	8
	10	18
Scientist	8	20
	9	14
	10	20
Historian	8	6
	9	3
	10	0
Islamic studies teacher	8	11
	9	10
	10	8
Computer game programmer	8	8
	9	5
	10	2
Researcher	8	21
	9	34
	10	33
Engineer	8	6
	9	9
	10	7
Politician	8	6
	9	2
	10	5

Table 7.8 Question 7 Data (%)

Because of the low numbers in some many categories, most chi-square values are unreliable (a minimum of 5% in every category is needed) and are not shown. However, it is worth noting the increase in ‘researcher’ for grades 9 and 10 and the fall in ‘football player’ as realism grows.

Question 8

(8) Different people find that different things attract them to study subjects.	Grade	%	χ^2	df	p
What I see on television	8	46	18.7	2	<0.001
	9	52			
	10	67			
Exhibitions, demonstrations, festivals	8	22	0.2	2	ns
	9	21			
	10	21			
My parents	8	29	10.1	2	<0.01
	9	17			
	10	20			
Books I have read	8	52	8.0	2	<0.05
	9	60			
	10	46			
My social studies lessons	8	63	3.9	2	ns
	9	71			
	10	62			
The opinions of my friends	8	13	0.2	2	ns
	9	13			
	10	12			
My teacher	8	55	1.4	2	ns
	9	50			
	10	51			
Anything else	8	28	3.0	2	ns
	9	21			
	10	24			

Table 7.9 Question 8 Data (%)

The growing impact of television is evident, with a fall in parental influence. It is sad that the impact of books suddenly drops in grade 10. However, most grades show similar patterns. There is no obvious reason why the impact of books in grade 10 is so much less. In Oman, textbooks are the main source of knowledge and a poor textbook can make a considerable impact. It appears that this might be happening in grade 10. The specific reasons for this needs further exploration.

Question 9

(9) Here is a list of eight modern day issues.								χ ² df p			
	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
The problem of global warming	8	22	20	14	14	10	10	11	43.2	10	<0.001
	9	19	21	20	12	13	9	7			
	10	8	13	12	19	15	14	20			
Using water resources efficiently in Oman	8	9	14	12	15	16	17	18	28.6	10	<0.01
	9	14	15	15	19	13	10	14			
	10	13	22	19	19	9	8	9			
The problem of energy for the world when the oil runs out	8	6	11	17	17	15	21	14	21.9	10	<0.05
	9	4	10	10	17	17	23	20			
	10	5	7	7	7	13	21	24			
Air pollution	8	8	11	14	17	17	14	19	20.9	10	<0.05
	9	2	10	18	18	15	20	17			
	10	6	6	19	14	19	22	14			
World poverty and malnutrition	8	8	11	11	17	17	18	18	29.8	10	<0.001
	9	6	6	10	10	21	25	22			
	10	4	14	12	21	20	22	8			
Saving the world's tropical forests	8	18	20	22	11	15	10	4	16.3	10	ns
	9	23	25	19	14	10	6	3			
	10	25	27	17	9	11	6	5			
Equality between men and women	8	30	15	10	9	9	11	17	24.9	10	<0.01
	9	31	14	7	10	12	8	19			
	10	39	12	15	4	5	4	20			

Table 7.10 Question 9 data (%)

The way they view modern day issues shows numerous differences with age although some are not very large. The perceived importance of global warming suddenly drops at grade 10 while there is a steady growth in perceived importance for water resources in Oman. There is a small fall in perceived importance for both energy from oil and air pollution. This is strange: do the pupils see the answers more clearly with age and, therefore, it declines in importance as an issue? It is possible that, having thought things through more, the views of the pupils are more 'black and white' and the issue is, therefore, less worthy of further thought. This possibility needs further exploration.

World poverty and malnutrition has its greatest perceived importance in grade 9, possibly reflecting some curriculum emphasis. The whole issue of equality of men and women is interesting: in terms of perceived importance, views become more polarised with age.

7.3 Some Conclusions

In conclusion, there are not many very large changes observed as students grow up although some interesting patterns of change can be observed. Generally, students increasingly see that social studies relates to issues in their lives as they progress through grades. On other hand, their interest in social studies decreases as they grow up. Perhaps two reasons underlie such a result. First, the curriculum is heavy and increasingly overcrowded with age. Second, their awareness about careers becomes clearer with age and the direct role of social studies in careers is minimal. Thus, they see that science subjects are more important to get jobs compared to social studies. The importance of perceived career potential was demonstrated very clearly in the work of Skyrabina (2000).

Chapter 8

Conclusions

8.1 Overview of Project

Since social studies as a formal delineation appeared in the United State of America in 1916, it has been used to achieve different purposes in different countries. It has been used as a tool for national development, as an attempted partial solution for social problems, as a means to develop a new political order, and to legitimize the teaching of social science. In addition, social studies has been used to improve the self-image of people in the society after a colonial heritage and to inculcate concepts of nationalism, unity, and interdependence among citizenry (Kissock, 1981). Adara (1996) argues that social studies can empower students to be an environmentally active citizenry.

The Adara argument is not easy to sustain fully. It implies, firstly, that a school subject has the power to enable attitudes to change and develop. However, the research on attitude development shows clearly that there is no simple relationship between increased knowledge and attitude change. Attitude development involves evaluation (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Learners need opportunities to evaluate, weigh information, appreciate implications, and simply basing a course on knowledge acquisition does not guarantee this. Indeed, it might hinder it. However, if the opportunities to evaluate, weigh information, appreciate implications are offered, then attitude development may occur.

Secondly, it implies that, even if studies in this area can enable aspects of empowerment to occur, the society around may not be willing to allow its citizenry to be empowered. In the same way as studying in the sciences does not, of itself, empower students to think scientifically (Al-Ahmadi, 2008), there is a need for caution in not over-claiming what any school subject can achieve.

Nonetheless, there is an agreement among scholars that social studies is a crucial subject in the curriculum as it is mostly pertinent to preparation for citizenship (Dean, 2005; Michael *et al*, 2003; Al-Maamari, 2002, 2006). Dinkelman (1999, p. 4), for instance states that:

“The field of social studies is bound together by the aim of democratic citizenship education...there is widespread agreement among social studies educators that preparing students to capably participate in democratic life provides the primary rationale for social studies in the modern school curriculum.”

Thus, in Michigan schools, social studies is defined as, *‘integrated study of the social sciences to prepare young people to become responsible citizens’* (Michigan State Department of Education, 1995, p. 1). Similarly, Michael *et al.* (2003, p.35) highlight the same point, stating that, *‘Although, all school subjects such as English, Mathematics, ..., integrated Science, Design and Technology and other subjects are expected to contribute to the making of the well rounded citizen, social studies is ... more related to the promotion of citizenship education in schools.’*

Social studies plays an integral role in the socialisation process of the students. By socialisation, it is meant that pupils are informed and equipped to understand something of the complexity of humans living in a social context. According to Doliopoulou (1995, p.48-49):

‘Social studies cover a wide spectrum and include everything that is associated with the human being and his/her surroundings. Social studies include elements of: a) psychology (e.g. personal needs), b) anthropology and history (e.g. different ways of living), c) geography and ecology (e.g. influence of the environment on a person's life), d) sociology and political sciences (e.g. rules and way of organisation of life) and e) economics (e.g. purchase of goods).’

The importance of social studies as a part of the school curriculum makes it important to ask what the student attitudes towards it are. Student attitudes towards aspects of learning will be important. This will include attitudes related to specific subject areas, the way they are taught, what is taught and the purposes for that learning. If student attitudes are negative, then it is very likely that learning will be seriously hindered (Reid, 2006; Jung, 2008).

There is a quite enormous research literature about attitudes in social psychology. Papers cover themes such as why attitudes exist, how they form, how they change, their relative stability, offering some clear descriptions of their nature, measurement and development. This study has tried to bring together some of the major findings as they apply in an educational context at school level. Attitudes involve a matrix of the cognitive, affective

and behavioural elements held in long-term memory and the key feature is that attitudes will always involve some kind of evaluative dimension. Attitudes are important in that they lead to the development of values and world views and, even more importantly, they will influence behaviour.

According to Katz (1960) and Reid (2003), the purpose of attitudes in an educational context is to help the student to make sense of himself, the world around him, and relationships. Thus, if students see that social studies helps them in their life, future, and understanding of the world around, then their attitudes toward the subject may well be positive. That means they may really gain great benefits from their work in social studies. However, if their attitudes are negative, then it is much more difficult to motivate and stimulate the students to work effectively and efficiently.

Phrase omitted in line below

In Oman, social studies has a low status, seen as an arts subject. In other words, mathematics and the sciences have higher status and significance because the emphasis is very much on career potential, under-emphasizing the importance of subjects in relation to personal development and preparing the school pupils to play an effective role as citizens of Oman.

Thus, the question about how students perceive their work in social studies is important.

8.2 Procedures Adopted

This study seeks to gain an overview of the social studies position in Oman. By considering the critical years of 14-16 and looking at attitude development in relation to age and any differences between girls and boys, the study hopes to throw light on the key issues which need addressed. In this, a few very broad comparisons with the key findings in attitude studies relating to the sciences was considered important.

Attitudes of students were explored for 618 Omani students using a questionnaire which depended on the approaches of Osgood *et al.* (1957) and Likert (1932) and others (more details in chapter 4). The sample was drawn from typical public schools in Oman. The survey approach allows a great deal of data to be collected rapidly to present an overall impression of the situation. The data were collated onto a spreadsheet, summarized using SPSS and a program for chi-square was used for analysis (this program had been

developed from previous work). In order to give a clear and accurate picture, the questions were analysed separately (Reid, 2006).

It has to be recognised that measuring an attitude for an individual is impossible using current available approaches which cannot give any satisfactory degree of accuracy at an individual level. The goal here was to develop a picture of student perceptions, based on patterns of data gathered from big samples, and to explore trends with gender and age. The findings were interpreted in terms of the context of the situation in social studies in Oman.

One of the aims was to explore any attitudes changes which occur with age. Generally, students have seen that social studies is related to their lives as they progress through grades. On the other hand, their interest in social studies decreases as they grow up. There might be two reasons underlying such a result. Firstly, the curriculum is heavy and increasingly overcrowded with age. Secondly, their awareness about careers becomes clearer. Thus, they see that science subjects are more important to get jobs compared with social studies. Nonetheless, it has to be recognised that attitudes towards the sciences also often tend to fall with age (Hadden and Johnstone, 1982) although there are curricular approaches which can reverse this (Reid and Skryabina, 2002). An interesting study for the future in Oman is to see whether attitudes relating to the sciences fall more than attitudes relating to social studies over this critical age range.

As they become older, they are more aware of career options. They consider that there are few options based on studies in the social studies area. For girls, teaching is an acceptable option. However, for boys (and, indeed, for girls if social expectations permit), there are probably more options which develop from studies in the area of social studies than are seen by students at these ages. Thus, boys who study social studies can get diverse job opportunities. They can work as historian, geologist, weather observer, map-drawer, and social worker.

The second broad area is gender and social studies. Girls and boys show few differences in their responses. However, boys tend to think slightly more that social studies lessons are poor while girls are less enthusiastic about practical work although girls say they cope better than boys. All this probably relates to different teaching styles, with separate schooling for boys and girls. Furthermore, examinations are perceived as more stressful

by girls. This reflects the greater conscientiousness of girls at these ages but it also reflects the very different ways boys and girls are treated in Omani society.

Boys have a slightly more positive view in studying more social studies in high schools or university as they think it will help them to get a job. Furthermore, they see social studies applications in their lives. It is true that boys have a much greater chance to gain careers by studying social studies while girls are limited mainly to becoming social studies teachers. The conservative nature of Omani society tends to limit careers for girls to areas like teaching, nursing, or some fairly low-level management careers in some ministries. In addition, in Oman different school subjects enjoy variable status and this reflects back on the subject teachers.

8.3 Limitations of the Study

This survey adapted some questions from previous major studies (eg Reid and Skryabina, 2002a,b; Suzuki, 2007) and the validity of these questions was well established. Nonetheless, the whole question of validity is very important in all questionnaires. While the questionnaire was carefully checked by experienced teachers, there is never any certainty that the pupils responded to reflect the attitudes they really held. Nonetheless, the response patterns obtained are consistent with the experience of the researcher in teaching social studies in Oman.

To aspire to good reliability, a large number of students was used. They were taken from many public schools, reflecting the range of typical schools in Oman. Thus, the sample did reflect the population under consideration. No attempt was made to look at individual student's attitudes. The aim was to gain an overall picture.

Time limitations prevented undertaking interviews with students and with teachers. This might have offered valuable insights as well as confirming (or otherwise) the general picture painted by the questionnaire data. Time also prevented widening the study to consider those older or younger than the target group.

8.4 Implications of Findings

This study seeks to offer an overall picture of the views of social studies, as seen by students in Oman aged 14-16. General trends with age were considered as well as gender differences.

The overall impression is of a student population who are fairly positively disposed towards social subjects but who do not look on this area of the curriculum as holding much career potential. Generally, Omani students do not wish to study more social studies in higher education because it does not help them to get a career. Suzuki (2007) found a similar problem with Japanese students when they studied biology.

While they are fairly happy with their studies, they do not seem to see what is involved in their studies in anything like the way envisaged by the curriculum planners (as evidenced by government documents). This suggests that social studies is not making the impact on students in terms of citizenship desired by the country's ministry of education. It seems likely that the problem lies in overloaded curricula, assessment credit focused almost entirely on correct recall of information and the way the prescribed textbooks define the curriculum in content terms.

In relation to physics, Reid and Skryabina (2002a) found the critical importance of the learners perceiving their studies in relation to the context of student lifestyles. Thus, students, for example, were very interested in the way physics impacted on medicine, space exploration, and communications. Social studies, by its very nature offers a huge range of contexts which are meaningful and important to young adolescents: for example, limited resources, climate change, culture and its development, roles of men and women in society, and so on. The possibilities for the development of individuals and the development of future citizens is enormous.

The issue of jobs and careers is not so easily resolved. Inevitably, school subjects will be perceived in terms of their career potential and this will have effects on student attitudes to the various subjects. This reflects the utilitarian edge which has developed in many education systems. It will not be easy to widen student perceptions to see subject value in terms of more general, possibly long term, aims.

8.5 Future Research

There have been a huge number of attitude studies relating to patterns of enrolment in science subjects.

“...about seventeen per cent of the 113 at the National Association for Research in Science Teaching (NARST) 1983 meeting in were directly related to student attitudes... In the UK a substantial number of theses and dissertations as well as scientific papers have dealt with science-related attitudes. These informal indicators all point to the importance afforded the affective domain in science education by researchers in Australia, UK, and USA.” (Schibeci, 1984)

Such a quotation is an example to show how much attitudes research in science education has been a major area of enquiry. On other hand, the same kind of research in the social studies field is rare. Thus, it is important to do more studies in attitudes toward this subject to get an overall picture about its status in the world.

This study is not only the first survey in Oman relating to students' attitudes toward social studies at ages 14-16 but there seem to be no studies for any age group. Thus, there is need for more studies in this field which consider students at younger and older ages to give a clear picture about subject status in the Omani education system.

This study found some trends which are worthy of further exploration. Why do the boys find lessons less good and what is meant when the girls seem to be less enthusiastic about practical work? Are there steps which can be taken to improve the situations?

It was found that students' interest in social studies decline when they grow up. Is this true for a wider age range and how does such a decline compare to any declines in other subject areas? Is it simply the impact of increasing awareness of career potential? There is considerable scope to probe into teacher attitudes as well as aspects of the teaching and learning process which may be influencing students positively or negatively in relation to their studies in social studies.

Probably most fundamental of all is the need to explore the place of social studies in the context of citizenship education. Can special studies achieve progress here or is this more a matter for homes and the wider educational experience?

8.6 Endpiece

Most studies of attitudes amongst school students are related to the science subjects or to mathematics. This study has tried to fill a gap. The study has raised the whole question of perceived career potential as an important driving force for young adolescents. They seem unaware of the other potential benefits of studies in this area. They seem to see the whole area in terms of material to be learned rather than giving insights into Omani society and culture, such insights offering a basis for the development of the future citizenry of Oman. It is hoped that the findings from this study will contribute towards the development of better ways forward for the young people of Oman as they undertake their studies in social studies.

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Appendix 1

Surveys Used

How Do You Find Your Studies?

*This survey seeks to find out what you think about your studies at school.
Your answers will NOT affect your school work in any way.*

<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">quick</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: right;">slow</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">important</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: right;">unimportant</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">safe</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: right;">dangerous</td> </tr> </table>	quick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	slow	important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unimportant	safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	dangerous	<p>The positions of the ticks between the word pairs show that you consider it as very quick, slightly more important than unimportant and quite dangerous.</p>
quick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	slow																		
important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unimportant																		
safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	dangerous																		

Answers the following questions using the same approach.

- (1) Think of your social subjects (eg geography, history) lessons.

Tick one box on each line to show your view.

I like social studies lesson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I hate social studies lesson
Boring lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting lessons
Easy lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complicated lesson
I'd like to spend less time on social studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I'd like to spend more time on social studies
Enjoyable lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Boring lessons
Useless lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Important lessons

- (1) Think of yourself when studying social subjects.

Tick one box on each line to show your view.

I feel I am coping well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel I am not coping well
I am enjoying the subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am not enjoying the subject
I find it very very hard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I find it very easy
I am obtaining many new skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am not obtaining many new skills
I hate practical work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am enjoying practical work
I like the teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I dislike the teacher
It is definitely my subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is definitely <i>not</i> my subject

- (3) Different student prefer different school subjects

Indicate your preference for subjects by ticking one of the boxes in each line below

Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arabic
History	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	English
Biology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Geography
History	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mathematics
Islamic Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Geography
Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Studies

- (4) There are many reasons why you have to study social subjects.

*Tick the **three** which are most important **for you**.*

- Studying social studies applications in life
- Learning about how people behave
- Explaining natural phenomena
- Preparing for a career
- Learning about the important events in history
- Studying about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens
- Studying how social studies can help me in life
- Studying about environment problems and how to solve them.

(5) Tick **one** box on each line to show your view.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(a) It is essential that every pupil learns some social studies.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) I should like to study more social studies in high school or university.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Using a textbook is more useful when you study than using your notebook.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Memorizing is very important in social studies.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Doing an examination in social studies is stressful.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Social studies is related in my life.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Social studies is useful for my career.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(6) School subjects may be able to help you get a job later in life.

Tick the **two** subjects which you think will help you **most**.

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Social studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Islamic studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |

(7) Think about life in the future

Tick the box showing what you would **most** like to be.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A football player | <input type="checkbox"/> A computer game programmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A geography teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> A researcher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A scientist | <input type="checkbox"/> An engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A historian | <input type="checkbox"/> A politician |

(8) Different people find that different things attract them to study subjects.

What attracts **you** to study social subjects.

Tick as many as you wish.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> What I see on television | <input type="checkbox"/> My social studies lessons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibitions, demonstrations, festivals | <input type="checkbox"/> The opinions of my friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parents | <input type="checkbox"/> My teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books I have read | <input type="checkbox"/> Anything else (please indicate) |
| | |

(9) Here is a list of eight modern day issues.

Place them in order, using the letters, showing which is most important for yourself.

- (A) The problem of global warming
- (B) Using water resources efficiently in Oman
- (C) The problem of energy for the world when the oil runs out
- (D) Air pollution
- (E) World poverty and malnutrition
- (F) Saving the world's tropical forests
- (G) Equality between men and women

most important least important

(10) What do you think is the most important thing you learn in your social subjects courses ?

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for your help
All the best in your studies

Appendix 2

Summary Data

How Do You Find Your Studies?

TOTAL DATA

This survey seeks to find out what you think about your studies at school.

Your answers will NOT affect your school work in any way.

quick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	slow
important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unimportant
safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	dangerous

The positions of the ticks between the word pairs show that you consider it as very quick, slightly more important than unimportant and quite dangerous.

Answers the following questions using the same approach.

- (1) Think of your social subjects (eg geography, history) lessons.

Tick one box on each line to show your view.

I like social studies lesson	57	26	11	3	2	2	I hate social studies lesson
Boring lessons	5	4	8	13	22	48	Interesting lessons
Easy lessons	41	29	15	7	5	3	Complicated lesson
I'd like to spend less time on social studies	10	13	18	13	17	30	I'd like to spend more time on social studies
Enjoyable lessons	52	26	12	5	2	3	Boring lessons
Useless lessons	8	3	2	10	13	65	Important lessons

- (2) Think of yourself when studying social subjects.

Tick one box on each line to show your view.

I feel I am coping well	61	21	11	3	2	3	I feel I am not coping well
I am enjoying the subject	58	23	11	4	2	2	I am not enjoying the subject
I find it very very hard	4	5	13	13	27	37	I find it very easy
I am obtaining many new skills	57	23	10	4	2	3	I am not obtaining many new skills
I hate practical work	10	8	13	10	22	38	I am enjoying practical work
I like the teacher	77	11	5	2	2	3	I dislike the teacher
It is definitely my subject	32	29	19	7	4	8	It is definitely <i>not</i> my subject

- (3) Different student prefer different school subjects

Indicate your preference for subjects by ticking one of the boxes in each line below

Mathematics	37	10	13	11	5	24	Arabic
History	39	9	12	7	7	28	English
Biology	29	7	13	10	8	34	Geography
History	30	7	11	9	8	34	Mathematics
Islamic Studies	50	9	13	9	5	16	Geography
Mathematics	22	5	13	12	9	39	Social Studies

- (4) There are many reasons why you have to study social subjects.

*Tick the **three** which are most important **for you**.*

- 32 Studying social studies applications in life
- 9 Learning about how people behave
- 57 Explaining natural phenomena
- 13 Preparing for a career
- 70 Learning about the important events in history
- 34 Studying about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens
- 12 Studying how social studies can help me in life
- 59 Studying about environment problems and how to solve them.

(5) Tick **one** box on each line to show your view.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
(a) It is essential that every pupil learns some social studies.....	3	3	8	43	44
(b) I should like to study more social studies in high school or university.....	7	11	21	40	22
(c) Using a textbook is more useful when you study than using your notebook.	5	11	14	33	38
(d) Memorizing is very important in social studies.....	6	7	10	32	45
(e) Doing an examination in social studies is stressful.....	19	28	20	19	13
(f) Social studies is related in my life.....	3	4	21	42	30
(g) Social studies is useful for my career.....	3	5	25	36	31
(H) Social studies help me to know the developments in my homeland....	2	2	9	33	54
(I) Social studies help me to better knowing my homeland.....	2	2	5	32	58

(6) School subjects may be able to help you get a job later in life.

Tick the **two** subjects which you think will help you **most**.

75 English	13 Social studies	7 Arabic
9 Islamic studies	36 Sciences	59 Mathematics

(7) Think about life in the future

Tick the box showing what you would **most** like to be.

11 A football player	10 A computer game programmer
12 A geography teacher	5 A researcher
18 A scientist	29 An engineer
3 A historian	7 A politician
4 Islamic studies teacher	

(8) Different people find that different things attract them to study subjects.

What attracts **you** to study social subjects.

Tick as many as you wish.

54 What I see on television	65 My social studies lessons
22 Exhibitions, demonstrations, festivals	13 The opinions of my friends
23 My parents	52 My teacher
53 Books I have read	25 Anything else (please indicate)

(9) Here is a list of eight modern day issues.

Place them in order, using the letters, showing which is most important for yourself.

- (A) The problem of global warming
- (B) Using water resources efficiently in Oman
- (C) The problem of energy for the world when the oil runs out
- (D) Air pollution
- (E) World poverty and malnutrition
- (F) Saving the world's tropical forests
- (G) Equality between men and women

most important least important

(10) What do you think is the most important thing you learn in your social subjects courses ?

.....

.....

Appendix 3

Statistical Notes

The Chi-square Test (χ^2)

The chi-square test is said to be one of the most widely used tests for statistical data generated by non-parametric analysis. There are two different of applications of chi-square test. These are used in this study.

(1) Goodness of Fit Test

This tests how well the experimental (sampling) distribution fits the control (hypothesised) distribution. An example of this could be a comparison between a group of experimentally observed responses to a group of control responses. For example,

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Experimental	55	95	23	N(experimental) = 173
Control	34	100	43	N(control) = 177 (using raw numbers)

A calculation of observed and expected frequencies lead to

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
$f_o = \text{observed frequency}$	55	95	23
$f_e = \text{expected frequency}$	33	97	42

Where $f_e = [N(\text{experimental})/N(\text{control})] \times (\text{control data})$ or $(173/177) \times (\text{control data})$

$$\chi^2 = 23.0$$

The degree of freedom (df) for this comparison is 2. This comparison is significant at two degrees of freedom at greater than 0.1%. (χ^2 critical at 1% level = 13.8)

(2) Contingency Test

This chi-square test is commonly used in analysing data where two groups or variables are compared. Each of the variable may have two or more categories which are independent from each other. The data for this comparison is generated from the frequencies in the categories. In this study, the chi-square as a contingency test was used, for example, to compare two or more independent samples like, year groups, gender, or ages. The data is generated from one population group. For example,

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Male (experimental)	55	95	23	
Female (experimental)	34	100	43	
(Actual data above)				
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	N
Male (experimental)	55 (44)	95 (96)	23 (33)	173
Female (experimental)	34 (45)	100 (97)	43 (33)	177
Totals	89	195	66	350
(Expected frequencies above in red)				

The expected frequencies are shown in red in brackets (), and are calculated as follows:

$$\text{e.g. } 44 = (173/350) \times 89$$

$$\begin{aligned}\chi^2 &= 2.75 + 0.01 + 3.03 + 2.69 + 0.09 + 3.03 \\ &= 11.60\end{aligned}$$

At two degrees of freedom, this is significant at 1%. (χ^2 critical at 1% level = 9.21)

The degree of freedom (df) must be stated for any calculated chi-square value. The value of the degree of freedom for any analysis is obtained from the following calculations:

$$df = (r-1) \times (c-1)$$

where r is the number of rows and c is the number of columns in the contingency table.

Limitations on the Use of χ^2

It is known that when values within a category are small, there is a chance that the calculation of χ^2 may occasionally produce inflated results which may lead to wrong interpretations. It is safe to impose a 10 or 5% limit on all categories. When the category falls below either of these, then categories are grouped and the df falls accordingly.