Citizenship Education: The Perceptions of Social Studies Omani Student Teachers**

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of Omani student-teachers of social studies major about citizenship and citizenship education. Interviews were used to achieve this purpose. Ten students participated in the study: 5 females and 5 males. Data were analyzed qualitatively using analytic induction and interpretive analytic framework. Qualitative results show a wide range of interesting views on citizenship that highlighted the influence of the social, cultural and political context in shaping the meaning of citizenship and citizenship education. The results from interviews can be classified into five categories: (a) Citizenship is a multi-faceted concept; (b) Citizenship education is a crucial area in the school curriculum; (c) social studies is still the main approach of introducing citizenship education; (d) citizenship education is an area which is missing in teacher preparation programs and (e) Citizenship education is practiced to an extent in practical training programs.

Keywords: citizenship education, perceptions of citizenship, social studies student teachers, Sultanate of Oman.

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تربية المواطنة: تصورات الطلبة المعلمين تخصص الدراسات الاجتماعية بسلطنة عمان

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هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى بحث تصورات الطلبة المعلمين تخصص الدراسات الاجتماعية بسلطنة عمان حول المواطنة وتربيتها ، ولتحقيق هدف الدراسة استخدمت المقابلة مع عينة مكونة من عشرة من الطلبة المعلمين: ٥ ذكور و٥ إناث، وتم تحليل البيانات النوعية باستخدام الاستقراء التحليلي والإطار التحليلي التفسيري، وأظهرت النتائج مجموعة واسعة من وجهات النظر المثيرة للاهتمام بشأن المواطنة ، وأبرزت تأثير الجوانب الاجتماعية والثقافية والسياسية في تشكيل معنى المواطنة وتربيتها ، ويمكن تصنيف النتائج التي تولدت من المقابلات إلى خمس فئات، هي: (أ) المواطنة مفهوم متعدد الأوجه والمعاني؛ (ب) والمواطنة مجال مهم في المنهج المدرسي؛ (ج) والدراسات الاجتماعية لا تزال المدخل الرئيسي لتدريس المواطنة؛ (د) وتربية المواطنة المجال المفقود في برامج إعداد المعلم؛ (ه) وتربية المواطنة تمارس إلى حد ما في برامج التدريب الميداني للطلبة المعلمين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تربية المواطنة، التصورات حول المواطنة، الطلبة المعلمين تخصص دراسات إجتماعية، سلطنة عمان.

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Since the early 1990s there has been a worldwide surge of interest in citizenship. According to Davies, Gregory and Riley (1999) citizenship is *'on the lips of high-status politicians and officials'* (p.89). Lee (2004, p.137) argues that *'developing good citizenship has been a continuing educational concern worldwide'*. This interest in citizenship education (hereafter, CE), has manifested itself in several ways, such as the formation of advisory groups to set guidelines for the development of CE. In England, for instance, the government formed an advisory group in 1997 under the leadership of Professor Bernard Crick. The work of this advisory group was presented in a report entitled *'Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools'*. This report discusses in depth the rationale of teaching CE and its goals, content, teaching strategies, and potential problems that might emerge from teaching it in schools (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998). Likewise in Scotland, a committee chaired by Professor Pamela Munn was formed in 1999 by the Advisory Council of Learning and Teaching Scotland in order to review CE in Scotland. This committee presented its vision of CE in a report entitled *'Education for citizenship: a paper for discussion and development'* (The Advisory Council of Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002).

Nevertheless, citizenship in teacher education (hereafter, TE), is still an area that has not been sufficiently covered by the previous studies. Those that attempted to explore teachers' perceptions of CE from different angles: most studies were conducted in order to understand teachers' and trainee teachers' definitions of citizenship (Arthur, 2002; Davies et al, 2004; Wilkins, 1999; Wilkins, 2003; Davies, Gregory and Riley, 1999; Leenders, Veugelers & De Kat, 2008); the influence of teachers' education on practicing citizenship (Harber & Serf, 2006); the threats that influence developing citizenship (Arnot et al, 2000; Leenders, Veugelers & De Kat, 2008); the factors that shape teachers' citizenship (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003); the preferable school climate for developing citizenship (Ichilov, 2003); the state of civic education (Feldmann, 2007; Losito & Heinrich, 2001); and an evaluation of teachers' exchange programs (Hinton, 2004).

Several themes emerged from these studies. First, citizenship is a multi-faceted concept from the teachers' viewpoint. If there is a con-

sensus among the teachers, it is on the controversial nature of this concept. Wilkins (1999) found out that trainee students in England were very confused over what it means to be a 'good citizen'. According to the findings of a study conducted by Davies, Gregory and Riley (1999), teachers believe that 'good citizenship' includes: a high level of concern for the welfare of others; a moral and ethical manner; consciousness of community obligations; participation in the community; tolerance of others' opinions and views; and an acceptance of diversity within society. The community-oriented citizenship in this study was supported by the findings of a comparative study conducted by Arthur (2002), who found that English teachers viewed citizenship as being involved in a community, whereas their German counterparts defined it as set of responsibilities and obligations. Similarly, Davies et al (2004) found that social issues and societal active participation concerned English teachers more than their counterparts in Hungary. Ichilov (2003) found that great differences exist regarding perceptions of citizenship and political issues between teachers in Arab schools and their counterparts in Hebrew schools. Arab teachers show little support of patriotism and national symbols. Issues such as the conduct of the army, immigration, global anti-Semitism and Zionist historical narratives had less importance for them as they are under occupation. By contrast, teachers in Hebrew schools show greater support in the opposite direction. The meaning of citizenship according to the study of Arnot et al (2000) is influenced by the political agenda of the state and the political experiences of its people. In stable democratic nations like the United Kingdom, student teachers seem more skeptical than their counterparts who live in countries that have experienced dictatorship and totalitarian regimes.

Previous studies have also argued that being active in the societal arena is the most important quality of a 'good citizen'. According to teachers' findings from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement IAE (1991), teachers across all participant countries took the view that students should know about the country's national history, in order to become a 'good citizen'. The second quality of a citizen is obedience to the law, protecting the environment and promoting human rights. The universally

least important aspect was related to 'joining a political party'. Consequently, political cynicism among the youth in Western countries is one of the most important factors behind renewed interest in CE.

CE is still related to civic-oriented subjects such as social studies, history, language, civic education, and religious education or moral education. Although as Wilkins' (2003) study indicated, teachers believe in the significant role of schooling in the development of social attitudes and values, the social dimension occupies a secondary position in comparison to the core subjects of literacy and numeracy. Teachers might perceive CE as a threat not only to their subjects but also to their confidence as teachers. Leighton (2004), in his study regarding the introduction of CE in England, found that teachers' attitudes toward this subject vary; those who work in schools that have a long tradition of teaching social science subjects express more confidence and show support for the implementation of civics. Yet teachers of the subjects that have scientific natures, namely science and mathematics, view CE as a threat to their own subjects because they feel unconfident delivering this new subject without training and previous experience in social science subjects.

According to the findings of a study conducted by Feldmann (2007), this might toughen the task of teachers with students who lack the knowledge, attitudes, and participation which are necessary for the future, The pertinence of CE to civic subjects was highlighted by the (IAE) study (1991), which found that the most popular approach to introduce civic education is through integrating it into other social sciences subjects, while the extra-curricular model was regarded the least popular among teachers. In addition, civic education as a separate subject is particularly appealing to teachers in some countries. These findings raise crucial questions regarding the role of the subjects that have scientific natures, namely science and mathematics, in developing CE.

It is often the case that TE does not appear to satisfy the requirements of CE. Some studies have provided evidence that teachers felt that they were not prepared to deal confidently with CE. Examining the understanding of 'citizenship' amongst trainee teachers in primary and secondary schools in UK, Wilkins (1999)

found that experiences gained from TE did not help them to clearly understand what to teach in CE and how to teach it. This finding was further supported by a study conducted by Harber and Serf (2006), who examined the role of TE in England and South Africa in relation to education for democratic citizenship. They concluded from interviewing 38 student teachers in both countries that a wide gap existed between programs of TE and the experiences of student teachers. Student teachers in England showed confidence in teaching the subjects, with the exception of those of who trained to teach citizenship. Students in South Africa highlighted that the lecturers do not provide a good role model for teachers.

With respect to Arab contexts, Arab countries have given significant attention to the development of CE since the beginning of the current decade. Yet this concern has not been accompanied by extensive research in this area. A few studies that have been conducted in the Arab contexts focused only on analyzing the textbooks, especially of social studies, nationalistic education and history, in order to identify the aspects of citizenship that were embraced in these textbooks. (Lootfy, 1989; Frayha, 1985; Mahmood, 1997; AlNajdi, 2001; Al-Manoofi, 1987; Khames, 1995; Rashied, 1996; Hamad, 1997; Zayed, 1997).

At the Oman national level, the research has observed student teachers (STs), curriculum developers and some policy makers working with a deficit of information in the field of CE. As a result, I found the matter a critical education imperative, not only in Oman but also worldwide, which needed to be investigated in order to place CE on solid ground. From this need - and for this purpose – came the idea for the present study. In addition, the present study was also conducted during a time at which the research in CE is growing in importance internationally. The present study focused on exploring citizenship in teacher education.

Statement of the study problem

CE has been paid considerable attention by the Ministry of Education during the last decade. Several workshops and seminars have been held to develop teachers' competencies in delivering citizenship in the classroom. Nevertheless, the perceptions of the stakeholders about citizenship and citizenship education

has not been explored. According to *Zaman (2006)*:

'Teachers' perceptions and attitudes were not usually considered in much of the CE research, while much of the concentrations were given to students and learning' p.3).

Because of the shortage of national and international literature in this area. It is very important to identify how teachers understand citizenship and CE, as those teachers eventually deliver educational policy through both the formal and informal curricula. Thus, The present study filled a gap in research of CE at the national. It can be regarded as the second study being conducted in Omani context (the first study was also conducted by AlMamari (2002) which showed that citizenship characteristics are not distributed equally in civic education textbooks.

The present study is an original study as it explored, for the first time, the perceptions of the student teachers of social studies. Therefore, the results that were obtained from the present study regarding different aspects of citizenship and CE might be used to perform any efforts to develop CE in Oman.

Purpose of study

The purpose of the study is to offer a comprehensive understanding of how the social studies teachers understand citizenship and citizenship education in terms of the meaning of citizenship, the main functions of CE, the approaches to introduce CE , CE in teacher education programme, and practicing CE in practical training programme. The study aims to answer the following research question:

What are the perceptions of Omani social studies student teachers about citizenship and citizenship education?

Significance of the study

This study aims to contribute to CE research and practices in many ways:

– First, regarding the terminology of citizenship, it explores how this concept is perceived and practiced in a developing country and in a different culture from that in which the concept appeared and grew. This will help identify and compare the commonalities and differences of the potential influences of international vs. local factors on citizenship.

– Second, with reference to research on CE, it explores the status of CE in TE, an area which has not been extensively investigated. The perceptions of STs will help to compare similarities and differences of international vs. national or local influences on understanding and practising citizenship.

– Third, this study should also make a timely contribution to further the intensive and ongoing efforts to develop CE not only in Oman but also in other Arab countries, as the context is somewhat similar.

METHOD

To answer the research question mentioned above, the qualitative method was felt to be an appropriate method for the current study. Interpretative research is concerned about meanings, concepts, context, discretions and settings (Picciano, 2004). The main aim of qualitative research is to discover the formulation and implementation of interpretations and understandings regarding a particular social phenomenon (Radnor, 2002). Such an aim can be achieved by means of observation and interview:

'Observing the research participants in their social world and talking to them are the ways in which the majority of the data which shape the research interpretation are collected' (Radnor, 2002, p.30).

This is based on the interpretative assumption of knowledge, which is personal and subjective, so research should be directed towards understanding social reality from different viewpoints. Epistemologically speaking, people perceive social reality in different ways, and consequently their actions and decisions are influenced by their interpretations of their reality (Radnor, 2002). Therefore:

'[The] Interpretive researcher's task is to make sense of their world, to understand it, to see what meaning is imbued in that situation by the people who are part of it' (Radnor, 2002, p.21).

The vast majority of these studies employed a positivist methodology, which is dominant in the Arab World, to investigate the problem of research. This methodology is not helpful to discover the meanings of the realities from the viewpoints of the stakeholders. Yet the present

study can be regarded as the first study in the Arab contexts that explored the perceptions of the stakeholders about the meanings of citizenship and the characteristics of a 'good' citizen in addition to the provision of CE. Unlike previous studies, the present study investigated CE by employing an interpretive methodology and different methods in order to discover how different stakeholders interpret the realities of CE in the education system in Oman in general and in TE in particular. Considering the similarities between the Arab contexts, the results of the present study might also inform the current development of CE in these contexts.

The present study is grounded in the interpretative paradigm. The main intention of the present study is to identify the current status of CE in Oman from the viewpoints of the stakeholders. It is believed that the stakeholders create, modify and interpret the world they live in, according to their subjective experience. Thus, the study is underpinned by the assumption that the participants in the present study have different understandings about citizenship and CE. Underpinned by the relativistic nature of the social world, the aim of the study is not to discover general laws but to provide explanations and interpretations about the world, as it is perceived by the participants.

The present study does not intend to test any hypothesis but relies on what can be inferred from its subjects and understanding of participants' beliefs by adopting an induction process. In other words, it assumed that by probing the participants' accounts of their actions, this will help to understand what they are really doing in their settings in terms of CE (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

As the interpretative perspective is characterised by the subjectivity of knowledge, the researcher in the present study must be actively involved with the participants in order to understand their views of citizenship and CE,

and the influential factors. Thus, the researcher did not isolate himself from the investigated context; rather, the researcher is the main data-collecting instrument and the active contractor of the meanings (Radnor, 2002).

In addition to the above, this study is interpretative as it deals with an area that has not yet been explored in the Omani context. According to Borg, Gall and Gall (1993), while a qualitative approach is suitable for initial exploration of the problem, gaining in-depth information about it can only be obtained by employing an interpretative approach. Thus, the required data is not numerical because the study looks for how the subjects understand and explain CE.

The sample

The population consisted of STs in the final year of their undergraduate program in the seven colleges of teacher education in Sultante of Oman totalled 329. This population comprises 191 males and 138 females. Several STs showed willingness to conduct follow-up interviews. However, ten STs (5 male and 5 female) were interviewed. Table 1 shows the demographic information about the participants in terms of code, gender and major.The sample size is considered acceptable and meets the minimum required sample size in qualitative study (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2006). All participants were interviewed once at their convenient time at their colleges.

Data collection and analysis

The present study aims to explore the perceptions of different stakeholders about citizenship and CE. It was assumed that the semi-structured interview would be the best way to achieve this aim. The literature suggests that this type of interview is very helpful to encourage the interviewees to freely talk about their perceptions, views and experiences about citizenship, and can be used in the Omani context.

Table 1:
Demographic Information of the Interviewees

Code	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4	ST5	ST6	ST7	ST8	ST9	ST10
Gender	M	M	M	F	F	M	F	M	F	F
Major	G	G	G	H	G	H	H	H	G	H

(Hereafter will be used as following: ST = student teacher M= Male F=Female G = Geography H=History)

The questions in the interview could be direct or indirect, general or specific, and factual or opinion-based. As the present study aims to identify the perceptions regarding CE, opinion questions will be more suitable, with factual questions used when the necessity arises. Because the semi-structured interview depends on probing, that means open-ended questions are more practical. Open-ended questions are characterised by flexibility so that they allow the interviewer to probe interviewees' responses in order to clear up any misunderstandings, to identify the interviewee's knowledge about the issue under investigation, and to properly assess the interviewee's beliefs (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

All interviews in this study were conducted in convenient settings. Student teachers were interviewed at the University or at the their colleges. Each interview lasted approximately 35-45 minutes, and was recorded on audio tape, followed by a verbatim transcription.

In order to enhance the reliability of the present study, the following strategies mentioned by Sturman (1999) were applied: (a) explaining data gathering; (b) presenting data transparently and in ways that enable the reader to re-analyse; (c) reporting negative instances; (d) explaining fieldwork analyses; (e) expressing the relationships between claims and supporting evidence clearly; (f) distinguishing primary data (the researcher's own) from secondary data (other people's); (g) distinguishing interpretation from description; (h) using a diary or a log to record what took place during the study; and (i) using procedures such as triangulation to check the quality of the data (cited in Scaife, 2004, p.71).

To avoid misinterpretation of the language, and because the study was being conducted in an Arabic context, the interview schedule and information obtained from the interviews were translated into English and Arabic. The translations were subsequently given to three professional lecturers at the English department to check the accuracy of translation and ease of understanding. Modifications were made based on their comments, leading to the final version.

Data analysis

Qualitative data of the current study were analyzed using interpretive analytic framework. The analysis and data interpretation processes which were followed in this study were based on the work of Radnor (2002). According to Radnor (2002) there are seven steps to analyse interviews:

1. Topic ordering, which means the identification of the topics from reading the whole text. The researcher should give attention to both explicit and implicit topics in the interviewees' responses. Then it is useful to assign a sheet of paper or open a file in the Microsoft Word for each topic. The name and the code of each topic should be put at the top of the page.

2. Constructing categories: a step which involves identifying the categories within each topic. These categories can be either explicit or implicit in the data. This step can be carried out by re-reading the transcripts and writing sub-headings to each topic. The emerging categories should be listed on the page that has already included the name of each topic and its code.

3. Reading for content by going through the transcripts in order to highlight or mark the main quotes. As this step does not involve the cutting and pasting of quotes, it is necessary to write the code name, the number of the category and the number of the interview beside the quotes that describe it.

4. Completing the coding sheets by inserting the appropriate quotes under each category according to the code of each interview. Where there are many interviews, a number or letter should be given to each interview.

5. Generating coded transcripts by using the cut and paste or copy and paste functions in order to *'retain the intact copy of the whole interview in the computer as well'* (Radnor, 2002, p.79).

6. Analysis to interpretation, by writing a statement that supports the data organised within categories: *'These statements summarize the findings within that category as interpreted'* (Radnor, 2002, p.8*8*). The interpretations might deal with differences as well as similarities.

7. When the analysis is fully completed, the researcher needs to explore the relationships and patterns which might emerge across topics and categories.

In the present study, the Radnor (2002) framework was utilized in analyzing the interviews. The seven steps of analyzing the in-terviewed was documented in details in figure 1.
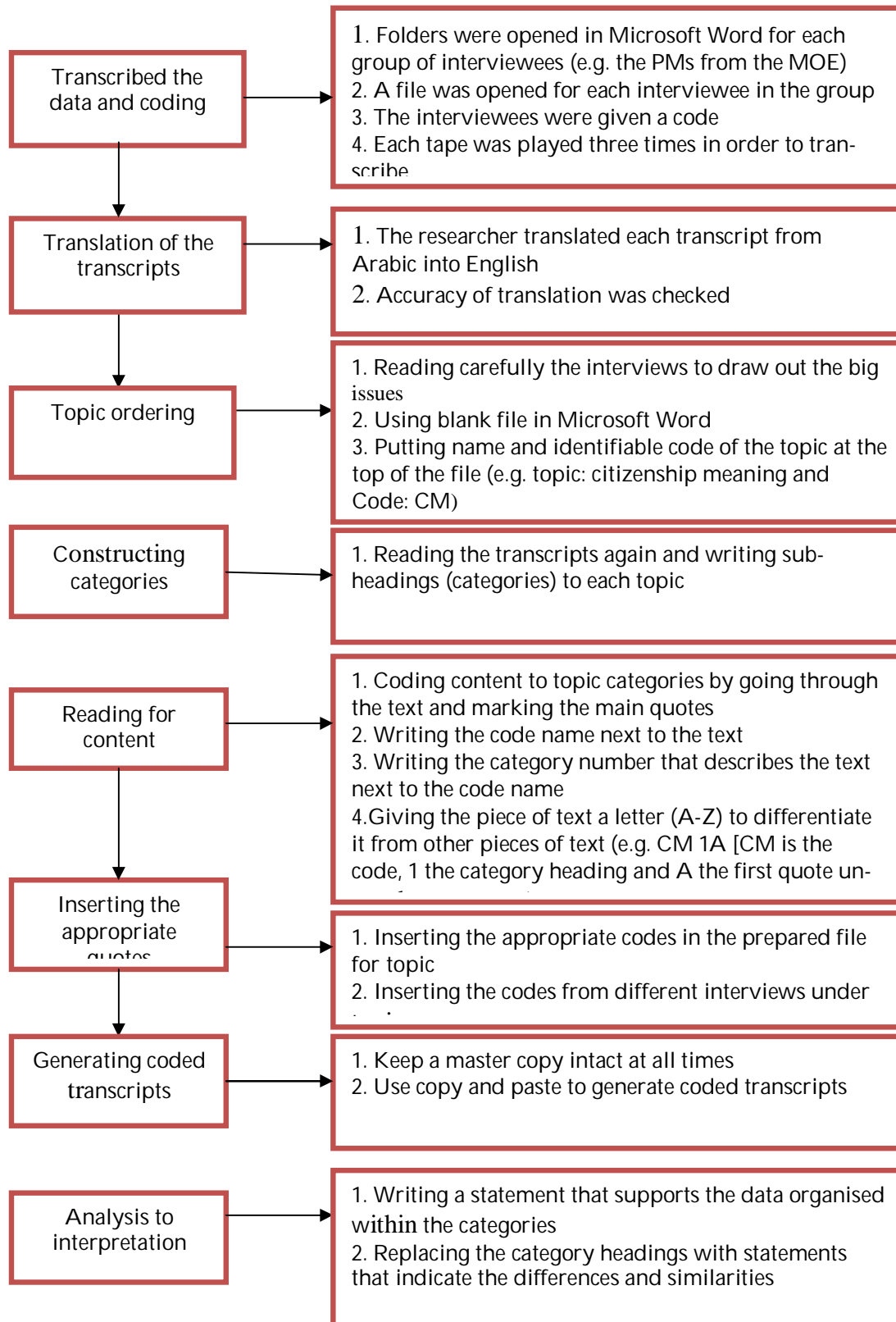
Transcribed the data and coding	1. Folders were opened in Microsoft Word for each group of interviewees (e.g. the PMs from the MOE) 2. A file was opened for each interviewee in the group 3. The interviewees were given a code 4. Each tape was played three times in order to tran-scribe
Translation of the transcripts	1. The researcher translated each transcript from Arabic into English 2. Accuracy of translation was checked
Topic ordering	1. Reading carefully the interviews to draw out the big issues 2. Using blank file in Microsoft Word 3. Putting name and identifiable code of the topic at the top of the file (e.g. topic: citizenship meaning and Code: CM)
Constructing categories	1. Reading the transcripts again and writing sub-headings (categories) to each topic
Reading for content	1. Coding content to topic categories by going through the text and marking the main quotes 2. Writing the code name next to the text 3. Writing the category number that describes the text next to the code name 4.Giving the piece of text a letter (A-Z) to differentiate it from other pieces of text (e.g. CM 1A [CM is the code, 1 the category heading and A the first quote un-
Inserting the appropriate quotes	1. Inserting the appropriate codes in the prepared file for topic 2. Inserting the codes from different interviews under
Generating coded transcripts	1. Keep a master copy intact at all times 2. Use copy and paste to generate coded transcripts
Analysis to interpretation	1. Writing a statement that supports the data organised within the categories 2. Replacing the category headings with statements that indicate the differences and similarities

Fig. 1: A Framework for the Analysis of the Interview

RESULTS

The following sections explore how ST of social studies perceive citizenship and citizenship education. The results generated from interviews can be classified into five categories: (a) citizenship is a multi-faceted concept; (b) citizenship education is a crucial area in the school curriculum; (c) social studies is still the main approach of introducing citizenship education; (d) citizenship education is an area which is missing in teacher preparation programmes and (e) Citizenship education has practised to an extent in practical training programmes.

(A) Citizenship is a multi-faceted concept

In general, the majority of STs defined citizenship as a sense of belonging, while only three of them defined it as a set of rights and duties, and as participation in the state's affairs. For those who saw citizenship as a sense of belonging, a good citizen should show his/her belonging to his/her country in several ways. For instance, *'maintenance of stability'*, *'loyalty to the Sultan of State'*, *'respect for the laws'* and *'maintenance of public spaces.'* Accordingly, one female student teacher defined citizenship as follows:

> *'The reality of belonging to the homeland is where the individual should be a participator, and work for development and maintenance of the homeland, as the homeland provides all the rights and entitlements which the citizen enjoys'* [ST9/F/G/Sultan Qaboos University].

However, three STs referred to citizenship as a set of rights and duties. Yet they valued duties more than rights. From their point of view, the citizen is always indebted to the government, which provides him/her with many services including education, healthcare and safety. One male ST stressed that the citizen must:

> *'Know and conduct his rights and duties properly. It is unacceptable that the citizen demands that the government provide him with different services while he does not use them wisely'* [ST2/M/G/Salalah].

Another female student teacher said:

> *'Citizenship … is give and take. It does not mean you should be dependent on your government and rely on others for everything,*

> *without introducing anything in front of it'* [ST5/F/G/Salalah].

On the contrary, three interviewees argued that citizenship required a citizen to be an effective participator in his society. They do not consider the individual a good citizen unless he positively contributes to the development of his country. Importantly, they mentioned participation in voluntary work and civil works, but not political participation.

The majority of interviewees argued that the Omani Institution is based on religious principles. For one of them, Oman is a country where religion plays an essential role in life:

> *'In Oman, the religious aspect is more influential than the constitution, as Oman is regarded as one of the religious countries which are still committed to Islam'* [ST3/M/G/Nizwa].

According to another interviewee, religion encourages people to display loyalty, and accept the authority of those who run the country, and these two values are very important aspects of citizenship. He supported his argument with the Quran, in which believers are advised to abide by authority. Another point mentioned in favour was that religion is a set of values and principles which encourages individuals to do the right things, not because he/she fears punishment as in the case of institutions, but because he/she wants to satisfy his/her inner beliefs. Thus, the motive in this case is intrinsic, not extrinsic because of fear of the police for example, in the case of crime.

By contrast, two interviewees saw that institutions are more influential as opposed to religion. They argued that religion is very broad, while the institution specifies the rights and duties of the citizen. In addition, the individual can practise religion in any country he/she goes to but he/she can enjoy full rights only in his own country:

> *'…constitution contains a set of laws and legislations that are offered to the individual in his country but if he/she travelled to another country he/she feels less committed to such legislation'* [ST4/F/H/Sultan Qaboos University].

It seems that the interviewees have no idea about the Omani constitution. No interviewees either knew the issue date of the Omani

constitution, nor its content. All except one claimed that they were not taught about it in the colleges, even though they are going to teach it in school. However, one female ST from the Faculty of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, stated that she studied it in a course entitled *'The Contemporary Omani Society.''*

(B) Citizenship education is a crucial area in the school curriculum

By and large, student teachers directly highlighted the importance of CE by assuming its different crucial functions. Slightly more than half of them argued that CE should aim to either achieve or consolidate national unity. From their perspectives, this unity is a platform for building both a strong state and a strong society. In other words, achieving this unity is a major cause of building a society of strong citizens. The individual citizen benefits more than society from this unity according to one interviewee, who directed attention to the situation before 1970, when disputes and partitions dominated Oman and led to the disappearance of the state and consequently citizenship. In such a situation, the citizen lost many benefits which he/she now enjoys:

> *'If we look back to history, we find that disputes existed in Oman before 1970. These disputes led to fragmenting the country into several tribal sects, because the concept of state was not clear during this period. These disputes reflected the disappearance of both unity and citizenship, which negatively influence the citizen'* [ST6/M/H/Sohar].

The remainder of the interviewees emphasised different functions of CE. One interviewee regarded it as a medium of creating a good generation who can shape a coherent and aware society. Another interviewee considered that CE should firstly concentrate on encouraging students to be effective in their society. Yet for a third interviewee, helping the students to know their rights and responsibilities and cultivating a sense of belonging to homeland should be the focus of CE.

In light of the above, it can be inferred that CE in Oman tends to be conservative in that it aims to educate the students in accordance with the existing social and political realities. In addition, the priority in CE should be given to building national pride, developing a sense of belonging and appreciating the role of the government in serving the government. This tendency parallels the task of CE in some developing countries but differs from the task of CE in the old and new democratic countries. In Vietnam, CE focuses on fostering national identity, love for the nation, matters related to the community and society, and the rights and duties of citizens (Doan, 2005). By contrast, the aim of CE in Latvia is to strengthen democracy and focuses on the meaning of human rights, the responsibilities of the citizen in a democracy, the mechanism of a democratic government, the role of the government in a democratic society, the key laws of Latvia and its constitution, and the principles of a market economy (Valts, 1998).

The disagreement regarding the aims of CE was captured by Palmer (2005) who claims that every nation provides its citizens with a kind of CE. Yet the function of this education differs from one nation to another. He argued that some nations use civic education to build national pride:

> *'Any number of nations promote civic education as building national pride by having students learn the national anthem, salute the flag, march in parades, identify national symbols, and name national heroes, these initiatives bear little relevance to daily life'* (p.2).

By comparison, other nations use CE to make the citizens actively involved in their own governance and this participation must be based on informed, critical reflection, and on the understanding and acceptance of rights and responsibilities.

(C) Social studies is still the main approach of introducing citizenship education

Such broad goals can be achieved by introducing CE as a cross-curricular theme, with a special emphasis on social studies, and by introducing an independent subject called CE. The majority of STs endorsed the former, with a few in favour of a distinct subject. For the majority, CE is an important area aiming to influence STs from different sides so that any subject can contain something to develop citizenship. Even the scientific subjects, notably science and mathematics, can play a role in this process as, according to one interviewee, they can help students to develop scientific thinking which is necessary for the citizen to deal with the different problems that might affect society:

'…it focuses on scientific experiments which yield some results that might help the student to find solutions for the society's problems by means of a scientific and systematic method' [ST4/F/H/Sultan Qaboos University].

Although the majority supported CE as a cross-curricular theme they find a strong relationship between social studies, civic education and citizenship. They claimed that social studies was the school subject that most embraces political, geographical, historical and societal aspects of citizenship. One interviewee commented in this respect as follows:

'It is a subject close to both society and politics and I feel these topics are close to citizenship' [ST7/F/H/Ibri].

Another interviewee highlighted that studying history, which is an essential element of social studies, can strengthen a sense of glory and pride in the homeland:

'…it helps a student to know the honourable history of his country which results in pride in the homeland and encourages the student to further work and giving in order to sustain its development and advancement' [ST9/F /G/Sultan Qaboos University].

However, two interviewees called for introducing CE as a separate subject in order to emphasize some essential aspects of citizenship, such as understanding a government and its structure. One of these interviewees referred to a current topic entitled *'This is My Homeland'*, which is introduced in secondary school (grades 11 and 12). Thus, it seems that there is confusion between civic education and CE. For those who are against CE as a cross-curricular theme, science and mathematics are not appropriate for developing citizenship as they concentrate only on academic knowledge. As a result, there is no scope for development of citizenship.

Unexpectedly, one interviewee expressed a totally different view with regard to the role of school in citizenship. He thought that citizenship cannot be developed by a school, as school subjects focus on memorization, and regular exams are an end in themselves. Another interviewee raised the same point about the teaching methods and evaluation systems in Omani schools. She claimed that when she was in school, foreign teachers taught them using information from textbooks. These comments provoke an important question regarding the way CE is handled, both in school education and TE.

To conclude, all stakeholders held the view that CE is a broad area that can be delivered by all subjects. Yet, they stressed that social studies and civic education are the most appropriate place for introducing citizenship. The data from the IEA teachers study suggest that teachers hold the view that integrating civic education in courses such as social studies or history makes it more effective and meaningful. The stress on the role of social studies on the development of citizenship can be attributed to the statutes of this subject, which was introduced Omani curriculum in 1983. Since then, civic education has been implemented as an integral component of social studies in addition to history and geography. Internationally, preparing a good citizen has been acknowledged as the main aim of social studies (Busari, 1992; Janzen, 1995; Griffiths, 1990; Dinkelman, 1999). Dinkelman (1999) claimed that:

'There is widespread agreement among social educators that preparing students to capably participate in democratic life provides the primary rationale for social studies in the modern school curriculum' (p.4).

Introducing civic education as a specific subject has greater appeal in the post-Communist countries (Torney-Purta and Richardson, 2003).

(D) Citizenship education is an area which is missing in teacher preparation programmes

From the transcripts, it is evident that CE is not a main goal in TE programmes of social studies, even though this area is very close to citizenship. According to the viewpoints of interviewees, CE is a missing area in their programme in terms of the courses and the ways of handling them. While half of the interviewees reported that the programme helped them to learn values such as love of and pride in homeland, responsibility, defence of the homeland and honesty in doing work, the other half claimed that the programme hardly dealt with citizenship. One interviewee put it like this:

'… [Citizenship] is a missing topic in the educational institutions and it is rarely used. Thus, we rarely heard about it and we heard it as an ambiguous concept in few cases' [ST10/F/H/AlRustaq].

Another three interviewees claimed that the programme prepared them to be a teacher but not a citizen. The concept of citizenship was not used in the whole programme, so that the STs did not know either its meaning or how to develop it:

'The focus was put on professional elements and how one can be a teacher who is able to teach the subject which he was prepared to teach. Yet the focus was not on preparing to be a citizen, so that we did not hear about the concept of citizenship during the preparation programme. As a result, the courses failed to provide us with the meaning of citizenship, what citizens should do, and what are the aspects of citizenship that we as teachers should develop in the students' [ST2/M/G/Salalah].

It seems that the problem is not in the deficiency of the courses which are closely pertinent to citizenship, because the interviewees mentioned several courses dealing with the history and geography of Oman such as 'The Contemporary Omani Society', 'Oman in History' and 'Geography of Oman'. However, the problem rests with the tutors and how they use and deliver the content in order to develop some aspects of citizenship.

The majority of interviewees claimed that lectures are almost the only teaching method used in the colleges. According to the STs, this method is used in order to transmit as much information as possible, and does not require as much preparation or time as other techniques. In addition, using lectures leads tutors to restrict themselves to the content of course-books, and pay no attention to linking the course with society, particularly when the tutor is not Omani. In this respect, one female ST strongly criticised entrusting a teaching course like 'The Contemporary Omani Society' to a foreign tutor:

'From my point of view how can a non-Omani tutor teach this course? It means he/she does not know Omani society, and makes it up. The tutor was Egyptian so Omani society is not important to him. Thus, he depends only on course-books, and this is an ineffective approach' [ST9/F /G/Sultan Qaboos University].

In addition, the method of assessment measures only the ability to memorise, which means that skills and values are ignored in the assessment process. Thus some interviewees

stressed that they studied these courses for exams, not for using their implications in real life. One interviewee expressed their view in this respect as follows:

'You study most courses only to pass the exam.' [ST5/F/G/Salalah]

In this learning environment, the STs were very negative, while the tutors were authoritarian. According to two interviewees, students were prevented from voicing their opinion or making any argument regarding the topic under study. If the student did so, his/her grades might be affected:

'When I started my studies in the university I expected a different teaching approach. However, I realised that indoctrination is the only approach used for teaching. The student wants to talk, but the tutor would interrupt him, and if the student argued with the tutor, that might influence his/her grade' [ST10/F/H/AlRustaq].

From the above discussion, it is clear that traditional teaching methods are dominant in the education system in Oman in both schools and the COEs. This result is supported by the findings of other Omani studies (AlRabani, 1995; AlHammami, 1999; AlRyami, 2002; and AlSkatit, 2002). Yet this learning environment is not unique to the Omani educational system, as some studies have discovered the same results in other contexts. In most countries teachers reported that their instruction emphasised the transmission of knowledge. They predominately used textbooks, worksheets and recitation but they rarely used role-playing exercises and projects. In Arabic contexts, just as in Islamic contexts, Abdel Hamid AlAnsari, the Dean of the Faculty of Shari'a at Qatar University, stated that:

'A significant part of educational discourse… [is] creating a closed mentality and an easy slide towards fanaticism. It plants misconceptions about women, and religious, or ethnic minorities, it is dominated by memorisation and repetitive methods' (Haass, 2003, p.145).

Similarly in Asian contexts, Fairbrother (2004) found that one crucial problem hampers CE in China, that using the lecture results in students listing and memorising without discussion or debate. In Malaysia, Barone (2002) mentioned that a pedagogy used by teachers is teacher-centred which relies strongly on cultivating moral habits and, as a result, not deal-

ing with controversial issues and moral dilemmas.

Harber (1989) argued that teacher-centred learning can be termed authoritarian learning which is dominant in the developing countries. He summarised some reasons behind using this authoritarian environment as follows:

'Syllabuses are overcrowded and teachers and schools are judged by their ability to get pupils through the examination. As time is also short, teachers resort to methods that allow the quick transmission of large chunks of knowledge – lecturing and note-taking' (p.60).

Dinkelman (1999) argued that teaching social studies fails to prepare students to be more active in real life although this is the main goal of teaching social studies. This is, he argued, because using the teacher-centred approach leads the teacher to be active and students to be passive. In addition, this approach stresses learning by memorising and a lack of critical thinking, and discourages students' opinions. Torney-Purta and Richardson (2003, p.153) added:

'The learning process was conceived as expository, a one-way flow of information from teacher to student which hardly encouraged tolerance, independent thinking or participatory debate.'

(E) Citizenship education is practised to an extent in practical training programmes

From the above, it is evident that STs were not satisfied with the teaching approaches used to prepare them in the colleges. Therefore, they argued that different teaching methods should be used to develop citizenship. For instance, they employed cooperative learning, social participation, discussion, problem-solving and dialogue. Consequently, they attempted to implement such teaching methods and others in their practical training programme. Interestingly, although they were familiar only with the lecture method, they involved their students in the learning process by using discussion, dialogue, current affairs, linking topics with local environment, brainstorming, and problem-solving. In addition, they tried to develop critical thinking by asking the students some critical questions, as one female ST did:

'On one occasion I asked the following question: What would you do if you became minister of tourism?' [ST5/F/G/Salalah].

Another female ST conducted the following activity in order to develop critical thinking:

'In a lesson about the Second World War, I provided the students with a set of reasons which led to the start of the War. I asked them to choose a strong reason among them and support their views by evidence' [ST9/F/G/Sultan Qaboos University].

What is very interesting is that the STs, who suffered in the colleges from the lack of opportunities to express their opinions and to provoke questions, encouraged their students to express their opinions. They regarded it as an important issue, which influences the education of citizens. One male ST called it 'democratic learning' and stressed that:

'Learning must have a kind of democracy and flexibility, and if it is characterised by authoritarian behaviour such as physical and emotional punishment, students in future will not be able to voice their opinion in public gatherings' [ST6/M/H/Sohar].

It appears that STs created their own learning environment, which is totally different from those they experienced in the colleges. Therefore, they claimed that they developed some citizenship values during their practical training programme, such as love of the homeland, loyalty to the Sultan of the State, maintenance of public spaces, voluntary work and maintenance of current achievements in the country. In addition, they also attempted to develop some skills such as using maps to define locations, summarisation, critical thinking, analysis of pictures, comparison and conclusion. Yet they did not mention that they deal with skills such as decision-making, communication skills and so forth.

However, although they used several interactive teaching methods, some of them had misconceptions about them. When one male ST was asked to give an account of how he used a discussion method, he said:

'I asked the students a set of questions and they answered them, or often I referred them to answers in the text book because the time allocated to the lesson is not enough to involve all students' [ST1/M/G/Nizwa].

Furthermore, when another student was asked to give an example of how he developed critical thinking, he said:

> *'During the practical education this term, I wrote a wrong word on the board and did not realise until the end of the lesson. Then I blamed the students for not correcting me on time, but they said they were scared. Therefore, in the next lesson I offered them some tips on voicing their opinion without any fear'* [ST6/M/H/Sohar].

To conclude, it is clear that the STs realised the nature of citizenship as a multifaceted concept. This realisation helps them to criticise their preparation programme for not concentrating on developing citizenship as a crucial curriculum area. In addition, it also helps them to some extent to develop citizenship in their practical training programme.

CONCLUSION

The present study aims to identify the perceptions of a cohort of student teachers of social studies about CE in the Sultanate of Oman and its implications for the preparation programmes of social studies teachers in seven COEs. The data showed that citizenship in the Omani context is, as is the case in other contexts, a multifaceted concept with emphasis being attached to citizens' rights.

The participants provided a wide range of views about CE in terms of functions, the approaches to its introduction and the appropriate teaching method to deliver it. Overall, they viewed CE as a means to build national pride and unity, which are necessary to maintain stability in the country. The STs experienced the limited and traditional implementation of CE in the preparation programme of social studies.

Overall, the present study revealed a gap between the intentions of the educational policy and the requirements of teaching CE in the schools and the actual practices of TE preparation programmes. As a result, the current education programme for social studies needs to be reformed in order to provide student teachers with adequate preparation in citizenship. The current concern of the MOE about CE requires teachers who have the required knowledge, values and discourses related to citizenship. The study also suggests that tutors in the COE need to shift from the traditional approach to democratic and participatory approach, which constitutes a major challenge for those tutors who became used to a specific approach years ago.

The call to reform TE in order to meet the requirements of citizenship has been echoed internationally. Educational literature refers to the high status of the teacher in current endeavours to reform. The American Federation of Teachers (2003) highlighted the need for different teachers in the 21st century:

> *'As we begin the 21st century, well prepared, highly qualified teachers are essential if we are to ensure that all students achieve the high standards necessary for them to lead fulfilling lives and become productive citizens'(p. 25).*

In addition, Patrick and Vontz (2001, p.50-51) stated that:

> *'Teachers cannot teach what they do not know and are unable to do. If they do not learn principles and practices of democracy, and how to teach them, then they will not be prepared to educate their students for citizenship in a democracy.'*

Similarly, Davies, Gregory and Riley (1999) stressed that citizenship will not be effective unless:

> *'All teachers have at least had an opportunity to explore key concepts such as democracy, citizenship and pluralism. Without the minimum of a basic introduction to the fundamentals of citizenship there is little hope for altering the current situation, in which teachers who have never explored the meaning of citizenship are drafted in to teach it due to the availability of a few 'free' lessons of their specialist teaching time' (p.116).*

From such a discussion, it is evident that the success of new initiatives to develop citizenship in Oman and elsewhere depends greatly on well-prepared teachers. As teachers are regarded as vital players in education for citizenship, they need to be well-prepared to carry out such a task.

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