What dispositions do they possess? Investigating the values and dispositions of Omani novice teachers

The present study investigated the dispositions that Omani novice teachers have as perceived by them and as perceived by another group of participants comprising school principals, their assistants and senior teachers. Five main categories of dispositions were investigated: Professional values at work, values associated with personality characteristics and traits, values related to cooperation and leadership, values related to continuous and life-long learning and attitudes towards the teaching profession. The main instrument of the study was a five level Lickert scale questionnaire that assessed the level of possession of the investigated dispositions as perceived by the participants. A total of 600 novice teachers and a total of 253 school principals, assistant principals and senior teachers responded to the questionnaire. Findings of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups of participants in their evaluation of novice teachers' dispositions in favor of novice teachers who rated themselves higher than those of the other group of participants. While novice teachers' overall evaluation of the level they possess the investigated dispositions was "very high", school principals, assistant principals, and senior teachers' evaluation was "high". The study makes a number of recommendations for teacher preparation programs and for practice.

Keywords: *Dispositions; novice teachers; Oman*

Introduction

Teaching is a noble job; teachers have the responsibility of educating our children, instilling values in them, and preparing them for the challenges of life. This requires a wide range of competencies on the part of teachers especially when they must prepare children for a world of rapid social, cultural, economic, and technological change. In fact, the roles of teachers and schools are changing, and so are expectations about them (Lee, 2019).

To be fully effective in performing their complex roles, it is no longer adequate that teachers have deep knowledge of the subject matter they teach, or skills that enable them to perform their job efficiently. The values and dispositions that teachers hold are equally important. These affect everything teachers do. Most teacher preparation programs have found it vital that they address these three elements: knowledge, skills and values in their curricula (Collinson, Killeavy & Stephenson, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Teacher accreditation agencies expect dispositions to be addressed in teacher preparation programs and have in fact made them an obligation of teacher educators. NCATE, for example, stresses the importance of the moral and ethical development of teachers, hence, teaching teacher candidates knowledge and equipping them with skills is no longer adequate. A teacher preparation program is expected to identify the values and dispositions it

deems important to produce effective teachers. That is why teacher education programs in many parts of the world have included dispositions into their evaluations of candidates' readiness for the classroom (Freeman, 2001; Thornton, 2006). Similarly, in 1992, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) in the U.S released a set of model standards (knowledge, skills and dispositions) for beginning teachers, which were soon adopted in more than thirty American states, and eventually in other parts of the world (Murrell, Diez, Feiman-Nemser & Schussler, 2010).

In the Omani higher education context, the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University has identified dispositions and values within its Conceptual Framework. Examples are "observing Omani, Islamic and professional ethics/values in performing their professional tasks and developing positive attitudes towards the profession". These are embedded in the college's curriculum and reflect the values established by faculty members as essential to the mission of the college. The candidate will develop and demonstrate professional dispositions based on observable and measurable behaviors at various stages in the program. Special measurement tools for candidate dispositions have been developed and used for a number of years now but no systematic evaluation of them has been conducted so far nor any research that investigates dispositions of graduating teachers or the impact these have on students' learning.

The huge role that teachers play in today's societies has made it of paramount importance that they are prepared with all that is required to make them highly effective teachers. As indicated earlier, the whole enterprise of teacher preparation cannot succeed if programs focus only on the knowledge that teachers need to gain and/or the skills/competencies they need to acquire. A better understanding of the dispositions that characterize novice teachers in the first few years after their employment and which are believed to affect all aspects of the teaching/learning acts that they go through is highly needed. It is hoped that the understanding of novice teachers' dispositions and the factors affecting their development will provide useful insights to teacher preparation programs in general and to the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University in particular.

To the best knowledge of the researchers, there has been no study that examined closely the dispositions of teachers in the Omani educational context. The present research intends to fill in this gap by answering the following research questions:

1. How do Omani novice teachers evaluate the dispositions they have?
2. How does this evaluation compare with that of school principals, assistant principals, and senior teachers?

1   **Literature Review**
2
3   **Definitions of Teacher Dispositions**
4
5   Dispositions have been defined in different ways over the years. These
6   definitions differ according to the theoretical background of each model and
7   the conceptual framework of each institution. Basically, teacher dispositions
8   are linked to qualities of effective teaching. According to Taylor and Wasicsko
9   (2000) "effective teachers are effective people" (p.9). Qualities such as caring,
10   helping others to learn, being enthusiastic and enjoying life are associated with
11   teachers who are considered effective. These effective teachers can use their
12   personal qualities along with the skills and knowledge to support students'
13   learning (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000).
14   Faull (2008) (as cited in Faull, 2009) defines dispositions as "innate
15   qualities that direct people to act in constant ways which can be detected from
16   patterns of behaviour in specific contexts" (Faull, 2008, p.33). Additionally,
17   Wasicsko, Callahan, and Wirtz (2004) explain that many available definitions
18   of dispositions are based on three main aspects: teacher behavior, teacher
19   characteristics and teacher perceptions. Teachers' dispositions are observable
20   actions and they include teacher tendencies, qualities, attitudes, morals and
21   belief systems.
22   Thornton (2006) provides a definition for dispositions in action which is
23   practice based and stems from classroom dialogue. From her point of view,
24   dispositions in action are "habits of mind including both cognitive and
25   affective attributes that filter one's knowledge, skills, and beliefs and impact
26   the action one takes in classroom or professional setting. They are manifested
27   within relationships as meaning-making occurs with others and they are
28   evidenced through interactions in the form of discourse." (Thornton, 2006, p.
29   62). Richardson (1996) explains that the relationship between beliefs and
30   action is interactive in nature. This means that beliefs drive actions, but new
31   experiences and reflection on one's actions can alter or change these beliefs.
32   A very common and a widely adopted definition of dispositions is the NCATE
33   definition of teacher dispositions. According to the NCATE (2008)
34   professional dispositions are "professional attitudes, values, and beliefs
35   demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators
36   interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities." (pp. 89- 90).
37   And hence, teachers' professional dispositions affect students' learning and
38   development as well as the teacher's professional growth (Notar et al., 2009).
39   It can be recognized that a group of terms occur repeatedly in the definitions of
40   teacher dispositions. These include: values, attitudes, ethics, habits of mind,
41   attributes, tendencies and behaviors (NCATE, 2008; Thornton, 2006; Notar
42   et.al., 2009); all are abstract concepts that prove that dispositions can not be
43   seen. What can be seen instead is the action that results from them (Simpson,
44   2011) and through which the quality of teaching can be judged.
45
46

1 **Defining Novice Teachers**
2
3   The term "novice teacher" is often used to describe beginning teachers.
4 There is no fixed agreed-upon definition for a novice teacher in the literature.
5 A novice teacher could be a new teacher who is teaching for the first time or
6 someone who is unfamiliar or inexperienced in teaching as a profession
7 (Freeman, 2001). One major disagreement among definitions is in the number
8 of teaching years for which a teacher should be considered novice (Freeman,
9 2001; Al Burtamani, 2015). Some institutes and organizations consider a
10 teacher with less than one year of experience a novice teacher while others
11 extend years of experience to three or five years. For example, Arkansas
12 Department of Education (n.d.) defines a novice teacher as a teacher who has a
13 license to teach and has less than one-year of classroom teaching experience.
14 Huntly (2004) agrees with the definition mentioned above, while Melnick and
15 Meister (2008) describe beginning teachers as the teachers who did not
16 complete three years of teaching after receiving initial teacher qualification.
17   In their study, Kim and Roth (2011) state that a teacher with less than five
18 years of teaching experience is considered a novice teacher and Gatbonton
19 (2008) refers to novice teachers as those who have very little teaching
20 experience (from zero to two years) and might be still undertaking training or
21 has just finished teacher preparation program.
22   In the Omani context, Al Belushi (2014) defines a novice teacher as the
23 teacher employed by the Ministry of Education who gained a Bachelor of
24 Education or an equivalent qualification and has a teaching experience of not
25 more than one year. In her study, Al Burtamani (2015) also identified that a
26 new teacher is the one who has one year of teaching experience. Most of the
27 reviewed literature places a new teacher between one to five years of teaching
28 experience. For the purposes of this study, the term novice teacher is defined as
29 a teacher with less than five years of teaching experience.
30
31 **Assessment of Teachers' Dispositions**
32
33   Assessing dispositions is a hard process as the literature does not provide a
34 clear definition for teacher dispositions and thus a lot of debate goes on about
35 the best measurements (Dottin, 2009; Edick et.al., 2006; Karges-Bone &
36 Griffin, 2009; Notar et.al, 2009). However, teacher program evaluation and
37 accreditation agencies (InTASC, 2011; NCATE, 2008) agree that the
38 assessment of teacher dispositions must be linked to program goals and
39 conceptual framework.
40   In her article, Thornton (2006) describes how teachers' dispositions are
41 defined and assessed based on different models. She identifies five different
42 models. The first model views dispositions as teacher's behaviour in the school
43 setting. According to this model, teachers' behaviors are observed using
44 checklists, rubrics and rating scales which are designed based on the
45 organizational and pedagogical goals of the institution. The second model
46 looks at dispositions as teacher's professional characteristics including

1   commitment, work ethics, attendance, proper conduct, sense of humor…etc.
2   These expected characteristics are regularly stated by school principals and
3   school supervisors based on what is considered an appropriate behaviour by the
4   teacher. Thornton (2006) states that regardless of the importance of such
5   characteristics, they have a minimal role in determining dispositions of
6   teachers and cannot fully indicate the teacher's professional dispositions.
7   Another model perceives dispositions as self-assessment reflections. Self-
8   report strategy has been used in many teachers' programs where candidates are
9   asked to reflect upon different experiences they go through. It is beneficial in
10 terms that it provides the teacher with clear insight about their proposition in
11 relation to stated standards. Journal wiring is also used by teachers to reflect
12 upon their own beliefs and teaching philosophy and tracking the change in
13 these beliefs over time. Their pitfall as Thornton suggests remains in the fact
14 that they are based on candidate's personal evaluation and thus do not clearly
15 address how values are displayed in the teacher's interactions in the classroom
16 setting. This issue of self-reflection is also reported by Waicsko, Callahan, &
17 Wirtz (2004). They warn that self-reflection assessment alone, although
18 beneficial, cannot be a very authentic medium for assessment of professional
19 dispositions with some candidates. That is because teachers who do not
20 demonstrate the intended dispositions struggle in using these assessment tools.
21 They intend to make inaccurate self-reflections to make themselves look as
22 expected by the teacher program officials. The fourth model describes
23 dispositions as ethics and morals. Theses teaching morals such as equality and
24 accepting diversity are frequently mentioned by researchers and scholars in the
25 pedagogical dispositions field. Teacher education programs strive to instill the
26 value of accepting students from different backgrounds, languages, and
27 experiences. Teachers are expected to ensure that all learners get equal learning
28 opportunities, and they should hold strong human ethics that lead to the success
29 of students' learning.
30   The last model is advocated by Ritchhart (2001). It views dispositions as
31 actions in practice and maintains that they are shaped based on the classroom
32 context. They go beyond personal characteristics and self-refection to focusing
33 on dispositions influenced by morals, attitudes and diversity and how these
34 dispositions reveal themselves subsequently in the actions of the teacher in the
35 classroom (Thornton, 2006). Therefore, they can be only observed and
36 assessed when they take place in the classroom dialogue.
37   However, most educators and educational institutes tend to combine
38 different perspectives when addressing professional dispositions and several
39 approaches of assessment have been utilized in assessing dispositions such as
40 teacher journals and portfolios, observation in field experience, rating scales
41 and rubrics (Karges-Bone & Griffin, 2009; Edick et. al., 2006; Wilkerson &
42 Lang, 2007), well-established standards, interviews, scenarios and case studies,
43 metaphorical assessment (Edick et. al., 2006) and documenting unacceptable
44 dispositions when they are observed (Wilkerson & Lang, 2007).
45   In hope to introduce a strongly validated and reliable assessment of
46 dispositions, many researchers try to develop models and instruments to

1   understand and assess professional dispositions. Examples of these attempts are
2   presented below.
3   Schulte et. al. (2005) acknowledge that dispositions address human
4   behavior. Because of this belief, they focused on self-reflection and one's
5   action awareness as an important tool for the teachers to understand their
6   dispositions and track their dispositions development. To achieve this purpose,
7   the researchers developed an assessment tool (Teacher Dispositions Index) to
8   measure the dispositions of effective teachers based on the INTASC's Model.
9   The Teacher Dispositions Index (TDI) was field tested and it contains 64 items
10   that are listed underneath the subscales of curriculum-centered, student-
11   centered and professionalism. The researchers believe that this tool would help
12   teacher programs to identify and track the development of the teachers'
13   dispositions.
14   In their article, Edick et. al. (2006) report the experience of Midwestern
15   College of Education regarding the integration of professional dispositions in
16   the teacher preparation courses following three distinct phases. First, the
17   students were asked to demonstrate their understanding about dispositions and
18   how teacher dispositions may affect student learning, in what is called the
19   "awareness level". This was followed by the conceptualizing of dispositions,
20   where students were asked to interpret the impact of a certain disposition
21   applied in a specific context. This is done through observation in field
22   experience. The last level was internalization, in which the teacher candidate
23   can reflect upon his own professional dispositions when interacting with
24   students. The assessment of teacher student development of dispositions is an
25   ongoing process, and it is achieved through various means of assessment
26   including discussions, case studies, field work observations and portfolios
27   (Edick et. al., 2006).
28   Also, Faull (2008), as cited in Faull, (2009) presented a theoretical
29   framework (the Dispositional Cluster Model) for identifying who is an
30   effective teacher. The model illustrates five general dispositions that
31   characterize highly effective teachers. These qualities are being creative,
32   committed, authentic, communicative and passionate. Faull (2009) clarifies
33   that each one of these five main dispositional clusters are further broken down
34   into minor dispositions that are interactive and interdependent. For example,
35   the secondary dispositions that describe the authentic teacher include caring,
36   reflective, empathic and open (p. 34). Being committed includes being
37   purposeful, organized, motivated, and resilient (Faull, 2009, p. 35). Under the
38   primary dispositions cluster of being communicative come the following
39   secondary dispositions: being a knowledgeable listener, engagement and
40   humor (p.36). As for the disposition of creativity, the subordinate dispositions
41   include risk taking, originality, curiosity, and problem solving (p.37). The final
42   major disposition discussed by Faull (2009) is being passionate and it is further
43   explained in four secondary dispositions which are enthusiastic, excitable,
44   positive, and energetic (p.38).
45
46

1   **Methodology**

2

3 **Instrument**

4

5   The present study used a questionnaire designed to investigate two main
6 issues: The first issue was concerned with novice teachers' perceptions of the
7 extent they possess various professional dispositions that were categorized into
8 five main subsections. The second issue was the kind of factors that affect the
9 development of these dispositions. For the sake of this paper, only results of
10 the first part are presented.
11   Items of the questionnaire were developed based on similar disposition
12 assessment tools used in the literature (e. g., Almerico et al., 2011; Varol,
13 2011) as well as disposition indices adopted by universities (e.g., California
14 State University). In addition, standards on teacher education such as INTASC
15 (2001) and CCSSO (2011) were also consulted. The development of the
16 questionnaire was also built on the qualitative findings of a preliminary
17 investigation to the present study (Al Seyabi, 2020).
18   The questionnaire starts with a background information section that
19 investigated various biographical information about the participants such as
20 their gender, university of graduation, their area of specialization and the
21 governorates where they were teaching. The questionnaire also included a
22 section that investigated novice teachers' personal evaluation of the degree
23 they possess a list of professional dispositions and values belonging to five
24 main categories: Professional values at work (17 statements), Dispositions
25 related to cooperation and leadership (11 statements), dispositions related to
26 personality traits (10 statements), dispositions related to life-long learning (12
27 statements), and dispositions reflecting attitudes towards the teaching
28 profession (10 statements). Participants were asked to indicate the level they
29 thought they possessed the investigated dispositions using a scale from 1 =
30 very high, to 5= very low.
31   The scale was validated by several experts from the College of Education
32 at Sultan Qaboos University as well as Oman's Ministry of Education. As for
33 reliability, the questionnaire was piloted among a group of novice teachers (N=
34 40). Table 1 below shows the reliability results of the different sub-sections of
35 the questionnaire and the overall reliability score.

36

37 *Table 1*. Reliability of the self-assessment professional values and dispositions
38 scale using a Cronbach's ALPHA (N=40)

Section	Cronbach's Alpha
Professional values at work	.922
Cooperation and leadership	.902
Dispositions related to personality traits	.941
Dispositions related to life-long learning	.921
Dispositions reflecting attitudes towards the teaching profession	.932
Overall reliability score	.967

39

1   As the table shows, the analysis revealed a high reliability score as its
2 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was .967, which indicated that the scale is
3 suitable and can be used in the study.
4
5 **Sample**
6
7   The sample of the study included 600 participants who responded to the
8 research instrument, 572 (88%) females and 72 males (12%). These were all
9 novice teachers whose years of experience ranged from one to 4, as follows: 1
10 year of experience (30.5%), 2 years of experience (24.5%), 3 years of
11 experience (27.8%), and 4 years of experience (17.2%). Regarding their place
12 of employment, the participant teachers were distributed mainly in the
13 governorates where novice teachers are highly needed based on the
14 employment situation in Oman. These are as follows: 23.8% in Dhofar, 23.3%
15 in Al Dhakeleya, 17.5% in Al Batinah North and 10.2% in Al Wusta. The
16 remaining participants were distributed among the other educational
17 governorates in Oman.
18   Regarding the teacher preparation programs that the participants graduated
19 from, 37.7% were graduates of Sultan Qaboos University, the first and only
20 national university in Oman, 20.3 % graduated from other governmental
21 institutions inside Oman, 19.2% graduated from private colleges inside Oman,
22 while the remaining respondents (22.8%) were graduates of institutions from
23 outside the country.
24   The second group of participants that the study targeted comprised a total
25 of 253, distributed as follows: 80 school principals (31.6%), 62 assistant
26 principals (24.5%) and 111 senior teachers (43.9%).183 of these participants
27 were females (72.3%) and 70 were males (27.7%).
28
29
30   **Findings**
31
32   The main aim of this study, as stated earlier is to investigate novice
33 teachers' perceptions of the kind and level of professional dispositions they
34 believe they possess. To help identify the level of possession of a wide range of
35 dispositions put into five main categories, the research team adopted the
36 following range.
37
38 *Table 2*. The judging criteria for the results of the research questions

range	Teachers' possession degree of professional values
From 1 to 1.79	Very weak (VW)
From 1.80 to 2.59	Weak (W)
From 2.60 to 3.39	Medium (M)
From 3.40 to 4.19	High (H)

From 4.20 to 5	Very high (VH)

1
2 **Differences between novice teachers' perceptions of their dispositions and**
3 **the perceptions of school principals, their assistants, and senior teachers**
4
5   This study endeavors to compare the novice teachers' self-reporting of
6 their dispositions with the reporting of another group of school participants:
7 principals, assistant principals and senior teachers. A t-test was run to check
8 whether there were statistically significant differences between the perceptions
9 of novice teachers and those of principals, their assistants and senior teachers.
10 However, given the imbalance in the original sample size of novice teachers
11 (N= 600) and that of principals, assistants and senior teachers (N=253), a
12 randomly selected smaller percentage of the novice teachers' sample was
13 selected to be entered in the t-test (N=372).
14
15 *Table 3*. T-test results of the differences between novice teachers (372), and
16 principals, assistants and senior teachers (253) in their perceptions of novice
17 teachers' dispositions

		N	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
Professional values at work	Novice teachers	372	4.59	0.36	8.836	0.000
	Principals, assistants and senior teachers	253	4.21	0.61		
Dispositions related to Cooperation and leadership	Novice teachers	372	4.18	0.48	4.596	0.000
	Principals, assistants and senior teachers	253	3.95	0.68		
Dispositions related to personality traits	Novice teachers	372	4.48	0.44	8.885	0.000
	Principals, assistants and senior teachers	253	4.05	0.73		
Dispositions related to life-long learning	Novice teachers	372	4.07	0.58	6.497	0.000
	Principals, assistants and senior teachers	253	3.69	0.79		
Attitudes towards the teaching	Novice teachers	372	4.30	0.56	8.770	0.000

profession

	Principals, assistants and senior teachers	253	3.81	0.75

1 *Significance level at α =0.05
2
3   As can be seen in the table, there were statistically significant differences
4 between the evaluations of the novice teachers and those of school principals, their
5 assistants and senior teachers in all five categories of dispositions investigated in the
6 study, in favor of novice teachers.
7   The table above shows that while novice teachers' overall evaluation of their
8 dispositions was "very high", the other group of participants comprising school
9 principals, assistant principals and senior teachers rated them as "high". Professional
10 values at work came first with the highest mean of (4.59) and a standard deviation of
11 (0.39) for novice teachers and (4.21) and a standard deviation of (0.61) for school
12 principals, assistants and senior teachers. This was followed by values associated with
13 personality characteristics with a mean of (4.48) and a standard deviation of (0.45) for
14 novice teachers and a mean of (4.05) and a standard deviation of (0.73) for school
15 principals, assistants and senior teachers. It can also be noted that novice teachers
16 rated themselves "very high" in all categories except for dispositions related to
17 cooperation and leadership and dispositions related to continuous and lifelong
18 learning; the later was given the lowest rank by the two groups of participants. The
19 other group of participants rated novice teachers "very high" only in the first category:
20 Professional values at work.
21
22 **The perceptions of novice teachers and those of school principals, their**
23 **assistants and senior teachers of the dispositions that novice teachers have**
24
25 <u>Professional values at work</u>
26 *Table 4.* The means and the standard deviations of the section on the
27 professional values at work

	Statement	Novice teachers		School principals, assistants and senior teachers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Respecting others when dealing with them	4.79	0.47	4.40	0.71
2	attending to the appropriate general appearance of the Omani society's nature	4.75	0.47	4.60	0.60
3	Adopting good morals emanating from the Islamic religion	4.71	0.49	4.54	0.66
4	Acting as a good model (in word and deed) in front of others	4.71	2.14	4.21	0.80
5	Commitment to the ethics of the teaching profession	4.70	0.54	4.32	0.81
6	Commitment to honesty and integrity at work	4.69	0.55	4.25	0.83

7	Taking responsibility for teaching my students	4.68	0.56	4.11	0.87
8	Taking responsibility for my decisions and their consequences	4.65	0.55	3.98	0.85
9	Commitment to the safe and ethical use of technology and social media	4.60	0.57	4.23	0.75
10	Adopting good morals emanating from the culture of Omani society	4.57	0.57	4.43	0.67
11	Respecting cultural diversity within the local community	4.56	0.59	4.32	0.75
12	Adhering to the laws and regulations of my school	4.54	0.58	4.15	0.80
13	Respecting the diversity of students in terms of their abilities	4.53	0.63	4.05	0.85
14	Adhering to the scheduled times of attending and leaving school	4.47	0.68	4.06	0.89
15	The completion of work on the specified dates	4.42	0.67	3.91	0.91
16	Taking care to cover the curriculum on time	4.40	0.74	4.06	0.86
17	Following up with the new laws and regulations related to education profession	4.24	0.77	4.02	0.85
	General level	4.59	0.39	4.21	0.61

Regarding professional values at work, Table 4 illustrates that the overall rating of the statements of this section was very high by both groups of participants. In fact, novice teachers have rated themselves "very high" in all statements of this section. The statement that states "respecting others when dealing with them", ranked first with the highest mean of (4.79), followed by "attending to the appropriate general appearance of the Omani society's nature" with a mean of (4.75), followed in the third place by the two statements "representing good morals emanating from the Islamic religion" and "being good model (in word and deed) in front of others" with a recurring mean of (4.17). These same statements have also received very high scores by school principals, assistants and senior teachers. The statement " following up with the new laws and regulations related to the education profession", ranked last from the novice teachers' point of view, with a mean of (4.24). As for school principals, assistants, and senior teachers, the lowest two statements were concerned with novice teachers' completion of work on time and taking responsibility for their own decisions.

1 Dispositions related to cooperation and leadership
2 *Table 5*. The means and the standard deviations of the section on cooperation
3 and leadership

	Statement	Novice teachers		School principals, assistants and senior teachers	
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.
1	Respecting different points of view during teamwork	4.43	0.62	4.13	0.75
2	Assisting colleagues in work-related issues	4.42	0.66	4.08	0.78
3	Initiating social relationships with colleagues and peers	4.33	0.73	4.22	0.75
4	Effective contribution to teamwork	4.29	0.70	3.97	0.85
5	Responding to requests from school colleagues	4.26	0.67	3.96	0.80
6	Sharing educational materials with colleagues	4.24	0.76	4.02	0.82
7	Taking the initiative to solve problems related to education	4.18	0.75	3.82	0.92
8	Cooperating with parents on issues related to their children	4.13	0.78	3.98	0.83
9	Having the ability to lead colleagues to make work-related decisions	4.00	0.75	3.80	0.91
10	Contributing towards making continuous change in the school	3.94	0.88	3.68	0.97
11	Participating with schoolmates in special social events outside school time	3.73	1.09	3.79	1.07
	General level	4.18	0.51	3.95	0.68

4
5   Table 5 shows the general mean and the general standard deviation for the
6 section covering dispositions related to cooperation and leadership, where the
7 general mean of the section reached (4.18) for novice teachers and (3.93) for
8 school principals, assistants and senior teachers, indicating a high rating by
9 both groups of participants. Novice teachers' responses showed that the
10 statement "Respecting different points of view during teamwork", came in first
11 rank with the highest mean which is about (4.43), followed in second place by
12 "Helping colleagues in issues related to work" with a mean of (4.42), and then
13 "Initiating social relationships with colleagues and peers" with a mean of
14 (4.33). It can also be seen in the table that while statements reflecting novice
15 teachers' cooperation dispositions received "very high" ratings, statements
16 addressing aspects related to leadership dispositions such as taking initiatives
17 to solve problems and leading change at the school level were perceived as
18 "highly" possessed. The only exception in cooperation-related statements was
19 "Participating with schoolmates in special social events outside school time",

1 which came in the last rank with a mean of (3.73). As for school principals,
2 assistants, and senior teachers, the statement "Initiating social relationships
3 with colleagues and peers" scored the highest mean in this category, while the
4 leadership disposition addressing teachers' contributions towards making
5 change at the school level came in last with a mean score of (3.68).
6
7 Dispositions related to personality characteristics
8 *Table 6*. Means and standard deviations of the section on personality characteristics

Statements		Novice teachers			Principals, assistants and senior teachers		
		Mean	SD.	Degree	Mean	SD.	Degree
1	Dealing in a polite and respectful manner with others	4.70	0.52	VH	4.35	0.72	VH
2	Kindness and caring for others	4.59	0.59	VH	4.18	0.76	H
3	Having the desire to cooperate and help others	4.59	0.58	VH	4.13	0.87	H
4	Listening well to others	4.53	0.63	VH	4.12	0.82	H
5	Having the ability to take responsibility	4.52	0.63	VH	4.00	0.89	H
6	Positive and optimistic	4.50	0.70	VH	4.02	0.93	H
7	Self-confidence in all behavior	4.48	0.66	VH	4.15	0.79	H
8	The ability to be patient and endure difficulties	4.38	0.74	VH	3.84	0.99	H
9	Wisdom and being balanced when facing difficult situations	4.28	0.71	VH	3.85	0.93	H
10	The ability to deal with different personalities	4.26	0.74	VH	3.90	0.90	H
	General level	4.48	0.45	VH	4.05	0.73	H

9 Table 6 shows the general mean and the general standard deviation of the
10 statements associated with the personality characteristics. While the general
11 mean based on novice teachers' responses reached (4.48), indicating a very
12 high level of evaluation, the mean obtained by school principals, assistant
13 principals and senior teachers was 4.05, reflecting a "high" level of evaluation.
14 In fact, all statements under this section were perceived to be very highly
15 possessed by novice teachers. The statement "dealing in a polite and respectful
16 manner with others", came first with the highest mean (4.70), followed in
17 second place by the two statements "Kindness and caring for others" and "The
18 desire to cooperate and help others" with a recurring mean of (4.59), whereas
19 in third place came " listening well to others" with a mean of (4.53). Although
20 still very high, the statement which states "the ability to deal with different
21 personalities", came in last rank with a mean of (4.26). The second group of
22 participants, on the other hand, rated one statement only as very high, which
23 read "Dealing in a polite and respectful manner with others". The mean of the

1 other statements reflects that they were perceived to be possessed in a high
2 manner by novice teachers.
3
4 Dispositions related to continuous and life-long learning
5 *Table 7*. Means and standard deviations of the section on continuous and life-
6 long learning

	Statements Novice teachers	Principals, assistants and senior teachers				
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	Degree
1	Seeking to be an expert in the subject	4.54	0.65	3.76	1.02	H
2	Caring about the importance of continuous learning	4.45	0.65	4.02	0.82	H
3	Searching for new sources to enrich the different teaching methods	4.34	0.74	3.80	0.93	H
4	Creativity in completing school-related work	4.27	0.77	3.77	0.96	H
5	Consultation with others (senior teacher, assistant principal, etc..), each according to their specialization for professional development	4.19	0.87	3.89	0.97	H
6	Participating in vocational training workshops organized by the Ministry	4.16	0.94	3.93	1.01	H
7	Participating in professional development workshops organized by the school	4.15	0.86	4.04	0.86	H
8	Ensuring the development of educational practices through the exchange of class visits	4.05	0.93	3.84	0.96	H
9	Ensuring the development of educational practices in light of the results of data analysis (exam results for example)	4.01	0.89	3.74	0.96	H
10	Following up of new research and studies in the field of specialization	3.81	1.00	3.35	1.05	M
11	Initiating to provide training and educational workshops to others	3.52	1.06	3.26	1.08	M
12	Attempting to carry out action research	3.33	1.11	2.94	1.22	M
	General level	4.07	0.60	3.69	0.79	H

7
8   Concerning novice teachers' data, Table 7 presents the general mean and
9 the general standard deviation of the statements related to dispositions on
10 continuous and life-long learning, as the general mean of the section reached
11 (4.07), a general standard deviation (0.60), and with a high rating. The
12 statement "Seeking to be an expert in the subject", ranked first with the highest
13 mean (4.54), followed in second place by "caring about the importance of
14 continuous learning" with a mean of (4.45), followed in third place by
15 "Searching for new sources to enrich the different teaching methods" with a
16 mean of (4.34). The only statement that received a ranking of "medium" not

1 only in this section but in the whole study was conducting action research,
2 which came in the last rank with a mean of (3.33). Similar to novice teachers,
3 the other group of participants have also rated this category of dispositions as
4 high, but with three medium level statements. These were "following-up of
5 new research and studies in the field of specialization", "initiating to provide
6 training and educational workshops to others", and "conducting action
7 research", which, similar to the evaluation of novice teachers, also received the
8 lowest mean in all questionnaire statements.
9
10 <u>Attitudes towards the teaching profession</u>
11 *Table 8.* The mean and the standard deviations of the section on attitudes
12 towards the teaching profession

	Statement	Novice teachers		Principals, assistants and senior teachers	
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.
1	Feeling proud of being a teacher	4.61	0.64	3.89	0.97
2	Having enthusiasm while teaching in class	4.52	0.66	3.89	0.89
3	Feeling satisfied with my profession as a teacher	4.41	0.81	3.79	0.95
4	Possessing positive attitudes towards teaching as a profession	4.37	0.76	3.97	0.89
5	Having knowledge of the teacher's duties and responsibilities	4.37	0.72	3.93	0.88
6	Demonstrating a passion for teaching as a profession	4.34	0.76	3.70	0.99
7	Having enthusiasm while participating in school activities and events	4.23	0.83	3.87	0.82
8	Accepting additional work required by the school administration	4.08	0.90	3.63	0.96
9	Having knowledge of teacher rights	4.06	0.93	3.87	0.87
10	Adopting new ideas at school	4.04	0.89	3.59	1.00
	General level	4.30	0.57	3.81	0.75

13
14   Table 8 showcases the general mean and the general standard deviation of
15 the statements reflecting novice teachers' attitudes towards teaching, where the
16 general mean reached (4.30), a general standard deviation of (0.57) and with a
17 very high rating. The statement " Feeling proud of being a teacher", came first
18 with the highest mean of (4.61), followed in second place by " Having
19 enthusiasm while teaching in class " with a mean of (4.52), followed in third
20 place by "Feeling satisfied with my profession as a teacher " with a mean of
21 (4.41). "Adopting new ideas at school", came in the last place with a mean of
22 (4.04).

Discussion

1
2
3   The present study was initiated to examine Omani novice teachers'
4 dispositions as perceived by teachers themselves and as perceived by another
5 group of participants comprising school principals, assistant principals, and
6 senior teachers. Findings of the study revealed that there were statistically
7 significant differences between the two groups of participants in their
8 evaluation of novice teachers' dispositions in favor of novice teachers. Both
9 evaluations were at the highest two levels of the evaluation scale; novice
10 teachers' overall evaluation of the level they possess the investigated
11 dispositions was "very high" while school principals, assistant principals, and
12 senior teachers' evaluation was "high". In general, the literature investigating
13 teachers' assessment of their dispositions has often reported positive
14 perceptions (Kirchner ,2011; Singh and Stoloff, 2008). Kirchner (2011), for
15 example, found that first year teachers reported that they have a very high rate
16 of the dispositions identified in the study such as confidence and resilience.
17 Add to this, it is not uncommon that self-assessment results tend to be higher
18 than the assessment of other people involved in the evaluation (Logan, 2015;
19 Borg and Edmett, 2018). Still, self-assessment in general has been recognized
20 as an option that can enhance teachers' self-awareness, sense of agency (Borg
21 and Edmett, 2018) and professional growth (Ross and Bruce, 2007). As for
22 other educators working with novice teachers such as those involved in the
23 present study, it seems that some dispositions are more visible than others.
24 Examples are politeness, showing respect to others and commitment to work
25 and its responsibilities.
26   Professional values at work were found to be the highest among the
27 categories investigated, based on the evaluation of novice teachers themselves.
28 These involved various kinds of values such as commitment to the ethics of the
29 teaching profession, adopting good morals emanating from the Islamic religion
30 and Omani culture, taking responsibility for actions and respecting laws and
31 regulations. This result is hardly surprising and is in fact shared with several
32 other studies such as Kennedy and Goodwin (2016) who found that teachers
33 rated themselves highly on dispositions tied to their professional ethics.
34 Teaching is an ethics-driven profession (Churchil, 1982). Klassen et al. (2018)
35 in their comparative study of the non-cognitive attributes of novice teachers in
36 four countries, including Oman noticed that professional ethics was a cluster
37 that emerged strongly in Oman's data and they believed that this result aligned
38 well with national educational policies and cultural values dominant in the
39 Omani context. This result reflects the importance of national values in the
40 Omani context and is also consistent with findings by previous Omani studies
41 (e.g., Al Barwani et al., 2012; Al-Ani, et al., 2018) who found that religion and
42 social norms play a vital role in shaping Omani educators' values and
43 dispositions.
44   Dispositions related to personality characteristics received the second
45 highest mean for both groups of participants, with politeness, kindness and
46 care, taking responsibility, confidence and having a positive attitude coming at

1 the top of the list. This is not surprising since previous research showed that
2 there is interconnection between professional values and personal
3 characteristics. An Oman-based national study conducted by Al Hashmi, Al
4 Rawahi, Ambu Saidi, Al Fahdi and Al Bulushi (2018) where the perceptions of
5 1054 grade 12 students on the characteristics of the Omani teachers revealed
6 that students believed Omani teachers had distinguishable personality traits,
7 among which were commitment to the job and having a positive attitude
8 towards teaching.

9 The third category of dispositions receiving a very high evaluation by
10 novice teachers and a high evaluation by school principals, assistants and
11 senior teachers was attitudes towards the job. It was revealed that overall,
12 novice teachers have positive attitudes in general represented among other
13 things, by feeling pride, enthusiasm and satisfaction with teaching as a
14 profession. This result is different from Issan et al's study (2011) which
15 showed that Omani teachers have negative attitudes towards the teaching
16 profession. Perhaps the focus of the present study on novice teachers was one
17 reason behind this difference in findings. Add to that, the category related to
18 attitudes investigated in the present study covered a number of elements such
19 as having knowledge of the teacher's duties and responsibilities, having
20 enthusiasm while participating in school activities and events, adopting new
21 ideas at school, and accepting additional work required by the school
22 administration.

23 Cooperation and leadership dispositions were assessed by novice teachers
24 as high, but not very high, with leadership dispositions receiving lower means.
25 This result coincides with Kennedy and Goodwin (2016) who also found that
26 dispositions related to cooperation and leadership were rated by novice
27 teachers to be high, yet lower than the other types of dispositions. In a
28 preliminary investigation of the present study (Al Seyabi, 2020), where
29 interviews were conducted with a number of school principals and assistant
30 principals, the interviewees reported that cooperation with others was one of
31 the least developed dispositions among novice teachers in their schools.
32 According to the interviewees, novice teachers tended to show more
33 individualism compared with the more experienced teachers, found it hard to
34 communicate with other teachers and with the school administration and lacked
35 the desire to participate in social gatherings at the school level and outside it.
36 Several other studies have also shown that novice teachers do not show strong
37 leadership skills and do not think of themselves as leaders (Gulbahar ,2017;
38 Morgan, 2019, Scales & Rogers, 2017).

39 Teacher leadership is a broad term that encompasses aspects both inside
40 and outside the classroom (Morgan, 2019). Although it might seem that only
41 the most experienced teachers can be good leaders, novice teachers can in fact
42 be leaders both in formal and informal ways (Gulbahar, 2017). Leadership is
43 connected to collaboration. When novice teachers are part of collaborative and
44 collegial interactions, they are engaged in teacher leadership (Bergren-Mann,
45 2016). Lane et al. (2003) describe how novice teachers can actually become
46 agents of change in the schools by engaging their guiding/cooperating teachers

1 in dialogue about how students learn and how best to facilitate their learning,
2 allowing them to confront and reconstruct their own beliefs and practices.
3 Scales and Rogers (2017) have also pointed to the role of school context as
4 well as perceptions of others in the school towards the creation of a leader
5 mindset among novice teachers. This can have implications on teacher
6 preparation programs. Cochran-Smith (1991) has stated that in most preservice
7 programs "the role of the teacher as an agent for change is not emphasized, and
8 students are not deliberately socialized into assuming responsibility for school
9 reform and renewal" (p.285). Instead, "student teachers are encouraged to talk
10 about 'relevant' and technical rather than critical or epistemological aspects of
11 teaching" (p.285).

12 Dispositions related to continuous and life-long learning came in the last
13 place and were evaluated as "high" rather than "very high" by both groups of
14 participants. Attempting to do action research as a tool of professional
15 development and lifelong learning scored the lowest mean. This result is
16 consistent with the findings of Al Ghattami and Al Hussaini (2014) in Oman
17 who found that a lot of teachers in public schools were not quite engaged in
18 reading research nor in doing research and attributed this to several variables
19 such as teachers' lack of knowledge and skills on action research and some
20 institutional factors such as work conditions, time constraints and logistics.
21 Lavrijsen and Nicaise (2017) in their cross-country study on obstacles affecting
22 attitudes towards lifelong learning identify three types of barriers: situational
23 barriers that arise from one's situation in life (such as family demands),
24 dispositional barriers (such as not having the desire to participate in lifelong
25 opportunities) and institutional barriers (such as high enrolment fees).
26 However, Lavrijsen and Nicaise argue that all barriers are to some extent
27 influenced by institutional arrangements. They further maintain that there is
28 "an interplay between individual choices and (the) broader context that limits
29 possible choices and makes participation less or more attractive, accessible,
30 and advantageous."

31
32
33 **Conclusion and Recommendations**
34
35 Omani teachers joining the teaching field seem to have high perceptions of
36 the dispositions they possess, as revealed by the findings of the study. This is a
37 strength that should be capitalized upon, first to promote persistence and
38 feelings of competence among them and second to help empower them as
39 change agents in their educational contexts. Support to novice teachers must be
40 made available to maintain these high dispositions, especially when
41 considering what the literature reports of the challenges that novice teachers
42 face and the need for more professional and moral support (Caspersen &
43 Raaen, 2014; Khalid & Husnin, 2019).
44 The findings of the study have implications for teacher preparation
45 programs. A more direct focus on dispositions is needed to be incorporated in
46 both curricular and extra-curricular activities so that teacher candidates become

1   more aware of their dispositions and their implications on both their
2   effectiveness as teachers and on their students' school success. It is
3   recommended that teacher education programs incorporate activities or topics
4   on interpersonal communication as part of the required curriculum in order to
5   develop more collaboration dispositions.

6   Similarly, induction programs organized for novice teachers at the
7   beginning of their careers should integrate more elements related to teachers'
8   dispositions, especially those related to independent and life-long learning so
9   that teachers develop this aspect. School administrations should also think of
10   ways to create contexts that are likely to facilitate the practice of leadership and
11   co-created leadership in schools (Wasonga, 2010) so that teachers have better
12   chances of promoting both collaboration and leadership dispositions.

13   Although the present study was not conducted for the sake of teacher
14   appraisal but for research purposes only, it would be interesting if future
15   studies link the results of teacher self-assessment with other tools used at
16   schools such as class observations and teacher evaluation forms so that a more
17   rounded picture is established, and in order to move toward a more
18   multifaceted vision of teaching that takes into account not only what the
19   teacher possesses in terms of skills and competencies but also values and
20   dispositions.

21   There are also several other recommendations for future research. The
22   present study was of pure quantitative nature. Future studies investigating
23   teacher dispositions can also adopt qualitative research methods so that deeper
24   insights into teacher dispositions are gained. A prolonged study that observes
25   and reports the development of teacher candidates' dispositions during the pre-
26   service programs and monitors both their progress and factors affecting them
27   after graduation might also add some important dimensions. Future research
28   can also attempt to see the relation between novice teachers' highly perceived
29   dispositions and teacher effectiveness, and more importantly the impact of this
30   on student learning.

31

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