FROM SCHOOL TO WORK VIA THE COLLEGES OF TECHNOLOGY IN OMAN:

HOW CAN THE PREPARATION FOR THIS TRANSITION BE STREAMLINED AT

IBRI CT WITH REFERENCE TO GLOBALISATION?

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Abstract: From school to work via the colleges of technology in Oman: how can the preparation for this transition be streamlined at Ibri CT with reference to globalisation?

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This study explores how tertiary education supports and prepares students to take up a career today. The research question is:

How can the preparation for the transition from school to work be streamlined at Ibri College of Technology with reference to globalisation?

Classroom-based practices were considered in this case study in Oman, to establish how the objectives of stakeholders can be met in pursuit of their goals, within the set curriculum and culture. The objectives were to:

- Interpret and evaluate the respondents' responses to the research-instruments appropriate to existing literature and current employer demands;
- explore perceptions of educational activities considering cultural diversity; and
- provide guidelines for streamlining the transition.

It is concluded from the didactic triangle that the better lecturers are prepared to comply with expectations of the students and curricula, the more positively learner achievement is impacted at college. Continuously updating the curricula embraces global occupational requirements as well as didactic goals. This theory applies equally to all the stakeholders and influences how students eventually manage modern workplace demands. Prioritising structured communication practices alongside EFL and technology as skills, support school to work transitions in tandem with the adolescents' progression towards adulthood.

The value of this study lies in its contribution to the body of knowledge on this complicated transition in Oman. The findings and conclusions assist instructors as well as their students whose transition from school to work can subsequently be streamlined. It also sustains economic and social occupational processes, in the Sultanate and globally, now and in the future.

KEY WORDS: transition; school-to-work; tertiary education; occupation; employment; culture; globalisation; youth; skills; Oman; curriculum; EFL; foundation programme

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the topic of this research, namely 'From school to work via the colleges of technology in Oman: how can the preparation for this transition be streamlined at Ibri CT with reference to globalisation?'

The colleges of technology in Oman aim to support their students' transition to employment. To assess this progress with reference to the worldwide occupational scene, the research question, **'How can the youth's preparation to transition from school to work be streamlined at Ibri College of Technology (CT) with reference to globalisation?'** is presented. This chapter provides a synopsis of the content and methods followed during the study, and justify the research. It identifies the stakeholders and deliberates their objectives regarding the transition. The chapter demonstrates how students and adults participated in the research by providing qualitative and quantitative input through completing different questionnaires and taking part in various interviews to triangulate the data. It illustrates the significance of this study linked with the current employment- and related training-, socio-economic and cultural setting in the country, alongside pressing global demands.

Chapter 1 confirms that the research is relevant. It outlines the theoretical framework that underpins the study and presents the chosen delimitations. It explains the terms and goals of the case study at Ibri CT, a tertiary institute in a developing country with specific parameters and unique contexts related to school to work transitions. This chapter moreover provides the definitions of terminology used to elucidate the increasing pressures associated with global demands on employment, which also affect the occupational situation of young Omanis.

1.1 Introduction to the study

Tertiary education can support its students effectively with preparation for the transition from school to work if it can deliver the skills and knowledge that professions currently demand. The challenge is to build on the potential released by the schools, while meeting the expectations of both the young workers and their future employers. Institutions such as Ibri CT will be momentous in the 21st century in the Sultanate of Oman once they can provide their clients with the exact expertise and qualities required by global job markets.

The study focuses on didactic and social relationships among the stakeholders interacting at Ibri CT. By law, the Ministry of Manpower in Oman determines the curricular activities this college has to provide to support the students as they progress towards the workplace. The didactic triangle models the interaction between students, lecturers and the curriculum. It illustrates that success with learning relies on the abilities and attitudes of all collaborators, which also applies to this college and culture. Besides the transition, the literature featured schools, classroom behaviour, adolescence, adulthood, employment and culture.

College curricula address the youth's occupational expectations in relation to the needs of the society. These expectations, which do not include for them to become labourers, are acutely impacted on by international economies and labour-markets. Globalisation and technological progress profusely affect job-related qualities such as expertise, location and job satisfaction by reducing the significance of distance as an obstacle for employers and employees alike. Founded on modern-day consumer demands, students can be supported in their occupational pursuit by sophisticated management skills, computer competency, English proficiency, as well as openness to learning and the development of adult attributes and attitudes.

The research question focuses on streamlining the preparation of students for the transition from school to work in Oman today. The study employs open-ended questionnaires, group discussions and unstructured interviews as overt social techniques with students and adults in its qualitative approach. It also embraces closed questionnaires and structured interviews as quantitative means to triangulate the data and support validity and reliability, and cross-check findings in the case study at Ibri CT. This study seeks to convey unprejudiced, balanced, open-ended analyses and interpretations to discover valid meaning and patterns of human behaviour and values (Bryman 2004; Henning 2004) related to the transition from school to work. It collected information on the educational and occupational expectations of students and the intentions of their lecturers of English as a foreign language (EFL), as well as their views on the curricula, in support of the research question. Differences are expected in the respective opinions of the adults and the youth, especially regarding their particular goals and roles at college.

1.2 Background to the research

Governments have to advance employment options supported by socially suitable training to meet 21st century occupational challenges (Cieslik & Pollock 2002:4, 6) in support of the youth as the emerging work-force. The literature confirms that the transition of the youth to work involves acquiring occupational skills and learning new codes of behaviour alongside adjusting to relationships with other workers and supervisors (Goodwin 2007:235; Goodwin & O'Connor 2005:204).

Traditional societies have limited access to knowledge due to their restricted lifetime pathways, but can draw on wider ranges of cognitive resources from other contributors (Eraut 2000), in this case, the EFL-lecturers. Education systems shape experiences and outcomes of the development tasks of the youth (Evans & Furlong 1997), and educators are crucial in sustaining and enhancing learner motivation (Atkinson 2000, Serban & Luan 2002). Careers become increasingly 'boundaryless' (Claes and Ruiz-Quintilla 1998:357). Schools, colleges and universities in the West moulded their courses into technically efficient systems (Lawy & Bloomer 2003), which support the establishment of partnerships between authorities and community groups (Cieslik & Pollock 2002) to deal with the new demands on societies and workforces. The youth's occupational and other aspirations must become more realistic, and in line with their expectations over time (Evans & Furlong 1997) while they are preparing to transition from childhood, since modern-day companies require intelligence, multiple knowledges, personal creativity, intuition, memory, technical know-how, quality, service and innovation of overseers to warrant maximum returns (Ashton & Sung 2002; Davenport & Prusak 1998; Richardson 2005). On entering the workplace young workers thus have to adapt to their environment in two ways. Firstly, they have to learn occupational behaviours and required job-skills, and secondly, attain suitable norms and conduct to blend into the 'adult community' (Goodwin 2007), also in Oman.

Oil exporting activities brought radical economic changes and instant wealth to the Middle East. In the mid-20th century, this prosperity also impacted on the Sultanate of Oman, an Arab desert country with a relatively small population, ingrained in the Muslim way of life. This government has since laboured to diversify its economy to ensure the state remains globally active and relevant when natural resources fall short. The colleges of technology are instrumental in preparing young Omanis, the potential future supervisory pool, to meet the

country's occupational needs. The aim is therefore to present sufficient, relevantly skilled employees to support the country's economic advancement.

The objective of the case study was to collect and study data from adults and students about the learning processes relevant to the transition of students to work in Oman which coincides with their training period at college. This route becomes meaningful when the goals and intentions of the students and lecturers align within the occupational and cultural constraints applicable at Ibri CT. The curriculum and how it is realised, thus has to accommodate the demands of the workplace against the backdrop of globalisation and in support of the transition from school to work.

1.2.1 The research question

Research questions guide the study, data collection, analysis and writing up of the evidence (Bryman 2004). Prompted by an incident on site, existing research and mounting globalisation, the question posed is: '**How can the youth's preparation for the transition from school to work be streamlined at Ibri CT with reference to globalisation?'** This question contends with how well this transition, a critical feature of adolescence is supported for students attending tertiary education institutions such as Ibri CT, to meet workplace demands in the global era.

1.2.2 Sub-questions

Additional questions were formulated to draw out the scope of the research question. They frame the research and its delimitations, and constitute the thesis:

1. How can the intensions of EFL-lecturers be aligned to the students' expectations of classroom activity to favour accomplishment at personal as well as at academic levels at Ibri CT?

2. How can cultural awareness benefit learning and teaching strategies at college?

3. To what extent are the learning programmes of the colleges of technology suitable to align the needs of the students in transition with the visions of lecturers who have to provide the skills, especially in the foundation phase?

4. How can the process to prepare the youth to become proficient workers be addressed in the Sultanate of Oman with reference to the changing demands of the global workplace.

The outcomes of this research produced guidelines for streamlining the students' preparation for transition from school to work, since the quality of training processes and learning efforts impact on various aspects of their passage to the global workplace.

1.2.3 Theoretical framework

This qualitative research project is based on an extended literature review, and aspires to be explanatory and interpretive. I consulted documentation on social, cultural, occupational and didactic developments, and the influence of curricula and technology on adolescents' pursuit of occupational skills to pursue the research problem.

The conceptual framework and methodologies used to expand the literature study in response to the research questions support the social and didactic ontological assumptions of the research and the case study (Bryman 2004; Denzin & Lincoln 2003). The research questions, methodologies and instruments used, convey the search for authenticity, which leans on the ethnographic, because a researcher should 'get right inside' cultural settings to generate knowledge and collect data (Mason 2006). The literature study as well as the data that were collected through different interviews and questionnaires with lecturers, students and others,

revolves around personal- and skills development and curricula. The perceptions and construal of the people at Ibri CT provided me with the input, the views and understanding to significantly deal with the research questions.

Societies determine the parameters for the specific education and skills offered, but universal equalising powers are formidable. Researchers and readers may interpret the terminology chosen for explaining the views and results of a study differently. The definitions of the terms culture, curriculum, globalisation, transition and streamlining are thus provided below to clarify and sustain the ontological position taken in this research.

1.2.3.1 Culture

Definitions by Geertz (1966), Kluckhohn (1951), LeVine (1984), Hofstede (1997) and Trompenaars (1993) show that culture refers to collective ways in language and values, and how they traditionally determine patterns of thought, self-expression, organisation of time, attitudes and religion, understood by members of a specific group, and shared in a particular way. These meanings transfer into how the group educates, manages and behaves socially. This 'mental programming' starts in the family, continues in the neighbourhood, school, workplace and community, and covers and links various spheres of life. Culture is the social engagement of individuals in similar ways. This cohesion in various areas results in distinguished factions at different social levels and times, such as Western, Islamic or Omani.

1.2.3.2 Curriculum

A curriculum is a plan for educational action which includes strategies for achieving the desired goals of societies. Curricula outline the learning content, activities and experiences a learner encounters when participating in a given education system. This includes formal

knowledge and tacit messages transmitted through interactions, and inculcate particular values, attitudes and dispositions.

1.2.3.3 Globalisation

Globalisation refers to increasing integration and interdependence of the world's markets to maximise profits and of societies to enable comforts, fuelled by technological headway:

> Globalisation is the expansion and intensification of linkages and flows of capital, people, goods, ideas, and cultures across national borders, caused by four interrelated factors: new international divisions of labour, internalisation of finances, new technology systems and the homogenisation of international consumer markets in the past quarter century.
>
> (Knox & Marston 2007:72)

Globalisation exposes, but also subjects, everyone to the impact of international economic and social demands and changes (Gibson et al 2000). It influences how companies are managed and workers selected, ruthlessly impacting, both positively and negatively, on the youth's occupational prospects. Learning to contend with the demands of globalisation is thus integral to the core curricula of training programmes for students.

1.2.3.4 Transition

A transition is the mental and emotional processes aiming to move people through stages to change their focus and end in a transformation, navigating them to a position where it is possible to engage in matters of a different status (Bridges 2003). Every person makes life-transitions, but insights related to the transfer of young people from secondary education to the occupational phase by attending a tertiary establishment is relevant in this study.

1.2.3.5 Streamlining

Streamlining refers to flowing, modernised designing to decrease friction, so secure new techniques are applied and old approaches simplified to reach perfection. Superfluous and

nonessential activities are omitted to increase efficiency. Streamlining is attained in this context when learning outcomes develop into the combined sincere focus and aim of the curriculum, students and EFL-lecturers. Streamlining the preparation of students to transition from school to work means every stakeholder's interest in the process is met sufficiently enough to allow appropriately skilled and rounded adults to emanate.

1.3 Justification for the research

This research is essential in view of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said's objectives for the Omani government to enable its nationals to assist the country to stay economically relevant. The Sultan stated at the Vision 2020 Conference:

> Development is not a goal in itself. Rather, it exists for building man, who is its means and producer. Therefore, development must not stop at the achievement of a diversified economy. It must go beyond that and contribute to the formation of the citizen who is capable of taking part in the process of progress and comprehensive development.
>
> (Times of Oman: June 4, 1995)

This dual vision recognises that Oman should remain economically relevant while supporting the nation through continuous development of the people.

Colleges like Ibri CT help realise these economic and social targets by preparing the attending youth for the radical break away from the accustomed state of affairs associated with school. According to Pillay et al (2003), young people are new to the global workplace and adult social and employment prospects, but are expected to have transformed and to immediately demonstrate appropriate skills and expertise when joining the global workforce.

This case study embraces the Omani youth's intersection with tertiary education en route to adulthood, and explores ways to assist them in this transition. The curriculum and its aims, as well as the teaching staff at Ibri CT, influence the development and employability prospects of the students, the future supervisory stock, attending this college. This research suggests that modified didactic and employment-related guidance are vital to sustain social and economic gains in Oman. The conclusions could be regarded as guidelines which are also applicable to the other tertiary institutions in Oman, the Middle East and developing countries who aim to support the youth for transitioning to work.

The transition from school to work is an appropriate field of study for a doctorate in Social Sciences for someone working in a tertiary institution such as Ibri CT. This current issue fits my background in education and embraces my social involvement with the Middle East. The thesis contributes to discourses on the school-to-work transition of the youth by exploring the experiences and relations of these stakeholders in times of globalisation, and with the aim to streamline their preparation for this transition.

1.4 Outline of the study

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study. It explains the motivation for the research and the reasoning that resulted in choosing this field. **Chapter 2** covers the literature study. It deals with the Omani education system, the situation at Ibri CT, and the position of the stakeholders. It furthermore contends with the transition and the youth's future employment prospects against global demands. **Chapter 3** explains the methodologies supporting the research questions. It highlights the theory underpinning the research, and explains the

research methods used. This chapter holds details about the selection of participants, the pilot study, data analysis, validity and ethical considerations. **Chapter 4** contains a synopsis of the information derived from participants. **Chapter 5** covers the results of the analysis and the research outcomes. It presents the guidelines aiming to help policy makers, administrators and lecturers streamline the students' preparation for transition from school to work with reference to globalisation. The conclusions reached and the implications of the study are provided in **chapter 6** which also summarises the research and presents the main findings as well as suggestions for further inquiry in this area.

1.5 Delimitations of scope

These days the passage from school to work coupled with the developmental change from childhood to adulthood involve a central transition. This transition is supported at Ibri CT, one of seven similar tertiary institutions in Oman, where a case study was undertaken:

> ... (C)olleges have the same course content, textbooks, assessment system, etc. In addition, the students share some background characteristics. So, each of the colleges can represent the others in terms of philosophy, objectives, need, content, students and teachers.
>
> (Al-Husseini 2004:122).

The study focuses on streamlining the transition to work to empower the young Omanis to perform in the global world of work. The existences of institutions such as Ibri CT, to which I have access, and where I observed social and didactic interaction between the stakeholders of the English Language Centre (ELC), are not disputed by this study.

Ministerial administrative personnel were not included in the research since they do not explicitly impact on the transition. Other interesting elements which are not fundamental to

the streamlining of the transition, such as gender, religion, learning styles and EFL were intentionally not included as topics.

1.6 Conclusion

Chapter 1 provides the groundwork and sets out the research problem and the resulting issues. The theoretical framework, justification for and limitations of the study, and the outline of the thesis, were provided.

The following chapter includes the literature review which highlights the scientific approach and fundamental perspectives of the study, and the way the education system functions in the Sultanate of Oman. It focuses on how the colleges of technology support the youth's personal development to eventually make the transition, and to progress to adulthood and the associated task of finding appropriate jobs in today's world.

Chapter 2: The transition of the youth to work in Ibri College of Technology (CT) from a cultural perspective

Chapter 2 provides the fundamental literature in support of this study to institute an understanding of the scientific approach and the perspectives followed in the study of the school to work transition in the Sultanate of Oman today.

This chapter clarifies the unique situation in the Sultanate in view of the current pressures of globalisation, and similar transitions elsewhere. The effectiveness of preparing the youth to enter the world of work is an essential part of their successful fusion into the global job market, a personal accomplishment which impacts on the country's socio-economic future.

Chapter 2 explains the position of the stakeholders and describes the venue of the specific educational and cultural reality within which the transitions to work occur for a large section of the Omani youth. The role of the colleges of technology in supporting the personal and academic development of the youth to transition, progress towards adulthood, and finding a job these days, is explained, featuring the situation at Ibri CT, as well as the youth's future employment prospects and the demands of globalisation. The second part of the chapter deals with the process of transitioning to a job and the labour market in this country. The third section considers the case study at Ibri CT and the challenges connected to the courses offered by the colleges of technology in Oman.

2.1 Introduction

The transition from school and the effects of globalisation on employment and culture are of interest to various academic disciplines. This study acknowledges debates in education, economics, anthropology, psychology and sociology on this transition in youth, occupational, cultural and global research. These discussions provide the focus for this research, moreover since a study on the youth's transition to work in the Sultanate of Oman with specific reference to global threats could not be found.

The literature review covers analyses of the prospects of students, curricula and lecturers as partners in the didactic situation in response to occupational demands and globalisation. It features the challenges in streamlining the transition which sanctions the integration of the youth with the world of work through learning and social development in support of the central argument.

The empirical contributions show societies underpin the youth's transit from school to work, connecting instruction with livelihood. Didactic achievement enables employability, but personal traits such as determination, attitude, motivation and behaviour also need to be developed (Layder et al 1991). School to work transitions clearly illustrate

> (o)ne's mental programming starts within the family; continues within the neighbourhood, at school, in youth groups, at the work place and in the living community.
>
> (Hofstede 1997:4)

Our 'mental programming' develops through educational choices and social behaviour consistent with a specific cultural group through birth. It continues in tertiary education where applicable curricula and suitable instructors enable didactic progress and guide young adults towards occupational and adult conduct.

> The transition to work involves much more than simply acquiring the skills to do the job. Young workers have to learn to behave completely differently … regulate their own behaviours, adopt the behaviours around them, develop the foresight required to 'keep time'. They learn occupational behaviours and skills required to do the job, as well as the behaviours appropriate to being an adult.
>
> (Goodwin 2007:235)

The second strand investigated in response to the research question, concerns industry. Global demands complicate the modern workplace as well as the youth's task of acquiring an occupation. Limited life-experience and lacking direction about the extent of the transition further restrain the youth's capabilities related to gaining work-related behaviour.

The transition from education to employment is an extension of the youth's life course which starts with the end of the school phase. School to work transitions became complex, fragmented and individualised processes, dependent on the negotiating abilities of young people due to global pressures, in comparison to those of previous generations (Elias 1961; Goodwin & O' Connor 2005). Today's youth are expected to 'renegotiate and reconstitute a range of individual-community relationships' in unfamiliar positions, dissimilar to their culture, abilities, opportunities and people (Lawy & Bloomer 2003; Layder et al 1991). Tertiary education deals with occupational integration, alongside personal development, to help counter contradictions and tension in the global workplace.

2.2 Tertiary education and its stakeholders

Higher education supports the youth in realising their ideals and establishing an adult way of life in preparation for entering the labour market. It does this by ensuring that relevant knowledge and skills are transferred to students. The purpose of tertiary instruction is

academic achievement, congruent with the vision and objectives of the institution and society, since the local way of thinking and approach to life are repeated in the community, in education, management and in the way cultures behave socially (Geertz 1966, Kluckhohn 1951, LeVine 1984, Hofstede 1997, Trompenaars 1993). To remain appropriate, instruction should be founded in society, whilst embracing projected future social skills and demands. Culture counteracts some of the demands created by globalisation, so it operates as a social stabiliser, since cultural and identity-related issues emerge as the youth develop individual lifestyles during this transition where the 'local and the global' meet (Cieslik & Pollock 2002; Eraut 2004). This study on the preparation to transition from school to work embraced cultural influence in tertiary education, since Elias (1962) insisted that issues concerning the youth suggest problems with the 'specific social position into which young people are thrust while they are growing up', and Fincher (1988) warned that traditional academic visions will no longer meet societal needs in the 21st century.

Societies are now confronted by modernisation in communication technology, employment, information, families and communities. To take up such challenges requires transformation in training and employment policies and partnerships, which impact on tertiary education. Although education and occupational establishments are driven by different forces (Much 1999), some institutions in the West managed to reach consensus, industrialise and mould courses into more efficient systems to meet new occupational demands (Cieslik & Pollock 2002; Lawy & Bloomer 2003). This is necessary because the youth need skills and qualities matching the requirements of the corporate world in the 21st century. Eraut (2004) found that these challenges get ignored in education and commercial areas. Relevant knowledge and skills to fit the new situation are not necessarily transferred, nor is information consistently integrated to support the new workers' thinking, performing and communication. Didactic

structures react sluggishly to changing consumer demands, rather than to shape the social tasks of the developing youth (Evans & Furlong 1997). Industry accuses education systems of using outdated curricula since recruits do not meet expectations of 'ready to use understanding of the new work situation'. Instruction must be embedded in occupational organisation and production processes, and shared by government and the private sector. But learning is no longer clear or contained within classrooms, ready for transfer to the workplace (Ashton & Sung 2002). Fine-tuning curricula can however engender well-balanced students with adequate training and social awareness to deal with future global workplace needs.

Globalisation is driven by escalating capitalism, a force insisting on high profits, following from enhanced contemporary social and physical interconnectivity (Knox & Marston 2007). Consumer behaviour compels rapid industrial change to meet new market demands, because time and money became the ultimate business incentive:

> ...firms are complex social organisations whose structure and activities reflect the diverse conceptions and values of their owners and/ or managers as well as other employees. They consider competitive pressures to be so strong that efficient forms of business organisation and 'rational' strategic choices quickly dominate market economies irrespective of cultural and institutional variations.
>
> (Whitley 1992:3)

Holden (2001) emphasises that global structures can establish trust between cross-cultural partners and join projects, processes and partners, challenging us about 'how', rather than 'what' to learn from each other these days.

Serban and Luan (2002) regard the relationship between faculty and students as the most important relationship in higher education. However, Evans and Furlong (1997) promote a holistic approach which includes the total social and educational network. The components identified in the didactic triangle (figure 1) according to the model of Herbart (Kansanen & Meri 1999), depict the interdependence of the educational partners in terms of its three sides.

Figure 1: The fundamental didactic structure according to Herbart

Curriculum

Teacher   Learner
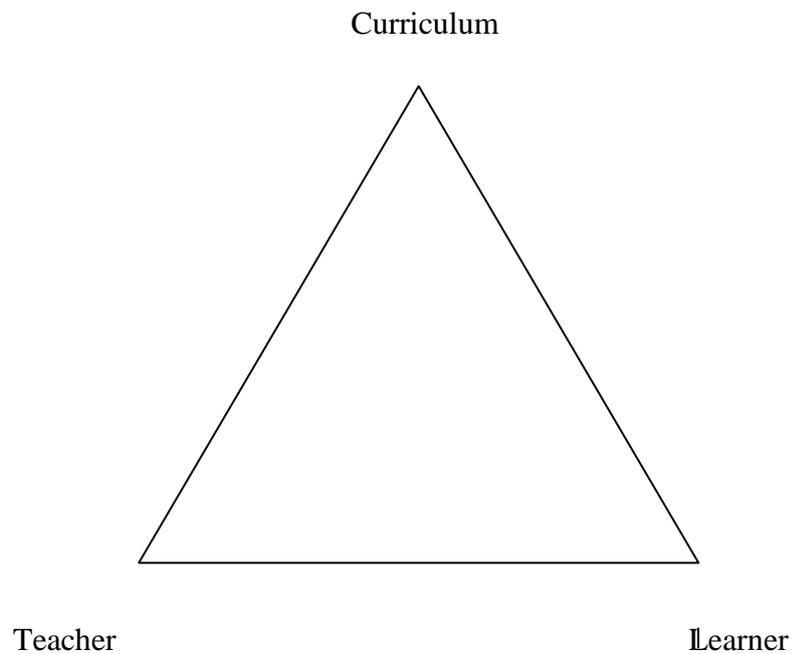
The didactic triangle illustrates that the better the lecturers comply with the expectations of the students, alongside the learning objectives stated in the curriculum; the more positive the impact on learner achievement. Simultaneously, the more applicable the curriculum, the easier it becomes for lecturers and students of English as a foreign language (EFL) to meet curricular expectations. Stakeholder-relationships impact on how the set goals are achieved. Better interaction result in more satisfactory proportions of accomplishment for everyone, and settles how the youth cope with the demands of the workplace.

The didactic triangle refers to the specific cultural context as modified in figure 2.

Figure 2: The influence of culture on stakeholders in the didactic triangle

Learning matter

Culture   **Culture**

Culture

Teacher   Learner
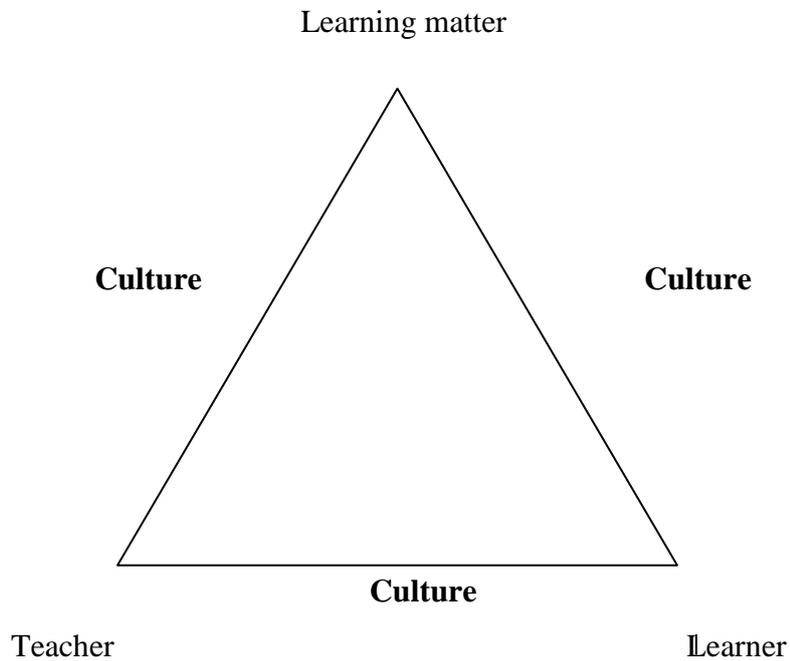
2.2.1 The students

Maturing is a complicated process for every adolescent. This age-associated social task includes to develop an own identity amid the turbulence, anxiety and doubt typical of their life-stage. Goodwin (2007) reports that young workers realise changes during transition, admitting they begin to show more mature behaviour, and learn from adults. Tertiary education supports this maturing process which coincides with the transition to work, if learning programmes and methodologies match their socio-cultural needs.

2.2.1.1 Student learning

Cultural value systems determine behaviour through families and schools. Adolescents learn consistent with their unique needs and culture, but a positive self-concept and motivation

impact on learning. Students detach from childhood ways and cultivate socially expected, work-related adult behaviour as an ongoing process.

> At some point in their unfolding careers young people may make some connection between their experiences and understanding in support of their future, as a development task, as they transform into their adult identities and roles.
>
> (Lawy 2000:601)

Students take on board what they need or understand, so independent learning develops.

> Learning results in the desire to change due to discomfort with the current state. However, change provokes anxiety, defensiveness, fear and retrenchment as much as it excites, stimulates, motivates and empowers members.
>
> (Vince 2001:1347)

Tertiary education is a worthy choice for every young person. Families and schools provide initial basic numeracy, literacy and computer proficiency as a foundation for future skills development (Ashton & Sung 2002), but Lawy (2000) warns planners to propose courses that meet present-day needs of the youth. A smooth transition to work requires competencies and skills necessary for young workers to survive and surpass in the global occupational world.

Tertiary education prepares adolescents to confidently take increasing responsibility for their socialisation and engagement with the adult world. Young people in transition are defined in terms of what they no longer are and what they nearly are: neither children nor adults (Goodwin 2007). This transition denotes a period of trial and error. Students' confidence needs augmenting beyond academic skills acquisition to enable them to manage the conflict, anger and mistrust met in global workplaces. Supporting the youth to deal with randomness facilitate their progression towards adulthood and eventually filling a job. Social interactions at college help them become independently skilled people with self-esteem and behavioural standards. Evans and Furlong (1997) explain that adolescents may compromise individuality to conform socially, since they need to feel valued by their peers and others. Adolescents are easily bored, embarrassed and overwhelmed (Richardson 2005). Strategies at tertiary

institutions should therefore deal with the youth's personal development, such as handling frustration, criticism and miscommunication during study programmes, emphatically linking education with occupation for students.

Learning develops with maturation. Young people's perceptions of their opportunities, uncertainties and risks are reconfigured by social, economic and political change (Lawy & Bloomer 2003). Those who underestimate their own abilities have difficulties to wed the demands of academic institutions with their insecure perceptions of intellectual inadequacies. Students initially regard information as right or wrong, justified by authorities, but later learn to reason independently. They begin to understand that knowledge is relative, grasp that one viewpoint is as good as another, and then grasp that information is correct, relative to context. Authorities are thereupon accepted as a source of guidance and support (Youn 2000).

The students' communication skills need to develop too. Communication is a vital tool to reduce misunderstanding and hostility among people when cultural perspectives emerge and opinions connect. Increased cultural contact in the global workplace demands that colleagues can read, write and communicate messages clearly.

2.2.1.2 The students and culture

Culture is at the root of every community and impacts on students and lecturers, curricula, and subsequently on teaching, learning and professional grounding at college level. Culture includes the assumptions and beliefs community members share about how the world works. These different ideas influence the way people think, manage and behave (Jeanquart-Barone & Peluchette 1999). Each culture has specific ideas about managing life and a career, but self- and social awareness, knowledge, application and understanding, self-development,

changing as a person, and learning as a life-long process are shared traits (Goleman 1995; Venter 2003a). This means students and EFL-lecturers can view programmes differently in multi-cultural environments.

Foreign teachers of EFL must be aware of different approaches prevalent in different cultures. They should be aware of power distance in classrooms (Vince 2001). People from collectivist countries follow a teacher-centred approach. For example, in India and Russia, workers fear to disagree with their bosses, who depress individual initiative. Learners 'learn how to do' under close supervision. Challenging a teacher is taken as disloyalty or reluctance to learn. Students do not want to lose face. Traditional ways and beliefs are supported to avoid uncertainty. Certificates are valued over competence. In countries with small power distance for example Britain; students are relatively secure about the future and comfortable with risk and change. Flexibility, open-mindedness and critical or independent thinking, associated with sophisticated believers, are valued. Teachers allow students to challenge, contradict and criticise them, to 'learn how to learn' (Hofstede 2001; Rodriques et al 2000; Youn 2000). Lecturers from these cultures working in developing countries can therefore not teach in ways they would in their home-countries, and expect similar results.

National culture influences the careers of individuals at macro-societal level, but modern careers unfold across national boundaries (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998). Attitude towards learning is culturally embedded. Naïve learning beliefs in collectivist cultures hinder critical aspects of learning such as reading comprehension, problem solving, understanding and coping with tasks, while sophisticated beliefs found in an individualist approach facilitate higher-level learning and thinking because it supports active, independent and open-minded learning (Rodriques & Min 2000; Youn 2000).

Cultural differences include that individualist employers in global worksites accordingly value employment consistent with global skills and coupled monetary significance. For example, Middle Eastern delegates regard American negotiators as nonprofessional, arrogant and impolite (Gibson et al 2000). Arab students perceive processes differently than their counterparts in the West (Chhokar 2001; Youn 2000), so students feel uncomfortable giving feedback on instructors' performance since they do not judge teachers (Al-Issa & Sulieman 2007). In Japan peer review and criticism are rarely used since they are considered as rude (Nisbett 2003). Religion forms part of how people behave at work in Hong Kong, whereas in Britain, it merely fills a part of social life and is kept out of areas such as work. Chinese traditionally believe an educated, civilised person can memorise the classics word for word as a way of showing respect (Chan 1999), and comparably, Muslims are expected to memorise Islamic religious scriptures at school. In the West plagiarism is regarded as a transgression, so copying poses problems for visiting Chinese and Muslim students.

EFL-lecturers are mature and experienced stakeholders who should find common elements to bridge, rather than focus on differences causing issues. Appreciating cultural variations in learning and being inclusive in teaching supports the students' transition to work.

2.2.1.3 Student identity development

The way in which students deal with tertiary studies reflects on their progress with the transition despite unfamiliar values they encounter. Values are affective desires that guide how people behave, organise, select, learn and judge; and help to shape knowledge. Values exist in the social context in which they develop as part of the maturation process, through exposure to national culture, society, family and work groups are (Gamble & Gibson 1999;

Gibson et al 2000). Students tend to relate knowledge to the perceptions they have derived

from their cultural values:

> People's values and beliefs influence their thoughts, actions, and what is seen and concluded. Their semi-conscious socialisation processes are formed through these values, norms, perspectives and interpretations of events, and by their conscious learning from and with others, as they engage in cooperative and challenging work or tasks.
>
> (Eraut 2004:254)

At college, learners consciously engage and interact quite closely, also with those from other

cultures, so they learn, and agree or disagree in different ways.

As new recruits, the youth encounter culturally diverse approaches at work which impact on

their behaviour and attitudes, and may leave them disillusioned. Cross-cultural collaborative

learning challenges mixed team partners and are central to work and knowledge management

in the Knowledge Era (Holden 2001). Managers form teams to ensure flexibility and quality,

and increase productivity and customer satisfaction for particular projects. People have to

work together to complete tasks despite diversity in age, gender, orientation, ethnicity and

race (Gibson et al 2000). This can cause disenchantment. The youth thus need to learn the

importance of their teams' successes, regardless of cultural or personal preferences.

Students connect learning experiences and understanding as a development task in support of

their occupational future as they transform and to gain adult identities and roles. Values,

beliefs, information and logic guide maturation through exposure to culture, society, family

and work groups as the youth observe, organise, conclude and learn. College education

influenced by national value systems determines student beliefs about the nature of learning

and self-construal, and therefore, future proactive behaviour. Sophistic learning beliefs are

associated with independent reasoning skills, decision making and problem identification,

and shape reading comprehension, mathematical problem solving, conceptual understanding

and coping with ill-structured tasks, while naïve beliefs hinder critical aspects of learning. Participating in cross-cultural teams, the issue should not be what, but how to learn from and with others (Gamble & Gibson 1999; Lawy 2000; Youn 2000).

Students have to extend their roles and responsibilities as they form own identities in their socio-cultural context. The process includes preparation for and choices related to starting a career, independence, marriage and parenthood. They start shaping their abilities, strengths and limitations at college, amid limited personal pressure and responsibility. Less desirable outcomes represent a learning-curve rather than cause serious emotional, economic or social effects in the teens, so blundering on this route towards independence is tolerated.

2.2.2 The curriculum

Education prepares learners to eventually cope with adult life. Curricula are strategic plans integrating physical resources, work- and extra-mural programmes and assessment, based on the community's educational goals in keeping with societal demands. Learning programmes are thus intentionally selected to include knowledge, values and attitudes in classrooms:

> Formal education structures will need a swift response if opportunity is not to be wasted. Teachers are fundamental to all this. They are skilled at observing their students' capability and at progressing it. They are creative and imaginative but the curriculum must give them the space and opportunity to explore the new potential for learning that technology offers. Structures like external assessment and curriculum frameworks must allow them the freedom to continue to be good teachers in the face of changing technology and changing students.
>
> (Heppell 1994:30)

Curricula should hold talents and interests, expand abilities, emphasise strengths and excite rather than punish learners (Richardson 2005). At tertiary level, they should be broad and resilient, embrace academic subject matter, and deal with life skills, to provide each student with opportunities to develop into an active, responsible, fulfilled citizen (Lawy & Bloomer

2003). The curriculum unlocks the way to adulthood by securing learners' former knowledge with their visions of the future.

2.2.2.1 Curricula and learning

Curricula are scientific, cultural-based programmes of work compiled by knowledgeable people from the community. They result in different learning matter for various 'subjects' and have to satisfy both the visions of teachers and the expectations of the learners.

As globalisation impact economies, education systems have to be modernised to embrace marketable skills and knowledge and support learners on life's journey, because societies' values and needs change. Curricula encourage skills development and afford learners the opportunity to gain life experience (Eraut 2000). However, the world insists upon tightly prescribed learning outcomes, disregarding the dependency of learning upon the life course, while what children learn to like, how they learn to feel, face difficulties and tackle problems are more important than what they get to know at school (Alexander 1999; Lawy & Bloomer 2003). Also, Liang and Johnson (1999) share the view of Dewey (1897), who, then, wanted educators to keep up with technological changes. Dewey did not picture technology-driven curricula, but recognised technological skill as curricular objective. Higher education should ideally use scientifically developed curricula to manage teaching- and supporting activities.

The rapid economic and social changes in the world transformed traditional perceptions of teaching and learning. According to researchers like Richardson:

> It is important for us to understand the world we are living in today, for the kind of education system that is needed depends on our understanding this. In the pre-industrial age, the economy was labour-intensive. During the industrial era the economy was capital-intensive. In today's global economy the most successful economies are knowledge-intensive.
>
> (Richardson 2005:189)

Curricula must present opportunities for interaction with aspects of the reality the youth will encounter in the work environment. They thus need to be monitored and updated to meet global requirements. Researchers, educators and the community have to combine forces to prioritise education, develop curricula that are acceptable to all stakeholders, and allow students to respond with flexibility and adventurous curiosity to their complex, changing reality (Youn 2000). New workers need interpersonal skills including risk taking, problem solving, dealing with authority, discussions and listening, objectivity, giving the benefit of the doubt, recognising the interests and achievement of others, and learning how to present work for assessment and meeting deadlines. Students who get to debate, outline, rehearse, discuss, question and express their ideas in class develop linguistic confidence corresponding to the demands of the complex global workplace (Eraut 2004; Richardson 2005).

Higher education and the workplace should engage, converse and transform equally, to permit aspiring workers to think, act and communicate in line with the demands of future occupational visions. However, tension between the requirements of global employers and the skills and qualifications provided by training bodies mounts because current learning does not match changing demands. Newly trained workers thus get trapped and frustrated while authorities treasure and implement their specific perceptions of knowledge and skills-related outcomes (Eraut 2000; Gibson et al 2000). Critical curricula support well-informed and accommodating societies to prepare students for the transition to work.

2.2.2.2 Curricula and culture

Curricula are grounded in the local culture, the determiner of boundaries for activities and performance. Colleges need to provide young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for living a productive and fulfilled life.

> Learner conformity to tightly prescribed learning opportunities and outcomes reflect little or no understanding of the dependency of learning upon the life course. As such, these beliefs become a major obstacle to the achievement of both vocational education and lifelong learning.
>
> (Lawy & Bloomer 2003:40)

Familiarity with other cultures helps learners to establish and understand boundaries, and is acquired informally and unnoticed through participation in social activities (Hofstede 1997). Adults, whether leaders or facilitators, influence the way the youth form their identity:

> …What students need in developing their own identities, is contact with a variety of adults who are willing to invite them into their adulthood.
>
> (Wenger 1998:277)

Semi-conscious socialisations based on norms and values of relatives or acquaintances that assist the development of young people's socialising are remembered. They impact on the interpretations of events and help to shape the youth's perspectives and perceptions of the shared system (Goodwin 2007). Teachers share in this privilege, but need to purposefully communicate their expectations.

Learning is universal, but learning style is culturally reinforced through the focus of child-rearing practices and education systems (Rodriques et al 2000). Every learner has to find their own approach to learning through employing strategies they elected, to attain success:

> Learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information ... to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations.
>
> (Oxford 1990:8)

Life is about analysing facts to identify problems and opportunities, find alternatives, and make the necessary decisions before making choices for improved quality of life (Gibson et al 2000). Focusing on critical thinking, study skills, and problem solving, replaces unrealistic student behaviour and outdated extrinsic values with intrinsic rewards and enables informed decision making where individual responsibility tops 'achievement at all cost'.

2.2.2.3 Curricula and employability

College curricula feature potential employability. However, Elias found that young people are not well-prepared and experience astonishment and anxiety rather than a smooth transition when they enter the adult world and the workplace (Goodwin 2007). Fifty years ago, transitioning simply meant boys had to obtain 'a good general education' because they were expected to 'take jobs, while girls took husbands', but times changed.

Globalisation complicates life and employment. Unlike unskilled labourers who generally are exploited (Chan 2003), other global workers are expected to produce excellent results, even in foreign and threatening guest-cultures, or face replacement. However, adults' behaviour and attitudes at work may differ greatly from those the youth are familiar with:

> Because of the separation of adults and young people, before entering work, adolescents have a highly selective and unrealistic perception of the adult world and of their life in it. Second ... the 'social reality' to which the youngsters have to get used is unsatisfactory and '… the gap between the adult reality (and life) as it turns out to be is very great indeed'.
>
> (Elias 1962:1)

To suddenly be part of, and deal with tough problems in adult ways, add to their insecurity and have the youth give up on jobs they can actually manage (Goodwin 2007). Training curricula thus need to allow the attainment of diverse skills as well as an appreciation of cross-cultural differences for workers to penetrate the global labour pool from where business and industry recruit future employees (Barker 2004).

Global work teams take their own production decisions. Ably educated workers grasp the requirements of and contend with changed job definitions including terminology such as flexi-time, job-sharing, retraining, redundancy, problem solving and coping skills (Eraut 2004; Al-Husseini 2004). Emotional intelligence together with self-awareness and self-management (achievement orientation, conscientiousness, adaptability, initiative, strong work

ethic, trustworthiness and self-control), social awareness (empathy and service) and social skills (leadership, communication, conflict management and teamwork), govern occupational and management performance (Bar-on & Parker 2000). Institutions and employers must collaborate to ensure that curricula meet employer expectations of relevant, flexible, multi-faceted, competency-based training that focus on developing social skills and work attitudes. Values such as conscientiousness, extraversion and the need for achievement and involvement, are predictors of job performance which are often seized in cultures (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998; Velde & Cooper 2000), so they need to be emphasised in modern-day curricula. Higher education must provide skills in peer-collaboration, the realisation that learning is a lifelong process aimed at changing the person, and support for the students' language, history, culture and identity (Pillay et al 2003; Richardson 2005). The information technology evolution furthermore requires of workers to pursue personal technology skills development to keep up with job demands and allow career-progress (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998). Students need to control technological tools and practices in courses since global communication hinges on technology. Institutions that include these elements in their courses facilitate the streamlining of the transition from school to work today.

Integrated formal and informal teaching and learning should provide each learner with opportunities to produce and practise knowledge. The advance of diverse occupational- and interpersonal behaviour is as important as the focus on emotional intelligence and social skills development to gain life experience rising towards adulthood. Teachers can explore learning potential and opportunities so their students can also 'respond with flexibility and curiosity', if curricula focus on global skills and respect for cross-cultural differences (Gibson et al 2000; Venter 2002; Youn 2000). Updating curricula to include global occupational demands facilitates EFL-lecturers from different cultures to empower the youth in transition.

2.2.3 The lecturers

Lecturers in tertiary education depend on appropriate curricula to guide them in preparing the students to also be successful in the workplace and adulthood (Barker 2004). Fresh approaches to workplace-related skills and proficiencies resulted in educational change. It has thus become as important to recruit expert teachers as employing appropriate curricula to ensure students of tangible immersion into the global job market.

2.2.3.1 EFL-lecturers as instructors

Lecturers plan educational events and processes to inspire young people to gain the best skills and knowledge in English as a foreign language (EFL) for securing jobs in the global world. However, cultural differences influence participation in teaching and learning activities.

First-time EFL lecturers in the Middle East may find this educational setting a challenge. Personal views influence attitudes towards and assessment of tasks, and students' academic progress. It is risky to assume that cultures are similar when employing foreign lecturers for colleges, but there are no scientific standards for considering cultural groups as superior or inferior to another (Hofstede 1997). Staffing policies which embrace the blending of ages, nationalities, and personal and academic attributes and approaches to education, acquaint students with different working-, management- and lifestyles, to get ready for the workplace.

Easterby-Smith (1997) reports Lillrank, who found that direct transfers of ideas and methods rarely succeed due to national and cultural differences in organisations. If a curriculum is imported and the content slightly adapted, practices can be intrinsically flawed because learning programmes are not grounded in the culture of the guest country. Approaches and

assessment lack efficiency due to different learning preferences. Learners from the West, for example, learn through discovery and exploration, while those from developing countries expect teachers to lead. Such dissimilar pedagogical and cultural orientations frustrate trainers as well as low performers repeating the programme that did not teach them properly in the first place (Rodriques et al 2000).

2.2.3.2 EFL-lecturers as role models

EFL-lecturers exemplify acceptable behaviour in the world of work to students. Lecturers become role models when students notice and imitate aspects of their conduct, either consciously or sub-consciously. Teacher behaviour can sustain, enhance or decrease learner motivation and affect, even disable education (Atkinson 2000). EFL-lecturers who treat students as mature, autonomous learners and expect professional teacher-student- and student-student-relationships, encourage and motivate them to take responsibility for their learning and occupational future through their approach to teaching, learning and life.

Lecturers demonstrating that they believe in the students' potential, support the development of confidence in the learning culture of the institution. Learners need maximum opportunity to learn and experience high expectations to achieve, develop a sense of belonging, express pride in the school, and identify with its objectives (Nielsen 1992). Caring lecturers assist students who only study when forced or monitored, to grasp their own abilities, since they understand that people learn best in environments where they feel understood, respected, valued and accepted. They acknowledge students and their opinions and feelings, but clearly communicate that full cooperation is expected, focusing on the professional task in hand.

2.2.3.3 EFL-lecturers and classroom management

Classroom management includes a complex set of behaviours that individual teachers use to establish and maintain classroom conditions which encourage student learning. Individual learner outcomes as well as skills transfers are affected by the school culture, but teachers and policy makers are the final determiners of learning opportunities (King & Newman 2001; Richardson 2005).

Adolescents do not yet have a realistic vision of the future (Richardson 2005). Their learning becomes focused in classrooms, also at college, when symbols carry similar values, but guest lecturers of EFL may feel frustrated with miscommunication in education, due to differences in interpreting the shared language, actions and symbols of the host country:

> (s)ymbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognised by those who share the culture. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear.
>
> (Hofstede 1997:7)

Opinions about how an academic institution should look and function may differ, but students do not want to learn from lecturers they dislike (Richardson 2005). Foreign lecturers cannot insist on changing social practices. They have to adjust to the new culture and its symbols, until new representations are established, as groups develop and get to share ideas. This progression lessens frustrations, but new issues may arise.

The methodologies used at colleges need to support and motivate lecturers and students academically rather than advance confrontations between people, groups and nations who think, feel and act differently (Hofstede 1997). Parents and teachers tend to treat adolescents in an inconsistent manner. At times they are given tasks suiting children, and next they get adult responsibilities. This demeanour adds to the youth's confusion, brought on by the rapid mental and physical development characteristic of this phase. If lecturers uphold these

discrepancies, adolescents will continue to suffer from low expectations and motivation they experienced at school as they enter adulthood, and remain emotionally insecure. Learners' confidence and motivation should be sustained to allow them optimal engagement in the transition and proper adult conduct.

Students need to be made aware from the induction onward to pursue opportunities to use English inside and out of classrooms, do assignments, and engage in workshop activities and tasks. Combining methods such as problem solving, demonstration, presentation, drill and practice, discussion, cooperative learning, discovery and suitable games breaks the monotony of a single teaching method and supports active learning (Newby et al 2000). Enjoyable activities allow students to cultivate strategies to cope with uncertainty and change.

Students have to be provided with reasonable challenges. Their initiative and independence is undermined by belittling tasks or learning materials, and they are also disabled and prevented from the best possible transition from school to work when lecturers do too much for them (Atkinson 2000). Pleasant activities reduce the youth's fear. Lecturers thus need to support them to discover alternative options, and have fun and make mistakes in the sheltered college-environment. It develops the young people's confidence to take greater charge of their transitional aims, heading towards adulthood.

Assessments are essential tools for measuring performance and expertise, plus they point to areas that need improvement. Trainers have become consultants; people who help identify performance requirements, as well as facilitators who provide advice and guidance to learners and managers (Ashton & Sung 2002). Challenging one's established ways of teaching is a personal learning experience which impacts on student learning.

In-service training courses for teachers should focus on features such as suitable teaching and learning strategies, relevant learning outcomes, appropriate teaching materials, creativity, differentiation, and the assessment of learner progress. Skills and knowledge change fast, so the 'master's knowledge-base' may become outdated. Older workers' technology skills can, for instance, be augmented by younger employees (Ashton & Sung 2002). Professionals are evaluated by the extent to which they control and keep abreast of knowledge pertinent to their field (Hoffman 1989). Lecturers thus need to set goals, target professional development, and be intentionally involved in research in pursuit of life-long learning today.

2.2.3.4 EFL-lecturers and personal development

Professional development (PD) provides tools to guide and improve practice. PD activities are influenced by the contexts in which teachers work, as well as their own beliefs, experiences and values about what it means to be a teacher and a classroom manager. Teacher-identity, or the relation between the local and the global, is continually informed and reformed as individuals develop over time. Identity is an incomplete lifelong process which includes self-image and self-evaluation (James 2004; Wenger 1998).

Higher education is committed to academic values, teaching and research (James 2004), which can be measured by the significance teachers attach to PD. Suitable PD activities align curricula with agency-expectations (Lieberman & Wilkins 2006) through techniques such as coaching and mentoring. Instructors should use the available tools to offer students different approaches. Richardson (2005), for instance, encourages teachers to ask themselves:

> Where can we attempt a cross-curricular approach?
> Can I include activities that allow the learners to explore real facts and figures?
> Can I build on their and their families' lived experiences?
> Can I use this topic to encourage students to aim high, plan their future, and consider their role in shaping it?

Do I have my learners in mind when planning – how can I spark their enthusiasm and help them appreciate and develop their unique talents?
Are students learning actively, sharing ideas and experiences to explore issues?
Do I teach with emotional intelligence, responding to each student as an individual?
Do I provide distinct leadership with clear boundaries?
Do I aim to dominate or scare the class?

An academic climate where teaching and learning are expected, updated, shared and valued by all, results in a positive school atmosphere. However, differences between EFL-lecturers and students in learning preferences and culture can decrease learner motivation and results. Miscommunication and confrontations develop because people, groups and nations think, feel and act differently. Adapting rather than directly transferring training and assessment methods limits frustrations (Easterby-Smith 1997; Hofstede 1997; Rodriques et al 2000). Teaching skills and methodologies, strategies, differentiation, teaching aids and assessment techniques relevant to the culture and the demands of globalisation can support the occupational visions of the students.

2.3 The global labour market and the youth's transition to employment

Children face different risks and opportunities today, compared to their parents' transitions. Although transitions were not uncomplicated in the past, there is immense competition in tight job markets today (Goodwin & O'Connor 2005; Vickerstaff 2001).

Traditionally new recruits learned trade skills over a set period during apprenticeships, and life generally advanced at a slow pace. Apprentices had a managed transition while they gradually constructed their skills and identities as juniors in the workplace. Apprenticeships were viewed as a continuation of adolescent status, and lasted about five years, from ages 16

to 21, which correlate with the period the youth currently spend on studying college courses (Furlong & Cartmel 1997; Vickerstaff 2003).

Today's youth grow up with a distinctive approach to time, technology and communication, where increased worldwide competitiveness emphasise technological advances (Gibson et al 2000). Global developments in science and technology caused traditional jobs to disappear, but new ones emerged. Ideas and messages move fast and effortlessly, and time is regarded as 'money'. Knowledge is gained and outdated faster, workers frequently change jobs and locations, and mechanisation and technology replace unskilled labour.

Diverse groups perceive the occupational world differently. Westerners regard a company as a place where people perform distinctive functions, but for others, an integral part of a company is bonding social relations (Nisbett 2003). Young people follow the customs of predecessors, and expect to be cared about as they think those were treated at work. Whereas Hofstede (1997) maintained that occupational and educational opportunities are associated with social class, values lost power as change-agents since globalisation intensified.

2.3.1 International employment developments and demands

Globalisation implies cumulative connectedness and interdependence in the world through common economic, environmental, political and cultural changes. This leads to spreading and linking of products, markets and organisations, so boundaries become increasingly insignificant (Knox & Marston 2007).

New information technologies and transnational corporations enable speedy transfers of capital, goods, activities, people and cultures between places and regions in response. These integrated economic activities urged governments to include international partners in labour, finance, technology systems and consumer markets, especially in the past quarter century (Knox & Marston 2007). The downsides of globalisation, particularly those related to the exploitation of unskilled labour denoted as 'the race to the bottom' (Chan 2003), became daunting, urging governments and industry to review the handling of vocational relations.

The inability to secure a job has long threatened new recruits. Goodwin and O'Connor (2005) report that the fear of unemployment was such a real issue for young people in the United Kingdom in the 1960s, that some took the first job they could find. On the other hand, studying at college can provide adolescents with the opportunity to develop versatile skills and initiative, mature, and maximise their employability. It has become urgent since global demands on skilled workers such as technological expertise, communication and social skills, problem solving and team work, and the ability to operate with minimum supervision to meet the needs of customers and co-workers (Ashton & Sung 2002; Knox & Marston 2007) are becoming persistent.

Organisations used to operate nationally and were culturally defined. However, the world has become a 'global village' serviced by fast and efficient transport and communication systems. Increased use of short-term work contracts in quick succession and growing worker mobility affect the total labour market today, matching the predictions of Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla (1998) that 'careers would unfold across national boundaries'. Workers consequently gain access to economic benefits, but pressure at macro societal levels rise too.

2.3.1.1 Human resources and management

The human resources (HR) or employees inclusive of their skills, increase a company's profitability and economic progression. Businesses generate maximum profits and prosper when their workers, products, capital and markets can cross domestic boundaries and become 'boundaryless' (Cieslik & Pollock 2002; Gibson et al 2000). Recruitment practices are affected because empowered workers accumulate skills and take opportunities in international job markets in reaction to demand and offer. They survive 'beyond traditional career arrangements' by building relationships and networking with others to remain employed (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998).

People base individual concepts on their cultural perspectives and perceptions, which may be individualist or collectivist (Easterby-Smith 1997). Cultures with higher levels of uncertainty avoidance prefer structured decisions and use lower risk recruiting processes, such as internal recruitment or apprenticeships (Jeanquart-Barone & Peluchette 1999). Job-seekers tend to sign up where methods are congruent with their own cultural expectations and quit jobs if they are uncomfortable with a company's human resource management (HRM) processes.

Preparing college students to locate and deal with global labour conditions impacts on how well workers are able to adapt to a host country's culture. This influences the quality of work. Individuals may transfer physically, economically and legally with reasonable ease, but adapting to the ways of other cultures, presents pitfalls.

2.3.1.2 Human resources and culture

Globalisation engulfs collectivist as well as individualist cultures by insisting on cross-cultural dealings. However people may frown upon the ways of others and struggle to

conform to their beliefs and values, for example, in teamwork. People from collectivist societies can be sensitive about internal relationship management and may find work less pleasant if the team they are in does not display 'warmth' (Hui & Yee 1999).

HRM influences global economic, education, political and legal systems (Jeanquart-Barone & Peluchette 1999). Organisations seek to employ individuals who are likely to conform to existing value schemes, regardless of nationality:

> The longer members stay in the organisation, the more successful they are, and the more they will embrace corporate values.
>
> (Gamble & Gibson 1999:221)

New multi-cultural communities develop as different cultures occupy common geographical areas across the globe. Firms align their HRM strategies with the different cultures within which they operate to try and increase competitive advantage.

Workplaces develop individual internal culture and energy, based on management and worker behaviour created from the interplay between emotions and power relations generated within and between individuals and groups (Vince 2001). Young workers are unaware of the existence of these dynamics which are generated through cultural conceptions or patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, in accordance with traditional ideas and values (Kluckhohn 1951). On taking a job, the individual enters an established group as a stranger and a task- and workspace novice. The new participants only begin to understand their separateness and feel the emotional impact thereof once they try to adjust after arrival.

Inductions to the job initiate their learning processes (Goodwin 2007) and create the awareness that they need to demonstrate their acceptance of and openness towards the society at work. This fosters acceptance by the other workers.

> The young workers themselves clearly identify their transformation into adulthood as part of a learning process based on their interactions with older workers.
>
> (Goodwin 2007:231)

Co-workers will not necessarily be forthcoming towards new recruits. They may feel threatened by the youth's potential skills and energy, and want to minimise competition, or test the perseverance of the newcomers. Young people who just begin work enter a new phase. They are (nearly) adults in their own eyes, however, for older workers and supervisors they are merely (nearly adults or) juniors (Goodwin & O'Connor 2005). The behaviour, norms and attitudes of the adults at work may differ considerably from those with which they are familiar (Elias 1961). The young workers observe differences between themselves and the others, and this makes them uncomfortable and insecure. Some can ignore these while others may challenge and attempt to change practices to suit their preferences. New recruits who relied heavily on family members in obtaining work or resolving conflicts up to this stage (Furlong & Cartmel 1997), can resist settling in, hide behind antagonistic or aggressive behaviour, opt for confrontation, or eventually leave the job, move along and explore other options, rather than adjust and endeavour to resolve the problems in adult fashion.

2.3.2 The youth and the transition from school to work

The modern school system which developed from the need to keep children occupied, served the Industrial Age. Studying reading, writing and arithmetic was adequate for decades, but secondary and tertiary institutions now follow different approaches, and some manage to provide learners with education and support relevant to the challenges of the 21st century.

Young people learn the norms, attitudes and adult codes of behaviour such as conforming to work hours, clocking in, reduced breaks, and limited holidays during the transition to work

and adulthood, through interaction with adults (Goodwin 2007). While children freely express their feelings without consequence, young workers need to acquire adult and cultural behavioural standards and occupational skills to move beyond their status as 'legitimate peripheral participants' in the workplace. Relationships have to be established between the individual and the community regardless of challenges and anxiety on both sides which may arise from cultural uncertainty (Goodwin 2007; Lawy & Bloomer 2003). The novice workers need to take ownership and respond positively to the need for relevant skills to be assimilated into the global society (Kubasek et al 2003).

The students have different reasons for attending tertiary education. However, breaking away from the safety net provided by the education system and pursuing a career holds challenges. The occupational vision and shared academic tasks such as language learning provide lecturers with a window for engendering trust with students. Young people need to discuss contentious issues with peers and learn about culturally sensitive conduct from lecturers (Al-Husseini 2004) with global experience before entering the global job market.

Adolescents who take up employment are perceived as young adults at work, and given fitting responsibilities. They get caught between these two worlds since they have completed the school phase successfully, knew the ropes, and were regarded as seniors, prior to this breakpoint. New recruits feel confident, empowered and ready for the next challenge (Al-Husseini 2004), but they quickly find that their part is less exhilarating. They experience uncertainty and stress which can thwart their wholehearted engagement in the new life-phase.

A streamlined transition from school to work will create awareness and better understanding of workplace demands. Young people should attain technological skills and communication

proficiency to meet work-related expectations. Occupational support services should be provided in schools and tertiary institutions to emphasise adult behavioural standards, occupational skills and career choices (Elias 1961; Evans & Furlong 1997). Cognisance cause better participation, flexibility, adaptability and openness to ensure that they can master the complex transition to the global workplace with realistic confidence.

Every person engages in transitions, but the transition from school to work and adulthood is a major step in the lives of adolescents. Elias (1961) argues that differences between the fantasies of future adult roles and actual living might come as a shock (Goodwin 2007) without prior preparation. Tertiary education must set students up for challenges and adjustments that accompany current job opportunities in order to minimise confusion and streamline their transition to work, but the rise of globalisation has increased requirements.

This study contributes to the understanding of streamlining the transition from school to work through a case study at Ibri CT in Oman.

2.4 The case study at Ibri CT

This case study was undertaken at Ibri CT, one of the colleges of technology managed by Oman's Ministry of Manpower. Since the education system and the labour market meet at tertiary training venues, the purpose was to determine how research results from for example Layder, Ashton and Sung (1991) who regard the transition from school to work as an 'extension of the life course' of the youth, apply to this transition in Oman.

Researchers like Elias (1961), Goodwin (2007) and Goodwin & O'Connor (2005) agree that in general, new recruits are not explicitly aware of differences in child and adult conduct upon entering the new social workplace milieu. When put in different relations with strangers at work, as well as with parents and friends, and confronted by workplace expectations, they suddenly recognise their shortcomings and juvenile ways. The young workers need to gain confidence and develop independence, self-esteem and behavioural standards, and practise leadership abilities while maturing. Personal demeanour is derived from one's culture, your psychological programming via birth (Hofstede 1997), and its views on education and work.

The simultaneous transition into adulthood implies the youth need to renegotiate individual and community relationships. Relating with peers and adults create bonds which assist with reducing cultural uncertainty, change, and personal tensions and contradictions resulting from the technological and economic pressures that drive global competitiveness and complicate the transition (Lawy & Bloomer 2003). Globalisation, or the recent expansion in linkages and flows of goods, people, ideas and cultures across national borders, is a result of the international distribution of labour, finance and technology that keep shrinking the world into a 'global village' shared by all, irrespective of culture, creed or trade (Knox & Marston 2007). These unavoidable transformations present complex labour market choices and demand new navigational and negotiating abilities of fresh workers (Goodwin & O'Connor 2005).

Tertiary education needs to employ fitting strategies to allow the youth to deal with contemporary global occupation-related threats on route from the familiar school environment to the unfamiliar world of work. Life skills and personal traits such as adult behaviour, motivation, a positive attitude and determination support present-day

employability (Layder et al 1991). These skills can reduce anxiety and extend their steering and bargaining skills, to become globally employable adults.

The Sultanate of Oman had a different occupation-related history to, for instance Europe, where full-time jobs and structured apprenticeships were the norm up to the mid-1970s. Adults in the Arab states were still nomads who shared and kept trades active in constricted family contexts to safeguard the tribes' skills secrets, in protection of their livelihood, at that stage. So, although it had a different educational route compared to other cultures and previous generations, the transition from school to work and approach towards learning, society and employment in Oman now also suffer from demands associated with globalisation. College curricula thus have to prioritise including demands on new employees during the multifaceted conversion, to ensure the preparation for the transition from school to work against the backdrop of globalisation is streamlined in Oman.

2.4.1 Education and occupations in the past

The youth has not experienced occupational pressure, due to the former Bedouin-lifestyle. In 1970, there were only three schools in Oman, a large country with relatively few native inhabitants. Tuition other than religious teaching was not a concern prior to the first oil exports in 1967. Sultan Qaboos bin Said prioritised education when he took power in the Sultanate of Oman in 1970 and socio-economic change followed rapidly.

A few Omanis had government positions, but people generally utilised the resources they had access to, so they were mostly nomadic herdsmen, subsistence farmers or fishermen. Parents of the students at Ibri CT thus had different transitions to both Westerners, and their children,

despite basic similarities. The same-age transition previously extended from childhood to adulthood rather than from school to work, due to the lack of schools and work as a commercial activity.

School to work transitions in the Arab world primarily involved taking responsibility for one's own religious life. In accordance with Islamic tradition, children were expected to start behaving as adults at fourteen, when they were instructed in gender-appropriate tasks, similar to an 'in-house apprenticeship', to support the physical survival of the tribe. Males were typically involved in caring and handling of camels, a food source and sign of wealth and transport, to get to markets for bartering, or harvesting dates, corn or fish, depending on the clan's location. Young people were expected to marry someone the family wanted them to have, mostly a cousin, to produce offspring.

2.4.2 Educational and occupational developments in Oman after 1970

Following 1970, education was prioritised in the Sultanate of Oman. About 560 000 students attended the 1053 schools founded to provide primary and secondary education for children between six and nineteen years of age in the 35 years thereafter. The first university was established in 1986 and in 2005, 19.3% of all 18-24 year-olds in Oman attended higher education. While women accounted for more than 50% of the total admittance, only 19% of the current Omani workforce is female (Al-Barwani et al 2009; Oman Observer 2011).

Initially, Omanis took jobs where they had contacts, for the salary. Occupational skills were irrelevant since the population was predominantly illiterate. However, free instruction and skills development followed the vast economic and social progress:

Oman now has a free-market economy in which the private sector can invest in whatever industrial projects it sees fit.

(Ministry of Information 1990:174)

Few Omanis depend on the traditional Bedouin lifestyle now, and where older people keep to this former practice, their children have paid jobs and help to keep bread on the table at mealtimes. Individuals are expected to join the communal support network and contribute to the extended family's financial needs, linked to the customary collectivist existence. Superior remuneration is prized, but boys will almost always terminate their studies to take a job for the sake of the salary, while girls will equally easily discontinue, seizing a suitable marriage proposal, because her duty in Islam is to be a 'good wife and mother'.

The Omani youth experience the transition from school to work rather similar to those in the West, but have to navigate it independently, because their parents lack the same experience, and cannot support them with it. The students' parents had not experienced the process of preparation to 'leave school and go to work', and might therefore expect offspring to continue behaving in the familiar way, as a child in the house, before the transition commenced.

In Oman, national goals are set through five-year-development plans, to regulate the distribution of wealth and ensure that the financial means generated by petro-chemical resources are properly utilised. The government deals with the possible depletion of oil and gas resources, the main source of finance for economic development, in various ways (Ministry of Information 1990) to ensure global competitiveness. The Ministry of Manpower also coordinates the supply and demand for occupational skills. It manages the curricula, the number of students who can enrol for tertiary education programmes, and the subjects studied

at its colleges. So, besides expected standard expenditure, the government also initiates and supports skill-building projects to make learning routes available to its citizens.

In similar vein, Green et al (1999) found that the Korean society was becoming more technologically advanced and information oriented, resulting from limited natural resources. They concluded that educators and researchers should focus on ways to develop students' epistemological beliefs and educate them 'to respond with flexibility and adventurous curiosity to a changing, uncertain and complex reality', since change follows where facilities enable the gaining of skills and credentials, and focus on academic excellence and personal empowerment to survive globally (Fuller & Unwin 2003; Green et al 1999). The same result may apply in Oman where public demand for academic and occupational skills is increasing.

2.4.2.1 Workplace and skills

Economic, political, social, environmental and technological processes link products, markets and organisations across the globe. Workers have to manage their abilities and opportunities to keep up with transformations to warrant employability. Governments establish educational institutions to ensure global competitiveness and afford the youth with personality traits, skills and credentials (Gibson et al 2000; Knox & Marston 2007). The Omani government's development plans include opportunities in agriculture, fisheries, mining and light industries to extend the national economy (Ministry of Information 1990), since it realises the importance of a self-sufficient, productive workforce and diversified market system.

Sultan Qaboos envisages the development of Oman within specific religious and social parameters, and aspires for it to take up scientific and socio-economic challenges. The Ruler said:

> We all live in the age of science. Its continuing progress in all fields is evidence that science and hard work go hand in hand in facing up to the challenges of our time and these are essential requirements for building a powerful and prosperous civilisation based on our Islamic and cultural values.
>
> (Ministry of Information 1990:120)

Sultan Qaboos recognises that the youth has expectations, and wants them to proceed to the level where they can implement their ideas to serve the nation (Ministry of Information 1990). The colleges of technology are instrumental in these developments.

Colleges like Ibri CT brace the upcoming Omani workforce. As skills, worksites, rewards, technologies, competition, alternatives, and knowledge of processes and materials increase in the Middle East, choosing a profession becomes intricate. For example, sociology and economics have recently been added as subjects to the secondary school curriculum in Lebanon, while preparation programmes were also introduced to assist learners in choosing jobs (Tabet 2001). These options are neither available in schools nor in colleges in Oman yet, but institutions like Ibri CT can start the groundwork for similar courses.

Research found that young workers did not feel prepared for the risk and uncertainty upon entering employment for the first time. One said: 'When you are at school you tend to see just the payday side', and another: 'I had no idea what it would be like' (Carter 1962; Goodwin & O'Connor 2005; Vickerstaff 2001). Preparation for a person's role as an employee is virtually non-existent in Oman, where some young Omanis tend to think they will be appointed at managerial level (Appendix 4). A realistic view of the progression of a career path and job-succession, other than speculation, tales, or accounts by teachers should be provided (Al-Husseini 2004) during this preparation to develop more realistic orientation and minimise frustration in the global workplace.

The Information Revolution creates high-wage positions for those equipped to participate in knowledge-based industries. Unskilled jobs for poorly educated workers, incapable of updating their knowledge through continuous learning, are decreasing in the West. However, in countries, like China and Mexico, these sources of 'cheap labour' get caught in the 'race to the bottom' (Chan 2003:259) through extremely low wages. Global connectivity contributes to cultural (Gibson et al 2000), social and economic transformation, whether positive or negative. Some groups are more subject to exploitation, others resist and protest against changes, while others accept and deal with them (Knox & Marston 2007). The Omani society, through its socio-economic and educational options, is in a position to assist the youth's occupational course by making fitting choices.

2.4.2.2 The education situation

The didactic triangle (figure 1) depicts the interdependence of students, lecturers and the curriculum, illustrating that better interaction between its stakeholders can result in more satisfactory proportions of educational success. However, culture determines the individual behaviour of each element in the triangle, in Ibri CT in Oman too, so the didactic triangle was modified (figure 2). For example, the students speak Arabic, dress and behave in a certain way, and follow Islam, almost oblivious of the prevailing global thrust for change 'out there'.

The didactic triangle as adapted in figure 3 depicts recent educational arrangements where the colleges of technology represent the institution, with the Ministry of Manpower as gatekeeper. Just nine years ago it was reported that:

> The Ministry often receives complaints from companies that college graduates are weak in English and not skilful in their specialisation. This topic might not be important when investigating the workplace of the graduates of the Colleges of Technology in Oman, as most of them work in companies which operate locally.

> (Al-Husseini 2004: 22, 82).

Figure 3: The influence of culture on stakeholders at Ibri CT, one of the colleges of technology under direction of the Ministry of Manpower of the Sultanate of Oman, as depicted by the didactic triangle

Ministry of Manpower

Ibri College of Technology

Learning matter

Culture   Culture

Culture

Teacher   Learner
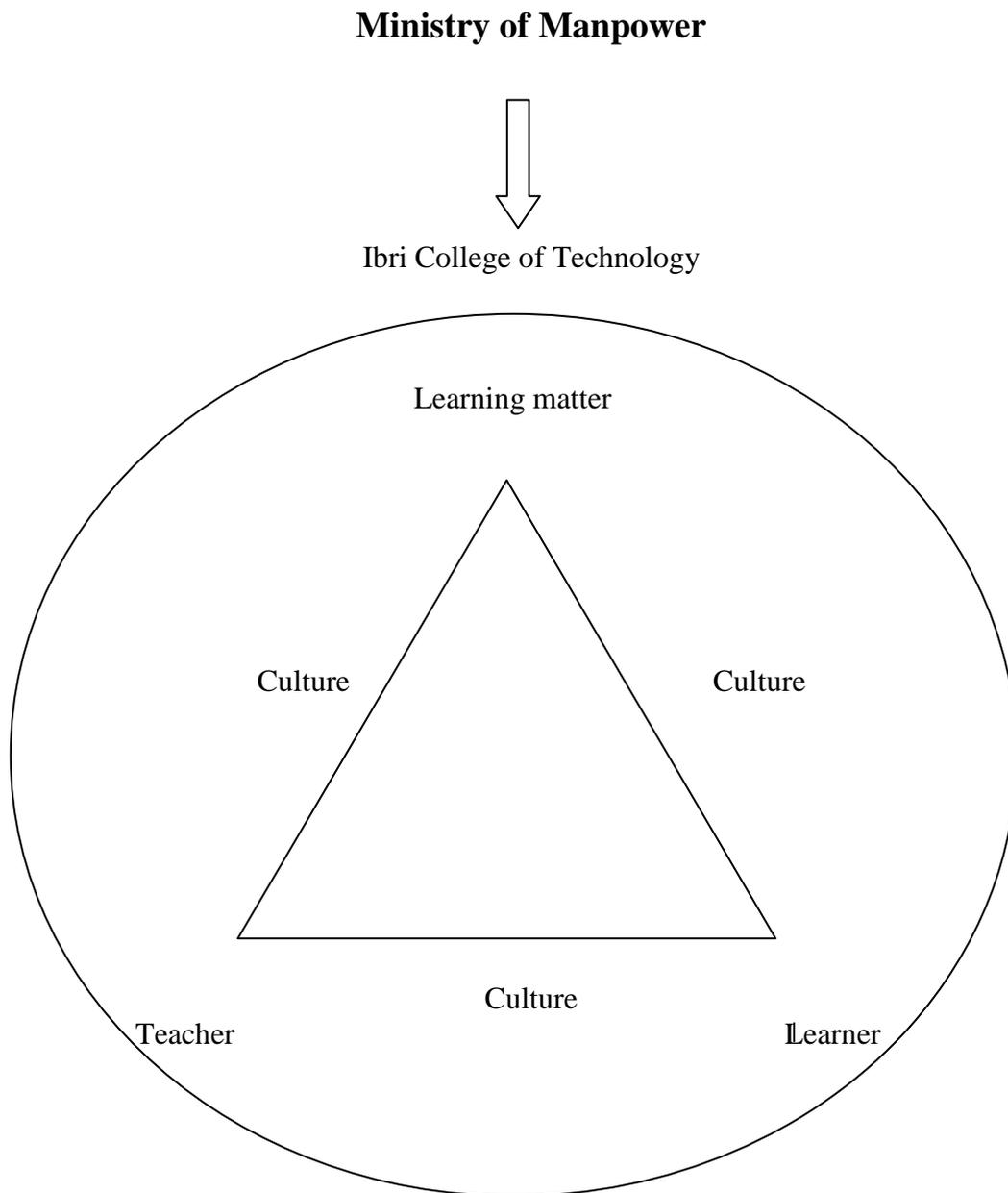
Whereas a decade ago colleges such as Ibri CT may not have been significant outside of Oman, students now need inter-personal relations and appropriate employee behaviour and life skills to be employable worldwide. These qualities are commercially determined but they complicate learning and the transition to the global job-market at Ibri CT too.

2.4.2.3 Omanisation and occupations

Economic empowerment of the nation has been a main concern of Sultan Qaboos since his accession (Ministry of Information 1990). Finding a job and being able to work is seen as personally empowering (Pillay et al 2003) in the Sultanate too. Omanisation, a quite effectively enforced socio-economic strategy which shields some jobs and ensures Omanis are favoured in appointments in both government and the private sector was implemented.

While Omanisation initially sustained lower unemployment rates among men in this paternalist culture, women are now gradually and purposefully included in the economy too. More than 30% of the students at Ibri CT are female, and more women are presently employed by the professional sector in Oman than ever before.

Occupational activities provide income and institutes self-meaning and a sense of personal worth (Gibson et al 2000). Previously, similar to the situation in China, according to Davies (1995), 'enterprises were often overstaffed, with egalitarian salaries and rewards and few incentives to encourage high levels of worker performance' (Venter 2003b). Omani businesses were frequently inefficient too, since quality and profits were not desired. However, especially Omani companies with international input, which may be better-placed to handle reform and the demands of globalisation, begin to insist on clearly identified occupational skills, based on profitability. They start selecting progressive and economically

minded people who want to learn as they participate, work without supervision, show pride in their jobs and attend work regularly. The youth have to embrace occupational requirements to ensure optimal employability without Omanisation, when it happens.

The Sultanate is an international competitor, economically. The demand for globally applicable skills increases, more so since there may soon be more graduates than available positions, locally. The Omani youth have a positive attitude to life, and although they also idealise adulthood, students sense that local jobs are harder to find. They will benefit from Oman's economic progress if they are ready to deal with pressures linked to globalisation. It includes that individuals need to manage their careers and engage in lifelong learning, inspired by their unique personal needs, knowledge, skills and ability to cope with challenges (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998; Evans & Furlong 1997). Globalisation affects different sets of workers in more- and less developed countries differently. It causes labour exploitation, de-skilling, redundancy, and swift movement of workers, goods and information, as well as flexible productivity in various regions (Burbules & Torres 2000; Chan 2003) and employees in the oil- and gas producing Sultanate of Oman too. The government retorts by prioritising the cause of the youth. It avails free tertiary education to evade negative effects found elsewhere, for example, possible exploitation of Omani labour (Chan 2003).

2.4.2.4 The Ministry of Manpower and the colleges of technology

Countries such as Oman will face predicament once oil resources diminish, so the youth needs to be capable of compete internationally for similar jobs. Tertiary education offers diverse skills in local settings. It must however deal with the reciprocal, disproportionate push of culture on curricula, students and lecturers to counter some of the consequences of globalisation in support of the transition from school to work today, as shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Globalisation impacts on the Sultanate of Oman, including the Ministry of Manpower as the gatekeeper, and the stakeholders at Ibri CT

Globalisation
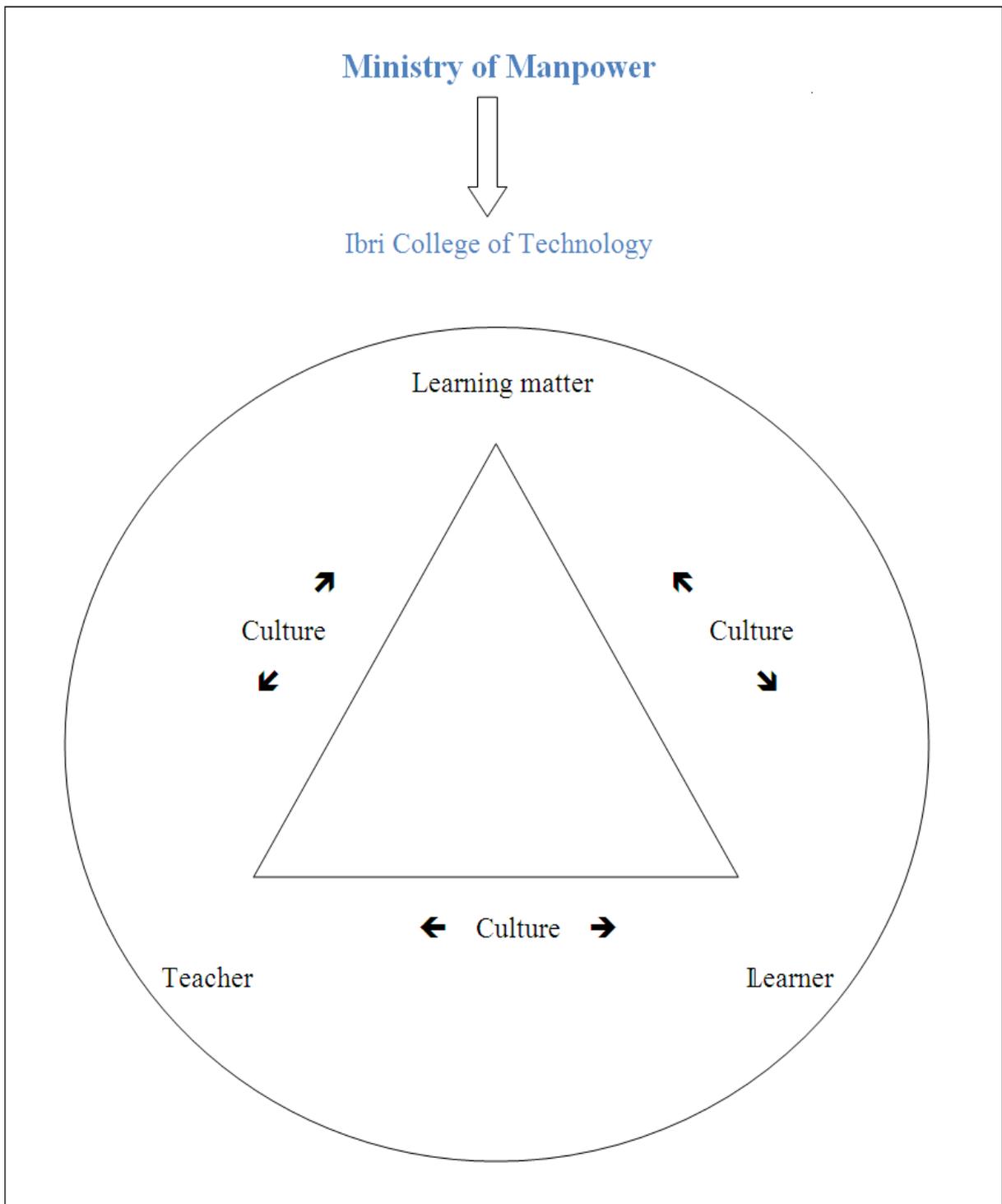
Government and the private sector share the responsibility for higher education in Oman. The Ministry of Manpower is in prime position to ensure that global occupational shifts are promptly embraced. The Ministry determines conditions for work and study in the colleges, and also has to ensure its curricula comply with global occupational demands:

> Globalisation demonstrates an international division of labour alongside economic integration, greater importance of the production of information and services over manufacturing functions, and shorter term contract work due to the growing importance of capital-intensive production.
>
> (Burbules & Torres 2000:6)

Higher education will become obsolete to the global community if study programmes are not constantly aligned with the changing demands of the international economy:

> Companies now require intelligence, multiple knowledges, personal creativity, intuition, memory, technical know-how, quality, value, service, innovation and speed.
>
> (Davenport & Prusak 1998:13)

The Ministry of Manpower's objectives regarding tertiary education are set out in the bylaws of the colleges of technology, which standardises the organisation of campus activities. The effectiveness of the processes is assessed by a Quality Assurance (QA) system overseen by the Ministry. The lecturers 'teach, counsel students, and boost an academic spirit' (Bylaws 2007). They participate in QA-activities alongside in-service staff training to support merit, professional development, upgrading of knowledge, skills and performance, and to augment learner performance.

The colleges of technology provide technical and administrative knowledge in line with the requirements of the labour market, and to meet the students' individual, social, academic, technological and vocational development. Omani nationals not older than 25 are enrolled and spend a year in the foundation programme (FP) to develop skills in English, math and technology (Bylaws 2007). The students choose a field of specialisation upon registration,

based on a combination of their interest, secondary school marks, and the availability of seats at the facility, appropriate to employment needs in Oman.

College management shapes the vision and goals, so they need to ensure that stakeholders fulfil their roles and follow procedures to facilitate an orderly and secure learning environment and -culture (Al-Husseini 2004). Innovative management approaches support the swift incorporation of social and skills changes as well as cultural influences related to shifts in demographics, technological innovations, market transformations and globalisation (Starkey 1998). Managers and workers with advanced critical thinking skills who support decision making and generate employment options are desirable. Increased competitiveness requires flexible, technologically skilled workers with solid educational qualifications (Ashton & Sung 2000; Kubasek et al 2003; Velde & Cooper 2000). Secluded supervision does not support the individual needs of the youth, so management teams should endorse leadership, team work and commitment.

The students at tertiary institutions have started the transition from school to work. A college provides the academic, cultural and social setting to reduce students' fear for change by building their confidence. The quality of the tuition determines the impact of this transition.

2.4.3 The themes and issues relating to the transition at Ibri CT

Ibri CT was founded in 2007 'to train technicians for the job market' (Quality Assurance Manual 2010). The college vision and mission direct its course. The college vision statement is**:**

> The College of Technology intends to become the 'College of Choice' for students and for the industry by providing demonstrably high quality teaching, learning and research that makes a significant contribution to ongoing national economic development.

The college mission statement is**:**

> The mission of the College of Technology is to achieve and sustain a strong reputation for excellence in teaching and learning. The College is dedicated to the delivery of high quality technical education and aims to produce graduates who have the professional and personal skills to enter employment with confidence, contributing effectively to the Sultanate's ongoing economic development.
>
> (Quality Assurance Manual 2010:9)

Ibri CT has the infrastructure to link proficiencies demanded by the global workplace and the social values of Omani communities. College programmes include that:

> Ibri CT will support student flexibility and creativity, and insist on values such as tolerance, teamwork and communication to engender graduates who are equipped with appropriate technological knowledge and personal/ professional skills according to international standards.
>
> Students are required to undertake the Foundation Program (FP) to ensure their English, maths and computer literacy proficiency is of a standard allowing them to enrol and efficiently participate in academic studies through their chosen programs. The College offers a one year certificate, a two year diploma, a three year higher diploma, or a B-Tech degree in the fields of Engineering, Business Studies and Computer Studies, after completion of the FP.
>
> (Quality Assurance Manual 2010:5, 11)

These mission and vision statements ensure that Ibri CT remains cognisant of its obligations as a transitional agent.

2.4.3.1 The lecturers at Ibri CT

The lecturers convey the curricular content and values to the youth. Suitable student-support through resourceful curricula which allows learner-practice facilitates appropriate transitions and empowers scholars (Lawy & Bloomer 2003). The global economic situation can force the new generations to find jobs in multinational companies, or abroad, and in teams. Lecturers thus transmit knowledge, and direct activities to help students cope with the spectrum of demands associated with globalisation, including technological and EFL skills.

The lecturers are recruited globally. Interacting with people from different countries broadens the students' social and academic skills. Exposure to the different views of the lecturers who teach on the familiar home ground supports the Omanis' cultural awareness in this structured environment before employment. It is a positive arrangement because:

> Very traditional societies are constricted since they provide a limited number of life pathways and social settings, with consequent restrictions on access to knowledge, but others can contribute to the situation, so members can draw on other cognitive resources.
>
> (Eraut 2000:131)

Young Omanis, similar to the UK-youth in the 1960s, cannot anticipate the expectations and demands of the workplace today (Goodwin 2007). Lecturers should thus invite students into the academic community as junior members, where the curriculum allows it (Wenger 1998). The lecturers have endured these transitions, so they can help students deal with future occupation-related insecurities, to alleviate associated pressure, risk and uncertainty. Lecturers create awareness of issues students might encounter due to global employment, and encourage and provide strategies to assist the youth. Non-academic activities focus on social achievement because:

> Educational achievement is personal achievement, especially for adolescents. Personal success enables the individual to pursue a certain line of activity. This involvement drives individual choices related to employability.
>
> (Layder, Ashton & Sung 1991:450)

Culturally sensitive lecturers who guide the young people to gain a realistic global perspective enable the streamlining of the transitional preparation of the young adults. The lecturers are guests in this country, who should support the shared 'collective programming of the mind' (Hofstede 2001) of the Omani students. Lecturers cannot insist on rules moulded to practices in their base-countries. Their teaching and learning must be guided by curricula appropriate to the needs of the institution.

2.4.3.2 The curriculum at Ibri CT

Omani parents are not well-placed to advise their children about exact features of their school to work transitions, because their transitions had been different to those of their children, and of Westerners, despite basic similarities. The same-age transition previously extended from childhood to adulthood and did not include the simultaneous transition from school to work (Lawy & Bloomer 2003; Vickerstaff 2003). Students and parents expect of and depend on educational institutions to afford marketable global skills and knowledge relative to the youth's future (Richardson 2005). Appropriate curricula are thus imperative.

English has developed into a powerful global language driven by the economic need for international communication. The rapid global diffusion of ideas between cultures added to its extension as a linguistic tool to reach the widest possible audience (Burbules & Torres 2000; Knox & Marston 2007). English proficiency provides the linguistic infrastructure to clearly disseminate ideas and explain beliefs. Pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence results in appropriate articulation and actions in specific social situations, as well as strategies for coherent written discourse and paraphrasing (Burbules & Torres 2000; Richardson 2005; Youn 2000). Advancement with acquiring English as a foreign language (EFL) promotes communication, so it features in curricula alongside occupational and social skills.

The FP provides language instruction in accordance with EFL needs and suited to local market requirements before the students pursue academic subjects taught in English (Al-Husseini 2004). Students follow the EFL-programme in preparation of the internationally accepted TOEFL-test, before starting specialisation courses. The students' EFL-proficiencies are thus assessed before placement in the FP. The Omanis have to simultaneously cope with the English alphabet and reversed reading and writing direction, since Arabic script is from

right to left. Students with typing skills using the English alphabet have thus overcome major academic and technological hurdles. Learning activities include reading, understanding and compiling CVs and letters, and practising conversation skills. Students need to recognise, analyse and evaluate texts, make informed choices and convey messages effectively and coherently, develop critical thinking skills, the ability to choose the appropriate language register for the audience and purpose, learn what to say in social situations, understand the structure of arguments, and apply assessment criteria, alongside new ways of thinking, writing and viewing the world (Baker 1996; Kubasek et al 2003). Lecturers must recognise and deal professionally with futile activities, in accordance with curricula.

Curricula facilitate learning and supervise students' academic and social advancement. They are culturally bound, but globalisation pounds cultural values. Teaching and learning in Oman differs from cultures due to influential Islamic values, including family, the tribe and society. Weekends pivot around Fridays, the official day of worship. Study materials should thus consider local traditions, to endorse classroom cooperation. Curricula in Ibri CT must embrace aspects related to social skills and attitude consistent with global occupational demands, as well as the job-related visions of students, to further employability.

2.4.3.3 The students at Ibri CT

The students who enrol at college are technically still adolescents, unconscious of the process of transitioning to work. They have to realise that life after this transition is about each individual taking up total responsibility for their job and adult existence (Goodwin 2007).

Students have to develop personal adult identities, and learn to deal independently with global occupational challenges and responsibilities. Exposure to methodologies of foreign

instructors and intimidating curricula can generate learner-anxiety. Some learners have low personal expectations studying through EFL with its different terminology, alongside academic subject content which can be culturally insensitive. They lack vocabulary, and translating directly from Arabic result in misinterpretations (Al-Husseini 2004). Anxiety and mockery among peers can furthermore drain self-esteem and obstruct EFL learning. Students are thus labelled as 'boorish' at times. If seized in a non-native controlled education system where no-one expects one to pass, chances are you will expect to fail (Richardson 2005), since you may deduce that others, including lecturers, think you lack academic ability.

Secondary schools in Oman provide basic skills, but are kept hostage by prescribed textbooks and conventional curricula which encourage rote learning and measure progression through outcomes. These and related practices can cause 'mindlessness' (Kinchin et al 2008), and result in teaching for examinations, which bears little resemblance to intelligence, dedication or sound educational principles. Omani students in the FP studying English, mathematics, and computer science, alongside learning and thinking skills to bridge the gap from school, lack a solid learning culture, and suffer from real fear of examinations. Under-achievement results when students' self-confidence erodes where inadequate language skills are regarded as a shortfall. Academic insecurity develops because students miscalculate the requirements of the new learning environment. They subsequently disregard their principles and follow others (Al-Husseini 2004; Evans & Furlong 1997), a reality confirmed by repeated cheating-incidents in examinations. Students neither grasp expectations of assignment-quality, nor the levels of constructive support they can obtain from lecturers or peers, since learning is based on negative previous experience (Al-Husseini 2004).

English language skills are not well-developed in the monolingual environment in the Middle East, regardless of major changes to education systems. English is 'a foreign language, rarely used or heard by pupils outside of classrooms in this region (Al-Husseini 2004), so acquiring English proficiency can be a humbling experience. Students assume English is not vital for their education because it is only used by expatriates who **cannot** speak Arabic. However, adolescents cannot comprehend their occupational needs, so colleges have to support and motivate students to attain proficiencies in communication and to acquire a learning attitude.

The students enter the classroom with expectations ranging from comfort to hesitation or confrontation. They attended single-sexed schools, so mandatory mixed-gender participation affects their attitude. Since success in acquiring a second language is influenced by learner attitude, problems arise (Oxford 1990), which may cause tension between lecturers and students. Some social practices at Ibri CT may frustrate foreign lecturers whose teaching methods could annoy, and even discourage Omani students, as can be deduced from some responses in this study. Able students with negative feelings about certain Western values may suffer, through culturally insensitive tutors on 'teaching holiday', only earning a salary.

Employment is empowering, but fear of redundancy is genuine. The youth need basic skills but also suffer, similar to their parents, from limited global exposure. Apprenticeships became outdated due to technological developments globally; however modern occupational settings expect able employees that are ready to do the job without ado.

2.4.3.4 The global occupational situation and Ibri CT

Every worker eventually makes the transition from school, but ably facing the demands of the modern industrialised world is challenging. Adult Omanis were not exposed to learning

culture as the West knows it. Parents lack experience with the transition, and cannot grasp their children's transitional predicament, since they are not explicitly conscious thereof, so they do not insist on appropriately challenging instruction and academic excellence. Adults furthermore treat young people according to Islamic principles in the Omani occupational environment, which eases their work-related pressure. It results in deceitful satisfaction with current school to work transitions though, because parents are oblivious of prowling global demands the young workers have to face.

The youth regard themselves as (almost) adult, but have limited global and life experience. The students will encounter different personal expectations, beliefs and management styles as global workers. They must learn to understand and cope with cultural, gender, ability and age group differences, because cross-cultural communication can result in misperceptions (Gibson et al 2000). Older workers will regard them as juniors, destitute of adult behaviour standards and occupational skills. The youth will thus suddenly perceive their peripherality through disparities between their fantasies and actual adult roles when they start work (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998; Goodwin 2007), resulting in various issues.

2.4.4 Consolidation

Literature about the transition from school to work shows tertiary education must be sustained by suitable, culturally appropriate learning programmes. Lecturers have to develop the diverse personal traits of the youth, alongside social- and work skills relevant to global demands. However, consulted research exposed questions which need reflecting upon.

Firstly, the educational status quo at Ibri CT was identified as an underdeveloped area, since no studies had been published on youth transitions here yet. Engaging in an in-depth study establishes a benchmark for future research, and provides recent and relevant information to stakeholders, as well as individuals and groups with social, academic and economic interests in the Sultanate, and the youth.

The second problem is that some research, for example that formal learning implies a 'prescribed learning framework, an organised learning package, the presence of a teacher, and an award, such as a qualification' (Eraut 2000), are no longer fully applicable. Whereas relevancy requires curricula to address job-specific, globally acceptable technological and social skills, these proficiencies tend to complicate the transition from school to work today.

The final concern involves themes from the literature which refer to the stakeholders of tertiary education and the workplace. These unearthed additional issues, highlighted in 2.4.3, so the case study at Ibri CT was induced.

2.5 Conclusion

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the areas addressed by the literature study, to explore how Ibri CT can assist in streamlining the preparation for the transition from school to work in Oman, in line with global demands. In accordance with the themes from the research question, the stakeholders distinguished by the didactic triangle, spearheaded the literature review. The students and their relations with instructors and the curriculum were addressed, additional to the cultural perspective which ascertains the institute's educational position.

The transition from school includes that adolescents have to unleash the known, secure school and home environment, to deliberately and resourcefully take up new life-tasks when they enter the global world of work with its diverse responsibilities and activities (Layder, Ashton & Sung 1991). Children leave school and enter the job market regardless of their readiness to engage in associated socio-cultural practices, but an extended and streamlined transition provides young people with the time to observe, participate in, test, question, learn from, and adjust to the changes to an adult approach and life-style. The extents to which they develop long-term occupational goals include past socialisations, but self-confidence grows from achievement involving task completion and personal decision making (Evans & Furlong 1997). Another strand followed by this research, was the development of fitting work-related skills, critical to the youth's successful entrance and integration into the occupational world.

The transition to work as an experience is not always understood. Institutions such as Ibri CT can support the learners on their way to adulthood and in securing a job, by creating awareness of the predicament of the youth among the educational and occupational stakeholders. Work-related skills need to be enhanced alongside personal and social relations during the transition to work (Goodwin 2007). The Omani adolescents attending college stem from a specific era and culture. However in the global occupational world, employers aim for high profits in their focus on economic success, so they require specific skills.

The literature study exposed issues about the streamlining of the transition from school to work with specific reference to Ibri CT. However, researchers aiming for valid conclusions need to focus on data rather than merely relying on literature, where the meanings of texts are not transparent (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). A case study at Ibri CT provided a suitable context to consider the resulting research questions. Commitment to practical exploration allows

qualitative researchers to examine processes and add meaning through 'in-depth understanding of the *how, where, when* and *why* of situations'. Asking people for accounts, and talking and listening to them, generate the kind of data which exposes patterns and relationships (Bryman 2004; Henning 2005; Mason 2006). The goal was to find solutions to the question of how to streamline the preparation of the students for the transition from school to work in the Sultanate of Oman at Ibri CT.

The next chapters deal with the design and methodological approach of this case study. Chapter 3 includes the pilot study, issues related to validity, reliability and generalisability, the basis for selecting the participants, and the methodologies of the research, as well as the schedule employed to gather the data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter provides details of the methodological approach in the case study undertaken to investigate the preparation to transition from school to work at Ibri CT in Oman. It describes how the research process progressed to result in the accumulated data.

Qualitative and quantitative research instruments were used with students and adults to gather ethnographic data in support of the research question. The young people completed closed-question questionnaires and took part in structured interviews besides group discussions. The lecturers completed open-ended questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews based on specific individual responses. Adults in the Ibri community were also interviewed to include personal, cultural, and global views represented at this setting, and to gain their perspective on the youth's preparation for transition from school to work with reference to globalisation. These methods and groups were furthermore selected to allow triangulation of the data and trustworthy outcomes.

Changes were made to the content of the research tools after piloting. The mass of collected information was tabulated per instrument where-after the resulting data were broken up, and concepts sorted and reorganised as connections between the response-sets became clear. These quantitative and qualitative data-sets dealing with the beliefs and issues of the students and adults were separately reworked before they were merged to provide a unified representation of the results accumulated through this research. This chapter furthermore explains how the study considered issues related to ethics, validity, reliability and the generalisability of this case study at Ibri CT in Oman.

3.1 Introduction

Present-day transitions of the youth from school to work are complicated by global forces. Streamlining transitions enable young workers the best possible opportunities in today's unpredictable workplace.

This chapter contends with the research question, the qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and the outline used in this case study. It explains how the research instruments, the basis for participant selection, the methods and schedules were developed and applied to support the study's aims and address issues generated from the unearthed literature. The research design guides the execution of the methodology and the analysis of the data in the process (Bryman 2004).

I used a multi-method strategy to pursue an interpretative, ethnographic research design. The tools selected to explore and record the views of participants complemented each other and the research framework. A case study brings about unity, because it describes and explains and incorporates the views of all stakeholders (Yin 1994). Employing the case generated original ways to support the streamlining of the transition to work in tertiary settings despite the threats of globalisation.

3.2 The research problem

This case study is driven and the research strategy determined by the research question:

> **'How can the youth's preparation for transition from school to work be streamlined at Ibri CT with reference to globalisation?'**

The didactic situation at Ibri CT was studied to establish how the stakeholders perceive their respective tasks. Data was gathered from adults and students to help fill the gaps in the literature, and understand the challenges faced by the participants.

3.2.1 The problem to explore

Four sub-questions were formulated in support of the research question, and based on the issues discovered in the literature, to guide this case study in Oman:

1. How can the intensions of lecturers be aligned to students' expectations of classroom activity to favour accomplishment at personal and academic levels at Ibri CT?

2. How can cultural awareness benefit learning and teaching strategies at college?

3. To what extent are the learning programmes of the colleges of technology suitable to align the needs of the transitioning students and the visions of lecturers who have to provide the skills in the foundation phase?

4. How can the process to prepare the youth to become proficient workers be addressed in Oman with reference to the changing demands of the global workplace?

Deciding on the approach and methodologies followed emerged as I explored the literature and accommodated and developed concepts as a researcher and a scholar to advance the youth's preparation to transition to work, after an incident between a lecturer and students.

3.2.2 The theoretical framework supporting the research problem

I approached the study based on my epistemological position as a language teacher, and the study's exploratory nature, where meaning enlightens over numbers. The research question directed the study and determined its approach. The research process was orchestrated using the didactic triangle (figures 1-4). The mass of related literature separated students, lecturers and the curriculum as themes. The effects of culture and globalisation were thus embraced.

The literature review deals with the time the youth spend in tertiary education, the qualities of curricula, lecturers, and the required equilibrium. It includes a brief perspective of the school system in Oman, as well as projections of educational and occupational expectations of the society, students and industry. The study reveals how the transition of the youth from school to work is regarded by other researchers, but it specifically refers to current effects of globalisation thereupon, in Oman.

The parameters of this case study include that the Ministry of Manpower provides curricula, lecturers are mostly foreigners, and students are enrolled in a foundation program to gain skills in EFL, as well as in mathematics and computer literacy. Ministry officials, college management, the specifics of teaching and learning these subjects, the use of technology, religion, parental involvement and gender issues, are complementary to, and thus not addressed in this study.

3.3 Justifying the research procedures

The literature study highlighted gaps in the existing research pertaining to the youth in transition today. This stems from the impact of globalisation on various options worldwide. This dilemma, in tandem with the unique socio-educational setting at Ibri CT, has combined in the urge to work on site in this case study, to examine the available information closely (Yin 1994). As a qualitative researcher, meaning is important over setting, but people's conversations and interactions are central, and I wanted to discover how and why certain groups of people behave and act in the ways they do (Henning 2005). Sharing, interpreting

and describing practices and experiences in detail enable verification of existing theories and generating new ones:

> Qualitative researchers want to know what happens, how it happens and why it happens the way it does. They want to explain in argument what the phenomena they study are about. They thus use methods such as observation, artefacts, document studies and interviewing.
> (Henning 2005:3)

I used data obtained from my observations interactively alongside different types of interviews and questionnaires (Bryman 2004), to gather specific information additional to the literature review, with reference to preparation to transition from school to work in Oman. The information aspires to bridge gaps in the literature in response to the research question. I involved the stakeholders at as many levels as possible, to get breadth through a variety of data and to regard everyone's viewpoint. Language concerns included that the students' and the majority of lecturers' second language were used. The reality that issues could rise with timing, and given that students have vocabulary issues, quantitative measuring instruments were used with them, and interviews and open-ended questionnaires with the adults, to be target-specific (Yin 1984). Furthermore, using a single method weakens research, so probing the views generated with diverse instruments allowed the study to reach reliable outcomes. Recording meanings revealed patterns which provided a holistic perspective of the topic.

Studying the preparation of students in a foundation course, a base has been laid for further research on streamlining school to work transitions in the Sultanate of Oman.

3.3.1 The pilot study

The evidence from the pilot study kept the research on track because amending the research tools improved the format and outcomes. The piloting aimed to ensure that questions are

understood and functional. It also provided the interviewer with experience in interviewing (Bryman 2004), both in conducting them and writing up the data. The pilots helped me to ensure that the language was clear, since English was either a foreign or a second language for most participants. The feedback also confirmed that the methodologies were suitable to the content of the study.

The students' questionnaires were quantitative in nature and accumulated information on their perspective of the EFL courses attended at Ibri CT, their command of English, learning, personal development, culture and their perceptions of work prospects. I piloted the self-completion questionnaire with seven students in their final semester here. The piloting warranted that the students understand the content and grasp how to approach and complete questionnaires. The length was appropriate to the timing for the task, about 40 minutes per session. I simplified item 9, a double-barrelled question, and made changes to the wording and sequence of items 14 and 23 upon the analysis. I initially thought the questionnaires would sufficiently deal with the students' views, but the pilot pointed to gaps in the information, so I generated and added the structured students' interviews as additional instrument. They presented data but did not allow respondents freedom of expression, so I incorporated interviews to acquire more information, but time was an issue. The group discussions, involving one of my classes of 20 students, resulted from this need to ensure sound outcomes, identified during the piloting process.

The questionnaires for the staff were piloted with two Omani lecturers in another city. I chose people representative of the sample employed in the study to pilot the instruments, but ensured that they were not part thereof (Bryman 2004). Their responses to and feedback on the questionnaire, lead to changes to the wording, to minimise bias. I also changed aspects of

the sequence to support a thematic approach, and added 'Why?' to quite a few questions to eliminate double-barrelling and increase understanding. These questions forced the lecturers to reflect on their responses, and provided additional interview discussion topics.

I noticed that the instruments provided a large volume of data, but I never opted to remove questions for fear of incomplete information. I also believe qualitative studies always have room for another opinion, even after the goal seems to have been met. This resulted in time-related issues in writing up and making sense of the raw material. The respondents who do not necessarily share my passion on the topic could lose interest, and just deal with questions to please, rather than provide sincere opinions, when time is an issue. This type of response would jeopardise the findings of the study.

3.3.2 Validity, reliability and generalisability

Research adds to progression in tertiary institutions. However, reliability, replication and validity are criteria incorporated into studies to assess the wider application of quality and rigour in social research (Mason 2006).

I aspired for this study to provide reliable results through accurately recorded and reproduced research and views, but the researcher is personally involved in the project (Henning 2005), which can result in deficiencies (Mercer 2007). The researcher's own values and reflections, the human factor, is always present, especially in social sciences, where people and how they live and express themselves impact on the research:

> …each person who conducts observational research brings his or her distinctive talents and limitations to the enterprise; …

> (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:112)

Bias can occur through decisions as fundamental as the methods and themes a researcher prefers, includes or disregards in the study, judgements about observations and experiences, what one thinks statements mean, and what to record. The research approach and focus, respondent arrogance, delusions, fantasies, even lies, based on social forces such as pressure to conform, and fear of conflict, or embarrassment (Bryman 2004; Henning 2005; Mercer 2007) also affect the truthfulness and applicability of data.

Blunders jeopardise results (Mercer 2007). I applied various qualitative and quantitative methodologies and incorporated large populations for varied opinions, to back-up and protect the validity of the data as the study progressed, rather than purely because cross-checking is expected at this level. Triangulation was acquired through different types of questionnaires, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, and group discussions. Multi-methods achieve broader results which advance impartiality and build confidence about the validity of the findings (Bryman 2004; Denzin & Lincoln 2003). In this study, triangulation helped to connect and control the accuracy of the data and findings.

Interviews are purposeful discussions but bias jeopardises validity. Participants must understand that honesty is more important than trying to provide desirable responses, hiding information, or pleasing the interviewer (Bryman 2004; Mason 2006). People's capacities to conceptualise, remember, and articulate, influence responses. Henning (2005) warns that bias-free research design cannot exist. As a member of the setting at Ibri CT, I remain cognisant of personal bias since my culture, opinions and expectations cannot be isolated from my approach to my research. Data from the questionnaires and in-depth conversations with students and staff provided me with views and facts which helped to counteract some of the bias I carry as a less than objective reader, observer, researcher, and human being.

Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions generated from the research. The original recordings and transcripts as well as the reports and interpretations are available to be accessed by professionals. I aimed to create a relaxed atmosphere in the data-collecting process to let everyone feel their input is valued and that they should freely express their real opinions. This approach assists with power-issues and distrust, which can result in partiality in data. The adults were given copies of the written accounts of their responses to allow them to make comments and change their minds (Denzin & Lincoln 2003; Mason 2006). No changes occurred, but significant discussions followed. To ensure validity, I also consulted with members of the College Council, the dean and the head of quality assurance, as college gatekeepers to ensure accuracy.

Research methodology is subject to slip-ups caused by the human factor, but reliability, supported by truthful research methods and techniques, such as coding reliability, basic, preventable issues with tools, and loss of data or details promote consistency (Bryman 2004; Mason 2006). Reliability and generalisation are concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable by someone else if the researcher exposes the procedures used. A case study is not replicable (Bryman 2004; Mercer 2007), but I diligently noted the methodologies followed, thoughts, even advice, in my research diary, to support possible repetition. I wanted to produce truthful results which others could use without reserve.

Generalisability is tested by the readers, as they determine whether the information interests them. Research should be generalisable beyond the specific research context (Bryman 2004; Denzin & Lincoln 2003) to ensure that results are useful. The collected data are specific to this case, however, lecturers and administrators at tertiary institutions with analogous contexts and conditions, such as in other Arab states and Third World countries, could expect

similar results with comparable studies (Yin 1994). These results apply to the youth in transition where globalisation threatens fossilised developmental and occupational patterns. Stakeholders in institutions analogous to Ibri CT would benefit from the conclusions which can be used as guidelines to streamline school to work transitions in the global era.

3.3.3 The basis for participant selection

To comprehensively contend with the issues in the literature review, students attending the foundation course at Ibri CT and their lecturers of EFL at the college completed separate questionnaires. Student participants were selected based on their progress within the system, as well as willingness to participate.

The male and female students who completed questionnaires were selected randomly. Some participants were enrolled in the FP while others had started their specialised studies. English is a foreign language, so closed questionnaires were used to assist the students' low levels of English proficiency. The questionnaires also ensured that a larger and more representative sample could be used. Questionnaires were completed by 29.4% students in the pre-elementary and elementary level, 62.4% in intermediate and advanced, and 8.2% in specialisation, representing a cross-section of the EFL students, of whom 76.5% had attended college for less than a year. The same apply to the interviewed students who were in advanced, intermediate and elementary classes, randomly allotted to me, for examining oral skills, by the head of department. The twenty students in the discussion group were all in my regular pre-elementary EFL speaking-class. They participated in five groups of four students each, according to the existing seating arrangement in the class.

All 30 EFL lecturers were invited to partake in the study. I provided each of them with a copy of my research proposal as well as the open-ended questionnaire via the college intranet, and received seventeen responses. Interviews were then conducted with seven of them, based on their replies. Participation was quite representative. Male and female lecturers of various ages from seven different nationalities responded. Their teaching experience was just short of 15 years each, and exceeding 8.25 years per lecturer at tertiary levels, on average. The lecturers had taught in Oman for an average of just over 4.5 years, indicating their familiarity with and expertise in teaching, and their knowledge of the students at Ibri CT and Arab culture (Appendix 8). Lecturers who failed to return the questionnaires were eliminated from the process on that basis.

Interviews were conducted with five non-teaching staff members at Ibri CT. I also consulted with the dean and head of QA on various occasions. Additional interviews took place with six members of the community, including the parents of four students at Ibri CT.

3.3.4 The methodologies and schedule for gathering information

I shared the details of the research and the planned methodologies with the College Council of Ibri CT in September 2009. After getting permission to continue, I frequently consulted with the dean to ensure compliance with the regulations of the Ministry of Manpower and with college policies and procedures.

I conducted the research from my ontological position as a practitioner. Since Bryman (2004) states that 'social ontological assumptions and commitments feed into and thus emphasise the ways in which the research questions are formulated and investigations are

carried out', I engaged members of staff who are involved with learning-related activities at Ibri CT, together with students, parents and friends as the population for data-collection. My arguing is built on the ethnographic, stressing increased cultural understanding between different social groups, to capture and describe a 'way of life' within a system from first-hand experience and exploration of the setting (Denzin & Lincoln 2003; Henning 2004). I regard quantitative surveys and experiments alone as too constrictive to embody this culturally founded case study. I thus opted to use questionnaires as well as interviews as main research tools optimise qualitative as well as quantitative methods. Methodologies and participants were furthermore selected to complement and be compatible with the work ethics and approach followed at college.

The data-gathering started within two months after permission was granted, and I managed to keep to the schedule (Appendix 6) as planned. I firstly piloted the students' questionnaire with seven students. The following week I piloted the questionnaires with two lecturers and conducted their interviews the following day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. I then conducted my first unstructured interview with a friend in Ibri.

After sending out the questionnaires to the staff members, I distributed the questionnaires to the first group of 25 students. I immediately recorded the results onto the data-tables I had prepared by converting the questionnaires into tabular format. After completing the next two sets, a total of 78 student questionnaires were collected and tabulated to enable the analysis. These results lead to the interviews. The group discussions with students followed later.

I tabulated the data from the 17 questionnaires after receipt, where-after the rest of the interviews with the adults followed. I recorded the interviews and made transcripts at the

first opportunity, which was time-consuming but useful. I noted observations, conversations, interviews and interpretations as they happened. A large volume of information was collected to ensure that a clear picture is formed (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). During this period I also conducted the group discussions with the 20 students, after which the final interviews with adults took place.

Using closed-question questionnaires in combination with structured interviews, and analysing this data quantitatively gave rise to triangulation and validation of the qualitative research methods employed. Convenience sampling was used when the opportunity arose because, as a college lecturer, I have access to specific people (Bryman 2004). It was not possible to take time off work, so I could not commit to a detailed timetable. I but scheduled activities around the windows in my workload, and when the participants were present and able to spare me time.

I stopped interviewing as a matter of practicality when I had no further questions to ask in relation to the study within the set parameters, and once I had dealt with the methodologies as planned. The situation might otherwise have occurred where one wants to engage in 'one more interview, just to make sure'. I am convinced I have done all I had to, to gain the relevant information. Additional needs will have to be dealt with at the next opportunity.

Once I started writing the thesis I had to again consult with some respondents to confirm details where perspectives were lost due to progression of time. These conversations were focused discussions dealing with specific detail, rather than 'new interviews', so they were of a different nature and regarded as another opportunity to ensure accuracy in the writing process rather than a shortcoming.

3.3.4.1 Observation

Strictly speaking, my observations cannot be labelled as research methodology. They are part of my routine as a lecturer at Ibri CT, but mentioned, since they influenced my decisions pertaining to this study. Teachers almost naturally 'observe', as part of the job, to enable assessment, and this case study originated in this didactic activity.

I habitually record incidents, experiences and comments in a diary. I often refer to these entries whenever my feedback is needed. This diary is biased since it deals with personal understandings, choices and responses as they occur, without purposeful planning according to a specific observation schedule (Mason 2006). It logs events, and contains personal notes rather than formal descriptions linked to a specific agenda, as scientific incidence diaries do. These records reveal that during the second semester of 2008-2009, a new member of staff was at loggerheads with a class I previously taught. The other lecturer was an older female teacher too, but both parties found it hard to conform to the task. I turned to the literature on teaching, learning and culture, while observing the interactions between students and EFL staff more intensely. Since the students regarded the American lecturer's methodologies and expectations as 'unrealistic demands', I concluded that the lecturer followed an individualist approach, while the students (and I) are from collectivist cultures.

The complaints from these stakeholders led me to question how lecturers' intentions differ from students' expectations at college levels. The research question developed from the task of finding the purpose and aims of tertiary education, and how they support the school to work transition of the students. My 'observation' sparked the research, the literature provided the theory, and the conversations uncovered issues which determined the boundaries for the questionnaires and interviews, and steered the course of this case study at Ibri CT.

3.3.4.2 Questionnaires

Anonymous, self-completion questionnaires were used to collect personal data and opinions on processes, subjects and preferences. While not all questions require discussion (Bryman 2004), collecting statistics, such as on nationality, qualifications, work experience and age is time-consuming. There may moreover be reluctance to frankly reveal some information.

The questionnaires for adults were compiled simultaneous with the student questionnaires to ensure that these tools correspond in terms of approach and content. The students' first language was not used, so once the closed questions for the students' questionnaire were compiled, I had them reviewed by an Arab-speaking colleague. Based on his comments I edited the wording and sequencing of questions as appropriate, to support the students to get the gist of the questions. For instance, in this culture the word 'worker' is associated with the term 'labourer', so I used 'employee' instead. I also added two questions (4 and 7) to determine levels of proficiency, and establish the importance of studying at college for future employability to the original batch to total 25 (Appendix 1). I aimed for a plain format to support trouble-free reading, since the students struggle when presented with a layout that they experience as lengthy or complicated.

I personally distributed the questionnaires of 25 closed questions each to the 78 students on three different occasions, since they have different levels of proficiency. These response rates were 100%, as can be expected from convenience sampling. Interviewer presence can result in anxiety (Bryman 2004), but the students at Ibri CT are used to interacting with teachers and often deal with questionnaire-style tasks. They were thus accustomed to the format and handled the questionnaires with relative ease. I instantly counted the responses

and entered the choices into the data-table. The results generated by these questionnaires shaped the questions used in the students' interviews and discussion groups.

The 30 EFL-staff members were requested to answer their self-completion questionnaires (Appendix 5) in hard copy to ensure anonymity. The response-rate was 56.67%. Quite a few lecturers discussed aspects of the study which deals with expectations, attitudes, perceptions, professional commitment, responsibilities, personal development and communication at Ibri CT whenever an opportunity arose. Questionnaires can be limiting and rigid rather than transparent, but layers of useful information were gathered here.

3.3.4.3 Interviews

Individual perspectives were collected through interviews with adults and students, as well as in student discussion groups. Interviews are just another conversation, but have a rationale:

> It seems that everyone, not just researchers, relies on the interview, as a universal mode of systematic inquiry, as a source of information, with the assumption that interviewing results in true and accurate pictures of the respondents' selves and lives. The interview is a negotiated text, a site where power, gender, race, and class intersect.
> The interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. It is not a neutral tool, for at least two people create the reality of the interview situation.
>
> (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:63, 48)

A standard set of broad interview questions (Appendix 2) were initially developed to expand on the literature review and issues resulting from the research setting.

Interviews produce the type of information social researchers are interested in, especially when used as one of several methods. An interviewer has to ask apt questions and listen well to the interviewees to get fair and full accounts, understand how the participants feel, and generate useful data (Bryman 2004; Mason 2006). Interviewing was the obvious way to collect some of the data in this study on the preparation for the transition to work too. I used different types of interviews with the different groups at different stages of the research.

I made voice recordings and generated the tape-scripts as the interviewing advanced. I summarised every interview from these scripts and provided the summary to the respondents for verification and modification, to ensure that I fully understood their perspectives on the themes and issues of the study, as discussed. Unstructured interviews were conducted off the cuff with various adults to obtain specific information when the opportunity arose. These were not recorded, but were summarised and typed immediately after they took place.

Adult-interviews

Semi-structured, discourse-oriented interviews, based on their individual responses to the questionnaires, were used to clarify some replies, allow the seven lecturers to add to their original notions, and to make suggestions. While they explained their views, I listened, observed, and decided where to delve deeper into emerging issues (Henning 2005), to understand and record their social and teaching experiences at Ibri CT. The challenge was to record as fully and explicitly as possible, to justify decisions made about the study (Mason 2006; Yin 1994), and maintain the participants' intentions with their responses.

From the onset, the data analysis was incorporated in the research process. I formulated the interview questions after coding the data from every questionnaire, to get additional information as gaps were identified. These one-on-one interviews were primarily used to pursue themes and issues which related to the literature study. The interviews provided participants with the opportunity to frankly explain how they experience and understand people and processes, including their occupational prospects and perception of responsibility, learning, education, the curriculum, and college procedures. The objective was to generate truthful views on teaching and learning at tertiary levels in support of the transition to work through this case study (Yin 1994). The interviews generated a wealth of useful information

on and descriptions of training practices, policies, and pros and cons of the system as well as about the challenges and joys of teaching and learner-assessment and -development faced by the educators.

Informal conversations with colleagues, parents and acquaintances at the chance (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) resulted in unstructured interviews which produced in-depth views. A name list was initially compiled (integrated into Appendix 6), but interviews with others who could provide specific details about the culture and the ways 'things are done and perceived' in Oman were added spontaneously. I let the 'experts get on with conversations' until questions I had about topics were covered, to generate broad understanding alongside critical details of the transition to work in Oman. Each interview lasted between 20 and 40 minutes.

Student interviews

Because of the time constraint a structured interview frame was used with the students to establish general patterns, in addition to data collected quantitatively. This format supported accessibility and opinions complemented the student questionnaires. One-on-one interviews would have been time-consuming and stressful for both parties.

The students are put through English oral or 'speaking examinations' as a requirement of the college bylaws. Each student is interviewed individually to assess their verbal proficiency. During my sessions with the three different groups, I asked each student four questions related to their studies at college, focused on information needed for this study.

I interviewed 73 students, using the same four questions comparable to an oral questionnaire with each group, to support reliability. The questions were short and simple, and brief replies

were expected, so the interviews lasted about five minutes each (Appendix 3). The objective was to establish the students' opinions on their future and their perception of the college's role therein. No transcripts were made, but each reply was immediately entered onto pre-prepared tables. I started coding these replies directly after the interviews, to support data analysis.

3.3.4.4 Group discussions

Group discussions were used in addition to the structured interviews to get the students' opinions on aspects of their college experiences. This style of conversation was particularly valuable since this is an oral society and students are at ease with group work in lessons.

Group discussions, analogous to focus groups offered the students a shared experience and supported the study's cultural inference (Bryman 2004). The students experienced the activity as a normal speaking class with 20 students of similar age, background and English proficiency. They worked in fours to enable me to control group dynamics and ensure everyone had the opportunity to speak (Bryman 2004). I did not use interpreters, since the knowledge that a stranger has full comprehension of their discussions could be inhibiting for beginners and have a more distracting effect on the dynamics than the linguistic limitations.

Each of the five groups received two or three of the eleven questions to brainstorm and answer (Appendix 4). They deliberated in Arabic and presented their combined opinions in English. The students were told that their views were more important than the grammar used. The process took place over a two-hour class session, but the group discussion activity was executed in 20 minutes. The questions were straight forward and the time limit ensured they kept to the stipulated topics. I moreover asked for their projections of what 'other students' may think, to depersonalise the activity. The students were forthcoming about issues, and

shared their ideas and expectations. A few students were less interested and tried to either dominate or suppress others' views, but they were manageable. The research benefitted from the explicit data delivered by these discussions.

3.3.5 The methods of data analysis

The data was analysed to establish to what extent the research methodologies supported the realisation of the aims of the study. To minimise loss of detail the analysis started directly after collecting and summarising the data. A combination of quantitative and qualitative advances were employed in this study, and therefore in the analysis, based on the blending of the research instruments. Sifting and coding the information from the questionnaires and the transcripts were laborious, but analysing became more focused after the collection ended and distance developed between researcher and data (Bryman 2004).

I matched the data per instrument and coded it against the research question and its aims, to ensure the initial focus of the study was pursued. The final analysis, which disclosed the conclusions, followed after comparing the categories elicited by the compiled data-tables. The analysis was time-consuming and often overwhelming, since one unnecessarily repeats exercises for fear of excluding nuances.

The resulting graphs and data-charts were created in Microsoft Word. I considered using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), but decided against it once the data was collected. Engaging in a methodology I am uncomfortable with and that is not vital to the processes could jeopardise the study. I consequently calculated percentages and constructed tables to allow comparison of results and arrive at conclusions, a celebrated didactic practice.

Researchers can never be totally neutral towards their work, but using the different tools and methods ensured fair outcomes. The results of the data-analysis convinced me that the tools were as effective as envisaged, and that the information complements the study.

3.3.5.1 Analysis of the adults' responses

The research question and sub-questions required information from the students about their expectations of and experience at Ibri CT. Some students completed questionnaires, others had interviews, and the final group participated in discussions to present their views on the transition to work today.

Quantitative methods were employed to collect basic data and help uncover the phenomena (Bryman 2004). The results derived from the qualitative tools were used to substantiate the information. I entered the data from the closed questionnaires into tables on the computer immediately after collection, keeping the numbering system and headings I used to organise the content of the different research instruments, in place. I calculated percentages based on the responses to the questionnaire, and created tables to enable comparisons of quantities and determine the spread of the responses. I then began classifying the information, noting tendencies highlighted by the data. I persistently used question marks where I identified gaps for follow-up. I formulated the interview questions for the students based on these breaks and conducted them. I added these results to the body of collected data in similar fashion. Once the results were merged interpreting seemed easier, but more questions emerged. I considered semi-structured interviewing, but finally opted for group discussions.

The data generated by the group discussions were interpreted qualitatively, similar to the lecturers' data, and initially kept separate from the interpreted quantitative data.

3.3.5.2 Analysis of the lecturers' responses

The research question requires exploring the support students get during the transition to work at Ibri CT today.

A large volume of qualitative data has been collected. A total of 17 (56.67%) open-ended, self-completed questionnaires were returned from 30 EFL lecturers at Ibri CT, and 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with different adults. To find reliability and uniformity, to verify, systematise, assign codes, categorise, classify, interpret and come to relevant conclusions, and make sense of the raw material, required a special effort.

The data generated from the lecturers' questionnaires pivots the analysis. The information was initially grouped and presented consistent with the themes in the questionnaire. Each theme was used as the basis for an argument with reference to each of the research questions in order to become a finding. I engaged in additional conversations and interviewed 18 adults based on questions resulting from this data. These views and concerns contributed to the study as an additional instrument, but also to ensure clarity and validity. The perspectives provided evidence in the continuing arguments of the researcher's views and the emerging knowledge claims (Henning 2005), which focused on communication and curricula.

The lecturers' responses were transferred into separate tables according to the themes, numbers, headings and sub-headings I used when I constructed the questionnaire. Based on the questions asked, I split the different responses into smaller units. I methodically 'named categories' per unit and congregated the related ideas (Henning 2005). I printed in different colours, starting with black for females, and red for male opinions. Gender is no real concern

in this study, but offered a starting point. I coloured related data according to the categories noticed, and grouped the fragments that contained correlating codes together.

Aspects resulting from the lecturers' questionnaires were discussed with the specific respondents in informal interviews. I shaded similarities in these transcripts to match the previous patterns. The data was merged per measuring instrument according to themes, each on its own page. I printed the datasets per tool in different formats at various stages, and added notes and remarks as I progressed. I reread the transcripts and original responses to uncover differences, parallels, consistencies and categories. I calculated the percentages of responses to the questionnaires to sustain comparisons, and merged the two sets of data collected from the adult respondents. I often returned to the original records to ensure that views were accurately accounted for and that I kept to the meaning intended by the participants. Codes and categories were continuously added as I identified them. I also conducted renewed conversations with colleagues and friends as I compared and reflected, to clarify and confirm data and perceptions. This analysing system worked well, because by rereading I got to know the content, and snippets of data began to make more sense together. Categories were refined to identify relationships, patterns and themes, until I felt confident enough to add the data generated by the students' responses.

3.3.5.3 Conclusions from the combined analysed datasets

The students' and lecturers' datasets were merged during the final analysis. A special effort was required to categorise, code, classify, verify and interpret this large volume of material from these disparate groups, especially since quantitative and qualitative data were combined. A fresh description resulted.

The data were organised corresponding to the format of the questionnaires, which were kept in both datasets. It simplified comparisons since the themes were clearly discernible in each set. I could question the relationships between the datasets to establish what was omitted, to gather additional information and refine the analysis. The data from the group discussions, which was the final tool used linked and bonded the results of the two sets of participants, and enlighten the research on the students' needs during this transition.

Knowing that the young people think the skills they learn in the FP influence their occupational future facilitated comparisons with the data provided by the adults on how they think the youth should view the transition to work. The generated data connected with existing knowledge about the topic, to 'see the whole' rather than 'we think' and 'they think', which concluded what the datasets reveal together and about each other (Henning 2005). This information enabled a clearer picture of expectations. Conclusions could be drawn which answered the research questions, filled some of the gaps in the literature, functioned as guidelines to support the streamlining of preparing the students for the transition at Ibri CT, and thus led to achieving the aims of the research.

3.3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical awareness builds relationships between researchers and participants in social studies. Ethics includes the need to be clear about operating a moral research practice at every stage of the study (Mason 2006). I deemed it important to execute my research in ways which participants as well as members of this society would view as appropriate.

Participants in qualitative research offer personal views involving people's lives, so an ethical code needs to be maintained to protect privacy, identities and the right to confidentiality. Comments recorded in semi-structured interviews with adults are confidential, participants remain anonymous, and views were published in ways that do not identify or compromise anyone. Participants were allowed to add or extract information at any stage of the research, and could refuse to answer particular questions, or withdraw from the study at any stage (Appendix 7).

I explained the nature of the research, emphasising anonymity and stressing that students who did not want to participate in the questionnaires were free to leave. All the students remained and participated. I did not explain the aims and objectives of the research to students who took part in the structured interviews due to the time limit in the one-on-one examination situation. The students are aware that I conduct research with permission from the College Council and the head of ELC, the gatekeepers who approved the questions used.

The students who took part in the group discussions were oblivious of the collection of information during the activity. I did not want them scared in advance by negative thoughts of possible consequences, such as being reported for their opinions, if they perceived their ideas as 'daring'. This arrangement also limited sampling errors because they did not stage the debates. I gave feedback to ensure accuracy in the transcribing to confirm their responses once the information was recorded. I explained the rationale behind the exercise and ensured them that their opinions as a group, representative of all students, were of interest and that names are not mentioned. They were content.

I also offered confidentiality and anonymity to the participating lecturers to warrant frank responses. However, I had to compile their details for recordkeeping and feedback purposes. No-one objected when I asked their permission afterwards to label their responses. I stressed that identities would not be disclosed. A note of gratitude and a copy of the document compiled from the raw data were subsequently sent to every participant, for verification that their views were portrayed accurately. I also provided each interviewee with a copy of their contribution for commentary. No-one voiced any concerns.

Although this research asks direct questions about processes and procedures in a government institution, potential for misconception is invariable. Some participants may want to convey specific messages to audiences, or stretch the truth, which can bring about inadequate data. For example, Omanis are less willing to provide information to strangers when they think it could portray their country, community, college or family in a negative light, but distorted accounts can influence the data and thus affect the results of the study. People may also feel bound by power relationships, obliged to participate, or omit particulars they assume I have, due to the location we share, as colleagues, or they may simply be biased (Mercer 2007).

Researchers are responsible for the quality of their research and the maintenance of practices and behaviour appropriate to the community in which they operate. Every effort was made to ensure that the parameters set by the bylaws of the colleges of technology as well as the University of Leicester's Research Code of Conduct were honoured, to ensure proper ethical conduct in this study. At the onset I approached the college dean and delivered a presentation to the College Council for official permission to engage in research. I provided each member with a written summary of the proposed study beforehand. The proposal was discussed, and accepted by the College Council of Ibri CT in their Meeting no 1 of 2009/ 2010 held on 28

September 2009. The condition was that I keep the dean informed of my progress, which happened every eight to ten weeks (Appendix 6).

3.4 Conclusion

This study was undertaken to inform the research problem and answer the related questions. The research methodology was identified and justified in this chapter. The basis for participant selection, schedule for gathering information, data analysis, and the ethical considerations pertaining to the study were discussed.

The accounts of lecturers and students in the college were thus probed to recognise their personal, academic and social expectations and accomplishments at Ibri CT. These views from the stakeholders were collected, studied, worked and modified to assist with the process to find ways to help streamline the transition from school for the Omani youth in the face of threats associated with globalisation in the workplace.

The details of the data analysis follow in chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results of the data analysis

The youth enrol and study at colleges to acquire skills to meet local and global occupational demands and be employable today (Eraut 2004; Goodwin 2007). The case study at Ibri CT, a tertiary institution in the Sultanate of Oman, aspires to uncover ways to streamline the preparation of the students for this modern-day transition from school to work.

Chapter 4 explains the results of the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data derived from the participants through the research tools in this study. The datasets were merged, worked, reworked and tabled for referencing and comparison of the information. The chapter deals with how adults and students view the time spent at Ibri CT, given their future in the industry. It embraces the participants' views on student-lecturer activities and expectations of studying English, the foundation phase curriculum and current employment prospects.

This section involves aspects related to the curriculum as reported by both students and lecturers, while the concluding component presents input by the lecturers on student support. The data provided by students heading towards the workplace is presented first. It demonstrates their positive bearing on the lecturers and courses. The adolescents consider English proficiency as essential to securing jobs in future. The instructors stressed that they enjoy teaching adolescents, but warned that the students are not focussed academically, and that disciplinary issues tend to inhibit scholarly competence. The results of the data analysis found differences as well as similarities in the views of the stakeholders, and corresponding to the themes and issues related to the transition from school to work, identified in chapter 2. The outcomes arrived at by the research on modern-day transitions from school to work as experienced at Ibri CT, are discussed in chapter 5.

4.1 Introduction

Tertiary education is responsible for the academic and social preparation of adolescents on their way to the workplace. Training programmes therefore have to suitably prepare these young adults to deal with the demands of globalisation.

Ibri CT aims to support students during their transition to work (Bylaws 2007), but the stakeholders may have dissimilar views, based on their distinct life-experience and cultures. The transition gets streamlined when teacher intensions and student expectations align. To this end, and corresponding with the research question, the data pursued through the closed-question questionnaires, structured interviews and group discussions, centred on students' views on the aims and purpose of time spent at college. In the open-ended questionnaires with 17 EFL-lecturers and 18 semi-structured interviews, I therefore asked the adults: Why should students enrol, and what should each group of stakeholders do at college in preparation of entering the occupational field today?

The mass of information generated through the research instruments were tabulated. It facilitated comparisons which illuminated the complexities of the transition from school to work furthered by globalisation as well as the challenges facing the Omani youth today.

4.2 The analysis of the data

This chapter provides the analysis of the data collected in this research on the schooling of the youth in transition, in relation to global workplace demands.

The data of students' and adults' experiences at Ibri CT are portrayed to uncover common elements as well as differences. These findings reveal how the intentions of the students, lecturers and the curriculum at Ibri CT can be aligned to streamline the preparation of the Omani youth to transition to work, particular to globalisation in this cultural setting.

4.2.1 The students

Young people enrol at colleges to gain occupational skills after secondary school, but their expectations and ideas about the experience may vary. To expose their views on the transition to work, information was collected through 85 self-completion questionnaires, 73 structured interviews and group discussions with five groups of four students each. These instruments probed the students' occupational aspirations as well as their reasons for joining.

According to responses to the structured interviews, some students are uncertain of which course of action to pursue after their studies. The students in the group discussions stressed financial gain as a driving force to pursue a job and engage in additional training. The responses confirm that adolescents are ill-informed about available career options as well as their occupational future. They need assistance with the transition, but are not likely to seek support (Ashton & Sung 2002; Eraut 2004; Vickerstaff 2003).

4.2.1.1 Student views of English classes

English proficiency affords linguistic infrastructure worldwide (Burbules & Torres 2000). In Oman, English is central to study programmes, but only used occasionally. Students' English aptitude is quite low at Ibri CT, as substantiated by the fact that an in-house TOEFL-score of 350 is prerequisite for the students to advance to the specialisation courses (Bylaws 2007).

Furthermore about 60% of the students gain placement in elementary levels, at every intake while just more than 35% qualify for more advanced levels and less than 5% manage the set TOEFL-target (see 4.2.2.2), so English is regarded as a foreign language here (Al-Husseini 2004). However, globalisation is reaching local agencies, for example through foreign labour in the Omani oil industry, and teachers from various countries working at institutions.

The research confirms that the students accept the presence and qualities of the lecturers regardless of their nationality, qualifications or gender. Almost 86% of students admitted in the questionnaires that they like studying at Ibri CT (Appendix 8). **Group 1** acknowledged in the group discussions that some students struggle to understand either or both the lecturer and the learning materials because they lack English proficiency when starting at the college. Low English ability results in miscommunication which can harm student-teacher relationships (Atkinson 2000; Gibson 2000). Students can lose heart due to shortfalls, and teachers can miss-interpret the students' subsequent behaviour as aggressive or demonstrating poor ability (Richardson 2005; Vince 2001), as mentioned by **Lecturer b** in a questionnaire. She said 'some students should not really be here and this is disruptive'. She confirmed in a follow-up interview that she focuses on capable students, and therefore gives up on those she 'thinks' have less interest and ability, validating the view of this study that young Omanis must be empowered to brace the offensive of globalisation on their job-related ideals.

Colleges extend the academic abilities and personal attitudes unleashed in prior instruction (Lawy & Bloomer 2003). Almost 80% of the respondents to the student questionnaire said studying English at college is important for their future. This view was confirmed by **Group 1** in the group discussions, who acknowledged differences between college and school, stating that the college English programme is 'amazing'. Using such recently acquired terms

confirm that they approve of and benefit from the instruction. Almost equal percentages of students liked (38.9%) and disliked (40%) studying English at school, according to their response to the questionnaire, while 87.1% enjoy studying English at college, and only 7% dislike these classes (table 4.3). **Group 1** revealed that they enjoy the spread of international teachers of both genders teaching them at college, the freedom through choices offered, and the support from classmates who are better at English. The last remark may refer to group activities, which were not used in schools, and which they may view as 'legal cheating'. The students in **Group 2** endorsed the streaming into 'four levels' (ability groups) after sitting a placement test, saying it 'is good' (suits them). This view is in tandem with Barker (2004), that an achieving approach to teaching is competitive and ego-oriented.

According to Al-Issa (2005), grammar is valued since it is taught extensively in Arab language studies at school. Although **Group 2**'s views could be age-related-boasting rather than realistic assessment of English classes, it confirms positive student attitude, reported by the lecturers in their questionnaires. For example, **Group 1** regarded some lecturers as 'good teachers' since they 'speak very good English' and 'correct the students' mistakes', while **Group 2** said the lecturers offer enjoyable 'speaking, reading, writing and listening (activities, some of which) are easy', but 'some of the grammar is difficult'. **Group 2** emphasised that children in schools do not understand English and do not appreciate studying it. They said 'Omanis have to (be able to) speak English', and students' English improves at college 'because they speak it a lot since the teachers cannot speak Arabic'. According to **Parent 1**, schoolteachers are Arabs. He explained some of them are from North Africa, making English their third language after French, so they do or can not necessarily prioritise it. He continued that academic excellence at schools means 'copying exercises to fill a book'.

Just over 20% of students who completed questionnaires were uncertain, but among the remaining 80%, the division between those who liked and disliked studying English at school was fairly equal, with about 40% in each group.

Table 4.1: Data showing the perceptions of the students who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT: Students view studying English more enjoyable at college than at school

	English is an enjoyable subject at **school**	English is an enjoyable subject at **college**
Strongly disagree	8.2%	1.1%
Disagree	31.8%	5.9%
Not sure	21.2%	5.9%
Agree	36.5%	50.6%
Strongly agree	2.4%	36.5%

More than 85% of the students enjoy studying English at college, while just 7% dislike English classes here. The opinions of the 15.3% students, who alleged their command of English had not improved, could be true views, based on feelings of insecurity studying at college. It could, however, be bravado, to show by way of the questionnaire that they think they are clever anyway, and the college and the foreign lecturers have no influence on their academic abilities. It could furthermore be apprehension that I will report their views, and have their class hours increased.

According to **Group 5**, there are students who face 'difficulties'. They did not elaborate, but maintained that 'some students do not like studying', or do 'not obey rules', which makes it hard for others to attend with them. They said some 'make mistakes' (cause trouble?) in class, implying they are regarded as a negative influence. They may refer to students who could not enrol for their preferred courses due to increased student numbers but still attend here, those who do not like their lecturers, timetable, group, level, or those from rural villages who have accommodation or transport problems, since **Group 1** reported 'we live far'.

4.2.1.2 Student perceptions of lecturers and their views

Students have to accept the new experience and feel comfortable to progress to the desired levels of learning associated with adult occupational behaviour (Goodwin 2007). Research showed that lecturers think they know the students' language needs, but these are often not clear, so personal experience rather than standards inform trainers' opinions (Al-Husseini 2004). Some students are labelled as 'slow learners', for example by **Lecturer j** in the questionnaire. However, language barriers may cause the problem (Holden 2001). A learner should have a trusting relationship with the person providing knowledge, and sufficient confidence to make mistakes and be rectified without the risk of losing face or trust, or being ridiculed or offended in learning relationships (Ashton 2004).

The study had to establish the students' expectations of the college to compare them to the lecturers' views. Almost 86% of the students claimed in the questionnaires that their lecturers liked teaching them while 9.5% disagreed, corresponding with the view of Evans and Furlong (1997) that adolescents need to be liked. **Group 1** said 'some lecturers are bad teachers' and some classes are 'boring' and 'long' (endless), so students dislike attending. There will always be students who cannot stand their lecturers. However, **Group 2** declared that their lecturers want them 'to pass and become good engineers ' (employees) in future.

Youn (2000) reported that students realise they have to commit to learning, but cannot yet comprehend the requirements of the new learning environment, or the levels of support they can expect from lecturers and peers. Insecure students often do not know who to consult about their uncertainties (Lawy 2000). Lacking official communication channels, or information thereof, alongside accompanying language-related issues encourage students to label lecturers as uncaring. However, all the lecturers confirmed in their questionnaire that

they care about their students' progress. This matches the opinion of the 85.9% students who responded in the questionnaires that their lecturers liked teaching them.

Table 4.2: Data showing the perceptions of the students who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT: Students generally see their lecturers in a positive light

	Lecturers enjoy teaching you	Lecturers **care** about your academic progress	Lecturers want you to get good jobs in future
Strongly disagree	7.1%	5.9%	3.5%
Disagree	2.4%	12.9%	9.4%
Not sure	4.7%	4.7%	11.8%
Agree	54.1%	49.9%	31.8%
Strongly agree	31.8%	30.6%	43.5%

Also, 75.3% students think their lecturers want them to get good jobs in future. The results from these three items verify that the students do not query the lecturers' intentions (4.2.1.1).

While 76.5% students said in their questionnaire the lecturers care about their academic progress, 18.8% disagreed. Students may misinterpret the meaning of the term 'care' as 'give marks' solely to enable them to pass, and advance to the next level. Some may believe the lecturers are too strict, or rigid in their academic expectations and demands. If they expect of 'caring' lecturers to just 'give' marks, a view echoed in the group discussions, where **Group 5** explicitly stated that 'some teachers are very hard', this points towards the propensity of the impact of past learning experiences on the current context (Al-Husseini 2004).

4.2.1.3 Student anxiety

Former short-term memorisation practices and unrealistic fear of examinations have to be replaced by problem-solving- and critical learning skills, suitable to the workplace (Lawy 2000). However, learners tend to revert to previous experience, so some students lapse into former exam-related practices, including cheating (Al-Husseini 2004). Exceptional anxiety flaws oral activities, and slows down the development of reasoning skills, which are vital in the global world of work (Davenport & Prusak 1998).

Almost 38% of the students agreed to nervousness in class, while just over 48% disagreed and 14% were uncertain. Almost 31% admitted to nervousness during examinations, and just less than 39% denied it, while nearly 31% were not sure, or not willing to reply. This sudden rise in insecurity points towards a real fear of examinations among students. **Group 5** admitted to 'fear of teachers' alongside 'insufficient studying', and low rapport and application in lessons. Students suffer from high levels of anxiety, they lack confidence, and tests and examinations in English classes make them 'nervous', so they lose heart, 'and cheat' (2.4.3.3). These fears might be due to peer or family pressure, or personal drive to get a job amid the dread of unemployment, to financially contribute to the family's plight. Failing twice will terminate their studies immediately (Bylaws 2007), which complicates getting a job in this culture. Lecturers may not be aware of the extent of students' anxieties.

Young workers are treated as adults and expected to handle this trust with responsibility at work (Ashton & Sung 2002). **Lecturer o** claimed in his questionnaire that students expect college programmes to be difficult, but relevant and practical, to learn some English, acquire a specialisation, and gain the ability to earn a good salary. These developing adults have limited world-experience (Gibson et al 2000). They do not fully comprehend that adult behaviour is now expected. They get confused, and 'behave like secondary school children, talking and having fun in classes' as reported by **Lecturer j** in his interview.

The youth feel safe and confident when they are successful. They do not regard achievement in activities as hard work or 'formal learning' (Goodwin & O'Connor; Much 1999). However, **Lecturer k** stated that 'students prefer effortless activities to discipline, repetition, regulated participation, tough grammar exercises, or getting homework; and expectations do not match the time spent studying'. Some lecturers said students enjoy task-based group activities and a

competitive spirit, since they consider their courses as an opportunity to socialise. **Lecturers a, m** revealed in the questionnaires that 'females tend to enjoy writing activities while male students are more oral and persuasive', 'generating excuses and filing complaints'. They accurately observed that these adolescents attaining adult conduct want to have fun.

Workers should learn to build relationships with supervisors and colleagues and disseminate information to endure in the occupational race (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998). Discussing issues and searching for answers help students to apply their linguistic proficiency and develop communication and teamwork skills (Al-Husseini 2004). Diverse views between generations may hence support the acquiring of negotiating skills and the modification of academic standards. Socialising and reasoning with peers and lecturers in these ways provide the opportunity to transform, grow and progress towards adulthood as part of the current development task of the youth.

4.2.1.4 The students' views on employment

Young, aspiring workers are inexperienced and immature. They enrol for training to prepare them to handle the dynamics of the modern occupational world. They fantasise about their future roles as grown-ups (**Group 3, 4**), but need to gain adult behaviour standards alongside occupational skills (Vince 2001).

The population and social and economic establishments in Oman have not had much international exposure (see 2.4.1). Parents are not well-placed to advise their children about school to work transitions now. Lawy and Bloomer (2003) reported that children's transitions differ from those of their parents despite basic similarities. The same-age transition here did not previously include the simultaneous transition from school to work, given the country's

economic and educational history. Today's youth face a complex transition, and their parents cannot fully appreciate their predicament, since they are just not aware of the extent of the issues which they never experienced (see 2.4.2). In their questionnaires **Lecturers a, b, i, j, l** identified shortfalls in academic drive and interest alongside uncertainty among students. Pro-educational values are not instilled in the culture yet (see 2.4.1). **Parent 2** admitted in an interview that continuing education is 'something to do until a job comes up'. He said students attend college since they 'managed the entrance requirements', 'everyone else does it', and the 'family needs income', rather than because they aspire to gain education and skills. **Parent 3** likewise reported that 'the youth depend on the badly informed grapevine'.

The students' attitudes towards their future occupational prospects were reflected in their questionnaires. Only 3.5% of the students said jobs are not important, while 81.1% regarded a job as very important, and believe their college studies will support their efforts (table 4.3), 35.3% of whom said jobs are only important because of the salary earned. Paralleling the view of Layder et al (1991), the students in **Group 4** agreed that a good job is important. During the interviews (Appendix 3) 94% of the students said they aim to get jobs consistent with their specialisation courses. Of the 73 students, 19% wanted careers in business, 53.6% wanted to be engineers, 20.4% technicians, 2.3% policemen, 1.4% soldiers, and 2.3% were not sure of the occupation they want to pursue after college. The 6% of students wanting jobs as policemen and soldiers or were uncertain, points out that some students lack mature occupational insights (Vince 2001).

On average, almost 80% of the respondents thought they would get the jobs they wanted. Of the students interviewed, 63% said their studies at college will help them get these, 9.6% did not think it would be beneficial, and 27.4% were not sure. This confirms the opinion of

Parent 2 above, that 'not all students attend college with the aspiration to get a qualification'. The students in the advanced groups may be more focused upon their academic or skills-related goals, since they already progressed somewhat at college.

Table 4.3: Data showing the perceptions of the students who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT: Students at this venue generally want to work, and believe the time at college will assist them in securing jobs

	You want a good job after completing your studies	Studying at Ibri CT will help you get a wanted job	You think you will use the information from the college in a job
Strongly disagree	4.7%	8.2%	8.2%
Disagree	7.1%	8.2%	4.7%
Not sure	9.4%	3.5%	16.5%
Agree	42.4%	48.2%	41.2%
Strongly agree	36.5%	31.8%	29.4%

To ascertain their work-related expectations regarding the transition, I needed to establish the significance of getting jobs had for the students. Oman's substantial oil reserves may be perceived as that social security systems are in place. It could lessen the youth's urge to find jobs. Another perception could be that females are not concerned about securing jobs in this paternalistic society, as they will get married and become housewives soon (Barker 2004).

Of the students who were interviewed, two thirds said their studies at college will help them get desired jobs, while 70.6% believed the information they get at college would be useful when they get jobs. The students in **Group 4** said good employees are 'happy, quiet, strong and active, have fine habits, respect timings, enjoy their job', and their conduct 'helps the company' to advance, showing some progression with adult thinking. **Group 4** continued that good jobs yield large salaries and better incentives (Vince 2001; 2.2.2.2). For young adults, earning money equals financial independence, personal freedom, or both. 35% of the students deemed having a job as important only because of financial benefits.

Group 3 responded positively to working in another country, a mounting possibility in the face of globalisation (Knox and Marston 2007), and eventually become managers. They said

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'engineers speak English' and 'get good salaries in other counties' where there 'are good companies and good people'. Almost 80% of the students who were interviewed preferred working in Oman or the Arabian Gulf while nearly 20% aim to work in the West for a period.

Table 4.4: Data showing the perceptions of the students who were interviewed at Ibri CT: Most students at this venue prefer to work in the Arabian Gulf

Country	Percentage
Oman	42.5%
Arabian Gulf	35.6%
England/ America	13.7%
Germany	3.7%
France	2.3%
Japan	1.4%

4.2.1.5 Preparing for the transition at Ibri CT

Researchers such as Burbules and Torres (2000) state that globalisation resulted in deskilling of the workforce in some areas, but require more skilled workers in others. Developments like this furthered the former 'apprenticeship phase' to become obsolete in places, and for its contenders to attempt higher education (Vickerstaff 2003). The preparation of the Omani youth to meet with the expectations of modern occupational sites has become the responsibility of colleges. These demands, that include employing workers who are ready to walk in and do the job, affect the economy and workforce, staff members, teaching, and the students' social and academic development, as they prepare to transit.

According to the questionnaire, 75.3% of the students at Ibri CT think their lecturers want them to get good jobs in future. **Group 2** said their lecturers have good qualifications and provide essential information. They view some lecturers as excellent teachers, indicating that they trust the college and the lecturers to prepare them for their future occupational role. Moreover, **Lecturers a, m** admitted in their questionnaires that they 'maintain standards and concept check to ensure students understand the class work'. They said they 'state

expectations and the students understand and cooperate', showing some lecturers are cognisant of their responsibility towards students.

The students were positive about tertiary education and Ibri CT in particular, but also about themselves and their future occupational prospects. Of the students responding to the questionnaire, 13% thought they would not make good employees while 71.7% stated that they would. 75.2% aspired to become managers. **Group 3** wanted to become managers too, and said 'a manager is respected' and 'can help people to be better workers'. These acknowledgements of their work-related goals indicate that it is essential for the youth to become more cognisant of occupational demands in Oman and the rest of the world before they attempt to become a significant part thereof.

Table 4.5: Data showing the perceptions of the students who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT: Students are generally positive about their working future

	You think you will be a good employee	You would like to be a manager in future	You would like to work in another country
Strongly disagree	7.1%	9.4%	3.5%
Disagree	5.9%	7.1%	8.2%
Not sure	15.3%	8.2%	15.3%
Agree	37.6%	47%	36.5%
Strongly agree	34.1%	28.2%	36.5%

The responses of students who completed the questionnaires and those who were interviewed differ slightly, reflecting the students' progression towards adulthood. The Pre-Elementary students were near the end of their course and enthusiastic and positive since they understand some English and have learnt how the college operates. They gained confidence but still need to develop socially and academically. They completed questionnaires, which may explain their elevated positive responses. Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced students have already progressed with the system. They have developed a more balanced view on tertiary education, Ibri CT, and their own abilities and social position. These students' more

mature and realistic views on their abilities and preferences may have contributed to the

lower percentages on this item in the interviews.

Table 4.6: Data showing a summary of the perceptions of the students in the case study at Ibri CT: Most students are positive about Ibri CT, its courses and lecturers, and their occupational future

Opinion	%
Your lecturers enjoy teaching you	85.9%
Your lecturers care about your academic progress	80.5%
Your lecturers want you to get good jobs in future	75.3%
English is an enjoyable subject at college	87.1%
Studying at Ibri CT is enjoyable	85.9%

Studying English at college is important for your future	78.9%
Studying mathematics at college is important for your future	65.9%
Studying computer literacy at college is important for your future	80%
You want a good job after completing your studies at Ibri CT	78.9%
Studying at Ibri CT will help you get a good job	80%
You think you will use the information you got from the college in this job	70.6%

You think you will be a good employee	71.7%
You would like to be a manager in future	75.2%
You would like to work in another country (Questionnaires)	73%
You would like to work in another country (Interviews)	67%

The way students view their lecturers' intentions and their own responsibility at Ibri CT, is

central in comparing their expectations with those of their lecturers. They can experience the

best possible transition to work in the global era if ideas connect, while mismatches signpost

obstructions which need to be addressed, to streamline preparation for this shift of the youth.

4.2.2 The curriculum

Curricula must broaden the minds of young adults. They need to develop critical and higher

thought processes, and a disciplined and professional attitude towards work, fellow human

beings, society, and the globe in preparation of potential entrance into the job market.

Curricula should enhance the students' ability to understand and assess the structure of arguments (Kubasek et al 2003), also in English, the major tool in global communication (Burbules & Torres 2000). The curriculum allows learners to recognise, analyse, evaluate and convey messages effectively and coherently to facilitate higher learning (Eraut 2000), a view echoed by lecturers at Ibri CT. For example, **Lecturer a** expressed in her questionnaire that the students have to become lateral thinkers and lifelong learners. The Ibri CT mission and vision statements (2.4.3) show that the college is aware of its responsibilities as such a transitional agent (Garavan 1997), however, individuals may lack full cognisance of their transition-specific responsibilities.

4.2.2.1 The curriculum at Ibri CT

The curriculum is recognised as one of the pillars of education (figure 1) and it was one of the primary themes regarded in this research too.

The lecturers collectively stressed in the questionnaire that tertiary education should focus on developing the students' English abilities, interpersonal skills, work ethic and global awareness during the preparations to transition to work and help widen perspectives, but were divided when asked whether they thought the students at Ibri CT see these as aims.

Table 4.7: Data showing the perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT about their views on student perceptions of tertiary education: Lecturers think their students have diverse views of tertiary education

	Positive	Partially	Negative
The students share your views on tertiary education	11.8%	59.8%	29.4%

The lecturers portrayed quite disparate views on tertiary education and the reasons to for the existence of Ibri CT in the questionnaires in general, but they largely agreed that the curricula at the college need improving. The questionnaire's results confirm that all the lecturers agree

that an ethos of academic excellence and an aspiring spirit (Whitley 1992) have not yet been established at the college.

Table 4.8: Data showing the perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT about the reasons for and the aims of tertiary education: Lecturers see the college and tertiary education in a positive light

Aims of Tertiary Education	Reasons for the Existence of Ibri CT
To prepare students for their future jobs and provide them with knowledge and skills for the job market (53%)	To provide job oriented education (17.6%)
The development of a disciplined and professional attitude towards work (17.6%)	To provide technological education and get the students employable
To prepare the students for cross-cultural contact and global awareness (23.6%)	For students to network with other tribes and form stronger social bonds
To develop thought processes, critical and lateral thinking, and broaden minds (23.6%)	To create and foster free minds to eradicate poverty of the mind and spirit and kindle economic growth
To coach individuals who can positively impact on their society (23.6%)	To prepare young adults to join society
More academic studies to reach their true potential and become lifelong learners	To give students new opportunities and fresh ways of learning
To improve their abilities in English	Good intentions: the need to keep young people engaged, off the streets
No idea (5.9%)	Not sure (11.8%)

Further opinions include that some colleagues are not 'properly' qualified to teach at tertiary levels, there is some apathy and resistance among students towards English, a pass/ fail mentality persists, and student expectations do not match the time they spend studying. Lecturers claim 'students want courses to be effortless', but **Lecturer l** said 'they expect their studies to be difficult'. The lecturers agreed that the youth are capable of better classroom performance, but that they presently suffer from a lack of vision. **Lecturer m** claimed that young people do not have distinct educational expectations; they just 'go with the flow'. Students have to be ready to take up tools and get on with a job, when they encounter the world of work. Tertiary education does not truly reach this goal, since education policies are based on a different conception of the world (Richardson 2005). Eraut (2004:256) reports that higher education aims to transfer what it regards as 'relevant knowledge and skills', but the workplace expects 'ready to use understanding of the new situation'. Both selfishly

advance their own interests. The potential employees have to be made aware of the different

expectations of theory and occupational realities in global work situations (Barker 2004).

Table 4.9: Data showing perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires about the students' expectations of the courses and perceptions of studying at Ibri CT: Lecturers think the students are happy, but not focused enough

I think the students expectations of their courses at Ibri CT are:	I think the students' perceptions of studying at Ibri CT are:
To show off their skills in technology	They should use technology in class
To socialise with classmates	It is a privilege to be attending college
To help them to continue with their specialisations so that they can get good jobs in future (29.4%)	Studying here will land them good jobs (11.8%)
To work together as a team	Most students are proud to be here and expect a lot from their lecturers (11.8%)
Courses should be easy and practical but should help them to get jobs (17.6%)	They are happy to be here (11.8%)
To deal with courses as fast as possible, and to pass with as little effort as possible, so that they can start working (29.4%)	They do not have a lot of perceptions, they only know they have to pass their English courses
Whatever their expectations, they do not match the time they spend on studying	Studying means time spent in class – very few study at home
Good skills in English and future specialisation skills to earn a good salary	It is easy here, they do not take it seriously
They expect it to be difficult, but relevant and applicable to their future jobs	Engineering students are upset about the lack of engineering facilities
They do not think about expectations, they just take every day in their stride	To waste time because teachers are unfair anyway
Not sure	Not sure

The lecturers indicated in the questionnaires that the students should gain life skills, basic

human values, an understanding of cultural differences, responsibility, respect for authority

and property, time management, love for autonomous learning, proper study habits,

vocabulary specific to their specialisation, and effective communication skills. However,

none of these traits were mentioned by the students in the group discussions.

English has become central to communication in the global world of work (Burbules and

Torres 2000). All the stakeholders consider studying English at college as a necessity, but

perceptions on its level of importance vary. The students begin to understand that they have

control over how and what they study (Al-Husseini 2004). A mismatch of interests will develop if their views differ substantially from their lecturers' ideas.

4.2.2.2 English proficiency

English has to be included in curricula to provide linguistic infrastructure in support of rapid global diffusion of ideas and cultures (Burbules & Torres 2000; Youn 2000). The English proficiency of the students in the FP is quite low. Of the respondents to the students' questionnaire, 62.4% started in Elementary levels while 36.5% qualified for Intermediate and none for the Advanced level in a standardised placement test. Only one student (1.1%) had sufficient English to commence with the specialisation course (2.4.3.2). These figures represent tendencies per semester at the ELC.

Lecturers agreed in the questionnaires that English ability has to improve alongside the youth's work ethic and interpersonal skills. They acknowledged that the students regard English studies as a necessary part of the curriculum (table 4.9). Over 90% of the lecturers stated that students need to practise and study their English (table 4.15). However, **Lecturers b, k** alleged that students think 'to study is equal to being in class, so very few revise at home, even for tests and examinations'. **Lecturer b** said in a follow-up interview that interesting classes and objective feedback can change the students' attitudes towards the language, help widen their life perspectives, and support assessment of their own actions and reactions before they are confronted by the realities of the global world of work.

Lecturers a, b, q said 'English contact hours should be increased' to validate the time-frame of the curriculum, since 'language competency cannot be sufficiently acquired' in a few months. An option for **Lecturers a, q** was to teach specialisation courses through Arabic,

because most students may never pursue an academic or global career. However, an Engineering lecturer (ADAA) insisted that the learning content in post-foundation courses requires sound English. His opinion corresponds with that of Eraut (2004) that students have to develop new ways of thinking, to communicate efficiently and explain their views clearly. The youth, as prospective global workers, need pragmatic- as well as sociolinguistic ability, to say the right thing in certain situations, and master strategies like coherent paraphrasing in speech and writing (Baker 1996; Gibson et al 2000).

4.2.2.3 The foundation programme

English, computer literacy and mathematics are obligatory in the foundation programme (Bylaws 2007). Students and staff (table 4.10; 4.15) agreed that they are essential subjects.

Table 4.10: Data showing the perceptions of the students who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT: Students regard English, mathematics and computer literacy as important subjects at this level

	Studying **English** at college is important for your future	Studying **mathematics** at college is important for your future	Studying **computer literacy** at college is important for your future
Strongly disagree	3.5%	9.4%	4.7%
Disagree	4.7%	7.1%	7.1%
Not sure	12.9%	17.6%	8.2%
Agree	56.5%	40%	43.5%
Strongly agree	22.4%	25.9%	36.5%

Group 3 stressed the importance of studying English as 'an international language', saying employees with good English land 'the best jobs'. **Group 5** said mathematics is important since engineering is founded upon it. Engineers should study mathematics based on its significance in 'building, trade and oil' exploration, as it helps to understanding quantities, distance and dimensions, and 'to develop new systems, machines' and technologies. They furthermore regard computers as multipurpose, 'phenomenal', and 'necessary in life and in the college'. Computers are versatile since they can be 'used in studies', for recreation, to enhance communication, to contact people through the 'Internet', and are 'easy to operate'.

Lecturers a, c in the questionnaire, agreed that FP goals are met to some extent, based on 'feedback from students', as well as 'statistics of students who completed training and found suitable jobs'. Pragmatic curricula focus on the students' global language and occupational needs and support skills development. In the questionnaires, and corresponding to Burbules' (2004) view that a purposeful curriculum supports job-specific technical training, **Lecturers k, q** suggested including English for Special Purposes (ESP). Some lecturers claimed that current curricula neither feature 'using technology' nor 'student character formation' enough, yet the students need the skills when they reach the workplace (Lawy & Bloomer 2003).

Interesting classes impact on student attitudes towards occupation-specific language- and skills learning. All the lecturers admitted in the questionnaires that, as the globalists, they must set standards and guide student expectations. Global input to student learning needs to be addressed by curricula rather than random additions by individuals. However, lecturers do not follow the curriculum to the letter. They admitted they include personal perceptions or 'life skills' in class to supplement the curriculum. It is risky practice in cross-cultural contact, since the lecturers' expectations relate to familiar contexts, which usually stems from their own countries, rather than the local curricular approach.

4.2.3 The lecturers

A positive school atmosphere is created where learners are given maximum opportunity to study, and where there is pride and high expectations for pupils and staff to achieve (Nielsen 1992; Richardson 2005). The constant motivation of everyone at tertiary institutions such as Ibri CT is crucial if sound social and academic outcomes are desired.

4.2.3.1 Personal data

The ages and genders of the EFL-lecturers provide an overview of the demographics of the adult population who responded to the questionnaires (Appendix 9).

Table 4.11: Data showing the academic qualifications of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT: The lecturers are quite well-qualified

Qualifications	Number	Percentage
First degree	17	100%
EFL/ ESL qualification	9	53%
BEd	5	29.4%
Master's degree	14 (+1 partial)	81.4% (87.3%)
Doctorate	3 (+3 partial)	17.6% (35.2%)

The lecturers at Ibri CT all have a first degree, as required by the Ministry of Manpower. Based on the questionnaires, just more than 70% of the lecturers would like to get additional qualifications. Engaging in further studies indicates a positive personal and occupational outlook, suggesting they aspire to be life-long learners (Venter 2003a). Just less than 50% of the respondents have worked at the college for almost four years each, while just over 50% spent less than 12 months here. Two lecturers (11.8%) speak only English, but the average linguistic ability is 3.5 languages each, implying that lecturers understand some issues the students have with learning a foreign language, which could be helpful in language teaching.

Six of the lecturers (35.4%) can speak Arabic, according to responses in the questionnaires. Although fluency in Arabic may result in lecturers teaching English through medium of Arabic, as is commonly found in schools (4.2.1.1), it may facilitate understanding of the students' needs. These lecturers can draw attention to similarities and differences in the two languages, such as inverted noun-adjective use in Arabic, which may support students who learn better through association.

4.2.3.2 The lecturers' perceptions of their responsibilities

All the lecturers admitted in the questionnaires that they enjoy teaching young adults, and they believe the students generally grasp their intentions in the classrooms, but **Lecturers g, k** were not sure that teaching at this college was a positive experience.

According to the questionnaires, the lecturers all want the students to make academic progress at college and get good jobs in future. Three lecturers (17.6%) did not think studying at Ibri CT will help the youth to get jobs, and did not think the students regard getting good jobs as a goal. While **Lecturers j, k** said the time spent at college will not support the students to become capable employees, eleven (61%) were positive. **Lecturer i** thought the students will use the material they study at college in their jobs in future (Fuller & Unwin 2003), but **Lecturers d, o** were doubtful. The lecturers acknowledged that they are role models for the students (Atkinson 2000), and see it as a responsibility, a form of compensation, and an incentive to do better as educators.

Table 4.12: Data showing the perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT about teaching at this college: Lecturers see their job as well as their students and the occupational prospects of their students in a positive light

		Disagree	Not sure	Agree
a	Teaching at Ibri CT is a positive experience for you.		11.8%	88.2%
b	You enjoy teaching students.			100%
c	Studying English is important for your students' future.		5.9%	94.1%
d	You enjoy teaching your current classes.	5.9%	17.6%	76.5%
e	It is important for you that students make real academic progress in Ibri CT.			100%
f	You want your students to get good jobs.			100%
g	To have a job is important to the students.	5.9%	11.8%	82.3%
h	Studying at Ibri CT will help the students get jobs.	17.6%	29.4%	53%
i	Studying mathematics is important.		11.8%	88.2%
j	Computer studies at college is important.		5.9%	94.1%
k	Skills in mathematics and computer literacy will benefit the students as employees.			100%
l	The students will use some of the learning matter they got from the college in their job in future.	5.9%	11.8%	82.3%
m	The time spent at college will support the students to become capable employees.	11.8%	23.6%	64.6%

In their questionnaires lecturers said issues with students (47.1%), professional recognition and care (29.4%), teaching materials (17.6%), the timetable (5.9%), class sizes (25 per class) and workload (20 hours teaching per week) in the ELC influence their motivation, approach to teaching and their loyalty. These concerns can be addressed by regular communication and personal contact, networking with other colleges, implementing systems to uphold standards, and executing changes after consultation, according to the questionnaires.

4.2.3.3 The lecturers' perceptions of the students at Ibri CT

Goodwin (2007) highlighted that students are children in transition, beginning to identify with mature behaviour, but not yet adults. The lecturers regard the students similarly. **Lecturer m, p** said in the questionnaires that students are children, based on their behaviour; four other lecturers (23.6%) insisted they were adults with limited world experience, while all the lecturers expect adult behaviour from them, since students are treated as adults at college.

Lecturers negotiate boundaries with the students to teach them alternative views and possibilities from what has been thought at school (Al-Husseini 2004; Gibson et al 2002). Lecturer frustration with discipline is common in education, but cultures perceive discipline differently (Eraut 2000). Just over 35% of the lectures were positive about discipline at the college, while almost 59% voiced negative views in the questionnaires. **Lecturers b, j**, for example insisted that students 'without the academic ability' should not attend college. They may err in their responsibilities as educators in global times.

Table 4.13: Data showing the perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT about discipline: Lecturers views of discipline is generally quite negative

	Good	Improving	Needs to improve	Negative
Discipline at Ibri CT is	29.4%	5.8%	17.6%	41.2%

Lecturers create opportunities to support their students' personal development (Pillay et al 2003) through active involvement. Methods used with first language instruction do not meet the needs of EFL learners (Al-Issa 2005). English-based extra-curricular activities, focussed homework, and involvement in class sessions make a difference (Lawy & Bloomer 2003), since the students do not use English outside the context of the college (Al-Husseini 2004). An Omani lecturer in engineering (ADAA) explained in an interview that English proficiency would improve if students perceived language acquisition as a hobby rather than as a duty. He says keeping the students busy on campus after their formal classes with fun extra-mural activities in English builds and supports English skills, based on his personal experience.

The lecturers at Ibri CT enjoy interacting with the students and generally regard them as interesting, well-mannered and curious. However, **Lecturer b** said some students 'are downright rude since it is the only way they know to compensate for their lacking abilities'.

The lecturers admitted that the students handle computers and mobile telephones well. Most lecturers said they attempt to use these strong points in lessons to enable communication. The students generally enjoy college life and attending classes where they use technology, but it is not always easy to incorporate due to a lack of facilities and teacher skills, according to the lecturers' replies to the questionnaire. PowerPoint slide-shows do not correspond to technology in teaching and 'does not support student participation' (Kinchin et al 2008).

Some lecturers stated in their questionnaires that curricula do not meet the students' future occupational needs well. They insisted that the students do not get sufficient practice. Students perform better when they are actively involved in learning activities during and outside of expected contact hours, manage self-assessment and develop self-discipline.

Table 4.14: Data showing the perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires at Ibri CT about student qualities: Lecturers generally acknowledge the positive and the negative qualities of their students

Positive student attributes	Negative student attributes
Curious	Needy learners
Interesting	Not serious about studying
Generally open and cooperative in class	Lack of motivation and academic focus/ drive
They like technology	Low levels of English
Positive attitude, eager	Lack of consistency
They are kind and happy teens	Odd classroom behaviour at times
They are proud to be Omani	Lack of understanding of the importance of education
Solid basic human values	Some students are rude
Ability to voice their opinion	Lack of realistic personal vision
Willing to be challenged to try	Not committed to self-study
Peace-loving people	Time-wasting
Respond to trust and motivation	Slack to take up responsibility

4.2.3.4 Culture

All the lecturers stated in the questionnaires that they had personal social contact with Omanis, such as having lunch or attending weddings on invitation, implying that there is tolerance towards people from other cultures in the community.

Although the lecturers were aware of and outspoken about cultural differences in their questionnaires, students are not fixated on them. A direct question in this regard was never posed, but culture-related issues were implied in the student questionnaires. Questions on whether they like the college, enjoy studying English, think their teachers like teaching them, and care about job-prospects, enabled deductions relevant to culture. I did not seek out disgruntled students to ask opinions, but discussing this issue with a native Arab lecturer in the ELC (EHoS) and a parent (**Parent 5**) in interviews, it seems that cultural differences do not bother the students too much.

All the lecturers revealed in the questionnaires that they are aware of cultural differences when teaching. **Lecturer b** said in her follow-up interview:

'The students may be uncertain of what to expect from their foreign teachers at first, and vice versa, but they soon settle and get on with their assignments. Both parties enjoy pointing out cultural differences and similarities which arise. Some lecturers and students try to capitalise on the other's blunders, but a good spirit generally prevails in the college. The students are friendly, eager, enthusiastic, well-behaved and cooperative, and enjoy the variation and novelty presented by the lecturers with their different ideas in the classrooms.'

The lecturers admitted in the questionnaires that they sometimes feel students act strangely in class, but assume that it stems from a lack of language and communication skills. **Lecturer a** said cultural gender-related restrictions, evident in the timid ways of the girls, arrogance of the boys, disrespect for authority, and love of their phones, can be annoying. The students' lack of academic focus, motivation and time management also frustrate some lecturers.

The adolescents test rules and boundaries from within the parameters of their culture and based on their age, previous experience and expectations or lack thereof (Al-Husseini 2004). Lecturers said in the questionnaires there is a noticeable need for academic awareness among students. Some said students are 'better-behaved', 'quiet' and 'disciplined' in their countries, while others said students behaved 'worse', are 'more challenging', and 'more disruptive' than Omanis. School culture and commitment influence lecturers' and students' attitudes, loyalty and dedication towards their various tasks and towards one another (King & Newman 2001).

4.2.3.5 Lecturer attributes and personal development

Lecturers want the best for the students and for themselves, according to the questionnaires. The lecturers generally regard themselves as good teachers and say they care about the students' progress. The lecturers furthermore described themselves as professional, patient, understanding and encouraging in the questionnaire. They aim to cultivate a pleasant class atmosphere, connect with students, and tend to individual needs. The lecturers say they prepare for classes, know the subject matter and deliver it with passion and variety to

minimise boredom of repetition. The lecturers say they try to challenge the students and allow them to achieve by breaking learning matter down into comprehendible chunks, to build self-confidence. Some lecturers give extensive feedback on assignments and return them promptly. They aim to support the students inside as well as out of classes. Students need English language as well as work-related and social skills in the global workplace (Al-Husseini 2004; Burbules & Torres 2000), but **Lecturers b, c, q** cautioned that neither the students nor the Ministry are aware of the urgency of embracing occupational requirements.

The lecturers said in the questionnaire they motivate the students by providing them with opportunities to express themselves in English in a safe environment, and by developing personalised professional relationships. They give due praise, reward, create a competitive spirit in class, show respect and interest, stress the importance of English, provide examples, role play, elucidate the term 'success', and discuss successful events and famous people.

Attending refresher courses and conferences are motivational, and help practitioners keep up with methodologies and research to remain passionate about their job (Ashton & Sung 2002). **Lecturer a** said in the questionnaire the teaching-learning situation can be improved if a stimulating learning environment could be created where student work can be displayed.

James (2004) found that institutions suffer from internal and external threats such as heavier workloads and quality assurance requirements. However, positive educational environments are sustained where information is shared, updated and reflected upon through efficient personal development (PD) activities, including school-wide professional standards, grade-level content-related and individual skills and knowledge development courses (King & Newman 2001; Lieberman & Wilkins 2006), a tall order, given the diversity among lecturers.

The lecturers all stated that they would participate in PD activities at Ibri CT. Over 50% of them said in the questionnaire they are willing to sacrifice to attend activities, due to the personal and professional benefits, but they are divided on the particulars thereof. Eleven of the 17 lecturers said the college does not provide enough PD prospects. Timing and the way in which activities were scheduled in the past were labelled as 'disorganised' by some.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter explains the patterns found in the data on the case study at Ibri CT. It provides the views of the stakeholders to give the reader background information about the venue, the educational scene, and occupational prospects of the youth in transition from school to work in the Sultanate of Oman.

The research questions were the focus of the responses generated by the qualitative and quantitative research instruments before the breakdown. The data collected from adults and students were analysed using a qualitative approach, based on the nature of the case study. The data are presented through a substantial number of data-tables to clarify concepts, since English is a foreign language in this region.

The conclusions pertaining to issues identified by the research questions are highlighted in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and implications related to the case study at Ibri CT

This chapter offers the outcomes derived from the data collected with the research instruments in the case study at Ibri CT and outlines the limitations thereof. The qualitative and quantitative tools provided a dynamic picture of the college site and the activities which challenge the lecturers, students and curricula in different ways.

Based on the respondents' replies, the results of this study show adults and adolescents have similar views and objectives, despite fundamental differences in age, language and culture. The differences are predominantly generated by factors related to globalisation and signify problems with communication.

The outcomes of this study spawned recommendations that seek to help policy makers, administrators and lecturers to streamline the youth's preparation to transition from school to work, especially in developing countries like the Sultanate of Oman, nowadays burdened by global issues too.

5.1 Introduction

Issues related to the transition to work and adulthood was raised by John Dewey last century. He blamed rapid changes in society, the economy, industrialisation, and technology for the ill-equipped state of the youth. As early as **in 1916**, Dewey criticised education for turning out students without:

> ... intellectual legs of their own to stand upon, no sense of perspective by which to take their bearings, no insight into the causes of the economic and social breakdown, and no way for orienting themselves.
>
> (Liang & Johnson 1999:80)

The transition from school to work is a normal developmental phenomenon, directed by occupational demands and prospects available to the youth, as stated by Dewey. However, despite vast amounts of research and reform, these concerns persist a century later, and are found in Oman today.

Education and commerce are jointly responsible for ensuring that curricula offer relevant, multi-faceted training to potential new employees. However, international homogenisation results in global and social shifts which constantly require new approaches to management and learning (Starkey 1998). Globalisation transformed relations through international labour prospects and technological developments in the past quarter century, resulting from flows of capital, goods, people, ideas and cultures across national borders (Knox & Marston 2007). It demands recent and relevant routing (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998; Fuller & Unwin 2003), which urges governments to seek new ways to deal with the complexities of tertiary training.

5.2 Conclusions about the research issues

A qualitative research approach which employed a case study alongside the literature review, facilitated data-gathering and conclusions about the transition of the youth attending Ibri CT. The objective was to answer the research question, which is **'How can tertiary education streamline the youth's preparation to transition from school to work with reference to globalisation?'**

The college-tasks associated with the students' smooth transition into the occupational scene and adulthood amid local and global economic demands are sustained by administrators and lecturers. Suitable curricula at tertiary level support the students' aspirations and fulfil the visions of the EFL-lecturers transferring transition-specific skills. Data were generated by the responses to questionnaires and interviews which focussed on the research question. These views provided by the adults and students, exposed observations and perceptions about curricula and educational and social activities dealing with the occupational prospects of the youth in transition to work in Oman. The data were presented in data-tables to facilitate comparisons and explain patterns found, and to elucidate the didactic model specific to this case study. The conclusions derived from the analysis connected the literature review and the research issues, endorsing existing theory.

It emerged from the synthesis of the sets of evidence in this study that communication underpins support for the transitioning youth. Unambiguous messaging results in clearer understanding, which builds confidence and prepares students to deal with transitional threats, including those associated with globalisation. The conclusions transpired into guidelines to help tertiary institutions advance teaching and learning, and support the students' transition to work today.

5.2.1 The stakeholders in the case study

Education is founded on a partnership of trust between lecturers, students and the curriculum, as explained through the analogy of the didactic triangle (chapter 2). Understanding the attitudes and opinions of the students and their approach to life and learning, the curricula, and the instructors, exposes the dynamics of processes between and among the stakeholders.

Every collaborating group must insist and compromise, knowing that the others will do the same to support the equilibrium, or education suffers.

The young adults' life experience, academic skills, and visions of study and work are limited, while the lecturers are experienced academic workers and globalists. The lecturers manage the transition and must take up this responsibility, while the students need to understand they have to be receptive. Mismatched expectations, perceptions and aims, ruin communications and jeopardise inter-personal relations. It binds curricula, so learning outcomes founder and the didactic site is weakened.

5.2.1.1 The students

Tertiary level learning includes gaining skills and knowledge. The youth must develop the ability to deal with authority and maintain workplace relations (Gibson et al 2000; Goodwin 2007), also in Oman. Students have to attain new types of learning, and acquire academic motivation and -focus to cope with adult life and global work prospects (Lawy 2000). However, students attending colleges are mere children heading towards adulthood, and their typical adolescent conduct includes aiming at achievement at all cost, therefore, getting optimal marks for minimal effort.

Researchers such as Eraut (2000) agree that the youth are fixated on qualifications and certification. In accordance with their life-stage, students want to deal with academic demands as painlessly as possible to get to the stage where, they presume, they will be 'in control', as seen from their responses to the research instruments. Adolescents cannot yet grasp the difference between childhood and adulthood conduct (Evans & Furlong 1997). This change in status and responsibility at college provokes fear, anxiety and defensiveness

as much as it excites, motivates and empowers the students (Vince 2001). They begin to realise that this transition affects their individual capability to assume responsibility for a job alongside adult life (Al-Husseini 2004). Their carefree existence is over, so their approach to the world has to change.

Educator-support increases student motivation. Both students' and EFL-lecturers' responses strongly indicated that typical academic and social contact at Ibri CT supports the youth's social and cultural development. The students in group discussions regarded their lecturers as 'good teachers with good qualifications who speak very good English because they are all from English-speaking countries'. These perceptions are not necessarily true, but, alongside the general, civil student conduct at Ibri CT, confirm that the youth enjoy the venture.

The EFL-lecturers manage the youth's educational needs in the classrooms and generate incentives to develop students' occupational competency, pride, and sense of purpose and responsibility (Nielsen 1992). They encourage students to face demands of the global workplace including independence, negotiating boundaries, timekeeping and providing feedback on activities, according to responses to the questionnaire. EFL-Lecturers expect students to contribute to join study groups to support the accomplishment of relevant tasks and goals (Rodriques 2000), but students fail to see their use, so they do not arrange them. The lecturers' questionnaires depicted that they believe students lack motivation and interest and fall short academically. The students suffer from linguistic deprivation due to inadequate exposure (2.4.3.3). The need and purpose to study English must be established as well (Al-Husseini 2004), since students do not interpret 'learning English' in the same way as teachers, who represent the global workplace, do. The students' academic and life-experience is still

limited and they lack in job-related information, but they recognise English proficiency as a contemporary occupational requirement.

Oman's short history of formal education and the absence of parental experience in educational and occupational matters are not helpful to the students' academic perceptions and orientations. Some adults reported that while pro-educational values are developing in Oman, tertiary education is not yet prioritised as it is in the West. EFL-lecturers provide the impetus to enhance the socio-didactic processes at Ibri CT, but educational application will only hit the college once it has become an occupational demand and goal in this society.

5.2.1.2 The curriculum

Higher education provides the youth with technical skills to perform the required tasks linked to a job, adult life and -behaviour (Goodwin 2007; Goodwin and O'Connor 2005). Curricula and EFL-lecturers, representative of the global work-related reality and adulthood, impact on transitional progress. They execute the study- and development programmes and help ease the youth's shift to work. Parents and students depend on, and trust educational institutions to provide credentials, and enable the youth to start careers in competitive global economies through highly marketable skills and knowledge (Eraut 2000). Curricula must thus sustain purposeful training to cover the students' social and occupational needs amid global threats.

Curricula are culturally founded. They include formal and informal activities to produce and manage knowledge and direct various aspects of life. Learning programmes facilitate the development of suitable qualifications, knowledge and multi-skills to support the youth to join the workforce (Lawy & Bloomer 2003). The programmes have to be compiled by

informed people incorporating culturally appropriate values, because curricula ignoring values, language and identity, are belittling (Eraut 2004; Richardson 2005).

The data collected from parents and students indicate that they trust Ibri CT to provide opportunities to practise and obtain skills and activities to empower the youth. The transition to work requires of the students to simultaneously acquire specific job skills, and learn new codes of behaviour (Goodwin & O'Connor 2005). Students practise adult and work-related social activities and skills (Lawy & Bloomer 2003), and learn through trial and error in their protected college environment. Suitable curricula provide the youth with opportunities to reach their true academic potential, and encourage them to talk, debate, outline, rehearse, discuss, express and question their ideas about what they need, and feel 'listened to', to successfully face the global world of work in future (Barker 2004; Eraut 2000). Active involvement in classes and purposeful assignments, alongside extra-curricular activities, provide EFL learners with additional English practice.

Globalisation is a major determiner of skills and activities in the contemporary workplace and society, and its force on international and local employers constantly changes the workplace (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998), subsequently complicating and obstructing the transition to work. Curricula have to guide the EFL-lecturers to focus on diverse skills relevant to modern job-related demands to empower students. Training needs to keep up with the technological and economic pressures driving global competition. Qualifications have to warrant that the students will gain the knowledge and experience they need to find jobs worldwide. However, the fluid global workplace-demands necessitate constant and rapid modification of curricula and learning outcomes, to minimise cultural-, skill- and academic frustrations which EFL-lecturers and students might encounter.

This case study pursued the challenges associated with streamlining the preparations to transition, to eventually result in the total integration of the students as qualified employees into the world of work. It probed the prospects of local and international employment and employer demands, in reply to the research question. The EFL-lecturers are global workers, critically aware of the occupational charge of globalisation. They expressed concern about the suitability of curricula, which they regard as not updated frequently enough. Consistent with Vince (2001), they claimed students need to cultivate strategies to deal with the ideals of tertiary education and the expectations and obstacles in life and the occupational world.

Today's youth's occupational needs are realised when they are enabled to sufficiently deal with global workplace and adult challenges (Al-Husseini 2004). The colleges of technology can warrant that students are at the forefront of evolving professional and societal changes through sensible curricular modifications. These need to take the effects of globalisation on board, and ensure that the content embraces social, occupational and didactic expectations.

5.2.1.3 The lecturers

As consultants of the global occupational world, EFL-lecturers facilitate learning, direct activities and convey skills and knowledge through example and instruction (Ashton & Sung 2002; Bylaws 2007) to support the youth's transition to work. The adolescents are on a fast track to the unfamiliar global employment arena (Furlong & Cartmel 1997). They are not, and cannot be aware of occupational skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed until they get the details. The instructors represent various cultures and viewpoints of the global world of work, and focus on development of personal qualities and knowledge to support the students' broader needs linked with this transition. For the students, their lecturers govern classrooms, and are role models who exemplify global employment.

The adults' data confirmed that lecturers should be experienced and responsible teachers with professional and social boundaries, and an understanding of the world and its cultures and jobs, besides adolescents' specific needs and problems, to offer students real opportunity to improve their skills. EFL-lecturers acknowledged that they set expectations and standards and extend the horizons and perspectives of the young adults by stressing global values within curricular parameters.

Lecturers aim to improve the youth's English proficiency, communication skills, cultural awareness, personal commitment and adaptability alongside work-specific knowledge and technological expertise to boost global employability (Lawy 2000). According to the data collected from the adults, checking understanding and clearly and often stressing norms and insisting on putting them into practice, broadens classroom behaviour. Colleagues also have to ensure that the youth accumulate recent, work-related information and skills, and gain a realistic view of global occupations.

Cultural differences result in specific social and occupational challenges (Cieslik & Pollock 2002; UNESCO Report 1996). The EFL-lecturers at Ibri CT all recognised that students and lecturers view the classroom situation differently. These lecturers generally have positive perceptions of teaching at the college, as is clear from table 5.1, created from the opinions showcased in tables 4.12 to 4.14 in chapter 4. However, that the negative views of lecturers deal with the learning content and the occupational future of the students, considered in tandem with the students' fear of examinations, could indicate that both stakeholders experience discomfort with curricular content.

5.2.2 Patterns noticed in the analysis

The opinions provided by the respondents at Ibri CT validated each group of stakeholders' anticipated contributions to and returns from the alliance. The comparisons and analyses of the generated data was the basis for the conclusions about the research questions. The findings of the case study moreover enabled the formulation of recommendations. It was evident that communication and curricula are issues which need to be prioritised to facilitate the streamlining of the preparations for the transition to work at Ibri CT.

Table 5.1: A comparison of the perceptions of the students and lecturers about teaching at Ibri CT: Both groups are positive, but the lecturers are concerned about the students' occupational future

	Students' Views	%	%	Lecturers' Views
1	Your lecturers enjoy teaching you.	85.9%	88.2%	Teaching at Ibri CT is a positive experience for you.
			76.5%	You enjoy teaching your current classes.
			100%	You enjoy teaching students.
2	Your lecturers care about your academic progress.	80.5%	100%	It is important for you that students make real academic progress in Ibri CT.
3	Your lecturers want you to get good jobs in future.	75.3%	100%	You want your students to get good jobs in future.
4	English is an enjoyable subject at college.	87.1%	94.1%	You think the students enjoy your classes.
5	Studying at Ibri CT is enjoyable.	85.9%		
6	Studying English at college is important for your future.	78.9%	94.1%	Studying English is important for your students' future.
			100%	Skills in mathematics and computer literacy will benefit the students as employees.
7	Studying mathematics at college is important for your future.	65.9%	88.2%	Studying mathematics at college is important.
8	Studying computer literacy at college is important for your future.	80%	94.1%	Computer studies at college is important.
9	You want a good job after completing your studies at Ibri CT.	78.9%	82.3%	To have a job is very important to the students.
10	Studying at Ibri CT will help you get a good job.	80%	17.6%	Studying at Ibri CT will help the students get jobs (Not sure: 29.4%; Negative 53%).
			11.8%	The time spent at college will support the students to become capable employees (Not sure: 23.6%; Negative 64.6%).
11	You think you will use the information you got from the college in this job.	70.6%	5.9%	The students will use some of the learning matter they got from the college in their job in future (Not sure: 11.8%; Negative 82.3%).

Items 1 to 9 in table 5.1 show both the students and lecturers responded positively on points related to their association with tertiary education, this college, as well as their future occupational prospects. Disparities about strategies and job-related goals can predominantly be attributed to collectivist versus individualist cultural views and the life-stages of participants. However, the responses in items 10 and 11 show that while the youth is positive, the lecturers' views about the occupational future of the students were relatively negative. EFL-lecturers doubt the students' readiness for occupational immersion following their transition period at Ibri CT, implicating the curricula in use.

5.2.2.1 Similarities in the views of the stakeholders

The participants in the educational processes at Ibri CT generally expressed contentment despite issues. The students perceive studying at this college as pleasant, and think their lecturers enjoy teaching them, care about their academic progress and want them to get good jobs. The students regard English as an enjoyable subject at college. They think the courses are valuable, and studying at Ibri CT would support their occupational aspirations (table 4.6).

According to table 5.1, the lecturers enjoy teaching young adults, and regard teaching at Ibri CT as a positive experience. They are content with the courses and think the students are comfortable too. These EFL-lecturers are concerned about the students' academic progress and future employment opportunities. Three of the lecturers indicated in interviews that to eventually have a job is an important objective for the students. They furthermore concluded that English, mathematics and computer literacy skills are essential for their students' occupational future.

5.2.2.2 Differences in the views of the stakeholders

The associates at Ibri CT have different cultural perspectives, worldviews and expectations of the occupational arena. The lecturers' age-, education- and work-related gain provides a more realistic perspective on life, adulthood and employment. The students' occupational beliefs on the other hand, are less realistic since their understanding of the world is limited, but their positive approach to life shows they are oblivious of shortfalls and 'confidently' heading on.

The students are positive about securing jobs in future. Conversely, the EFL-lecturers, who already completed this transition, view the students' prospects quite negatively. According to table 5.1, only 17.6% of the lecturers said studying at Ibri CT will help the students get jobs, while 53% of them had negative opinions in this regard. Whereas 11.8% of the lecturers were positive, 64.6% thought the time spent at college will not support the students to become capable employees. Only 5.9% of the lecturers thought the students will use some of the learning matter they got from the college in their job in future, while 82.3% did not think the course content would be useful at all. These responses, alongside lecturers' concerns about exam-related dishonesty and student misconduct, reflect issues with curricula. They confirm flaws noted by the global employees who are interacting with adolescents in this developing country. At large, these responses (table 5.1) endorse that institutions need to match expected occupational skills with global issues and demands, to remain suitable.

Both the EFL-lecturers and students had concerns about the appropriateness of features of the curricula used at Ibri CT. The potential of the staff as a resource influence the experiences of the youth on their way to the workplace. This reserve needs to be developed sufficiently if the streamlining of the transition of the youth from school to work is regarded as a priority.

5.3 Conclusions about the case study

This research is set in an educational venue through a case study focussing on the transition from school to work with reference to globalisation. The literature review disclosed the theoretical framework and presented the themes of the study, based on the research questions. These themes correspond with the three areas recognised in the didactic triangle.

The changing processes in and demands of the global workplace were embraced in the research focus to manage the academic and social aspects of teaching and learning which affect the transition to work at different planes for young adults today. A variety of responses were accumulated from the stakeholders in an effort to talk and listen to as many students and adults as possible, to probe the research question through various instruments. The synthesis of the data brought the different components together, blending the empirical and theoretical by merging information from the existing body of knowledge with the reality of the context provided by the obtained data.

The most important observation emerged after the data had been reworked and the results compared (table 5.1). This method exposed some of the complex issues found in teaching and learning at tertiary institutes such as Ibri CT since globalisation expanded. The all-encompassing development of the stakeholders, together with the dynamics embedded in culture and communication emerged as key points. The students, staff and curriculum relate continuously and in powerful ways. These interactions become productive when the culture is shared, while cultural differences can result in tension and conflict. This discloses that effective communication practices are critical to support teaching and learning at this level.

These outcomes, from combining the literature with the results of the data collection, supported by the intellectual labour to generate original findings on the transition of the youth to work, are evidence of the recontextualisation (Henning 2005) in this study. The didactic triangle, as modified in figures 2-4, was thus adapted once more (figure 5 below), to explain the unique setting of this case study. It embraces the issues revealed by the data and exposes the intricacy of the threat posed by globalisation to the youth as they advance the job market.

The expectations of the different stakeholders and the processes related to the preparation for the transition from school to work in Oman in view of the pressures of globalisation were covered in the four sub-questions:

1. How can the intensions of lecturers be aligned to students' expectations of classroom activity to favour the accomplishment at personal and academic levels at Ibri CT?
2. How can cultural awareness benefit learning and teaching strategies at college?
3. To what extent are the learning programmes of the colleges of technology suitable to align the needs of the students in transition with the visions of lecturers who have to provide the skills, especially in the foundation phase?
4. How can the process to prepare the youth to become proficient workers be addressed in Oman with reference to the changing demands of the global workplace?

Reworking the collected data resulted in conclusions relating to these questions, and therefore, the research problem.

5.3.1 Conclusions about teaching and learning at Ibri CT

Ibri CT is representative of tertiary education in Oman. The research contended with the current transition from school towards taking up an occupation. It includes issues concerning the envisaged occupational prospects of the Omani youth which relate to the future of the students, the applicability of curricula, and the lecturers in the service of the college, as well as the fine balance between the stakeholders amid the powerful demands of globalisation.

Figure 5: Communication is at the heart of the transition from school to work, which is impacted by globalisation on a worldwide scale, also at Ibri College of Technology in the Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Manpower

Ibri College of Technology

Learning matter

Culture

Culture

COMMUNICATION

Culture

Teacher

Learner
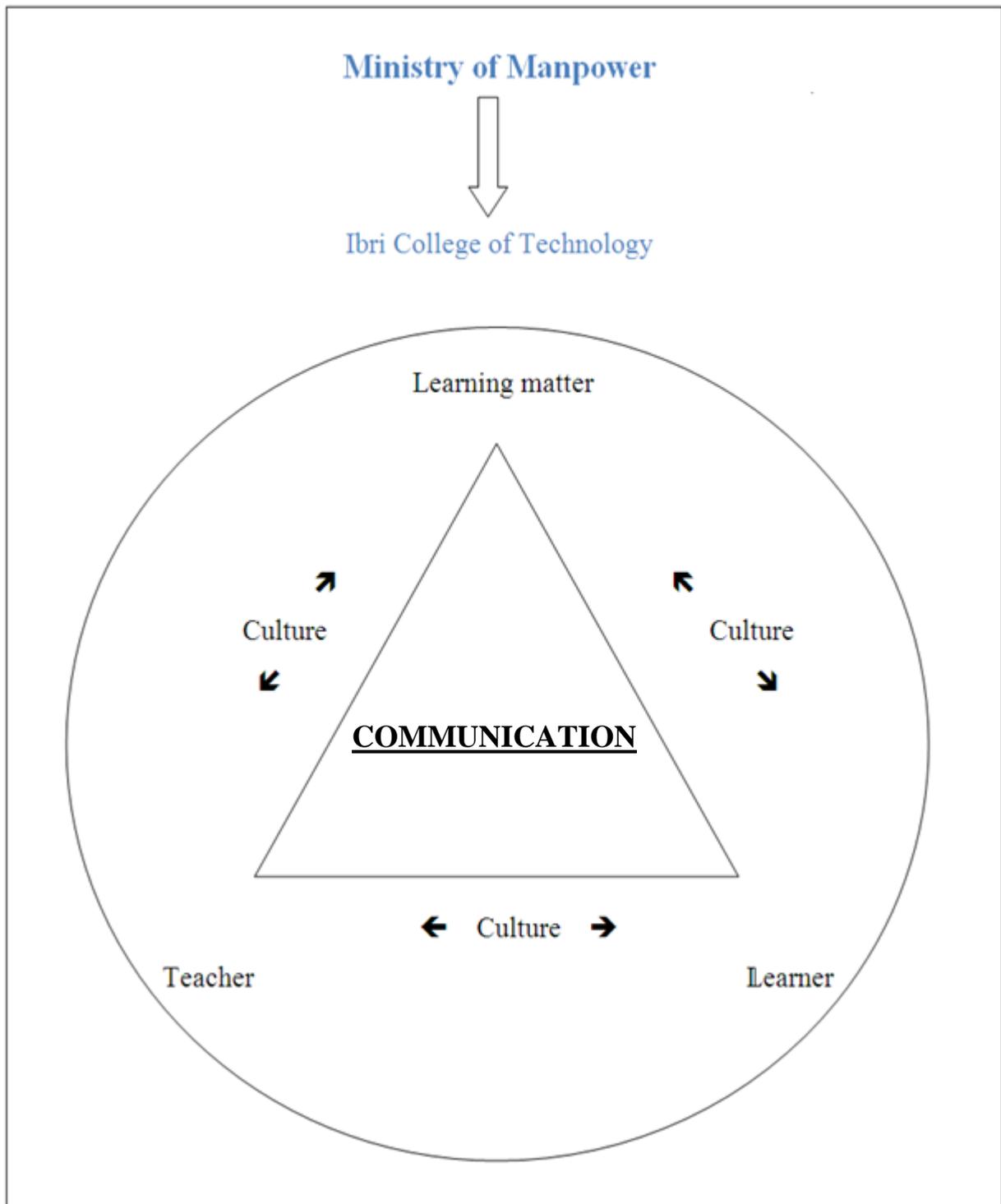
The students provided their views on experiences at college. It contained their opinions on what they 'think' the lecturers should offer them. The research confirmed that the students enjoy studying at Ibri CT. They are empowered since they develop academic and personal skills through classroom activities. Their responses confirmed that they believe English, mathematics and computer technology have occupational relevance, and that they are making progress in these areas.

The students acknowledged that acquiring a job is challenging. They associate employment with financial freedom, and their responses showcased confidence that they would be 'good' employees and managers, as can be expected of adolescents. The young Omanis expressed willingness to work in foreign countries, which indicates that, although they are unaware of the research question as such, the students regard the college as relevant to their transition to the global workplace.

All the EFL-lecturers acknowledged in their questionnaires that they enjoy teaching English. They said college education should prepare students for future employment and cross-cultural contact. The lecturers admitted that they expect adult behaviour from the students, but echoed a lack of academic awareness, which they regard as crucial for motivation, study, practice and competency, among the Omani youth. Curricula should relate to global work-related skills, but lecturers stated in the questionnaires that neither character formation nor using technology features enough. They affirmed that students regard courses at college as an opportunity to gain access to a job in future, and to socialise, similar to students in their home countries. The students are well-behaved and cooperative, and a good spirit prevails despite cultural differences and insufficient language skills, so the initial uncertainty of what to expect from the others in the classrooms, soon settles.

All stakeholders in this case study suffer from cultural cargo. Unsurprisingly thus, that the data pointed towards different perspectives of the same vision among them. However, the responses did signpost issues with messaging. Communication was mentioned in the literature but did not feature either as a theme or an issue, and was not included *per se* in the scope of the study. Miscommunication causes problems with trust and this does not support transitioning from school to work and from childhood to adulthood. Alongside outdated curricula, it hinders training, which delays the preparation of the youth to enter the global occupational arena. English is a foreign language in Oman. This barrier results in student issues being dealt with by Omani lecturers or official channels in Arabic. Students do not confide in the foreign lecturers, so instructors are unaware of certain issues. Instituting structures to support cooperation and effective communication can advance the students' skills and personal traits, in sustenance of their future role as adults in society.

Establishments such as Ibri CT have both the ability and the responsibility to provide students with more than an impersonal and distant approach to education and life in general, to streamline the complex transition from school to work, given the multiple threats associated with globalisation. However, suitable curricula can evoke change by providing lecturers and students with sufficient information and activities to convince them that their individual visions of the transition to work can be realised. According to researchers such as Ashton and Sung (2002) and Evans and Furlong (1997), a major problem is that education and commerce practitioners insensitively advance their own interests rather than to jointly ensure that relevant curricula are in place.

EFL-lecturers manage and support students' inductions and academic and extra-mural activities (Al-Husseini 2004). Staff-members thus need to be familiar with, and supportive of

the vision and mission of institutions to be comfortable and secure enough to help the learners maximise the quest for accomplishment. Information about colleges and their responsibilities as transitional agents therefore has to reach all the staff and students during every intake. Prioritising general as well as ELC-specific inductions is crucial. Committed overseers at the various levels of tertiary education consequently support the streamlining of the transitional process; a necessity since public interest is at stake.

5.3.1.1 Lecturers

Appropriately trained, experienced and socially sensitive educators ensure that the youth accumulate recent, work-related information and skills, and a realistic view of the workplace against the backdrop of globalisation. They aim to accommodate cultural differences and the adolescents' specific needs, and provide students with didactic support, according to the lecturers. These views are consistent with Newby et al (2000) that teachers should have integrity and professional boundaries, and persistently provide expert social and academic packages that recognise and support diversity in socio-economic status, learning styles, skills, needs and motivation of their students through active learning routines in classrooms.

Qualified, competent, committed and enthusiastic EFL-lecturers who communicate candidly and clarify differences in learning approaches to the students, sustain the development of new learning attitudes and support the transition of the students to work and adulthood. Al-Husseini (2004) insists that lecturers explain their need to be competent in English, and provide students with specific information and models to facilitate their studies and skills development. The students need more than an impersonal and distant approach to education and life in general to achieve and acquire relevant occupational and social skills. Lecturers should widen students' understanding and awareness of current occupational demands, the

particular needs of employers, and the expected future trends of specialisations within the colleges and industry. Full appreciation of responsibilities is thus a starting point for streamlining the preparation of the youth to transition to the global workplace.

Colleges develop learner confidence by, for example, involving the youth in establishing ground rules in classrooms, and providing ample extra-curricular activities to support English proficiency within the existing social parameters. Humans as a resource are valuable in Oman with its small population, and specialised petro-chemic-based economy. Management teams have to ensure that their students' educational and occupational needs are fulfilled (Al-Husseini 2004) by recognising, developing, encouraging and managing the fullest potential of the staff.

Learning matter presented in accordance with the curricula and the demands of the global world of work supports preparations to transition to work. Since expatriate teachers have been educated independently, their pre-service training cannot be controlled by colleges. Employing expert educators trained in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), and those who have previously been successful as teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is essential to maintain didactic aims. Monolingual English speakers who did not study didactics, or TEFL, or never learnt another language, may lack understanding of EFL-learning, and should not be lecturing in the ELC. One of the lecturers stated in an interview that ill-qualified teachers in the system need suitable in-service training to improve their skills. Employing EFL-lecturers for whom English is their third language is opposed based on their lack of linguistic proficiency and the resulting communication issues. Teachers who use Arabic when teaching EFL are equally unsuitable.

The combined opinions of lecturers in their questionnaires showed they think students should be taught mutual respect, basic human values, discipline, time management, manners, how to become autonomous, self-guided learners, respect for authority and property, proper study habits, a love for learning and knowledge, vocabulary specific to their specialisation, effective communication skills, responsibility and tolerance towards different cultures. Whereas some lecturers offer maximum opportunity for study and practice, others thought the students must become independent learners, assisted by classmates, parents, family members, friends, lecturers, administration, the college, class advisors, and mentors. This study found that while some of these agents are able to make a difference in this culture at this stage, others cannot, illustrating that some lecturers may lack a realistic perception of this society (ref 4.2.2.1). However, the constant motivation of everyone involved in this process is crucial to ensure the students experience socio-didactic success at college (Layder, Ashton & Sung 1991), in support of the transition from school to work.

Reasonable challenges which link learning activities and outcomes increase the potential to develop students' sense of responsibility, but Atkinson (2000) warns that teachers who do too much for students may be disabling them. One of the lecturers warned in an interview that excessive spoon-feeding 'transfers the fossilised problems ingrained in schools into the colleges' and 'further handicap' the potential workforce entrusted to them. Where parents are at a disposition, as in Oman due to the infancy of the education system, lecturers should intervene and include students as junior academic members (Wenger 1998), when learning programmes permit it. EFL-Lecturers should establish an incentive to develop globally acceptable occupational competencies, pride and a sense of purpose as part of their job description in Oman. Americans value and compensate individual responsibility and efforts. In agreement with Tolich et al (1999) teachers of American origin should thus include aspects

of typical American occupational behaviour to benefit students in preparation of global employment. Despite internal and external burdens such as heavier workloads and quality assurance requirements, pride and high expectations for pupils and staff to achieve, result in a positive academic atmosphere (James 2004; Nielsen 1992). This is facilitated when frequent and effective PD and academic activities become part of the institute's ethos.

The stakeholders are affected by ever-increasing pressure on resources which results in escalating numbers of students per class. Oversized classes mean there just is not enough time in a day for EFL-lecturers to physically see each student's efforts, or heed individual mistakes and successes. Students then feel their efforts are disregarded. This increased classroom-frustration 'hampers language acquisition and personal growth' according to one of the lecturers in an interview. Curricular outcomes are consequently not fulfilled. Tertiary institutions need to manage their resources optimally and remain focussed on their mission and vision, to adequately prepare students for today's global occupational arena.

Managers committed to sharing and team work prioritise academic achievement. Developing a pool of skilled and devoted lecturers and administrators through workshops and in-service training sessions advances competency and stability. Some lecturers mentioned in interviews that brainstorming issues such as learners' needs, curricula, course purpose and developments in various fields could benefit transitional processes. Lecturer-distress as voiced in this research may not be founded on scientific needs-analyses, but it embodies personal views which impact classroom-performance. Acknowledging their opinions advances broad global best practices and benefits institutions. Gatekeepers such as the Ministry and college management should be alarmed by issues revealed in similar studies. Frustrations suppress

enthusiasm, disturb relations and result in elevated staff turnovers (ref 4.2.3.2) which does not support the streamlining of the transition to work.

5.3.1.2 Implementation of curricula

Educational institutions have to encourage adolescents, who are not yet able to view the future from an adult perspective, to take greater charge heading towards adulthood. The Ministry of Manpower in Oman provides the curricula followed at the colleges of technology. As gatekeeper, the Ministry therefore has to facilitate Ibri CT's ability to provide its students with suitable knowledge and skills. The Ministry has to ensure communication structures are in position so ministerial decisions and information can reach all stakeholders promptly. Continuous revisions of curricula ensure that relevant occupational skills are provided to the youth during transition. Course activities and -content have to support the students' social awareness and promote basic operational, managerial and academic components, consistent with industrial demands.

The students need to cultivate strategies to deal with the ideals of tertiary education and the expectations and obstacles of the occupational world (Vince 2001). The questionnaires showed the EFL-lecturers agreed that students need skills to negotiate options and resolve issues in classrooms in preparation for future workplace requirements. Although personal networking is a key source of information for detecting vacancies, securing positions and problem-solving, the youth need to learn to handle personal difficulties independently (Goodwin & O'Connor 2005). Lecturer-responses included that they believe students need basic skills in accounting, simple office-, HR- and management strategies, time managing, stock-control, strategic planning, computer competency, maintenance, market research, statistics, critical thinking and independent learning, alongside personal values, for instance

independence and professional conduct, compatible with results reported by Atkinson (2000). Two of the lecturers mentioned in interviews that the EFL-programme has to integrate English language proficiency, business communication, touch-typing skills and common technology to be relevant to the students' future work environment. The students must submit assignments electronically as a starting point to using technology as learning tools. It supports the curriculum, since it links theory and practice for students, according to some responses to the lecturers' questionnaires. One lecturer said the students should be introduced to technical English vocabulary through English for Special Purposes (ESP) and guided to grow social sensitivity towards others who share or visit the workplace.

Suitable learning materials and lesson planning hinge on lecturer-expertise, but improved student performance is dependent on appropriate feedback. Research indicates that curricula should provide opportunities for active learning to create an awareness of the expectations of technical studies. Lawy and Bloomer (2003) and Newby et al (2000), for example, agree that students learn better through active involvement. Providing opportunities in class where their ideas spark reaction from their lecturers and peers also generates success (Richardson 2005).

Researchers like Eraut (2000) value a student-centred approach that promotes students' understanding of the purpose for communicative, reading and writing activities, and enhances their vocabulary. Students have to participate in 'role play, discussions, presentations and independent research in English' to learn, practise and test their skills through trial and error, 'in controlled, fun activities', according to an Omani lecturer in an interview. The youth begin to believe their views are significant when acknowledged by others.

5.3.1.3 Student activities

The youth's perception of education may be that they know it all, since they have been successful at being school children for the past 12 years! Researchers such as Eraut (2000) linked the capacity to study and communicate to prior experience and knowledge. However, college level students' understanding of the learning context is not yet realistic (Al-Husseini 2004). Classroom- and exam-related experiences, which embrace a fresh approach to teaching and learning through the medium of instruction and linguistic skills beyond reading, writing, listening and speaking (Newby et al 2000), are attributed to globalisation.

Recent global changes such as diminishing apprenticeships forced tertiary institutions to take on a wider purpose and embrace transitional tasks. Student expectations of college life must be aligned to the realities of the new learning situation. The lecturers agreed in their questionnaires that students need to establish the behaviour expected in this new life-phase, alongside academic skills. EFL-lecturers have to deliberately highlight differences between school and the workplace, in recognition of students' learning issues. They need to explain to students the relationship between understanding prior educational experiences, the purpose of the new type of learning and methodologies used, assessment and the relationships between and among school teachers and themselves. Knowledge of fossilised errors, intolerances, stagnations, regressions, even lack of confidence, fears, or hostilities facilitate lecturers' understanding of the current academic disposition of the students, and support the replacing of resulting practices such as short-term memorisation, achievement at all cost, and unrealistic fear of examinations. These should be traded for long-term, higher order thinking and learning skills to change students' approach to life and learning, in addition to modified language needs (Al-Husseini 2004).

EFL learners always use their mother tongue unless encouraged to communicate in English (Al-Husseini 2004). One of the lecturers confirmed in an interview that since English does not exist the way it does where it is the first or second language; opportunities to use English outside classrooms have to be created intentionally. Newby et al (2000) explained that EFL-students should participate in social environments where understanding English is more important than accuracy. Supervised out-of-class activities such as excursions, societal participation, volunteering and involvement in research, empower students and help teachers to appreciate students' problems and find solutions for their transitional needs. Al-Husseini (2004) reported that students noticed the need to regularly talk to others in mentoring or after-work relationships. He remarked that students admitted that transferring opinions or relating experiences by delivering a speech in front of others or explaining the aims of an organisation or activity, contribute to maturation and socialisation at college. According to his study, students explicitly stated that activities in Arabic cannot support their learning objectives related to communicative English.

Induction is an organised, ongoing advising process. It supports the achievement of educational, personal and job-related goals of students in their quest for employability. Information about fields and requirements of specialisations, the choices available, and the learning situation, supports the students' participation in college activities and their transition. Multi-functional inductions provide printed and oral information on the expected learning content and skills, language programmes, and extra-curricular activities, and focus on study skills and autonomy vital to the transition. EFL-lecturers should allow discussions where students can ask questions, for example about using the library or assessment systems. This is important since the physical and social structures, rules and approach to interpersonal relationships and communication at tertiary institutes, which insist on adult conduct, are new

to them (Al-Husseini 2004). Some students will go with the flow. Others may arrive at college with prejudice, a negative attitude, insecurity, even fear, as deduced from student responses in group discussions. Students may become disgruntled or disruptive due to insufficient information. Furthermore, according to one of the parents in an interview, students who are not academically inclined will drop out as soon as they find a job.

Regular, frank discussions about the intensions of teachers and the expectations of students are advantageous. Dialogues during and beyond induction sessions improve communication and sustain attainment in support of the youth's passage to adulthood, according to a lecturer during an interview. Ground rules suitable to the new situation should be introduced into lecture rooms, to agree on boundaries. One of the EFL-lecturers acknowledged that engaging the stakeholders in structured negotiations and arbitrating limitations, initiates conversations. It facilitates understanding of handling responsibilities, grievances and confrontations as adults in the global workplace with its set parameters, enables and empowers individuals, and minimises disruptive behaviour. Studies by Alexander (1999) and Lawy and Bloomer (2003), among others, reveal that opportunities to express and assess students' prior conceptions, goals and plans institute new learning.

Students should be streamed just before the end of the FP (Al-Husseini 2004) to endorse their preferences for technical specialisation. Choices made at enrolment may be premature and based on visions of financial gain rather than on personal affinity and talent (ref 4.2.4.1), which deter productivity in the labour market. One of the lecturers concurred in an interview that the youth do not yet understand that a large salary cannot compensate for job related aversion. Comprehensive skills testing before final course-selection supports the students'

academic motivation and ensures that their choices match their abilities, preferences and skills, a necessity due to globalisation and the price tag associated with course-provisions.

This research envisages that lecturers with genuine intentions, empathy, respect and sincerity, who support students in dealing with their transitional and future occupational needs inside and outside classrooms, will find that students attending their classes excel at socio-didactic levels. Educators like these empower students and facilitate the streamlining of preparations to transition from school to work.

5.3.2 Guidelines

The outcomes of the case study at Ibri CT were focussed on strategies used in tertiary education to manage the occupation-related abilities, skills, knowledge, understanding and preparation the youth need. These are impacted by agents such as ministries, employers, the market, parents, peers, and expectations and assumptions about teaching and learning, which impinge on classroom culture and manifest as the critical balance of visible and concealed collaboration between students, lecturers and curricula (King & Newman 2001; Richardson 2005). The findings culminated in commendations which are presented as guidelines for lecturers and administrators to help streamline the preparations for the transition of the youth in preparation of their entrance into global employment. Guidelines are recommendations which assist with the implementation of policies, procedures and rules. They assist instructors with creating solutions to their unique didactic problems (Newby et al 2000). Guidelines are a vital part of governance processes but are never complete or mandatory (Ibri CT Policy and Procedures Management Document 2010).

These guidelines aim to develop the youth's potential to be integrated into, and interact and function effectively in the workplace. While some conclusions are new, other practices to help restore the balance and streamline the preparation of the youth in Ibri CT and Oman to transition from school to work exist, but needs tweaking, revising, or sincere execution.

5.3.2.1 Guidelines related to teaching and learning

(i) Employ qualified, competent, committed and enthusiastic EFL-lecturers and guide their didactic focus through inductions and PD activities, since they have to manage curricula and ensure that students stay on target, academically, as well as skills-wise.

(ii) Structure and organise inductions to provide relevant information, rather than time to idle.

(iii) Involve the students in establishing ground-rules in classrooms to create opportunities for discussions. It facilitates their understanding of handling responsibilities and negotiations as adults in the global workplace.

(iv) Explain to students the differences between their past learning and the new type of education that enables the cultivation of positive attitudes towards their studies, at this level.

(v) Focus socio-didactic activities on students' imminent adulthood needs, to build learner-confidence and empower and enable students through excursions and research in preparation of uncertainties of the global workplace which amplifies the workers' existing insecurities.

(vi) Provide ample extra-curricular activities to support linguistic proficiency where English is not freely used outside classrooms.

5.3.2.2 Guidelines specific to the Ministry of Manpower and the Administration of Ibri CT

(i) The aim and purpose of the colleges of technology have to be clear to all stakeholders, to support the establishment of a shared academic culture, and boost communication practices.

(ii) Consult with the stakeholders to advance their commitment and perception of inclusion and recognition.

(iii) Review curricula ceaselessly to ensure significant outcomes in line with industrial developments and the demands of the global workplace.

(iv) The numbers of students in EFL-classes must be realistic to prioritise the quality of language acquisition over quantity.

(v) Skills-testing students before starting their specialisations support academic progress, advancement towards adulthood, and gaining of realistic occupational expectations and skills towards suitable appointments.

(vi) Convert the ELC into an independent language- and skills school which provides achievers for the College of Technology.

5.3.2.3 Discussion

These guidelines, generated from the findings of the case study at Ibri CT, aim to help streamline the youth's transition from school to work. The students have to be empowered to take responsibility for their own lives as workers in the global, adult world after this phase.

Economic and technological advances driven by globalisation have changed markets and labour in the last three decades (Evans & Furlong 1997; Knox & Marston 2007), and caused reshaping of the organisation of education and training programmes to generate sophisticated skills levels. The resulting occupational and social pressures insist that curricula used in tertiary education are continuously evaluated and adapted to keep up with the demands of local and international employers.

The mission of the colleges of technology includes the aim to deliver high quality technical education to yield graduates with the professional and personal skills to enter employment

with confidence and contribute to economic development. Consequently, Ibri CT has to insist on values and support flexibility, creativity and communication skills to engender graduates equipped with appropriate technological knowledge and skills, in accordance with international standards (Quality Assurance Manual 2010).

The tweaking of the current system to develop the ELC as a separate language and skills school can provide locals with practical training and certification in preparation of future employment options. Industry-specific training in EFL, computing, mathematics and office administration can benefit society since, as two parents admitted in interviews, some students attending Ibri CT want 'regular office' rather than 'technical' jobs. This phenomenon suggests indecisiveness but it stems from free education, and can moreover be charged to the added apprenticeship-related responsibilities of tertiary institutions. Adapting the system allows scholarly students to proceed to post-foundation courses, based on skill and ability. This implies, consistent with Ashton et al (1999), that the colleges can maintain their focus of providing quality graduates to the industry. They can simultaneously embrace local office- and business labour market needs over technical skills. Resources are put to optimal use and members of the society can be included and empowered appropriate to their ability, as a community service, if run as an additional after-hours-facility.

The decision-makers and administrators who are serious about the socio-economic future of the country need to deal with issues specific to this venue. These, deducted from the realities reported as the stakeholders at Ibri CT experienced them, and addressed by the guidelines, hinge on communication-related support. They furthermore match research results from studies in other parts of the world on school to work transitions.

5.4 Limitations

Every study has constraints, based on its parameters and the time-frame. More articles, views and questionnaires or interviews can always be included, but researchers have to adhere to delimitations of resources to uphold standards. The superfluous information collected in this study confirms that, over-enthusiastically, too many questions were asked.

The instruments did not pose problems other than substance. Information overlapped significantly, however all the data added to the clarity of the research. The interviews presented a practical way to collect data and follow up on unclear or ambiguous replies. Transcribing the interviews was time-consuming, but provided additional engagement in the content, which supported my understanding of the data and helped to scaffold the coding process. Masses of teacher-talk transpired in initial interviews, because interviewing was a new research tool for me. This trend improved drastically, since typing up the masses of data forced me to observe schedules. The focus groups with the students were economical and provided a fresh approach to the research. Action research, or teachers studying their own practice to support reflection and discourse (Smith 1998 and Vince 2001), could benefit teaching practices and therefore all the stakeholders, but it was not pursued *per se*. The lecturers had to rethink incidents to share thoughts and experiences in questionnaires and interviews, but were not expected to keep diaries.

I neglected some recent information because technology is a personal struggle, but using books and articles supported reliability. More culture-specific details could have been included if I could read and understand Arabic. However, I consulted widely, and the research questions were answered adequately as reflected in the collected information.

This was my first large-scale study. It was a laborious but fruitful commitment, which provided me with a positive personal learning curve. My lacking experience slowed the process down. A case study was not my initial vision, so I had to modify the approach, and constantly return to the literature for support. This caused frustration, stress and loss of self-confidence at critical stages of the study; however I gained research skills and experience.

The collected information supported the research question. I developed an appreciation of the colleges of technology and tertiary education in Oman. Moreover, an understanding of the transition to work depends on theoretical and practical application. I became alert to the value of communication, of my colleagues', the community's, and students' views and the importance of team work in further studies. Also, small groups working together by choice and with a shared vision can ensure the accrual of reliable and applicable research results.

The boundaries of my research were set by the topic and the research questions, so office-bearers and Ministry officials other than the college dean were not included. Some issues were deliberately omitted, but the temptation to venture further always lured. Researchers approach their studies differently. There is always room for improvement, but I believe I was successful since my study provided truthful answers to the research questions. I am gratified.

5.5 Summary

Dewey's concerns hold water for every generation; however, globalisation increased the pressures of time, skills and knowledge on the transition of the youth today. Students can develop intellectual legs; common sense and social savvy, and orient themselves when the

preparations to transition from school to work is streamlined. Tertiary institutions such as Ibri CT support this transition, provided curricula are continuously updated regarding global occupational demands, and that communication between stakeholders is prioritised.

Chapter 6 illustrates how the findings connect the study with the conversation on school to work transitions in the literature, consistent with views of Bryman (2004).

Chapter 6: Synopsis and implications of the research

Chapter 6 provides an overview and summarises the final results of the case study at Ibri CT whereupon it recommends further research in this field. It furthermore drew conclusions about the identified research problem, based on the results of the study.

This chapter links the empirical results of the study on streamlining the youth's progress with transitioning from school to work against the pressing issues brought forward by globalisation to the existing body of knowledge. The themes identified and developed in the literature facilitated the structuring of the practical approach of this study which hinges on the relationships between the students, EFL-lecturers and curricula; representative of instructive behaviour, as depicted by the didactic triangle. The preparations to transition from school to work can be streamlined when communication among the stakeholders is prioritised, alongside the focus on developing English and technological proficiency, adult occupational conduct and cultural awareness and -tolerance.

This chapter moreover considers implications for theory, policy and practice, and suggests additional research activities, based on the study and its outcomes.

6.1 Consolidation

The youth has to gain the knowledge and experience to meet the requirements and make the transition from school into the global occupational world. However, since the workplace

changes constantly as a result of the demands of international and local employers under the pressure of global drift, this regular developmental task became complicated.

Students attend tertiary institutions after school to acquire skills to facilitate their entrance into and advancement with the occupational realm. This educational process among the partners is illuminated by the didactic triangle (figure 1). This focus expanded to include aspects related to the stakeholders' skills, attitudes, opinions and cultures, in view of issues pertaining to the transition to work, globalisation, and communication (figures 2-5).

This chapter presents the concluding overview of the research on how tertiary education can streamline students' preparation to transition from school to work in Oman, with reference to globalisation, based on the literature review tendered in chapter 2, together with the data-collection, analysis and conclusions presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively. Merging the literature with the context and the research results indicates mixing empirical and theoretical evidence of recontextualisation, or the intellectual labour of the researcher to generate new findings (Henning 2005), in this instance, specific to Ibri CT.

6.2 The research problem

The aim of this research was to investigate how the preparation of the youth's transition from school to work can be streamlined in tertiary institutions today. I engaged in a case study to detect global as well as cultural specific workplace demands and practices relating to novice workers. The transition to work concerns all potential employees and their adult future. This

study thus endeavours to assist tertiary institutions in Oman as well as in comparable countries to enable the youth through the best possible preparation for this transition.

A qualitative approach was followed in this case study to answer the research question, which is **'How can tertiary education streamline the youth's preparation to transition from school to work with reference to globalisation?'** Four sub-questions were developed to explore educational and occupational aspects of this transition to work. These questions broach the convictions of the different stakeholders along with processes related to the transition from school to work in Oman, in view of the pressures of globalisation. They ask how the intensions of EFL-lecturers can be aligned to student expectations, given the cultural diversity at Ibri CT, and how higher levels of cultural awareness can benefit learning and teaching. They contend with the suitability of curricula of the colleges of technology to support the transition and personal and academic needs of the Omani students as well as the visions of their lecturers from different countries. The sub-questions cover the changing processes in and demands of the global workplace affecting the academic and social aspects of teaching and learning and the transition to work for young adults at different planes.

Acquiring relevant personal qualities and skills support the youth's occupational and social development. Alongside work-specific and technological skill, awareness and adaptability, the global world of work demands English proficiency, suitable communication skills, an awareness of different cultures, and flexibility. Supporting and guiding their aspirations to be employable reduce anxiety and extend the capabilities of the developing adults to bargain and compete in the global world of work, an area which is still unfamiliar to them.

6.2.1 The transition from school to work

In this study the literature review embraced the educational and occupational prospects of the youth, to determine how tertiary education can streamline the preparation for the transition to work with reference to globalisation. It put into perspective the social and emotional state of affairs of adolescents as they leave school to enter the workplace and engage in fresh challenges.

The literature has shown that curricula supporting classroom practice and learning outcomes can bind cultural and academic frustrations and empower students (Richardson 2005), also during this transition. For example, according to Youn 2000, Korea's limited natural resources should alert educators and researchers to prioritise education and find ways to develop the students' epistemological beliefs since Korean society is becoming more technologically advanced and information oriented. The Korean society should insist on educating students to 'respond with more flexibility and adventurous curiosity to the complex and uncertain, changing reality' (Youn 2000:103). Such a deliberate drive to modify opinions and skills, support the transition to work. It could also be accomplished in Oman.

The main themes in the literature connect the data from the questionnaires and interviews. The past and envisaged future of the education system in Oman, the role of schools, and the situation at Ibri CT, one of the colleges of technology managed by the Ministry of Manpower and its curricula, as well as the lecturers in its service, were thus incorporated. In particular, this research focused on the effects of globalisation with reference to projections of the didactic and occupational expectations of the youth's future local and international employment prospects, and employer-demands.

Education is a partnership of trust, as explained through the analogy of the didactic triangle. To help make sense of the dynamics, and in pursuit of the challenge of streamlining the transition, one has to understand some attitudes and opinions of the stakeholders. Each group has to insist and compromise, knowing that the others will do the same to support the didactic equilibrium, or objectives will suffer. However, the vast diversity which exists among them; both related to and clear of the shared academic environment, means special efforts have to be made by all during this period of preparation at college before the students transit into the world of work (Fuller & Unwin 2003; Lawy & Bloomer 2003).

The curriculum and EFL-lecturers at Ibri CT is representative of the global occupational reality and adulthood. They impact the students' transitional progress by providing study- and development programmes to assist authorities to help ease the youth's shift to the world of work (Goodwin & O'Connor 2005; Richardson 2005). The academic environment at colleges like Ibri CT hosts different approaches to teaching, learning, study and testing. Awareness and deliberate inclusion of the other's approach helps establish a middle ground to facilitate cooperation. Staff members who manage to build on the students' prior experience and focus on development of personal qualities and diverse skills, relevant to modern job-related demands, empower the scholars (Al-Husseini 2004). Similarly, the offering of culturally appropriate curricula at tertiary institutions support the students' broader needs associated with the current transition from school to work.

This study explored aspects of the students' learning, their culture and identities, the college curricula, and the lecturers as instructors and role models. It included probing features of personal development, human resources and human resource management which impact on the students' eventual integration into the world of work. Students attending Ibri CT are mere

children, but expect to attain suitable occupational qualifications (Eraut 2000). In accordance with the adolescent life-stage, students want to deal with academic demands as painlessly as possible to get 'control' (Elias 1962), confirmed by students' responses in the focus groups. Students believe by getting through college they will be set to take up jobs (Appendix 3).

Economic and technological pressures drive global competitiveness. The world has shrunk into a shared entity where globalisation became a major determiner of skills and activities, relentlessly transforming the workplace, challenging contemporary international and local employers and societies (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998; Knox & Marston 2007). Higher education provides technical and job-related skills, knowledge about the adult world, life and its tasks, as well as critical new codes of behaviour to help warrant a multi-skilled workforce (Goodwin 2007; Goodwin & O'Connor 2005; Layder et al 1991). The youth needs work-specific knowledge and experience to meet the complex and fluid requirements of this force of global drift, obstructing the current transition to work.

6.2.2 The issues addressed by the case study at Ibri CT

This case study focused on the role of Ibri CT in streamlining the transition from school to work for the Omani youth. The adolescents attend, and put up with requirements of tertiary institutions, expecting that they will depart with suitable qualifications and the proficiency to attain a job. Resulting qualifications must thus warrant adequate qualifications to find jobs today. The curriculum and lecturers, representative of the global occupational reality and adulthood, impact on the progress of the youth's transition in various ways. The bylaws of the Ministry of Manpower (2007) insist that lecturers support the students' broader needs associated with the transitional process on behalf of the college. Staff members control the

classroom and its activities, and exemplify the expectations associated with global workers. However, individuals interpret and execute directives differently.

The development of the research question increased understanding of the identified problem (Bryman 2004). The literature review presented the theoretical framework and disclosed the themes: students, curricula, EFL-lecturers, globalisation, employment, and the transition from school to work. These themes developed in accordance with the three areas recognised in the didactic triangle. The issues resulting from the themes were investigated through practical research. The research focused on the youth, the quality of the curriculum, teachers, as well as the fine balance between stakeholders, during the time spent in tertiary education. A variety of responses were accumulated from the respective stakeholders to probe the research question (chapter 3). The flow of educational processes, illustrated in figures 1-5 in chapter 2 and 5, elucidate support for the youth's preparation to transition to work within the cultural and global constraints faced by the stakeholders at Ibri CT. The rationale for the design of the research instruments and procedures were explained alongside the schedule for gathering information, the data analysis, student- and adult responses, and ethical considerations.

During the study the aim was to talk and listen to as many students and adults as possible via the various instruments. Using multiple methods was essential to examine key educational and social processes, and to capture the fundamentals of how the transition from school to work is experienced by the students and staff. The different methods used with each group allowed the participants to provide independent accounts of their unique experiences of, and opinions on various aspects of teaching and learning at Ibri CT. These instruments delivered a variety of responses from the respective stakeholders to explore the research question. The students completed questionnaires and structured interviews which were quantitative in

nature. They were also engaged in group discussions, presenting their input to the study with qualitative information alongside the data from the open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from the adults.

All the data from the student- and adult responses were finally connected through the main themes to generate the conclusions. These inferences elicited a wealth of information on the perceptions of the teachers and students in this socio-didactic setting. While the number of open-ended questionnaires completed by EFL-teachers on how they perceive the students and the college was less than optimal in my view, more, and more useful information followed from them. The conclusions validated the existence of issues, and added particular meaning to the existing bodies of knowledge.

The students commented on the purpose of, and their experience at college, and what they think the lecturers should provide them with. The responses confirmed that the youth enjoy studying at Ibri CT and are empowered by classroom activities which result in academic and personal skills. Eighty per cent of students like studying English at college and believe they are making progress using it. They think the courses, including mathematics and computer technology, are relevant and occupationally applicable. The students are adolescents who associate employment with individual and financial freedom, and are willing to work in foreign countries, since acquiring jobs has become urgent. They believe they would be good employees and managers. Unwittingly, in terms of the research question, the students regard the college as relevant to their transition to work.

All the lecturers said in the questionnaires that they enjoy teaching English. They believe college education should prepare students for future employment and cross-cultural contact.

EFL-lecturers expect adult behaviour from the students, but echo a noticeable lack of academic awareness among the youth. The students should become competent English users, and motivating them to study and use English is crucial. Curricula should relate to global workplace skills, but lecturers think neither character formation nor using technology features enough. They admit, similar to students in their home countries, these adolescents regard courses at college as an opportunity to help them find a job to earn a good salary in future, and to socialise with others. They say students are generally well-behaved and cooperative, and the initial uncertainty of what to expect from the other people in the classrooms soon settles, resulting in a good spirit, despite cultural differences and language deficiencies.

The synthesis brought together the different components of this study. This became evident in the final analysis, when all the data had been reworked, and the data-tables were compared (table 5.1). The datasets highlighted that the stakeholders are quite content, indicating that these groups share basic anticipation, hopes and values. It also confirms that the college's vision and mission statements adequately deal with their common aspirations and expectations of tertiary education at Ibri CT. The results also reveal differences in opinions and expectations on the transition to work in Oman, an anticipated phenomenon, based on the fundamental differences between students and lecturers. Although identified in the literature (5.3.1), communication never made an appeal comparable to the chosen themes. This can be explained by the fact that English is a foreign language, rarely used here. The non-Arab lecturers are typically from individualist cultures and not focused on students' personal issues. They are mostly oblivious of issues, since these are dealt with by official channels, in Arabic.

6.3 Implications of this study

The combined findings emanating from the literature and the stakeholders' responses connect to the rites of teaching and learning in colleges like Ibri CT. The outcomes of this case study point towards the need for the training approach to prioritise the preparation of the youth in conventional societies to advance in the global occupational world. The current focus is on improved technological skills and social development, but communication must be embraced in this newly-developing educational setting in this collectivist culture, with its strong Islamic base and range of foreign EFL-lecturers. The guidelines in chapter 5 provide support with streamlining the preparation of the youth to transition from school to work, and the integration of the young adults into the workforce, to benefit societies, despite limitations.

6.3.1 Implications for theory, policy and practice

Adolescents want to start work and earn money, but the common age-appropriate transition to leave school and find employment has become a complex affair for students these days (Ashton & Sung 2002; Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla 1998), also in countries such as Oman where priorities were different before 1970. Keeping in mind that the modern history of education in this country does not even extend over fifty years, a massive amount of organisation and administration came together here. However, this research inferred that Oman's traditional ways still yield issues which hold practical implications for administrators. A well-prepared labour force is an important resource in every economy. Proactive planning benefits the youth and society amid domineering global powers in the workplace. Prioritising the trajectory of the youth can ensure a sound transition from school to work, but depends on effective cooperation between ministries, industry and the society. Young adults who receive

specific language- and technological training, and learning- and social tolerance strategies can moreover develop a competitive edge which supports them once they access employment opportunities. Policy makers must be responsible, knowledgeable locals (Richardson 2005) with an inclusive vision and understanding of both worlds, to effectively link the disparate requirements and objectives of industry and tertiary education. Compilers of curricula need to be in touch with the demands challenging today's youth which includes the mastering of technology as a vital occupational skill, alongside a focus on acquiring adult behaviour (Goodwin 2007; Goodwin & O'Connor 2005). Curricula have to be refined continuously (Eraut 2004) to sustain the focus on the diverse skills that are relevant to contemporary job-related demands. Expert and focused trainers deliver suitable training programmes likewise present the youth with skills associated with adult behaviour, concurrent with the transition to work, in the light of waning apprenticeships (Vickerstaff 2003). They need to be positive professionals helping tertiary institutions provide young adults with opportunities to obtain the skills and behaviours in preparation of the tasks associated with the global world of work.

The results of this study indicate that the globally recruited EFL-lecturers are valuable resources at the colleges, one of the most recent developments in this young educational system. They embody different advances to contribute to tertiary education in host countries. They can facilitate the streamlining of the youth's transition to work and adulthood through their related global educational experience. Instituting cultural vigilance also helps equip the youth with a view on employment beyond the borders of Oman and its overall Islamic approach to life and learning. These lecturers can facilitate the students' understanding of the nature of subject studies, and the level of English needed to cope with academic course demands (Ashton 2004). They have to be explicitly aware of their responsibility to provide the students with more than academic capabilities. The curriculum must pursue the

development of the life-course of the youth in transition, alongside local and global industrial and occupational tendencies, to permit training to adequately support the development of the students' confidence and skills.

The transition to work is a normal phenomenon, directed by the prospects and demands of future employment. I engaged in this study to expose ways of enabling young adults the most relevant transition to work and their adult future at this recently established setting in the newly instituted and budding educational system that has to develop rapidly to facilitate the pressing needs induced by globalisation. The aim of the literature review and subsequent case study was to derive a plan of action to explore unanswered questions about the streamlining of this process in tertiary institutions to fill gaps that have been identified (Bryman 2004; Henning 2005). Close monitoring of and adapting to new developments support preparations for the youth in school to work transitions.

6.3.2 Implications for further research

The responses from the participants highlighted that communication deficiency cause the most distress among stakeholders. Proficient communication management reduces incidents among the age-, culturally- religious- and intellectually diverse groups, and supports the transition from school to work. Personal communication strategies, adaptability and socially acceptable adult conduct need to be included in set courses alongside best practices to convey applicable technological skills and knowledge to the youth. This needs to be undertaken in alliance with contemporary industrial needs to ensure global applicability.

The EFL-lecturers stressed, as reported by existing literature, that English proficiency is an important skill for any worker to be globally employable today. Research on how EFL skills could be significantly improved in the Sultanate of Oman, as a national educational issue brought forward by globalisation, should also be undertaken.

The other area highlighted by the adults' responses, and which needs to be researched, is opportunities for the development of general cultural awareness and tolerance training for students and staff, to handle sensitive issues and situations. Committed and supportive staff members are instrumental in the streamlining of the preparation to transition from school to work. Creating awareness among the culturally diverse EFL-lecturers at Ibri CT, who focus on disseminating academic skills, infuses appreciation of their responsibility regarding social and cultural transfers.

The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in Oman recently gathered information about the outcomes of tertiary education and occupational requirements from all its former students. Tertiary institutions are eagerly awaiting these results. Also, two of my colleagues are currently researching educational aspects at Ibri CT. These activities stress the relevance of tertiary studies, which further substantiates the relevance of my study at this time in the history of this college, as well as for the youth in transition at Ibri CT.

Prioritising educational and social issues related to this transition from school to work supports streamlining to ensure this country of a solid, employable workforce in future.

6.4 In conclusion

The question in chapter 1 was: '**How can the youth's preparation to transition from school to work be streamlined at Ibri CT with reference to globalisation?'** The aim was to explore how the Omani youth could be prepared during their transition at the colleges of technology, to become proficient national and global workers. The topic featured the role of education, and students' challenges to become full members of the working community amid global requirements. The research question deals with how EFL-lecturers' intensions can be aligned to student expectations and personal and academic accomplishment, and how higher levels of cultural awareness can benefit learning and teaching, recognising the cultural diversity at Ibri CT. Also, are the curricula supporting the transition and future needs of the students and the vision of the lecturers who have to convey various skills?

The literature review in chapter 2 embraced the educational situation and provided a vision of the occupational prospects of the students. It exposed views of existing studies on the youth's social and emotional challenges as they leave school to enter the workplace. The literature revealed a body of knowledge which added to the understanding of this research problem, and helped to confirm the findings of this study.

The education system and the workplace congregate in schools (Layder, Ashton and Sung 1991). In Oman this convention is extended. It occurs when the future employees and adults attend tertiary institutions such as Ibri CT. Globalisation pounds economic and cultural borders and pressurises labour markets (Gibson et al 2000), so adolescents need the support offered by personal development and recent job-related skills in foundation programs.

Developing countries have yet to advance to the same economic, educational and occupational levels as the developed states. Young adults should be supported and guided in their aspirations to become employable. Globalisation poses threats which are work-specific, such as technological awareness and adaptability alongside flexibility, English proficiency, suitable communication skills, and an awareness of cultural differences. The EFL-lecturers are ideally placed to help reduce anxiety and extend the capabilities of the youth to bargain and compete in the global world of work with which they are still unfamiliar.

Scientifically compiled tertiary learning programmes aim to develop contemporary skills, strategies and techniques appropriate to the young adults' preparation for employment and their future work environment. They embrace cultural diversity and incorporate the vision of the lecturers who manage the transition and the students' anticipated needs. Relevant methodologies, strategies and skills can benefit both learning and teaching at the colleges of technology in Oman and additionally realise the demands associated with globalisation.

Since practical research was undertaken to investigate the issues resulting from the themes, the rationale for the design of the research instruments and procedures were explained, while the schedule for gathering information were discussed in chapter 3. Derived from the findings, communication aimed at narrowing the gap between the visions of EFL-lecturers and students is vital at all levels to support the students at Ibri CT in their transition from school to work and confirmed by both groups of respondents noted in chapter 4 in this study.

The ultimate conclusion provided in chapter 5, based on the data gathered from students and adults, is that the real issue at Ibri CT rests in poor interpersonal communication practices between the partners in this complicated didactic situation. These communication-related

issues include insufficient language skills and social involvement between collectivists and individualists, which can be resolved if people reach out and support rather than ignore (Wenger 1998) one another. The outcome of the study was surprising, considering the initial incident between a member of staff and the students which I observed. The episode left me with the impression that there are major differences of opinion between stakeholders, a sentiment shared by the other EFL-lecturers and reflected in their responses to the questionnaire (table 4.9). The problems found can and should be addressed to assist the streamlining of the preparation to transition from school to work for the students.

In chapter 1 of this case study at Ibri CT, the question was '**How can the youth's preparation to transition from school to work be streamlined at Ibri CT with reference to globalisation?**' Scientifically compiled and monitored curricula, to ensure the inclusion and development of appropriate skills, strategies and techniques, and an EFL-programme relevant to the students' preparation for their future work environment are beneficial at tertiary institutions such as Ibri CT (figure 5). Developing and implementing relevant strategies, methodologies and skills, including communication, acknowledging the diversity among the stakeholders, can benefit both learning and teaching at the seven colleges of technology in support of transitioning in Oman.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Students' questionnaire

Read each statement and circle the number you agree with.

1. You are:
1 = 18   2 = 19   3 = 20   4 = older   5 = younger

2. You completed school:
1 = In 2009   2 = In 2008   3 = In 2007   4 = In 2006   5 = before 2006

3. You started at level:
1 = Pre-Elementary 2 = Elementary 3 = Intermediate 4 = Advanced 5 = Specialisation

4. You are in level:
1 = Pre-Elementary 2 = Elementary 3 = Intermediate 4 = Advanced 5 = Specialisation

5. English is enjoyable at school level.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

6. Studying at college is enjoyable.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

7. Studying English at college is important for your future.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

8. Studying English at college is enjoyable.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

9. English classes make you nervous.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

10. You are very nervous when you write tests.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

11. You are very nervous when you write examinations.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

12. Your English has improved since studying at Ibri CT.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

13. Your lecturers enjoy teaching you.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

14. Your lecturers care about your academic progress.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

15. Your lecturers want you to get a good job.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

16. To have a job is very important.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

17. A job is only important because you get money.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

18. You want a good job after completing your studies.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

19. Studying at Ibri CT will help you get a job.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

20. Studying mathematics is important.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

21. Computer studies is important.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

22. You will use the information from college in your job.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

23. You will be a good employee.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

24. You want to become a manager in future.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

25. You want to work in another country.
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain 4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

Appendix 2: Broad interview questions

- How can Ibri CT assist lecturers to support the students with a realistic view on the workplace?
- Are tertiary students sufficiently exposed and required to acquire management and leadership skills to streamline the transition?
- Are the learning programmes suited to the needs of the students, and in line with those of the lecturers who have to transfer the skills?
- What are the major problems the students experience?
- What are the major problems the lecturers experience?
- How can the intensions of teachers and the expectations of students be aligned to result in better accomplishment at personal as well as at academic levels?
- How can higher cultural awareness benefit teaching skills and methodologies?
- How relevant is the EFL-programme to the students' preparation?
- Could lecturers and students be more empowered?
- Are the learning programmes scientifically compiled and monitored?
- What are the transition needs of students in the FP?

Appendix 3: Students' closed interview questions

1. What job do you want in future?
2. Do you think you will get it?
3. Where would you like to work?
4. Will your studies at college help you get the job?

Replies:

	Advanced:21	Intermediate:25	Elementary:27
Job			
Business	14		
Engineer		21	18
Technician	7	4	4
Policeman			2
Soldier			1
Uncertain			2

Will you get it?			
Yes	Bus14; Tech4	Eng14; Tech4	Eng16; Tech4; Soldier1
No	Bus-; Tech-	Eng2; Tech-	Eng-
Uncertain	Bus-; Tech3	Eng5; Tech-	Eng2; Pol2; Uncertain2

Will studying help you get it?			
Yes	8	15	23
No	4	2	1
Uncertain	9	8	3

Where ould you like to work?			
Oman	4	9	18
Arabia	9	10	7
England/America	5	3	2
Germany	-	3	-
France	2	-	-
Japan	1	-	-

Appendix 4: Student group discussion questions

1. Why do you like attending English classes?
2. Why do you dislike attending English classes?

3. Why does your English improve?
4. Why do your lecturers care about students' studies?

5. Why do you want to work in another country?
6. Why do you want to become a manager?

7. Why will you be a good employee?
8. Why is it important to have a good job?

9. Why is it important to study mathematics?
10. Why is it important to study computer science?
11. Why are students nervous during examinations?

Appendix 5: Teachers' questionnaire

1. You are:

1 = Younger   **2 = Between 36 and 50**   **3 = Older**

2. You have been teaching English at tertiary level for _____ years.

3. You have been teaching in Oman for _____ years.

4. You started teaching in Ibri CT in _____.

5. Name, place and year of qualifications:
    Final school year: _____
    Bachelors: _____
    Honours (BEd):   _____
    Master's: _____
    Doctorate: _____
    CELTA: _____
    DELTA: _____
    Other: _____

6. Have you taught English at school level?
_____

7. Teaching at Ibri CT is a positive experience.
1 = strongly disagree   **2 = disagree**   **3 = uncertain 4 = agree**   **5 = strongly agree**

8. You enjoy teaching tertiary students.
1 = strongly disagree   **2 = disagree**   **3 = uncertain 4 = agree**   **5 = strongly agree**

9. Studying English at college is important for students' future.
1 = strongly disagree   **2 = disagree**   **3 = uncertain 4 = agree**   **5 = strongly agree**

10. You enjoy teaching your current classes.
1 = strongly disagree   **2 = disagree**   **3 = uncertain 4 = agree**   **5 = strongly agree**

11. It is important that your students make academic progress.
1 = strongly disagree   **2 = disagree**   **3 = uncertain 4 = agree**   **5 = strongly agree**

12. You want your students to get good jobs.
1 = strongly disagree   **2 = disagree**   **3 = uncertain 4 = agree**   **5 = strongly agree**

13. Getting a job is important to students.
1 = strongly disagree   **2 = disagree**   **3 = uncertain 4 = agree**   **5 = strongly agree**

14. Studying at Ibri will help students get good jobs.
1 = strongly disagree   **2 = disagree**   **3 = uncertain 4 = agree**   **5 = strongly agree**

15. Studying mathematics is important.

1 = strongly disagree　　2 = disagree　　3 = uncertain 4 = agree　　5 = strongly agree

16. Computer studies is important.
1 = strongly disagree　　2 = disagree　　3 = uncertain 4 = agree　　5 = strongly agree

17. Skills in mathematics and computers will benefit the students as employees.
1 = strongly disagree　　2 = disagree　　3 = uncertain 4 = agree　　5 = strongly agree

18. The students will use some learning matter from college in their job.
1 = strongly disagree　　2 = disagree　　3 = uncertain 4 = agree　　5 = strongly agree

19. The time at college will support the students to become capable employees.
1 = strongly disagree　　2 = disagree　　3 = uncertain 4 = agree　　5 = strongly agree

A. Personal:

How long have you been teaching?

How long have you been teaching in Oman?

How long do you plan to work at college?

Are your qualifications appropriate for your job?

What would you like to change in terms of your qualifications?

How many languages can you speak?

Is Arabic one?

B. Lecturers' perceptions of their job

Do you enjoy teaching?

Do you reflect on lessons to improve each attempt?

Do students do what you intended them to?

What frustrates you as a teacher?

Who can change this situation? How?

How do you feel about discipline at college?

How do you feel about class sizes?

How do you feel about your workload?

Do you think you are a role model for students?

How does that make you feel? Why?

What frustrates you about the college?

C. How do the lecturers experience the curriculum?

What is the aim of tertiary education?

Do you think the students see this as an aim?

Do you think the students need to learn English?

Do you think English skills would improve if they studied?

Do you think the students see learning English as necessary?

Is there an ethos of academic excellence at the college? Why?

Who is responsible to create this?

What is the reason for the existence of the college?

Does it meet those expectations? Why?

Do you think the curriculum is suitable? Why?

Do you follow the curriculum to the letter?

What changes would you like to make to it?

Do you give the students more than the skills outlined by the curriculum?

Is the curriculum relevant for Omanis? Why?

Does the curriculum support Omanis in the international job market? Why?

Do the students need more than academic skills? Why?

Do you include personal perceptions or 'life-skills' in class?

Do the students enjoy it?

What do the students expect of the courses?

D. What are the lecturers' perceptions of their students?

What do you enjoy about teaching here?

What is difficult about teaching here?

What are the students' perceptions of studying at Ibri CT?

What should the students be taught?

Do you think students can perform better?

Do you think the students practice outside of classrooms?

How can study methods become more effective?

Who should help them in this?

Do you communicate well with your students?

Do the students enjoy your classes?

What don't students like about your classes? Why?

Do the students understand your expectations of them? Why?

Do you keep cultural differences in mind when you teach?

Do the students accept that you do things differently due to cultural differences?

Do you discuss cultural differences with your students?

Have you ever visited an Omani family? Why?

Are the students children or adults? Why?

What are the students good at?

Do you use these attributes when you teach them?

What do you think of your students' behaviour in class? Why?

How does this compare to students in your country?

What frustrates you about the students?

What do you like about your students?

E. Teachers perceptions of themselves:

How do you motivate your students?

How are you a good teacher?

What can you do to be a better teacher?

What would you like to change in your classroom?

Is there enough opportunity for PD?

If there were more, would you participate?

What are the problems to participation?

Do you make time to attend? Why?

Appendix 6: Interview schedule

Schedule to apply research tools

	Dec 09	Jan 10	Feb	March	April	May	June	Oct
Students questionnaire	Pilot (7)		2 (25)	3 (53)				
Student interviews							27, 29/ 6 (73)	
Student Discussion Groups							20 (5 groups)	
Staff questionnaire	Pilot P1&P2		Sent by Outlook (Lecturer a-q)					
Staff interviews	Pilot P1&P2		EB, EC	EH	EA	EE	EO	EI
Admin Staff interviews			EHoS	ADAA		ADAF	ADSA	ESec
Other Interviews	Parent1	Parent2	Parent3	Parent4		Parent5	Parent6	
Consult Dean/HoQA	24/6/09 12/9/09	12/10/09			25/4/10	15/5/10	12/7/10	30/10 /10

*KEY: P – Pilot; E – ELC + questionnaire code or job abbreviation; A – Admin

Appendix 7: Participant Information and Consent

Mr/ Ms _____

I am conducting research on the transition from school to work for the fulfilment of a doctorate degree in Social Sciences. I invite you to take part in my research project:

From school to work in Oman via Ibri CT: How can the colleges of technology in Oman streamline students' transition from school to work with reference to globalisation?

Outline:
Tertiary education can support students effectively with the transition from school to work if the expectations of everyone involved can be met. The focus is on classroom practice and communication in the colleges of technology in Oman within the curriculum and culture. It features students' progression to meet the requirements of tertiary education, in view of the transition to future employment, and in acknowledgement of the demands of the global economy. The aim is to dovetail the academic expectations of students and the intentions of foreign lecturers of EFL in the colleges of technology in terms of their respective roles in tertiary education as envisaged by the Ministry of Manpower and its views on employment to impact learner achievement and coping with the demands of the global workplace in the transition from school to work in this society and culture.

I would like to involve you as an educationalist in an interview. The interviews will last no more than one hour and will be conducted in English. Your comments will be recorded to facilitate transcription. You will be provided with a transcript to check for accuracy.

I assure you that your comments are confidential, that you will remain anonymous, and that your views will be published in a way that does not identify you. You can add or extract information at any stage of the research, and you are free to refuse to answer particular questions, or to withdraw from the study at any stage.

I believe you can contribute to this study. Please sign the consent form if you are willing to participate, and return it to me. Once your form is received, I will contact you to arrange an interview time. Please e-mail me at lynettebrummer@yahoo.com if you require additional information.

Thanking you for your time and willingness to participate in this research.
Yours sincerely
Lynette Brummer   Date: _____

Participant Consent Form

Research title:

From school to work in Oman via Ibri CT: How can the colleges of technology in Oman streamline students' transition from school to work with reference to globalisation?

I have read the accompanying information and had the study explained. My questions about this study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask additional question at any time.

I am contributing to the body of knowledge about transition from school to work by allowing my responses to be used in this study. This will benefit the Omani students whose transition from school to work may subsequently be streamlined, but also the economic and social processes at work in the Sultanate of Oman.

I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time. I agree to provide the researcher with information on the understanding that it is completely confidential. I understand that my name will not be used and the information will only be used for the purposes of this study.

I, _____ have read the information and **I agree/ do not agree** to be interviewed and that my contribution may be used for the purposes of this study only.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Appendix 8: Information derived from student questionnaires

Questions 1 and 2 of the questionnaire confirm that the students are young people. Only 3.5% completed school more than two years prior to enrolment.

Table 8.1: Data showing the ages and final school years of the students who completed the questionnaires

Age		Final school year	
Years	Percentage of 85 students	Percentage of 85 students	Year
18	10.6%	76.5%	2009
19	42.2%	7.1%	2008
20	34.1%	12.9%	2007
Older than 20	12.9%	3.5%	2006

Table 8.2: Data showing the perceptions of students who completed the questionnaires: Students view studying more enjoyable at college than at school

Opinion	Studying at **Ibri CT** is enjoyable
Strongly disagree	1.1%
Disagree	8.2%
Unsure	4.7%
Agree	64.7%
Strongly agree	21.2%

These percentages correspond with question 6 of the questionnaire. **85.9% [64.7+21.2]** said studying at college is enjoyable, while **9.3% [1.1+8.2]** responded negatively.

Table 8.3: Data showing the levels of English competency of the students who completed the questionnaires at admission: Students generally have low levels of English when they enter the colleges

English Level at entrance	Percentage of 85 students
FP	
Pre-Elementary	40%
Elementary	22.4%
Intermediate	36.5%
Advanced	0
Specialisation	
Certificate	1.1%

Appendix 9: Information derived from lecturer questionnaires

Table 9.1: Data showing the age- and gender distribution of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires

	Males		Females		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Younger	2	11.8%	2	11.8%	4	23.6%
Between 35 and 50	5	29.4%	5	29.4%	10	58.8%
Older	0	0	3	17.6%	3	17.6%
Total	7	41.2%	10	58.8%	17	100%

Table 9.2: Data showing the work experience of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires

Experience	Average
Teaching	9.85 years
Teaching English in Tertiary Education	8.02 years
Teaching in Oman	4.06 years
Teaching at Ibri CT	15.5 months

Table 9.3: Data showing the perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires about occupational issues: Lecturers see their job in a positive light

Issue	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Student Behaviour		5.9%	47.1%
Colleagues/Faculty			17.6%
Personal Inadequacies			17.6%
Professional Care and Appreciation, and Remuneration			17.6%
Teaching Materials/Resources			23.6%
Timetable			5.9%
Class size	11.8%	29.4%	58.8%
Workload	5.9%	70.7%	23.6%
College staff			17.6%
Ministry of Manpower			11.8%
Recruitment			5.9%
Information/Access			17.6%
Organisation/Procedures			41.2%
Induction			5.9%
Expectations/Goals			11.8%
Work Experience/Interest			29.4%

Table 9.4: Data showing the perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires about concerns at work: The lecturers have job-related issues but view students positively

No	Issue	Positive	Partial	Negative
1	The curriculum is suitable	29.4%	29.4%	35.2%
2	You follow the curriculum to the letter	0	47.1%	41.2%
3	The curriculum is relevant to support Omanis in the international job-market	0	35.2%	47.1%
4	The students are capable of better academic performance	100%	0	0
5	The students get sufficient opportunities to practise English	0	0	100%
6	You communicate well with your students	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%
7	The students enjoy your classes	70.5%	23.6%	5.9%
8	The students understand your expectations of them	76.5%	17.6%	5.9%
9	The students would perform better if they believed they enjoyed their classes	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%
10	Your students accept that you do things differently due to cultural differences	47.1%	23.6%	23.6%

Table 9.5: Data showing the perceptions of the lecturers who completed the questionnaires about the work environment: Lecturers see their job and students in a positive light

The Teaching-Learning Environment	Possible Improvements
Crisp physical learning environment	Smaller class-sizes, attractive personalised classrooms
Multi-cultural staff with a variety of approaches to teaching and learning	Lecturer refresher-courses and conferences
Non-regimented working conditions	The post-foundation curriculum needs revising
Pleasant inter-personal relationships prevail	Motivation and academic focus at all levels, development of confidence, time management
Students participate without hesitation	Gender-equality and expectations of the occupational world
Sound academic teacher-qualities	Realistic administrative systems have to be developed and followed
Good/modern resources	Maintenance of resources and technology

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