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REVIEW

Educational Leadership and Organizational Change in Oman: Toward an Interdisciplinary Transformation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how integrated educational leadership can foster interdisciplinary collaboration and organizational agility in Omani educational institutions, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. Using a qualitative approach based on secondary data analysis, the research synthesizes literature, policy documents, and institutional reports to propose a culturally grounded leadership framework. The model combines distributed, instructional, entrepreneurial, and culturally responsive leadership to address the complex demands of educational transformation. Findings indicate that distributed leadership supports shared decision-making and mobilizes expertise across institutional levels, while instructional leadership clarifies educational goals and nurtures effective learning environments. Entrepreneurial leadership encourages innovation through creativity and risk-taking, and culturally responsive leadership ensures alignment with Omani values and societal norms. Together, these dimensions form a synergistic framework that enhances interdisciplinarity, institutional adaptability, and alignment with national development priorities. Despite policy emphasis on interdisciplinary education, barriers such as limited university–industry collaboration and underdeveloped research capacity constrain agility and innovation. Based on these insights, the study recommends enhancing leadership development, improving research infrastructure, expanding digital capacity, and embedding leadership and interdisciplinarity criteria into

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accreditation standards. The study contributes conceptually by integrating diverse leadership theories into a context-sensitive model and provides actionable guidance for policymakers and educational leaders. Future research using primary data and regional comparisons is suggested to validate and refine the framework.

Keywords: Educational Leadership; Interdisciplinary Collaboration; Organizational Agility; Vision 2040; Oman; Transformational Leadership

1. Introduction

Education in the twenty-first century is undergoing profound transformations driven by the accelerating convergence of Education in the twenty-first century is experiencing significant changes due to the convergence of technology, knowledge systems, and sustainable development needs. It is no longer only a process of knowledge transmission but serves as a strategic tool for societal development. Effective educational leadership plays a central role in guiding organizational change through adaptable policies and practices, particularly in countries pursuing ambitious transformation agendas like Oman ^[1].

Despite reforms under Oman Vision 2040, studies show limited integration between leadership practices and interdisciplinary approaches in Omani schools and higher education institutions ^[2]. Leadership strategies often remain confined within disciplinary boundaries, reducing the capacity of institutions to address complex challenges that require cross-disciplinary collaboration. As a result, institutional adaptability and innovation are restricted, affecting the achievement of Vision 2040's educational objectives ^[3].

This study focuses on three main objectives:

1. Examining how educational leadership supports interdisciplinary practices in Oman.
2. Investigating leadership contributions to organizational change and institutional adaptability.
3. Proposing frameworks to enhance leadership effectiveness in interdisciplinary education.

The research addresses the following questions:

- How does educational leadership influence interdisciplinary integration in Omani schools and higher education institutions?
- Which leadership practices support institutional change aligned with Oman Vision 2040?

- What frameworks can guide leaders in promoting inclusive and interdisciplinary learning environments?

Oman is advancing toward its Vision 2040 goals, positioning education as key to innovation, equity, and economic growth. Achieving this vision requires transformational leadership that embraces interdisciplinarity, drives institutional reform, and promotes outcome-driven learning environments. Such leadership goes beyond routine administration, requiring the ability to bridge knowledge domains and foster dialogue among disciplines, communities, and generations ^[4].

Interdisciplinarity is increasingly recognized as essential for addressing complex global challenges, including climate change, public health, economic resilience, and digital transformation ^[5]. Educational institutions are tasked with integrating diverse knowledge streams from sciences, social sciences, and humanities to enhance innovation and relevance. This trend aligns with international efforts to meet the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ^[6].

Educational leadership is critical in navigating diverse perspectives and stakeholder needs, enabling adaptive systems that promote both academic excellence and social responsibility ^[7]. Leaders must integrate ethical reasoning, cultural understanding, and critical thinking alongside technical knowledge to prepare students for real-world problem-solving ^[8].

Despite its importance, there is limited understanding of how educational leadership can effectively promote interdisciplinary reform within Oman's cultural and policy context ^[9]. The absence of integrated models linking leadership, organizational change, and interdisciplinary strategies hinders institutions from fully aligning with national development goals.

This study explores the relationship between edu-

cational leadership, organizational change, and interdisciplinarity in Oman. It examines theoretical foundations and practical strategies for supporting interdisciplinary transformation in educational institutions. The study emphasizes how leadership can transform schools from sites of knowledge delivery to platforms for knowledge co-creation, critical inquiry, and societal development.

2. Literature Review

Transformative educational leadership is crucial for fostering adaptable learning environments. Among leadership models, distributed leadership—emphasizing shared responsibilities and decision-making—has gained attention^[10]. Spillane highlights that this model enhances organizational adaptability by leveraging diverse expertise within schools^[11]. Empirical studies in Oman support these claims: Awashreh et al. report a positive correlation between distributed leadership and school effectiveness, noting Omani teachers favor distributed leadership practices more than counterparts in Egypt^[12,13]. This indicates the potential of distributed leadership to bridge disciplinary silos, addressing complex educational goals^[14].

However, hierarchical cultural norms in Oman may limit genuine shared decision-making, requiring adaptations that balance distributed leadership with cultural expectations^[15]. Complementing this, instructional leadership focuses on clarifying school missions, guiding curriculum implementation, and nurturing climates for student learning^[16]. Yet, instructional leadership remains underexplored in Oman, limiting understanding of how it can support interdisciplinary transformation aligned with Vision 2040^[17].

Oman's Vision 2040 prioritizes education for innovation, economic diversification, and human capital development. Institutional reforms led by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAAQA) and the Ministry of Higher Education aim to strengthen leadership capacity^[18]. Identified competencies include professional expertise, communication, technology use, crisis management, and cultural awareness^[19]. Nonetheless, applying international leadership standards without localization risks cultural dissonance, emphasizing the need to integrate global best

practices with local values^[20].

Interdisciplinarity—integrating methods and perspectives across disciplines—is essential for addressing global challenges such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals^[21]. It also fosters critical thinking and cognitive flexibility, supporting Oman's vision of responsive, innovative education^[22]. Practical examples show Omani principals and teachers embedding interdisciplinary themes (e.g., green economy) into leadership and curricula^[3,23]. Despite these efforts, gaps remain between policy aspirations and school-level implementation, particularly in global citizenship and interdisciplinary integration, highlighting the role of educational leadership^[24].

Organizational change in Omani educational institutions emphasizes agility and core competencies. Projects at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) demonstrate that organizational agility enhances competitiveness and aligns with Vision 2040^[25]. However, limited university-industry partnerships restrict interdisciplinary and applied leadership initiatives, and low research capacity hinders evidence-based leadership and policy development^[21,26].

Entrepreneurial leadership (EL)—characterized by foresight, creativity, risk-taking, and continuous learning—is vital for Oman's innovation and diversification goals^[7,27]. EL promotes knowledge management and supports creativity and innovation, driving sustainable development within a knowledge economy^[28]. Although primarily studied in organizational contexts, EL provides insights for fostering interdisciplinary, collaborative learning environments^[29]. Current leadership research rarely integrates EL with other models in education, representing a gap for future investigation.

Interdisciplinary change also faces challenges in digital and mobile learning adoption, including limited access, teacher readiness, and learner engagement^[30]. Cultural factors affect technology use, indicating the need for leadership models incorporating cultural intelligence and resilience^[31]. MOOCs highlight both opportunities and barriers for educational transformation in Oman, underscoring the importance of context-sensitive leadership frameworks^[32]. **Table 1** provides a summary of the gaps in the literature and the key findings of the article.

Table 1. Summary of Gaps & Positioning.

Theme	Existing Findings	Gap in Literature
Leadership Models	Distributed, instructional, entrepreneurial leadership explored globally and partly in Oman	No integrated model combining interdisciplinary leadership, agility, and Vision 2040
Context-specific Competencies	Identified professional, tech, intercultural competencies	Missing synthesis into frameworks that actively direct interdisciplinary institutional change
Institutional Change	Green economy, organizational agility projects emerging	Lack of evaluative studies on continuous change and interdisciplinary outcomes
Research Infrastructure	Limited research capacity in educational institutions	Need for dedicated frameworks and empirical evidence
Technology Integration	Multiple small-scale studies	No unified leadership approach addressing m-learning, MOOCs, and cultural factors

Source: developed by the author, 2025.

On transformative, distributed, instructional, and entrepreneurial leadership theories, as well as organizational change and knowledge economy literature, this study proposes an integrated leadership framework tailored to Oman's socio-cultural and policy context^[33]. The framework combines distributed, instructional, entrepreneurial, and culturally responsive leadership approaches to promote interdisciplinary practices and organizational agility, aligned with Oman Vision 2040^[28]. It aims to provide a conceptual basis for policymakers and educational leaders—including the Ministry of Education, OAAAQA, and MoHERI—to develop strategies that support interdisciplinary, sustainable, and innovative transformation across Oman's private higher education sector^[18].

The theoretical foundation draws upon complementary theories that together offer insight into the interplay between educational leadership, interdisciplinarity, and organizational change in Oman's Vision 2040 context^[34]. Key theories include Transformational Leadership Theory, Distributed Leadership Theory, Interdisciplinary Theory, Organizational Change Theory, and the Knowledge Economy Framework.

Transformational Leadership Theory, introduced by Burns and expanded by Bass, focuses on leaders who inspire followers to exceed expectations by shaping attitudes, values, and goals^[35]. Its main components are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration^[36]. Empirical studies in Oman link transformational leadership to improved teacher satisfaction, institutional performance, and adaptability

^[37]. School leaders demonstrating these components foster more resilient and innovative learning environments aligned with Vision 2040^[38].

Distributed Leadership Theory views leadership as emerging from interactions among leaders, followers, and organizational context rather than residing in a single individual^[11]. It emphasizes collaboration, shared decision-making, and capacity building at multiple levels. In Oman, distributed leadership enables leveraging expertise across roles, fostering institutional coherence and collective ownership^[39]. For example, Omani schools report sharing leadership responsibilities among administrators, teachers, and community stakeholders to support interdisciplinary initiatives^[22].

Interdisciplinary Theory addresses complex challenges in sustainable development, innovation, and global citizenship. It argues that such problems require integration of knowledge, methods, and perspectives from multiple fields^[40]. In education, interdisciplinarity requires leadership that promotes integrative thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and respect for diverse knowledge forms^[41]. This aligns with Vision 2040 and the UN SDGs, which advocate for educational models transcending traditional boundaries^[42]. Omani educators have begun embedding interdisciplinary themes such as environmental sustainability into curricula and leadership practices^[22].

Organizational Change Theory explains how institutions evolve amid internal and external pressures. Models such as Lewin's unfreeze-change-refreeze and modern eight-step frameworks guide transformation^[42–44]. These

models highlight leadership's role in managing structural and cultural changes. In Oman, educational leaders navigate resistance, uncertainty, and capacity limitations while implementing systemic reforms in policy, pedagogy, and institutional culture ^[45].

The Knowledge Economy Framework situates leadership within Oman's socio-economic ambitions. It emphasizes knowledge production, dissemination, and application as drivers of innovation, economic growth, and sustainable development ^[46,47]. Omani institutions are expected to function as hubs for interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation. Leadership that fosters knowledge sharing, research-informed teaching, and cross-sector partnerships is essential for achieving national objectives and preparing a competitive workforce ^[48]. Examples include initiatives promoting university-industry linkages and collaborative research addressing real-world challenges.

In summary, the study's framework integrates transformational and distributed leadership with interdisciplinary practice, organizational change, and knowledge economy principles. It illustrates how diverse leadership approaches intersect with interdisciplinary efforts to enhance institutional adaptability and innovation, supporting Oman's Vision 2040 and SDG goals.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative design to explore the relationship between educational leadership, interdisciplinarity, and organizational change in the context of Oman's Vision 2040. A qualitative approach is suitable for understanding complex social phenomena, such as leadership

practices and interdisciplinary integration, through interpretation of textual and documentary evidence ^[49]. The exploratory focus relies on secondary data to develop a leadership framework tailored to the Omani educational context.

3.2. Data Sources

Secondary data were collected from diverse, credible sources, including academic journals, government reports, policy documents, strategic frameworks (notably Oman Vision 2040), and institutional publications. Key sources include Sultan Qaboos University publications, reports by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAAQA), and international organizations such as the UN and World Bank. Sources were selected for relevance and reliability, focusing on leadership paradigms, interdisciplinary practices, and organizational agility in Oman. **Table 2** summarizes the study themes and main sources cited in the references.

3.3. Data Collection

Data were gathered through systematic searches in databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Sage Journals, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar, using keywords such as "educational leadership," "interdisciplinarity," "organizational change," "knowledge economy," and "Vision 2040." Official government websites and institutional portals were also consulted. The search was limited to publications from the past 10 years to reflect contemporary reforms and leadership challenges in Oman.

Table 2. Themes and Key Sources.

Theme/Category	Representative Sources
Educational Leadership Models	Spillane ^[11] , Awashreh and Hamid ^[12] , Harris ^[16] , Alshamy et al. ^[19]
Interdisciplinarity in Education	Abo-Khalil ^[20] , Awashreh ^[22] , Koh et al. ^[24]
Organizational Change & Agility	Fathi ^[25] , Okitasari and Katramiz ^[42] , Pollack and Pollack ^[44]
Vision 2040 & Policy Frameworks	Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation ^[18] , Elshaiekh et al. ^[46]
Knowledge Economy & Innovation	Elshaiekh et al. ^[46] , Summad et al. ^[47] , Awashreh ^[48]

Sources: developed by the Author, 2025.

3.4. Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was applied to synthesize the data. Texts were coded to identify recurring themes and patterns related to transformational and distributed leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, organizational change, and entrepreneurial leadership. The coding process included iterative reading, open coding for emerging concepts, and axial coding to organize concepts into categories relevant to Vision 2040 and knowledge economy contexts. Cross-validation was performed by triangulating findings across sources to ensure reliability.

3.5. Validity and Bias Mitigation

The credibility of sources was carefully evaluated, prioritizing peer-reviewed articles, government publications, and reputable institutional reports. Potential biases, including publication bias or policy-driven narratives, were mitigated by comparing diverse perspectives and cross-referencing local and international data. Transparent documentation of source selection and coding procedures further reduced researcher bias.

3.6. Justification for Secondary Data Use

Secondary data were used due to the exploratory nature of the study and the availability of rich, relevant, and current information. Secondary data analysis is an established method for examining broad systemic phenomena where primary data collection is limited by resources or access. Integrating multiple secondary sources allows for a comprehensive synthesis situating educational leadership within Oman's socio-political and economic framework.

4. Results

This study investigates how integrated educational leadership can drive interdisciplinary practice and organizational agility within Omani institutions, aligning with Vision 2040. By analyzing secondary data, it highlights leadership models that foster innovation, cultural responsiveness, and collaboration, offering strategic insights to advance Oman's educational transformation and national

development goals.

4.1. Integrated Leadership Framework for Oman's Educational Context

This study examines how integrated educational leadership can support interdisciplinary practices and organizational agility in Omani institutions, in line with Vision 2040. Analysis of secondary data identifies leadership models that foster innovation, collaboration, and cultural responsiveness, providing strategic insights to guide educational transformation and national development goals.

The analysis indicates the need for an integrated leadership framework combining distributed, instructional, entrepreneurial, and culturally responsive approaches to address Oman's educational challenges under Vision 2040^[50].

Distributed leadership facilitates decentralization of responsibilities across stakeholders, mobilizing expertise from administrators, teachers, and community members^[51]. This shared approach enhances institutional adaptability and supports collective problem-solving and innovation, critical for addressing interdisciplinary educational demands^[52].

Instructional leadership complements this model by clarifying educational missions, overseeing curriculum implementation, and fostering positive school climates. Although less studied in Oman, it supports foundational objectives outlined in national strategies^[14].

Entrepreneurial leadership contributes by promoting creativity, foresight, risk-taking, and continuous learning, aligning with Oman's innovation-driven growth priorities.

Culturally responsive leadership ensures that practices are sensitive to Oman's socio-cultural context, values, and community expectations, increasing the relevance and acceptance of leadership initiatives^[53].

Together, these leadership dimensions form a holistic framework capable of responding to national priorities while supporting global trends in inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, and sustainable development^[54].

Table 3 presents the key findings from the thematic analysis.

Table 3. Key Themes and Leadership Insights.

Theme	Key Coded Concepts	Representative Sources
Distributed Leadership	Shared responsibilities, capacity-building, decentralization	Awashreh and Hamid ^[12] , Gough ^[51]
Instructional Leadership	Mission clarity, curriculum oversight, school climate	Al-Mahdy and Al-Kiyumi ^[14] , Lawrence et al. ^[17]
Entrepreneurial Leadership	Risk-taking, foresight, knowledge sharing, innovation culture	Awashreh and Mohamed ^[7] , Sott and Bender ^[53]
Culturally Responsive Leadership	Community relevance, socio-cultural alignment, stakeholder trust	Rai and Beresford-Dey ^[54] , Wang et al. ^[55]
Interdisciplinary & Organizational Agility	Cross-discipline collaboration, adaptability, responsiveness, curriculum integration	Zitkiene and Deksnys ^[56]

Source: developed by the author, 2025.

4.2. Catalyzing Interdisciplinary Practice and Organizational Agility

The examination of secondary sources reveals that while interdisciplinary practice within Omani educational institutions Analysis of secondary data indicates that interdisciplinary practice in Omani educational institutions is emerging but remains uneven, particularly regarding themes such as global citizenship and sustainability ^[23]. A key enabler is leadership that promotes distributed decision-making and collaboration across disciplines, breaking down traditional silos. Such leadership supports an institutional culture where diverse knowledge streams—spanning sciences, humanities, and social sciences—are strategically combined to address complex societal challenges ^[55].

Organizational agility, the capacity to adapt rapidly to changing internal and external conditions, is enhanced by inclusive and entrepreneurial leadership styles that encourage experimentation, flexibility, and proactive responsiveness ^[56]. This agility allows institutions to align dynamically with Vision 2040 directives and societal shifts driven by economic diversification and technological advancement.

However, constraints limit the realization of interdisciplinary goals and agility ^[57]. Limited university-industry partnerships reduce opportunities for applied research and innovation, weakening feedback loops that inform curriculum development and leadership practices. Additionally, underdeveloped research infrastructure restricts evidence-based decision-making, limiting leaders' capacity to implement interdisciplinary reforms effectively ^[26].

4.3. Alignment with Vision and Policy Recommendations

The findings highlight the role of educational leadership in guiding institutions toward Vision 2040 objectives, which prioritize innovation, human capital development, and the transition to a knowledge-based economy ^[46]. Leadership models that emphasize continuous learning, knowledge sharing, cultural intelligence, and entrepreneurial thinking are essential for fostering adaptable and innovative educational environments ^[58]. **Figure 1** presents the policy recommendations and a summary of the key findings.

Based on the analysis, the study proposes the following policy recommendations:

1. Enhance leadership development programs to integrate entrepreneurial and culturally responsive competencies, enabling leaders to manage technical and socio-cultural dimensions of educational change ^[59].
2. Strengthen university-industry partnerships to bridge gaps between research and practice, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration that drives innovation and relevance.
3. Invest in digital infrastructure and professional development to support educational technology adoption, advancing interdisciplinary learning and institutional agility ^[60].
4. Integrate leadership and interdisciplinarity criteria into accreditation standards by quality assurance bodies such as OAAAQA, institutionalizing frameworks that promote accountability and continuous

improvement ^[61].

Summary of Key Findings:

- Leadership practices in Oman remain fragmented, with few institutions adopting integrated approaches.
- Interdisciplinary initiatives are emerging but inconsistently implemented across educational levels.
- Organizational agility is limited by structural rigidity,

insufficient research capacity, and weak partnerships.

- Secondary data indicate the feasibility of a culturally adapted, integrated leadership model.

The next section interprets these findings, proposes implementation strategies, and outlines policy measures aligned with Vision 2040.

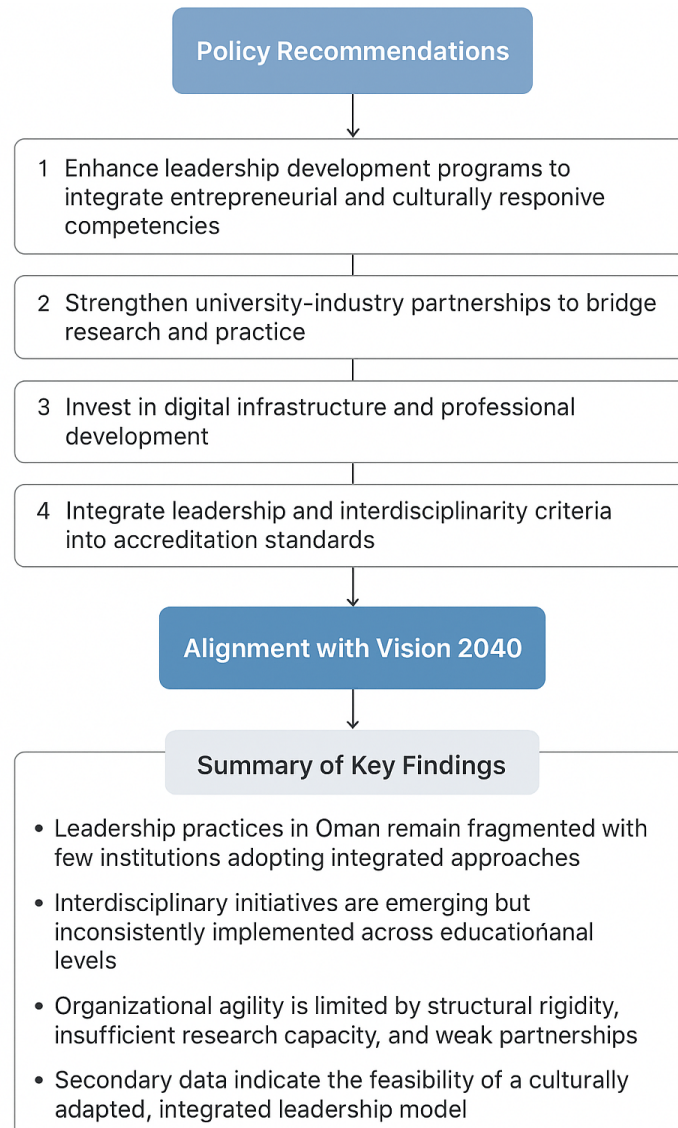


Figure 1. Policy Recommendations and Summary of Key Findings.

Developed by the author, 2025.

5. Discussion

The findings highlight the role of integrated educational leadership in promoting interdisciplinary practices and organizational agility in Omani educational institu-

tions, aligned with Vision 2040 ^[46]. The analysis of secondary data suggests that a leadership model combining distributed, instructional, entrepreneurial, and culturally responsive dimensions is necessary to navigate the sector's ongoing transformation.

Distributed leadership facilitates collaboration and leverages institutional knowledge across departments and stakeholder groups, supporting participatory governance and localized decision-making as emphasized in Vision 2040^[12]. This approach enhances collective problem-solving and shared ownership of institutional goals, particularly in interdisciplinary settings.

Instructional leadership, though less developed in Oman, complements distributed leadership by ensuring clarity of educational vision and coherence in curriculum implementation^[45]. Targeted research is needed to contextualize this model within local pedagogical practices and strategic priorities.

Entrepreneurial leadership, with its focus on creativity, risk-taking, and foresight, supports innovation-oriented reforms and knowledge-sharing environments. Its effectiveness depends on integration with culturally responsive leadership practices to align initiatives with local values and societal norms^[28].

Interdisciplinarity and organizational agility are interdependent. Institutions adopting interdisciplinary approaches are better able to respond to internal and external changes, enhancing adaptability. Constraints such as limited university–industry collaboration, underdeveloped research infrastructure, and insufficient professional development restrict full implementation.

Policy coherence and leadership development are critical for operationalizing Vision 2040. Leaders require technical, cultural, and systemic competencies to implement interdisciplinary strategies and manage organizational change^[18]. In summary, a contextually grounded, integrated leadership framework is necessary to align Omani education with Vision 2040 goals. This framework should encompass leadership styles, institutional structures, cultural dynamics, and collaborative ecosystems to drive sustainable educational innovation.

The study contributes by integrating transformational, distributed, entrepreneurial, and culturally responsive leadership theories into a unified framework tailored to Oman's context. It clarifies how these models collectively support interdisciplinary collaboration and organizational agility, providing insights for systemic educational reform and aligning leadership with national development priorities and knowledge economy imperatives.

6. Conclusions

This study emphasizes the strategic importance of an integrated educational leadership framework—including distributed, instructional, entrepreneurial, and culturally responsive approaches—to foster interdisciplinary practice and organizational agility in Oman^[46]. By contextualizing these models within Oman's socio-cultural and policy environment, the study contributes to understanding how leadership can support Vision 2040 educational reforms.

Limitations:

The study relies exclusively on secondary data, limiting insights into the lived experiences of educational leaders and potentially overlooking emerging practices. Consequently, findings may have limited generalizability beyond Oman or similar cultural contexts.

Future Research:

Empirical studies, such as qualitative interviews and longitudinal case studies, are recommended to validate and refine the integrated leadership framework. Comparative research across Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries could test adaptability, identify regional best practices, and inform harmonized policy strategies.

Policy and Practice Recommendations:

Short-term priorities:

- Design leadership development programs emphasizing cultural intelligence, collaborative skills, and innovation management.
- Integrate interdisciplinary and leadership criteria into accreditation standards, particularly via OAAAQA.
- Provide targeted professional development to strengthen interdisciplinary planning and digital leadership capacity.

Long-term strategic efforts:

- Foster university–industry partnerships to align academic learning with national innovation goals.
- Invest in research infrastructure and institutionalize evidence-based leadership and curriculum reforms.
- Develop sustainable leadership pipelines and incentive structures to ensure continuity, adaptability, and long-term impact.

This study provides a conceptual foundation for reimagining educational leadership in Oman as a dynam-

ic, contextually grounded, and interdisciplinary driver of transformation. By integrating theoretical insights into actionable recommendations, it informs policy and institutional practice, supporting both immediate improvements and long-term systemic change in alignment with Vision 2040.

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The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this article.

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