

Establishing a Reading Culture in Arabic and English in Oman

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Abstract

Within the Arab Gulf nation of Oman, reading skills in both Arabic and English are often associated with academic achievement, social success, and the development of life-long learning skills. In this context, reading is closely linked with a number of benefits, including school readiness and participation, learner motivation and self-confidence, employability and social mobility, future happiness, and the willingness and ability of individuals to take an active and constructive role in society. Despite this, Oman, like many of the other Arab nations, has been characterized as largely lacking a reading culture in either Arabic or English. Recent reforms and initiatives in the country have sought to improve learners' reading skills and to take the first steps towards establishing a genuine reading culture. This paper, therefore, begins by exploring some of the potential personal, social, and economic benefits that may be accrued through the establishment of a reading culture as supported by these reforms, before detailing some of the challenges that need to be addressed for this to be achieved. It ends by arguing for the need for various stakeholders to work together to design and implement a nation-wide reading program to help improve the quality of education in the country, and to also allow Oman to continue its path of development as a globally-competitive, stable, and dynamic nation.

Keywords: Arabic, benefits of reading, English, Oman, reading culture, reading programs

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