Determinants of Students’ Performance
**Women in Development**

The participation of Omani women in different economic sectors is one of the important and influential contributions in the Omani society. According to the International Labor Organization’s Decent Work Country Program Report for the year 2010/13 for the Sultanate, the challenges of globalization and free economy drive Omani women to participate more actively in a knowledge-based market economy, to the extent of running their own businesses from their homes. The Government has encouraged this trend and continues to stimulate women’s participation in the economic development process by providing various kinds of support and encouragement, such as training, counselling, capital and marketing support.

There has been a dramatic increase in the participation of Omani women in the public and private sector. A study by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) reveals that over the nine-year period from 2003 to 2012, and with 2013 numbers being finalized, the number of Omani women working in the public sector rose from 29,218 in 2003 to 68,200 in 2012. During the same period, the number of Omani women working in the private sector trebled, with 35,248 Omani women registered with the Public Authority for Social Insurance versus the 2003 total of 13,385.

According to the NCSI figures, the number of Omani women holding top management, middle management and direct management positions within the Public Sector witnessed a healthy 50 per cent growth since 2008, with a total of 774 Omani women holding Senior Public Service positions against the 2008 total of 510. The figures highlight the increasing emphasis placed by the government on providing opportunities for talented Omani women to play a greater role in the public and private sector as the economy continues to diversify and grow.

Despite the increase in the number of businesswomen in the Sultanate, there are still many free-trade business opportunities open to Omani women. The long-term development strategy Oman Future Vision 2020 provided an encouraging start-up for those interested in establishing their private businesses and investments. In any field, you need to renew yourself constantly, maybe more so in development. It is diverse, dynamic and constantly evolving because of its very nature so there is always room for innovation, learning and sharing.
Conference Focuses on Pathways, Practices and Platforms in ELT

Oman 15th International ELT Conference, organized by the Language Centre at Sultan Qaboos University, was held under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Said Hamad Al Rubaie, Secretary General of the Education Council. The Oman International ELT conference was founded in 2001 to serve as a professional forum for English language teachers and educators from around the world. The conference provides excellent opportunities for sharing ideas, experiences and best practices in different areas of English Language Teaching. It is an exciting, stimulating and rewarding annual event for ELT professionals in all sectors.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the conference, Hon. Dr. Saleh Al Busaidi, Director of the Language Centre at SQU said that the theme of the 2015 conference “Pathways, Practices and Platforms in ELT” draws attention to professionalism in the field of ELT. “This is demonstrated in the ways in which we constantly review our practices and develop our skills as teachers on the pathway to more effective education for our students and ourselves. Additionally, using technology in creative and innovative ways, increases the number of platforms where students can access English as a foreign language. Our success in teaching by exploring effective pathways and platforms depends on how we, as professionals, shape our practices to suit the contexts in which we work”, he said. Khalfan Al Kemyani, Conference Chair said that over 700 participants and presenters are attending the ELT conference which features over 80 presentations, 12 workshops and 5 certified professional development workshops. The patron of the event opened the ELT material exhibition that features a selection of a wide range of the latest ELT publications and products.

In the first session of the conference, Roger Charles Nunn, Professor of communication at the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi, presented ten principles of critical thinking for teachers of all levels to consider in relation to their own learning and teaching experience. He explained the evolution of his ten principles with reference to extensive classroom practice, arguing that all practical teaching needs to be grounded in an acceptable characterization of academic competence. On the second day of the conference, Dr. Charles Hall, Associate Professor of English at of Alfaisal University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, will talk about “Killing off General English: why everything is ESP (English for Specific Purposes)”. In conjunction with the conference, a symposium on “Higher Education and Special Needs: Challenges and Difficulties” was organized by the Special Needs Department in the Students Affairs Deanship in collaboration with the Society Friends students’ group.

Engineering Students Showcase Skills

The sixth edition of the Engineering Students’ Exhibition entitled “Engineering Cubed” organized by the Engineering Society at Sultan Qaboos University concluded last week. The event was opened under the patronage of H.E. Eng. Sultan bin Hamdod Al Harthi, Advisor at the Supreme Council for Planning. The key component of the event was an exhibition of students’ projects from SQU and different colleges in the Sultanate. Other activities included a panel discussion on the future of engineering in Oman, competitions for students, and other entertainment programs on the concluding day.

Out of the 41 projects exhibited at the grand hall of the Cultural Centre at SQU, 22 were from the College of Engineering, two from the College of Agricultural & Marine Sciences, and the remaining 17 were from various colleges in Oman. The projects included smart meter system for electricity distribution, portable traffic lights, 3D printer, power shoe, delta trolley which can go up and downstairs, crashing energy absorber and compressed air brake system. The best project was given an award and the title of the best engineering project. The exhibition continued for three days.

Robotic competition, structure competition and scrambler competition were the contests organized as part of the exhibition for students to test their engineering skills. The 6th Engineering Exhibition is the largest event of the College of Engineering at SQU this year where the engineering students from all over the country collaborated, met and discussed their ideas, inventions and projects under the slogan “Engineering Cubed” which describes the three concepts of engineering namely dreaming, collaborating and achieving.

SQU, Lithuanian University Explore Ties

An academic delegation from Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, headed by Prof. Daiva Rastenyte, Vice Rector for Studies, and Head of Neurology Department, visited Sultan Qaboos University recently and held discussions with H.E. Dr. Ali bin Saud Al Bimani, the Vice Chancellor of SQU, and other officials on future academic and research collaboration between the two universities. The two sides explored the possibilities for collaboration in nursing and medical specialties through exchange of students and faculty members and collaborative research.
What are the factors that determines the better performance of a student in Sultan Qaboos University (SQU)? Is it socio-economic, demographic, familial, individual students’ scholastic or institutional factor? Why girls are consistently outperforming boys in SQU? To find the answer of these questions, recently a study has been conducted in SQU. The study has identified many factors that have significant influence on student’s academic success. The factors include: pre-admission qualification, time spend in study, regular class attendance, probation status, father’s education, parental support and involvement, interest in major subjects of study, and gender of the students as significant determinants of academic performance of students.

The study was conducted by Dr. M. Mazharul Islam from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, College of Science, with the support from internal grants of SQU. Part of this research findings was published in the Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS), 2014, vol 5(4), pp 396-404. The data for the study come from a cross-sectional retrospective survey among the SQU students of cohort 2008-2010. Sample students of these cohorts were selected proportionately from six colleges including: Agricultural & Marine Sciences, Arts & Social Sciences, Economics & Political Science, Education, Engineering, and Science. Ultimately, 585 filled-in questionnaires were collected that constitute the respondents of the study. The academic performance of the students were measured by cumulative grade point average (CGPA) on a 4.00-point scale. Both descriptive and multivariate statistical techniques such as logistic regression analysis were employed for data analysis.

Of the total 585 students, 54.5% were female and 45.5% were male. About half (49%) of the students reported that their usual place of residence (family dwelling) is in city or urban areas. Most of the students (about 80%) studying in SQU are coming from outside Muscat region. Female students were found to be economically better off than the male students. The average CGPA of the graduating students were observed to be 2.8. Female students showed higher CGPA than the male students (2.9 vs. 2.7). Female students entered in SQU with a better high school grade than male students (91% vs. 87%). Overall, more than one in five students (23%) ever experienced probation in SQU. Male students are significantly more likely to experience probation than female students (27% vs. 19%, p = 0.017). More than half (53%) of the students spent less than 10 hours per week in studying their course or preparing home works, while 47% spent 10 hours or more in study purpose. On the average students spent 9 hours per week in study purpose. Female students spent more hours in study than the male students (10 hrs vs. 8 hrs).

Fathers’ education (at least secondary level) – an important family background characteristics of students – showed significant and positive association with achieving higher CGPA. Economic status of the family showed no significant independent effects on academic achievement, which contradict many other study findings. While both components are important, social factors, such as parents’ educational attainments, have been found to be more significant than economic factors in explaining student’s educational attainment in Omani society. This may be due to the fact that education is free in public universities like SQU. Thus, irrespective of family economic background, any students can afford education from SQU. The study findings support the thesis that family income alone is not the only factor for influencing academic success of the children.

Students’ level of attendance in class during a semester and probation status showed significant effect on academic achievement. Time spent in study showed significant positive association with very good to outstanding performance. The study identified parental support and involvement as a significant determinant of academic success among SQU students. The other student characteristics such as level of participation in extra-curricular activities, time spent on library work, and living arrangement, were not found to have any significant effect on student academic achievement. Boys found to be more aligned with extracurricular activities and spent more time in library work than girls.

This study identified gender of students as a significant determinant of academic performance. The relative under-performance of boys in recent time raised a serious policy concern. Researchers have argued that girls receive higher grades than boys because they exert more effort, work harder, and their academic culture is more study oriented than boys. This study findings also support these assertions. This study observed significant variation in efforts and motivation between male and female students. In almost all the selected characteristics that are related to study culture and motivation of students such as time spent in study, level of attendance, satisfaction with the major subject, pre-admission scores in grade 12 and ever on probation, female students showed better performance than their male peers did. Thus, it can be argued that the better performance of girls in SQU can be explained by the gender-specific study cultures.

However, the commonly held belief of positive effect of on-campus living by the female students only in SQU should not be overlooked. The off-campus environment and the life style of male students living off-campus rental houses may be unfavorable for a better academic performance than female students living on-campus in SQU. Living in an on-campus residential hall or dormitory promotes a variety of academic outcomes by enhancing students’ involvement and engagement with their institution. Female students living on-campus residential hall or dormitory more likely enjoy these facilities than the male students of SQU living off-campus. Besides, male students living off-campus have to spend a substantial proportion of their time daily in commuting to SQU campus. Due to lack of public or well-organized private transportation system in Oman, transportation problem of the commuters to SQU is very acute. Male students living in off-campus rental houses also face food problem.
Majority of respondents who participated in a community based study that investigated the awareness of risk factors for cancer among Omani adults, were not aware of the common risk factors for cancer. Hence the researchers recommend developing strategies to educate the public about these risk factors in order to reduce the incidence of cancers in Oman. The study was conducted by Mohammed Al-Azri, Mustafa Al-Hinai, and Robin Davidson from the Department of Family Medicine & Community Health of the College of Medicine & Health Sciences, SQU, Khadija Al-Rasbi, a medical student at SQU, and Abdullah Al Miniri from the Research Council. The findings of this research was published in Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention (Vol 15, 2014).

The majority of respondents in the study agreed with the fact that cigarette smoking (active and passive) and excessive drinking of alcohol increased the risk of cancer. Majority of respondents were also aware that drinking alcohol is a risk factor for cancer. The majority of people in Oman are Muslims and alcohol intake is forbidden as part of religious faith. Also culturally, like other Arabic societies, smoking and alcohol are regarded by the majority of people as a “social stigma” and people tend not to drink alcohol or smoke in order to protect their health. Thus, the majority of respondents in this study agreed with the fact that smoking and alcohol are harmful for their health and could cause cancer.

Respondents in this study showed low awareness that adopting a “westernized lifestyle”, such as eating more red or processed meat, eating less fruit and vegetables and obesity, increased the risk of cancer. Indeed, the western dietary pattern including red and processed meat and refined grains and sedentary lifestyles are associated with increased risk of cancer.

The burden of non-communicable diseases including cancer in the Arab world has increased substantially over the past 10 years. Low fruit and vegetable intake, smoking, drinking of alcohol and obesity were still the leading risk factors for death from cancer worldwide. The low public awareness in Oman of the importance of adopting a healthier lifestyle could be a key cause for the increasing incidence of cancer in this country. Indeed, it has been found that, developing chronic disease, including cancer decreased progressively as an individual adopted a healthier lifestyle.

Respondents in this study showed low awareness of certain risk factors that could increase the risk of cancer including increased age, having relatives diagnosed with cancer, infection with HPV and getting frequent sunburn during childhood. This is similar to findings in developed countries including UK, Canada, Australia and USA, where public awareness of the increased risk of cancer with increasing age was low. Indeed, age is the strongest risk factor for most adult cancers including breast, colon and prostate. The low awareness of respondents in this study of the fact that there is a genetic risk factor for cancer is important. It is well documented that family history of cancer increases the risk to certain types of cancer. For example, the presence of breast cancer among first degree relatives increased the risk of developing breast cancer 5.7 times and adults who had relatives with any types of cancer advised to adapt a healthy lifestyle to decrease the risk. Thus, the majority of women in western countries were able to identify that family history of breast cancer is a risk factor for breast cancer. The lack of awareness of women in Oman to consider family history of breast cancer as a risk factor, and to seek medical help or screening at an early stage, might be a reason for late stage diagnosis with poor prognosis.

The findings from the current study showed that the higher the level of the education of respondents the more likely they were to be aware of cancer risk factors. This is the first study conducted in Oman to identify the level of public awareness for cancer risk factors among the adult Omani population. The findings from this study showed that the majority of the respondents were aware that smoking (active and passive), and excessive drinking of alcohol are risk factors for cancer. However, they were less likely to identify other risk factors including eating less fruit and vegetables, eating more of red or processed meat, doing less physical exercise, being overweight or elderly, having a close relative with cancer, infection with HPV and getting frequent sunburns. Also the results showed that the higher the level of education, the more likely people are to be aware of cancer risks factors.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Azri, Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Public Health, College of Medicine and Health Sciences at SQU, who led this study said that the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Oman could integrate public awareness of cancer risks factors as part of the future strategic health plans. As the incidence of cancer in Oman increases, strategies to increase public awareness for cancer risks factors for common types of cancer are needed. Public awareness of cancer risk factors can be increased by using mass media, leaflets school visits, and posters in hospitals and primary care health centers. Indeed, intensive and tailored printed information and community-based awareness programs was found to be effective as a strategy to improve cancer risk awareness. Greater educational activity is needed in Oman to improve public health awareness of adopting a healthy lifestyle to reduce the incidence of cancer.
The fourteenth edition of Scientific Festival 2015 was held at SQU under the theme “Co-minds to Monetise”. The exhibition featured scientific innovations, projects and researches conducted by students from SQU and other GCC countries during the academic year 2014-2015. The event, which lasted until April 23, showcased state-of-the-art projects from all science streams under one roof. The Scientific Festival is an annual event held at SQU and organized by six student groups from the College of Science namely Computer, Geology, Physics, Chemistry, Math, Statistics, and Biology groups.

During the Science Festival students also presented their research papers related to the theme of the event. Seminars were held on topics such as road accident prediction using hybrid reasoning technique, nano-additives for drilling fluid rheological properties enhancement, influence of diesel acidification, and, influence of scientific events on improving students capabilities. As part of the festival, contests for the best creative science project, researches and studies, the best promoted product, and the best co-project were held. An exhibition, an open day, scientific and entertainment activities were also held on the sidelines of the event. Science city for children and bicycles show were also held as part of the Festival.

H.E. Dr. Ali bin Saud Al Bimani, the Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University, recently received in his office, H.E. Dainius Pavalkis, Minister of Education and Science, Republic of Lithuania and accompanying delegation. The two sides discussed the possibilities of establishing academic and research partnerships between SQU and Lithuanian higher educational and research institutions. The minister observed that, during his visit to Oman, he could find a lot of similarities between Lithuania and Oman, which increases the possibilities for collaboration in academic, research and other fields between both countries.

H.E. Dainius Pavalkis was accompanied by representatives from various Lithuanian higher educational institutions including Vilnius University, Kaunas University of Technology, Klaipėda University and Vytautas Magnus University.

The fourteen edition of Scientific Festival 2015 was held at SQU under the theme “Co-minds to Monetise”. The exhibition featured scientific innovations, projects and researches conducted by students from SQU and other GCC countries during the academic year 2014-2015. The event, which lasted until April 23, showcased state-of-the-art projects from all science streams under one roof. The Scientific Festival is an annual event held at SQU and organized by six student groups from the College of Science namely Computer, Geology, Physics, Chemistry, Math, Statistics, and Biology groups.

During the Science Festival students also presented their research papers related to the theme of the event. Seminars were held on topics such as road accident prediction using hybrid reasoning technique, nano-additives for drilling fluid rheological properties enhancement, influence of diesel acidification, and, influence of scientific events on improving students capabilities. As part of the festival, contests for the best creative science project, researches and studies, the best promoted product, and the best co-project were held. An exhibition, an open day, scientific and entertainment activities were also held on the sidelines of the event. Science city for children and bicycles show were also held as part of the Festival.

As part of the symposium on “Higher Education and Disabilities: Opportunities and Challenges” organized in conjunction with the Oman 15th International ELT Conference, a workshop on “Designing and implementing an office of disability services-accessible education at your university” was held at SQU recently. The workshop was delivered by Dr. Loren O’Connor, Director of the Office of Disability Services-Accessible Education, and Alex Price, Disability Services Coordinator, at Brandman University, which is part of the Chapman University.

The symposium on “Higher Education and Disabilities” was organized by the Special Needs Department of the Deanship of Student Affairs at in collaboration with the Friends of Society student group at SQU. The aim of the symposium was to educate academic staff and employees in higher education on the potential of the persons with disabilities, introducing the global convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in the field of education, as well as to create equal opportunities for them in institutions of higher education and to qualify the academic staff to deal with people with disabilities. The event also introduced the supporting technologies in the field of education and presentation of experiences and success stories for people with disabilities in the field of education. The workshop on disability services was attended by the top management of SQU.

The College of Economic & Political Science at SQU organized an event on business risk management recently. The function was opened under the patronage of H.E Said bin Hamdoon Al Harthy, Under-secretary at the Ministry of Transport and Communications for Ports and Maritime Affairs in the presence of Dr. Said bin Mubarak Al Muhamrani, Dean of the College of Economic and Political Science, as well as a number of experts and researchers.

The event included a film and an exhibition at which students explained their role in bringing out a book that was launched during the function. Six student teams, supervised by their faculty members, conducted research studies on risk management with application of these research on the practical and scientific aspects of university life.
I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, and have been here since September 2013. I can say, unequivocally and extremely happily, that the past year and a half have been some of my most productive years as an academic in terms of research.

I’d like to start by explaining briefly why I think it is important for me to conduct research. I firmly believe that it is my responsibility to be a model for my students in every way. I, like many other faculty members in the English Department, teach writing. I continually ask my students to write, and constantly extol the virtues of writing and its indelible link to critical thinking. If I myself didn’t produce any writing, any research, wouldn’t I be a hypocrite? If I constantly preach to them the values of research, what kind of a mentor would I be if I didn’t demonstrate to them my own work as a researcher? So I do, and for the most part, thoroughly enjoy it. I enjoy taking students early drafts of my own work, or showing them the difference between early and late drafts. I believe that sharing with them and showing them that the research process I go through is not different from one that I am teaching them to follow makes me that much more believable as a teacher.

And then, of course, there is the other important reason for conducting research. Contributing to an ongoing scholarly dialog, and staying abreast of the field are definitely important to my role not only as a scholar but also as a teacher. While I believe this is true for any teacher, I think it’s particularly important for a language teacher; language teaching methodologies change all the time, and there is constant discussion among academics as to which are the most effective methods, which are the least effective, what works, and what doesn’t. I have always liked being a part of this discussion, both to have my voice heard, and for the benefits the discussions bring my students.

I am happy to say that my belief in and enthusiasm for inquiry has rubbed off on my students. Several students have presented at local and regional conferences, one has presented at several international conferences, and has had two papers published in very reputable international journals. And another has submitted two proposals to present at an international conference in the United States. I am a very proud mother hen, and SQU should be, too!

I’d like to move on, now, to SQU’s role in my life as a researcher. How does SQU promote research? Opportunities for research at SQU abound, and unlike other universities I have worked at, SQU does actively support research, be it in the form of library support, or financial incentive. With library support, since I have been here, I have been astounded by the ease with which I have been able to acquire journal articles in my discipline. SQU’s subscription to large databases like SCOPUS, Web of Science, and EBSCO, to name just a few, definitely facilitate the research process. And when I have needed an article or book that is not available through any of these resources, the library’s Interlibrary Loan system has worked efficiently to obtain what I needed. One only needs to peek into my rather large pile of paper to determine just how many articles I have managed to easily procure! SQU has also attempted to make my life as a researcher easier by organizing workshops with the developers of research tools such as Mendeley, a reference manager and PDF organizer. I am working on getting easier access to these resources, and perhaps, in the near future, the piles of paper in my office will not increase quite so rapidly. Trees are incredibly precious, after all!

Moving on to the fun part, financial incentive. Now any researcher worth their salt would tell you that financial incentive should not be a requisite for productivity, and that an academic, by virtue of being an academic, has the responsibility to produce research and add to the dialog of the academic discourse community. And I most certainly agree. But, who would dislike the idea of financial reward? Financial incentive here at the university comes in the form of several possibilities. Firstly, the university has a Journal Publication Reward System. Faculty members who publish during an academic year can apply for their publication to win this award, which, if they win, are given a handsome monetary gift. Financial incentive also comes in the form of several different grants available to faculty members: Internal Grants, Research Council Grants, and His Majesty’s Grants, to mention just a few. I feel that with each passing day, I learn about yet another opportunity for research here!

So with all these opportunities, then, what have I accomplished in the past 18 months? I have had three papers published – one, a book chapter in a book published by John Benjamins, out early this year, and the other two, a journal article and another book chapter, coming out in April and August of this year. I have submitted two additional papers to international journals. I have presented papers at a local, a regional, and, most recently, an international conference in Cambodia, which, of course, was supported by the university. In collaboration with Dr. Rahma Al Mahrooqi, Associate Professor in the English Department and Director of the Humanities Research Center, I also wrote a proposal for an internal grant, which I am excited to say, was accepted. So I know that I certainly have my work cut out for me for the next couple of years. And I look forward to it!
Eser Çaktı is a Professor of Earthquake Engineering at the Department of Earthquake Engineering, Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey. Her research interests include 3-D strong ground motion modelling, earthquake protection of cultural heritage, earthquake scenarios, earthquake loss estimation, and assessment of seismic hazard and design basis ground motion. Prof. Çaktı is one of the consultants for the “seismic hazard assessment for the Sultanate of Oman” project, coordinated by the Earthquake Monitoring Centre at SQU. Eser Çaktı speaks about her specialization and involvement in the Oman project.

**Horizon:** You prepared ground shaking maps as a part of the seismic hazard assessment for the Sultanate. What is the use of ground shaping maps in seismological studies?

**Prof. Çaktı:** The shake map methodology enables the estimation of the level and distribution of regional ground shaking and enables the assessment of the regional effects of an earthquake immediately after its occurrence once earthquake source information (the magnitude and location) is known. Reliable maps of ground shaking level and distribution lead to realistic estimation of earthquake losses such as causalities and building damage, which in turn provide vital assistance to the planning of emergency response actions.

**Horizon:** What are the parameters that you considered in the development of the maps for Oman?

**Prof. Çaktı:** We have created an inventory of active major faults and systems within and around Oman to be deployed as the earthquake source information in the estimation of regional ground shaking. Ground Motion Prediction Equations suitable for use and representative of tectonic conditions in Oman were selected and implemented. Local site conditions, represented by shear wave velocities, for Muscat were considered. And finally the earthquake records from the Oman National Ground Motion Network were organized in such a way that the software can utilize them in the generation of ground shaking maps.

**Horizon:** While preparing ground shaking maps for Oman, you have studied the seismic hazard probabilities for Oman. We know that the northern parts of Oman are more vulnerable to earthquake risks. Can you comment on it?

**Prof. Çaktı:** This is because Northern Oman is surrounded by major earthquake sources. Although the incurring ground motion levels in Northern Oman are not as high as in other parts of the world, as in Istanbul for example, there is a need of a proper assessment of the effects of expected large earthquake events on buildings and on infrastructure. We have estimated the earthquake risks associated with the building stock in Muscat with the framework of this project. Yet there are some gaps in our knowledge about the earthquake behavior of buildings in Oman. If more research is devoted to this subject, the estimations can be improved. It is also important, I believe, to carry out similar studies covering other cities in Oman. It is also very important, the evaluation of earthquake risk associated with the infrastructure in a country, such as transportation, electric transmission and distribution, water transmission and distribution and gas pipelines.

**Horizon:** Earthquake protection of cultural heritage is one of your research areas. Could you summarize your contributions and research in this field?

**Prof. Çaktı:** We devote a major effort to the earthquake safety assessment of cultural heritage buildings in my country. For example the mosques and minarets in Istanbul, such as the Süleymaniye Mosque, Sultanahmet Mosque, Fatih Mosque and Mihrimah Sultan Mosque are monitored 24 hours. In Hagia Sophia, in addition to vibrations we also monitor the rotation of the main piers. We also work on modeling of earthquake behavior of historical buildings by finite element and distinct element approaches.

**Horizon:** Based on your expertise and experience, what advice do you have to offer the policy makers and authorities in Oman, with regard to mitigation of seismic risks?

**Prof. Çaktı:** Development of Seismic Design Code for Oman was one of the major activities of the project. Its approval and enforcement, in my opinion, is vital. This is something, which needs to be planned in steps. The contribution and support of the engineering community become important. On the basis of expected earthquake effects on buildings and population, it is possible for the authorities to develop plans for mitigation actions. Finally I would like to express the significance of estimation of economic losses in Oman, to be evaluated with respect to national economy and resources.