

Lecturers' Perspectives on Fostering Future Skills among Omani EFL Learners

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Abstract

Developing future skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and digital literacy is essential for Omani EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students to meet contemporary educational and workforce demands. This qualitative study explored the perspectives of 18 lecturers from the English Language Unit at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Salalah, Oman, focusing on their roles in fostering these skills among EFL students. Additionally, the study identified the challenges lecturers encounter and the strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles. Through thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, the findings indicated that lecturers significantly contribute to skill development by motivating students, updating teaching methodologies, and integrating modern technologies into their instruction. Nonetheless, lecturers face considerable challenges, including students' limited English proficiency, time constraints within the curriculum, and a lack of student motivation. To address these issues, the study suggested strategies such as enhancing student motivation, increasing student participation in the learning process, and utilizing innovative teaching methods with new technologies. Implementing these strategies is recommended to effectively develop future skills among Omani EFL students.

Keywords: Future Skills Development, Omani EFL Education, Lecturer Perspectives, Higher Education

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Problem

The rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies are fundamentally transforming higher education, presenting universities with the critical challenge of equipping students with the skills necessary for success in an evolving job market (Al-Saiari, 2023a). This issue is of paramount importance, as AI-driven global employment trends compel educational institutions to transition from traditional knowledge repositories to dynamic centers for comprehensive skill development.

Ensuring that graduates possess competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, self-directed learning, and digital literacy is essential for fostering individuals who can effectively contribute to societal progress and navigate the complexities of a technology-driven world (Atiku & Boateng, 2020). Furthermore, this transformative shift requires the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies, the integration of modern technologies, and the continuous updating of curricula designed to develop these essential skills (Atiku & Boateng, 2020; Al-Saiari, 2023a; Hannan & Liu, 2023).

To respond to these demands, nations such as those in the European Union, Singapore, and Malaysia have implemented strategic initiatives to integrate future skills development into their educational systems (Gleason, 2018; Maria et al., 2018). These strategies emphasize the importance of aligning educational practices with workforce needs and ensuring that graduates possess the necessary skills for future jobs (Davey & Harney, 2023). Universities are increasingly compelled to adopt pedagogical strategies that enhance future skills and move beyond traditional rote learning practices, as highlighted by Matthews et al. (2021) and Aldosari & Almana (2021).

In Oman, aligning higher education practices with the national Vision 2040 and global educational trends necessitates a transformative approach. Lecturers play a pivotal role in this process, serving as facilitators and mentors who guide students in acquiring the essential skills for future success (Kowang et al., 2020; Pujotomo et al., 2019; Zulnaidi et al., 2020). Lecturers can enhance future skills in various ways, such as adopting project-based and collaborative learning, integrating advanced digital technologies to create adaptive learning environments, encouraging self-directed and lifelong learning, and engaging in continuous professional development (OECD, 2023). Their involvement is crucial for fostering future skills among students and supporting the broader objectives of national development and educational goals.

However, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the specific challenges and strategies employed by Omani EFL lecturers in this endeavor. Therefore, the current study aimed to address this gap by exploring the perspectives of lecturers from the English Language Unit at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Salalah, on fostering future skills among Omani EFL students. By

providing insights into the current state of future skills development, the study sought to contribute to aligning educational practices with Oman Vision 2040 and international best practices in higher education.

1.2 Literature Review

The increasing emphasis on future skills in higher education has sparked extensive research efforts. However, there remains a significant gap in studies focusing on the Arab world, particularly regarding how lecturers contribute to the development of these essential skills. This review aims to address this gap by systematically presenting relevant research from various regions, organized chronologically. It explores the multifaceted roles that lecturers play in preparing students for the future. For instance, Vithayaporn et al. (2019) examined the evolving role of lecturers in Thailand's rapidly evolving education system. Their analysis, based on existing studies, highlights the crucial role lecturers play in fostering a culture of learning and enhancing educational effectiveness through creativity and strategic thinking.

In Malaysia, Murugiah (2020) examined the obstacles hindering students' acquisition of 21st-century skills. Through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, the study identified several key challenges such as the lack of clarity regarding future skill requirements, students' excessive dependence on professors, and limited opportunities for practical skill application. These findings highlight the necessity for more explicit definitions and structured approaches to skills development within the context of Malaysian higher education.

Mulkawi (2020) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the roles of education and training in Jordanian public universities by administering a questionnaire to 382 university professors. The results revealed significant impacts on the development of future skills, particularly concerning the learning environment and teaching methods/tools. This study highlighted the critical role of educational infrastructure and pedagogical strategies in facilitating the acquisition of essential skills among students.

Similarly, Atah and Ukah (2021) examined the dynamics between lecturers and students in fostering the competencies and skills necessary for final-year business studies students in Nigeria. Their findings suggest that improved relationships and communication are essential for enhancing work-related skills, highlighting the significance of interpersonal interactions in effective skills development. This study contributes to the understanding of how lecturer-student relationships can impact the acquisition of skills that prepare students for the future.

Faraj (2022) examined the future skills that are essential for students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University and explored how artificial intelligence could support their development. Through a survey conducted with 150 faculty members, the study identified critical areas for AI integration, including learning environments, faculty engagement, curricula, and student and graduate outcomes.

In the context of Oman, Al-Saiari's (2023b) qualitative study assessed the readiness of higher education institutions to address the challenges presented by Oman Vision 2040. Interviews with institutional leaders and experts revealed a moderate level of preparedness and highlighted areas requiring enhancement, including human resources, pedagogical strategies, and learning environments.

To summarize, several studies have highlighted the crucial role of lecturers in developing future skills within higher education across various international contexts, including Thailand, Malaysia, Jordan, Nigeria, and Oman (Vithayaporn et al., 2019; Murugiah, 2020; Mulkawi, 2020; Atah & Ukah, 2021; Faraj, 2022; Al-Saiari, 2023b). These studies confirm that lecturers are essential in implementing educational strategies that effectively prepare students for future challenges.

Vithayaporn et al. (2019) emphasized that the changing roles of lecturers involve complex activities that are significantly influenced by the educational environment and the pedagogical approaches employed. Challenges such as the ambiguity in defining future skills identified by Murugiah (2020), along with the necessity for improved human resources and pedagogical strategies highlighted by Al-Saiari (2023b), underscore critical areas for improvement to optimize educational outcomes.

The review of these studies showed the need for further research focused on the Arabic context, particularly in Oman, to develop a nuanced understanding of how lecturers can effectively contribute to the development of future skills. Addressing these gaps will assist policymakers and educational leaders in aligning higher education practices with both national and global demands for graduates who are prepared for the future.

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1.3 Rationale and Research Questions

This study aimed to address the following questions: (1) How do lecturers at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah branch, perceive their roles in fostering future skills among preparatory year students? (2) What challenges do lecturers encounter in developing future skills among these students? (3) What strategies do lecturers at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences,

Salalah branch, recommend to enhance the development of future skills in preparatory year students? These questions are derived from Bandura's (1986) theory of teacher agency, which emphasizes the significant role of educators in shaping student outcomes through their beliefs and practices. They also emerged from the need to address challenges and identify effective strategies for skills development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, as highlighted in previous studies (Mulkawi, 2020; Murugiah, 2020).

2. Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative research design was employed to gather rich and detailed information. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is particularly well-suited for studies that collect data from individuals within contexts relevant to the research problem, providing deeper insights into complex topics.

As the study aimed to explore lecturers' perspectives on fostering future skills among Omani EFL students, a qualitative approach was selected. This methodology facilitates an in-depth understanding of lecturers' experiences and offers the flexibility to adapt to emerging themes during data collection and analysis (Gibbs, 2012). Additionally, qualitative research is particularly effective in capturing the nuances of the unique educational context in Oman, enabling a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing the development of future skills.

2.1 Participants

The study sample consisted of 18 lecturers from the Preparatory Studies Center at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Dhofar Governorate. Although the sample size was modest, it was carefully selected to enable in-depth data collection. Participants were chosen based on their expertise, specifically those with over five years of experience in higher education. The selection process also prioritized diversity in gender, academic background, and nationality to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

The sample included lecturers from three main units within the Preparatory Studies Center: (11) lecturers from the English Unit, (3) from the Mathematics Unit, and (4) lecturers from the General Requirements Unit. Additionally, participants were categorized based on their years of experience, (3) lecturers had between five and ten years of experience, (10) lecturers had between ten and fifteen years of experience and (3) lecturers had more than twenty years of experience. In terms of gender, the sample consisted of 10 females and 8 males.

The rationale for selecting participants with diverse experiences, backgrounds, and genders was designed to provide comprehensive knowledge about the roles, challenges, and strategies employed by lecturers in developing future skills among Omani EFL students. This diversity enhances the study's validity by incorporating a wide range of perspectives.

2.2 Instrument

To obtain detailed responses, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Fossey et al. (2002) highlighted that this method enhances cognitive enrichment and is particularly well-suited for the exploratory nature of qualitative research. An interview guide was developed and distributed to participants in advance to build rapport and ensure they were adequately prepared. The interview guide included sections for introductory procedures, demographic data collection, clarification of study terms, and study questions. Prior to the interviews, informed consent was obtained from all participants to record the sessions.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. The semi-structured format enabled the researcher to begin with a set of predefined questions while maintaining the flexibility to ask follow-up questions based on participants' responses (Zina, 2005). This approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of the participants' perceptions regarding their roles in fostering future skills among students, as well as the challenges and strategies related to the study topic.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face, except for three that were held online to accommodate participants' availability and preferences. Additionally, (11) interviews were conducted in Arabic, while (7) were conducted in English with non-Arabic speakers.

2.3 Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability pertains to establishing the study's credibility, quality, and accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study employed several strategies to ensure reliability. First, the internal validity of the data was enhanced by reviewing the interview transcripts multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the content. Additionally, an external reviewer was engaged to verify the accuracy and consistency of the data.

Moreover, participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and allow them to confirm the accuracy of their responses. This process enhances the credibility of the data by ensuring that the participants' views are accurate.

Furthermore, detailed methodological descriptions of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes were documented. This transparency enables the replication of the study and facilitates a comprehensive evaluation of the research process by others.

2.4 Data Analysis

Following data collection, the researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis using Thematic Analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2014). Each interview was transcribed to ensure linguistic clarity and accuracy. The analysis employed an inductive approach, as described by Thomas (2006), which involves interpreting raw data to identify emerging themes and patterns without imposing

preconceived categories.

The data analysis process began with the initial identification of broad categories, which were subsequently refined into specific codes through a detailed examination of the transcripts. This coding process enabled the identification of key themes, including the roles of lecturers in fostering future skills, as well as the challenges and strategies they encounter.

The coding process underwent two rounds of refinement. The researcher created a coding manual that included detailed definitions for each code to ensure consistency throughout the analysis. An external reviewer was consulted to verify the consistency and reliability of the coding process.

The final stage of data analysis involved synthesizing the coded data into a comprehensive report, enriched with direct quotations from participants. The use of quotations allowed the participants' voices to be heard directly and giving depth to the findings (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Role of Lecturers in Enhancing Future Skills

The roles of lecturers in enhancing students' future skills were examined through a thematic analysis of responses from individual interviews. This analysis included calculating the frequencies and percentages for each identified role, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis of Lecturers' Roles in Enhancing Future Skills for Preparatory Year Students (n = 18)

No	Percentage	Repetition	The Role of Lecturers in Enhancing Future Skills	Ranking
1	40	14	Raising motivation	1
2	34	12	Providing students with skills through learning	2
3	8.6	3	Employing modern technologies	3
4	8.6	3	Updating the curriculum	4
5	5.7	2	Counseling and guidance	5
6	2.9	1	Linking learning to community problems	6

Note: The percentages and frequencies are based on a total of 18 respondents.

3.1.1 Raising Motivation

The most prominent role identified by 40% of respondents is that of motivating and encouraging students. Participant 3 stated, "The professor's role is to motivate and encourage students, training them in creativity, innovation, and critical thinking." Similarly, Participant 5 emphasized, "The lecturer's role is motivational and encouraging, expanding students' knowledge and broadening their thinking horizons. They are not just teachers but also motivators who shape students' thoughts for the future." These findings align with Atah and Ukah (2021), who highlighted the importance of interactive relationships and communication between lecturers and students in fostering essential skills. The emphasis on motivation as a key factor in acquiring future skills can be attributed to its significant impact on stimulating the desire to learn. Motivation generates an internal drive to acquire these skills, independent of external rewards. This focus aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to enhance the country's global standing through quality educational outcomes that keep pace with regional and global changes.

3.1.2 Providing Skills through Learning

The second most frequently mentioned role, at 34%, is equipping students with skills through innovative teaching and learning methods. Participant 1 stated, "Students learn these skills by adopting innovative teaching methods, which enhance their creative thinking and problem-solving abilities, thereby preparing them for the job market." This viewpoint is supported by Participant 8 added, "Conducting workshops contributes to the development of future skills and prepares students for jobs that depend on these skills. Participant 10 remarked, "Teachers strive to move away from conventional teaching by using modern methods that encourage students to learn essential future skills." Similarly, Participant 18 emphasized "We innovate fun methods that facilitate exploration and guide self-directed learning, such as using visual and electronic education and documentary programs." These approaches align with the strategic plan of UTAS, which aims to enhance teaching and learning methods through workshops and training programs for lecturers while encouraging their participation in scientific forums (University of Technology and Applied Sciences, 2022). Additionally, the adoption of the "Omani National Framework for Future Skills" as a unified national framework for educational institutions is a significant step. It enables both the regular and higher education sectors to integrate future skills into their curricula, thereby equipping students with the necessary competencies for the future.

3.1.3 Employing Modern Technologies and Updating the Curriculum

In the third rank, two roles were equally cited by 8.6% of respondents: the integration of modern technologies and the updating of curricula to align with future skills. Regarding modern technologies, Participant 3 stated, "Linking the curriculum to modern technology in teaching and using artificial intelligence techniques like ChatGPT is essential. For example, I use it with students for innovative activities, relying on it for ideas and staying informed about contemporary developments." Participant 12 affirmed, technology into learning is crucial. When we use artificial intelligence, the lesson transforms into an enjoyable game, helping us to discover new skills in a fun and engaging manner.

Regarding curriculum updates, Participant 1 explained, "The curriculum serves as our guide in developing future skills, providing detailed

guidance on teaching methods and equipping students with essential skills. The textbooks include teacher guides that provide comprehensive instructions on how to make lessons both enjoyable and useful. Participant 18 added, "The educational curricula we use in teaching are international, adhering to global standards and emphasizing these skills in various aspects." These findings align with those of Faraj (2022), who highlighted the role of artificial intelligence applications in developing future skills by enhancing the learning environment and improving the capabilities of both faculty and students.

3.1.4 Counseling and Guidance

Another significant role of lecturers, identified by 5.7% of respondents, is guidance and counseling. Participant 1 highlighted, "Our role extends beyond teaching; we also guide students academically and personally, contributing to their personal skills development. Lecturers can advise students and reinforce ethics and values, which are essential for preparing them for the future."

3.2 Connecting Learning to Community Issues

Finally, connecting curricula with community issues was identified by 2.9% of respondents. Participant 10 stated, "We also connect learning and topics with societal issues, giving students with opportunities to think about solutions and discuss them. Thinking and problem-solving skills are essential for a sustainable future, helping to address many challenges in our region." This finding aligns with the Omani National Framework for Future Skills, which aims to integrate future skills into the education system and develop educational practices that meet societal needs and aspirations (Ministry of Education, 2021).

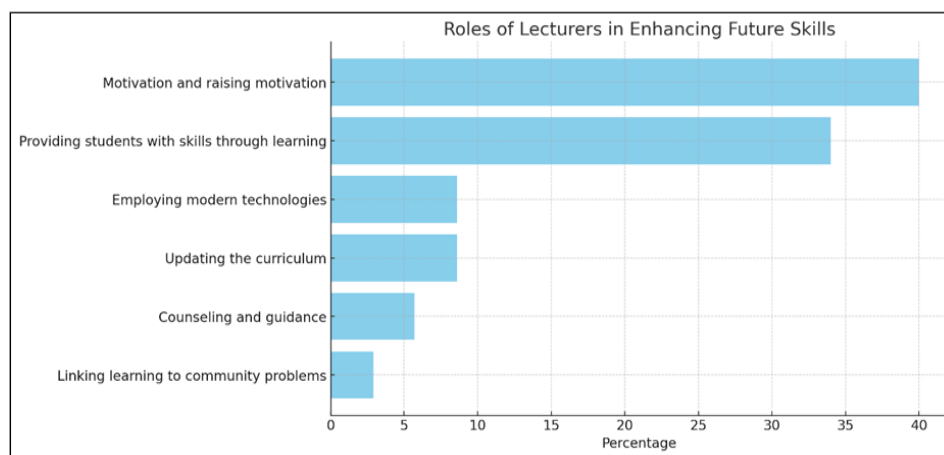


Figure 1. Opinions on the Role of Lecturers in Enhancing Future Skills for Preparatory Year Students at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences

Figure 1 illustrates five key roles of lecturers in enhancing future skills for preparatory year students at the College of Technology and Applied Sciences. The most significant role is motivation (40%) which involves inspiring creativity, innovation, and critical thinking among students. Providing skills through learning (34%) is achieved by employing innovative teaching methods. Additionally, utilizing modern technologies and updating the curriculum (both at 8.6%) are essential, as they involve integrating AI tools and aligning with international standards. Guidance and counseling (5.7%) are crucial for offering academic and personal support. Lastly, linking learning to community issues (2.9%) connects the curriculum to real-world challenges, thereby enriching students' educational experiences.

3.3 Challenges Faced by Lecturers

The challenges faced by lecturers in promoting future skills among preparatory year students were analyzed based on participants' responses from individual interviews. The frequencies and percentages of these responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Challenges Faced by Lecturers in Enhancing Future Skills (n=18)

No	Challenges	Repetition	Percentage	Ranking
1	Low Academic Performance Among Students	6	24%	1
2	Time restrictions	5	20%	2
3	Lack of motivation	4	16%	3
4	Insufficient Proficiency of Lecturers in Future Skills	3	12%	4
5	Emphasizing Information Quantity over Skill Development	3	12%	5
6	Irregularity of students in attending lectures	2	8%	6
7	Less adapting to the university	2	8%	7

Note: Percentages and frequencies are based on 18 of total respondents.

3.3.1 Low Academic Performance Among Students

The most significant challenge, identified by 24% of respondents, is the low proficiency level of students, particularly in English.

Participant 7 highlighted, "Many students lack basic writing and reading skills in English, which consumes a significant portion of instructional time." This finding aligns with previous studies conducted in the Omani context, such as those by Al-Maashani et al. (2023) and Al Mekhlafi (2019), which emphasize the detrimental impact of limited language proficiency on skill development.

3.3.2 Time Restrictions

Time constraints, noted by 20% of participants, present a significant obstacle. Participant 15 remarked, "Teachers don't have enough time to adequately promote these skills due to curriculum demands." Participant 7 echoed this sentiment and mentioned that the academic pressure to complete the curriculum restricts opportunities for creative and innovative teaching approaches. This challenge aligns with findings by Al-Saiari (2023a), who identified time management as a critical issue in higher education.

3.3.3 Lack of Motivation

A lack of motivation among students was identified by 16% of respondents as a significant challenge. Participant 1 observed, "Students lack enthusiasm and are content with their current level; they show little desire to acquire new skills." Participant 4 added, "One of the most prominent challenges is the lack of self-motivation among students to learn, as they often feel helpless or unable to acquire the language." This issue is supported by studies conducted by Zavyalova (2020) and Mauliya et al. (2020), which suggest that improving student motivation requires strengthening relationships with professors and diversifying learning environments.

3.3.4 Insufficient Proficiency of Lecturers in Future Skills

12% of respondents identified the lack of lecturers' proficiency in future skills as a significant challenge. Participant 3 remarked, "Teachers need more support and training in these skills." Participant 10 added, "There is a limited awareness among teachers, and there is insufficient clarity on this matter." Participant 11 also emphasized, "The teacher may not know these skills well, and there is often a lack of training programs in this area." This challenge is consistent with Murugiah (2020), who emphasized the necessity for a clearer understanding and training in future skills for both lecturers and students.

3.3.5 Emphasizing Information Quantity over Skill Development

Another challenge, identified by 12% of respondents, is the focus on the quantity of information rather than skill development. Participant 2 explained, "The focus on covering the curriculum often limits the opportunity to develop critical skills. Teaching becomes routine, at the expense of personal development." Participant 3 noted, "The most significant challenge is the teacher's lack of conviction regarding the importance of teaching these skills to first-year students." This issue is further compounded by the substantial teaching and administrative burdens placed on lecturers, as also highlighted by Al-Saiari (2023a).

3.3.6 Irregular Attendance and Adaptation Difficulties

Participant 1 observed, "There is a lack of consistency in class attendance." Participant 14 added, "First-year students often struggle to adapt to the new academic environment, which affects their ability to acquire future skills." Participant 13 mentioned, "there is a significant gap between school and university environments, and this transition poses challenges for many students." This finding aligns with Van Rooij et al. (2018), who emphasized that academic adaptation during the first year is crucial for student success.

The impact of these challenges on lecturers' roles in promoting future skills is significant. One major issue is, the overall weakness in English language proficiency among students, combined with variations in educational backgrounds, makes it difficult for lecturers to effectively address individual needs. Additionally, the short duration of the academic semester increases this issue, as lecturers face pressure to meet curriculum requirements while also striving to improve students' proficiency levels. Moreover, the lack of student motivation further complicates efforts to develop their skills, as unmotivated students are less likely to engage in learning activities and skill development.

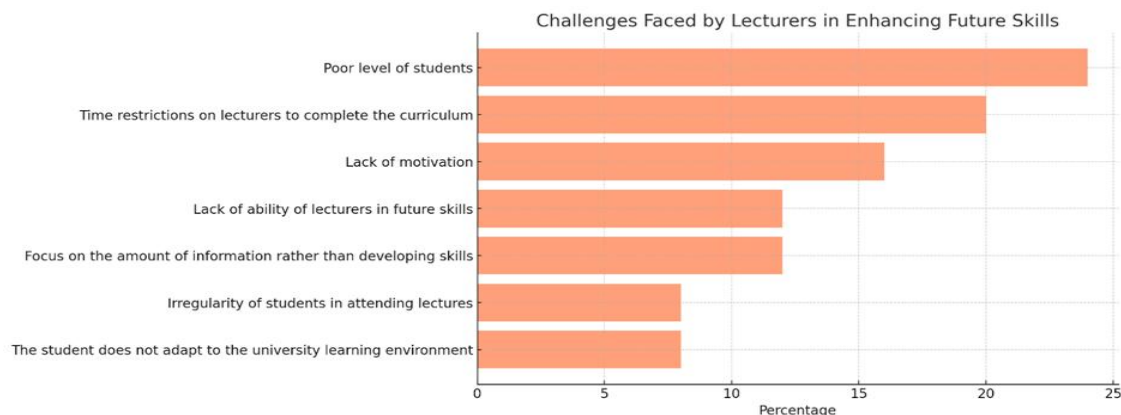


Figure 2. Challenges Faced by Lecturers in Promoting Future Skills

As shown, Figure 2 illustrates the key challenges identified by participants in enhancing future skills among preparatory year students at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences identifies key challenges, including low English proficiency (24%) and limited time (20%).

Additionally, lecturers reported a lack of student motivation (16%), limited proficiency in future skills among themselves (12%), an overemphasis on the quantity of information over skill development (12%), and issues related to student attendance and adaptation (8% each).

3.4 Strategies for Developing Future Skills

Based on lecturers' insight, the following strategies emerged to enhance the development of future skills in preparatory students. The strategies were analyzed based on participants' responses from individual interviews. The frequencies and percentages of their responses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Strategies to Develop Future Skills for Preparatory Year Students from the Lecturers' Perspective (n=18)

No	Percentage	Repetition	Strategies	Ranking
1	34%	10	Focus on developing future skills	1
2	17%	5	Modern Teaching methods.	2
3	17%	5	Educational stimulation	3
4	14%	4	Students Participation in selecting teaching material	4
5	7%	2	Psychological support for students	5
6	7%	2	Cooperation between universities and industry	6
7	3%	1	Raising the criteria for selecting lecturers	7

Note: Percentages and frequencies are based on 18 of total respondents.

3.4.1 Focus on Developing Future Skills

The most emphasized strategy, highlighted by 34% of respondents, was the focus on developing future skills. Participant 15 suggested offering courses on these skills, while Participant 13 stressed the importance of using technology and interactive methods: "It is essential to use technologies like ChatGPT and other applications because they can stimulate our students' thinking and creativity. Additionally, Participant 11 stressed the need for coordinated efforts between the Ministry of Education and higher education institutions through workshops and seminars. This strategy aligns with the findings of Tuzlukova et al. (2018), which emphasize the significance of professional training programs and workshops within the Omani context.

3.4.2 Modern Teaching Methods and Educational Stimulation

Innovative and modern teaching methods, along with educational stimulation, were mentioned by 17% of participants. Participant 2 emphasized the necessity of enhancing educational motivation, while Participant 5 highlighted the importance of creating a supportive environment for students to refine their talents. Participant 8 suggested employing diverse motivational methods such as rewards and encouraging phrases. These approaches could enhance students' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Freeman et al., 2014). Such methods make learning more engaging and prepare students for the dynamic demands of the modern workforce (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Similarly, studies by Sogunro (2015) and Johnson (2017) emphasized the vital role of motivation in improving students' learning experiences and academic performance.

3.4.3 Fostering Student Participation

Involving students in the selection of scientific materials and teaching methods was mentioned by 14% of participants. Participant 2 suggested involving students in activities outside the classroom to break the usual routine. Participant 8 emphasized the importance of engaging students in competitions and projects at both local and international levels. This approach encourages students to take an active role in their education and fosters a deeper connection to learning (Vattøy & Gamlem, 2024).

3.4.4 Psychological Support and Collaboration Between Universities and Industry

Providing psychological support for students and fostering collaboration between universities and industries were each mentioned by 7% of respondents. Participant 14 highlighted the need for continuous psychological support to assist students in overcoming first-year challenges such as anxiety and distraction. Participant 7 stressed the significance of developing partnerships between universities and industries, a sentiment echoed by Participant 14, who proposed collaborative programs between educational institutions and private sector entities. These strategies are crucial for addressing the comprehensive needs of students, as effective psychological support helps them manage stress and build resilience (Luzano, 2024; Tang & Zhu, 2024) while industry partnerships provide valuable real-world experiences and align academic programs with market demands (Khasawneh, 2024).

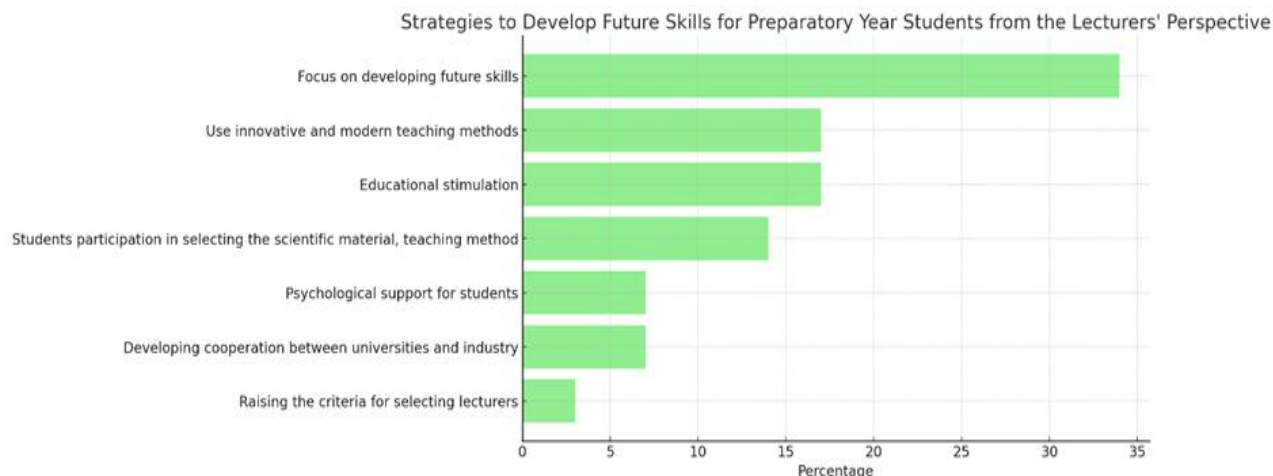


Figure 3. Strategies for developing future skills among preparatory year students from the lecturers' perspective

Figure 3 summarizes the strategies for developing future skills among preparatory year students from the lecturers' perspective. The most significant strategy, focus on developing future skills, was mentioned by 34% of participants. Following this, educational motivation and the use of innovative teaching methods were each emphasized by 17% of respondents. Involving students in selecting scientific material and teaching methods accounted for 14%, while psychological support and developing cooperation between universities and industries were each cited by 7% of participants. Lastly, raising the criteria for selecting lecturers was noted by 3% of respondents.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the multifaceted roles of lecturers in fostering future skills among preparatory year students at UTAS, Salalah branch. Participants emphasized the crucial role of motivation (40%) in fostering student engagement and internalizing critical thinking, digital literacy, and other key competencies. This finding aligns with the current emphasis on education as a driver of Oman Vision 2040. However, challenges including students' weak proficiency (24%) and time constraints (20%) hinder effective skill development. To address these, lecturers suggest some strategies such as focusing on future-oriented curricula (34%), fostering intrinsic motivation (17%), and increasing student involvement in learning practices (14%). These strategies are essential for creating an educational environment that addresses immediate challenges and fosters long-term skill development in alignment with Oman's national objectives. Implementing these approaches can ensure well-equipped graduates who are capable of contributing meaningfully to both national and global advancements.

5. Limitations of Study

One limitation was the small sample size involved only 18 lecturers from a single institution which could restrict the generalizability of the findings. To counter this, I ensured diversity by selecting participants from different units and with varied levels of experience and gender. Furthermore, the study focuses on the Omani educational context might limit the applicability of the findings to other regions or educational systems; however, I provided a detailed contextual description and compared the findings with international literature to situate the results within both local and global trends.

6. The Future Scope of This Study

Future research can include a larger sample size and multiple institutions to compare findings across different settings. Additionally, including the views of students, administrative staff, and industry experts would offer a broader understanding of how future skills are developed. Exploring the impact of new digital technologies and artificial intelligence on teaching methods could further enhance the study.

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Authors' contributions

Anfal A. Mohammed Alsairie was responsible for the analysis of interviews, including thematic analysis, and interpreting the data to extract meaningful insights.

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Competing interests

I declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work.

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Informed consent

Obtained.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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