

Preparing Teachers of Art at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman

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Abstract

Higher Art Education in Oman has a very short history. Officially, Art Education program for preparing teachers of Art was first established in 1991 with the opening of the Art Education Department at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Muscat. The main aim of the program was, and still is, to prepare qualified Art Education Teachers for different pre-university stages and levels, as indicated in the department's published aims. The establishment of this department in Oman was late compared to other Arab Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain. Since the establishment of the department there have been substantial and dramatic changes in preparing teachers of Art at SQU. These changes were in admission requirement for the program, the outcomes of the program and the requirements for graduation with references to the conceptual framework of the college of education. This research focuses on the key assessments of the art teacher preparation program in relation to academic accreditation as requested by National Council Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in order to obtain the substantial equivalence from the National Association of School of Art and Design (NASAD). The primary purpose of this study is to highlight the progress have been made to Initial program regarding the standardized artistic abilities test, GPA Analysis for content knowledge in art education, candidate ability to plan instruction, assessment of field experience, advance application in art studio practice and finally the Ministry of Education Employment Test which took place after graduating from SQU.

Keywords: Key Assessment, Teacher preparation, Art Education, Higher Education, accreditation, Oman

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Introduction

According to Efland (1990), the history of Art Education shows that the first attempt to introduce the study of Fine Arts into universities was in 1868 at Oxford, Cambridge, and London universities in England. Before this period, training took the shape of the apprenticeship system and workshops. Furthermore, the methods and systems of teaching were 'owned' by the masters who trained others in the field (Efland, 1990). Since that time there have been substantial and dramatic changes in art teacher education which take several forms: the pre-service preparation of classroom teachers, the pre-service education of Art specialists, in-service courses and workshops for experienced classroom teacher, and advanced graduate education for visual arts teachers. However, as Galbraith (1995) mentions "the art teacher education program often comprises of coursework divided between general educational, studio education, generic pedagogy, and art education methodology, along with a final-day, semester-long student teaching practicum. It is known that these program components have changed little over the years". (p.7)

With understanding of today challenges in teacher preparation of any educational disciplines, including art education, we all agree that teacher education programs must go beyond mastering the art content knowledge to include 21st century knowledge and skills. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE: 2010) confirms that the "new teacher candidates must be equipped with 21st century knowledge and skills and learn how to integrate them into their classroom practice for our nation to realize its goal of successfully meeting the challenges of this century" (p.3). This includes skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and technology literacy which must be addressed in any 21st century programs. Consequently, many art education programs in worldwide tray to respond to these challenges and make changes required to prepare teacher for future and current time. These programs need to be improved even where they can be described as already strong, as they need to take account of new developments in Art Education such as the 21st century knowledge and skills. Day, in his study (2000) entitled 'Preparing Teacher for Excellence', suggests that major changes are necessary in Art teacher preparation programs. This change for university undergraduates includes the expectation that they will study Art-related disciplines, as well as becoming proficient in the domain of Art Education. Moreover, Eisner's book (2002) entitled 'The Arts and the Creation of Mind' illuminates the various ways such as Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE), Visual Culture, Creative Problem-Solving, Creative Self-Expression, Art Education as Preparation for the world of work, the Arts and Cognitive Development in order to make art as cognitive endeavours. He indicates these art teaching approaches as examples of diversity in teaching art which go beyond the traditional concept of the field of art education today.

As a result of the reforms in Art Education, the art teacher's beliefs, art museums/galleries, contemporary and multicultural art content, new technologies, visual culture, standards for art teacher preparation and accreditation process of teacher education programs are adopted as an educational reform for improving art education in generally and art preparation in particularly.

Accreditation is one of the most important aspects to consider as a possible way to ensure the quality of any art teacher program. Therefore, the College of Education at

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) was involved in the process of accreditation since 2009 for many reasons such as:

- Enhancing the international reputation of SQU and the College of Education.
- Placing the college as a centre of excellence for teaching, counseling and scientific research.
- Improving the quality of the college programs based on international standards.
- Produce distinguished leaders in educational change and development.
- Enhance the quality of learning in schools, Connect students and faculty members with their counterparts in distinguished international universities.

(College of Education, 2014)

In order to be accredited, the college of education at SQU talked several steps such as:

- Building the conceptual framework of the college.
- Using the conceptual framework and international standards to assess the programs and the College.
- Using data to identify points of strength and weakness in order to develop the college, the programs and the graduates.

The conceptual framework of the college is organized around five themes. These themes are Academic Rigor and Specialized Experiences, Diversified Teaching, Research Culture and Lifelong Learning, Dispositions and Values, and Technological Skills. Each theme is discussed separately in the document. The college conceptual framework also demonstrates how knowledge, skills and professional dispositions are integrated and assessed in the academic programs. Similarly, the conceptual framework specifies the role of the assessment system in guiding and reforming the teacher preparation programs and processes in the college. These themes are represented in the Optimal Learning Model (Figure 1). The model depicts five connected circles of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the candidates must demonstrate to become distinguished graduates who can then open the doors to optimal learning for their students.

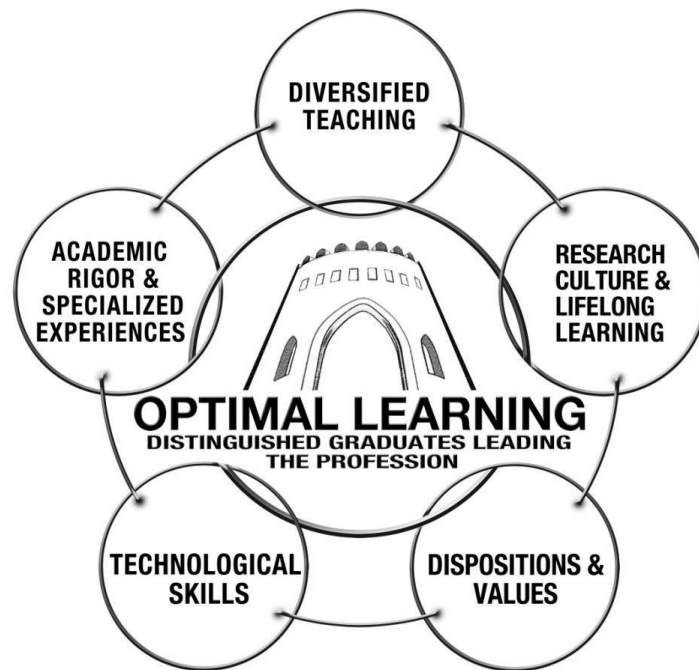


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework model "Optimal Learning Model" at the college of education, Sultan Qaboos University in Oman

Art education program at the college of education like other programs seeks for accreditation from NCATE accreditation body. Therefore, the art education department at SQU did a lot of efforts to improve the condition of preparing teacher of art. Since the establishment of the art education department at SQU in 1991 there have been substantial and dramatic changes in preparing teachers of Art at this governmentally institution. These changes were in admission requirement for the program, the outcomes of the program and the requirements for graduation with references to the conceptual framework of the college of education.

This study highlights the progress have been made to Initial art education program regarding the standardized artistic abilities test, GPA Analysis for content knowledge in art education, candidate ability to plan instruction, assessment of field experience, advance application in art studio practice and finally the Ministry of Education Employment Test which took place after graduating from SQU. This study also provides historical background on art teacher education in Oman which for the first time this history was recorded for teacher education in Oman in generally.

General History of Teacher Education in Oman

In 1970, at the beginning of the Omani renaissance, his Majesty declared the overarching aim to be the expansion of education to reach all parts of the Sultanate of Oman, so that every Omani would get their fair share in accordance with his or her aptitude. Improvement in the field of Education in Oman started growing from 1970

when the government provided free education from primary to higher education, which was then considered as a right for every individual Omani.

The education of both girls and boys is given high priority in Oman. In 1970, there were only three schools with a total of 909 pupils and not more than thirty teachers. (Ministry of Information, 2000). There are currently 2156 schools, including three special education schools with a total of nearly 549257 male and female pupils. Moreover, in the academic year 2014-2015, a modernised Omani curriculum for the kindergarten stage was introduced in all private schools (Ministry of Education, 2014-2015).

In general, the first teacher training institute in Oman opened in 1977 for students who had completed their study in preparatory stage education (grade 7-9). These institutes were later upgraded and in the academic year 1984-1985 they became Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges (ITTC), whose students were secondary school graduates destined to become primary school teachers. In 1995, the Intermediate Colleges were further upgraded and become colleges of education, which granted university degrees in education to their graduates. During the same year, the responsibility for these colleges was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Higher Education (Ministry of Information, 2000).

The College of Education at SQU launched teacher education training in 1986, offering six areas of specialisation: Islamic Education, Arabic Language, Social Studies, Science Education, English Language and Home Economics Education. In the academic year 1990/1991, the college introduced a Physical Education programme, followed by an Art Education specialisation in the academic year 1991-1992. In 2003, the Educational Technology was introduced as new specialisation at college of education, SQU. The Early Childhood specialization is the last teacher training program was opened at the college of education which was in 2007.

As mentioned above, the first official Art Education programme for preparing teachers of Art in Oman was thus first established in 1991 with the opening of the Art Education Department at SQU and this marks the beginning of Art teacher preparation in Oman at the undergraduate level. However, there was art teacher education program at diploma level within two years period of study opened in the academic year 1992/1993 for only three cohorts. The following section presents the position of Art in general teacher training with a focus on the Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges (ITTC) where the Art Education programme was established, followed by the focus on the Art Education programme at SQU.

Art Teacher Training in Oman

From 1977 till 1991, Art was studied as a subject requirement rather than a specialist area for study and was seen as valuable for all student-teachers in these institutes and intermediate teacher training colleges. According to Al-Salmi (2001), the Male and Female Secondary Teacher Institutes (MFSTI) were established in 1977- 1978. They accepted students who had completed the intermediate or preparatory stage (grade 9). The period of study was three years, after which students received a certificate in primary school education. The system of study was based on branching system of general studies in teacher education in many different subjects. Art and crafts were

studied perhaps once a year during the three years of the general teacher training programme at these institutes.

Art as a subject was thus given low priority in the Male and Female Secondary Teacher Institutes (MFSTI). The situation of Art was not much improved when upgraded in these institutes in 1984-1985 to become Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges (ITTC). These intermediate colleges accepted students who had completed their secondary education (grade 12). The length of study was two years with four semesters and at the end of their study, students received a diploma in primary school teaching. Again, Art was studied once in each semester with a totality of four courses. In all these institutes and intermediate colleges, Art was not a specialist area of study but a subject for general teacher education for primary school teaching.

In 1992-1993, under the system of ITTC, Art Education was established as an area for specialisation in primary school education. This programme in the ITTC started after the establishment of the Art Education programme at SQU in 1991-1992. However, the Art programme at SQU was a four-year programme, covering 8 semesters. Graduates of SQU were to work as specialist Art teachers in preparatory and secondary schools. The Art Education programme at ITTC ran only for four years until 1996 and three groups of primary Art teachers graduated from ITTC in this period, as is seen below on the Table 1.

Group of Graduation	Academic years of Studies at ITTC	Period of Study
First group	1992-1993	2 Academic years
	1993-1994	
Second group	1993-1994	2 Academic years
	1994-1995	
Third group	1994-1995	2 Academic years
	1995-1996	

Table 1: Groups of Graduation and the Academic Year of Studies at Intermediate Teacher Training College (ITTC)

According to Al-Salmi (1994), there were nine Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges (ITTC), four for females and five for males. However, the researcher's investigations at the Ministry of Higher Education, revealed that the ITTC Art Education programmes were offered only in three of the nine colleges. Two colleges were in Muscat (Al-Qurm Males' College and Lakhwar Females' College) and another male college was in Sohar (Sohar Males' College).

The ITTC programme was designed to prepare students to teach all of the school curriculum in the first three primary classes (1-grade 3) and to be specialist in one area in the upper three primary classes (4-grade 6), such as Art Education or another specialist subject (Al-Salmi: 2001). The academic study at ITTC was based on credit hours (75 credit hours), which were distributed into four areas of requirements:

- 1- General Culture requirements (20 credit hours)
- 2- Vocational Culture prerequisites and special methods (22 credit hours)
- 3- Primary Education specialisation (12 credit hours)
- 4- Academic specialisation (21 credit hours)

(Ministry of Education, 1985:10-11)

The ITTCs used the Competency-Based Teacher Education (CBTE) Approach. The colleges prepare primary Art teachers through college-based teaching and school-based training. Students have to attend different classes according to each specialist group timetable. As mentioned above, the 75 credit hours are the total amount of their study at ITTC. According to the Ministry of Education (1985), these modules were distributed across four semesters and the programme study at ITTC was divided into five domains of study: (1) General Culture Requirements, (2) Practical Studies and Activities, (3) Professional Education, (4) Primary Education Specialisation, and (5) Academic specialisation.

Structure of ITTC programme for Art Primary Teacher, it can be said that the standard of the primary Art teacher who graduated from ITTC was not high enough in all specialist areas. Al-Salmi (2001) mentions three reasons regarding the unsuitability of the programmes for training primary teachers in ITTC:

- 1- The standard of the students who joined these programmes-in the first and second stages- was not appropriate for the teaching profession.
- 2- The length of the programmes was insufficient for training student teachers fully.
- 3- The subjects taught in the programme were insufficient and unsuitable for training primary school teachers. (p.91)

As a result, in 1995 the ITTCs were further upgraded and became Colleges of Education, which granted university degrees in education. Responsibility for these colleges was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Higher Education. Since establishment of the Colleges of Education in Oman, Art Education and Physical Education have disappeared from these colleges because these specialization areas were provided by SQU in the same university degree level as the Colleges of Education. Moreover, the need of the Ministry of Education for teachers in these areas was less than in other area of specialization, such as Science teachers, English teacher, Mathematics teachers or Islamic education teachers. Furthermore, the standard of the Art Education program at SQU, comparing with primary Art teachers' programme at ITTC, was sufficient in terms of quantitative and qualitative approaches at that time. In addition, those Art educators who designed the ITTC Art Education programme were the same who taught in the Art Education Department at SQU. Consequently, SQU should help extend the professional development of primary Art teachers who graduated from 2-year diploma-level ITTC programme so that they have the equivalent of the 4-year university qualification. Therefore, in the graduates' questionnaire the researcher included a statement regarding this matter as one of the future proposals to develop Art Education in Omani society.

Art Education Program at the University of Nizwa

The University of Nizwa was established in Oman in 2004 as a private university. It is located 140 km from the national capital of Muscat in the interior region of Al-Dakhiliya near the historic former capital of Nizwa. The University seeks to provide a progressive and safe learning environment that is respectful of the traditions and values of the Sultanate. Within the college of arts and sciences, the art education program for undergraduate was established in the academic year 2008-2009. The philosophy of Nizwa University based on positive thoughts and it is for promoting the nation identity and its values and cultural heritages. The main aim of this program is to prepare teacher of art education for the public and basic education based on professional and academia preparation for quality seek. Graduate of this program will have completed a minimum of 132 course hours of study, which includes 27 credit hours for the core university requirement including 6 credits for university elective courses, and 20 credit hours for educational requirements and 85 credit hours for the major requirements in Art Education. (The University of Nizwa, 2015)

The aim of this part was to give the historical background of primary art teacher preparation in Oman and to record it for future studies rather than for critical analysis. Therefore, in order to understand the case of Preparing Teachers of Art at SQU, it is necessary to represent a brief background about the Art Education program as a foundation for the current study.

The Establishment of the Art Education Department at SQU

According Al-Amri (2011) Higher Art Education in Oman has a very short history. Officially, the Art Education program for preparing teachers of Art was first established in 1991 with the opening of the Art Education Department at SQU in Muscat. The main aim of the program was, and still is, to prepare qualified Art Education Teachers for different pre-university levels, as indicated in the department's published aims. This program was designed by Egyptian art educators, like other programs in the Arab Gulf countries. However, the establishment of this department was late compared with other Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain (Al-Amri 2006). Al-Ghamedy (1986) confirms the first programme for preparing Art teachers in Saudi Arabia was established in 1965 and other two programmes were established at King Saud University in 1974/1975 and another one at Um Al-Qura University in 1976. The Art Education department in Qatar was established in the University of Qatar in 1981.

The mission and vision of the art education Department are stated clearly to guide the process of educating art teacher and developing the art education program. As indicated by the mission of the Department is to “prepare distinguished specialists in the field of Art Education to work in different fine art contexts in a way that serves scientific research, the society and sustainable development” and the vision is based on that “the Department of Art Education seeks to be a scientific and professional center of excellence at both University and Post-university levels as well as at research and community service levels” (Art Education Department, 2014, p.5).

With the main mission of preparing art teachers for all types and stages of educational levels prior to University, the art education department tries to achieve the following aims:

- 1- Enrich skills and knowledge of Art Education teachers in one field of visual art.
- 2- Employ Art teachers' experiences to serve local communities.
- 3- Develop art education teachers' abilities in linking visual art to societal culture as well as to humanities and applied sciences.
- 4- Contribute to development of the educational process in different fields.
- 5- Conduct scientific and field researches in the fields of visual art.
- 6- Design and implement educational and artistic programs and workshops on visual art.
- 7- Innovate systematic methods and approaches of criticism and evaluation of artistic and aesthetic works.
- 8- Possess ability and expertise to understand, deal and transfer with modern technology.
- 9- Understand the history of art, criticism theories and aesthetics to analyze artistic works.

(Art Education Department, 2014, p.5).

Initial admissions decisions into all programs including art education at the University are made by the Higher Education Admission Center (HEAC) which is directed by the Ministry of Higher Education, based upon General Diploma (high school) test scores, weighted GPA emphasizing the candidate's degree interest, overall GPA, and the result of standardized artistic abilities test.

The art education degree program is eight semesters in length, and it requires the completion of at least 125 hours. In addition, most candidates take a preparatory year (Foundation Program) on campus to hone their English, mathematics and technology skills prior to taking university-level coursework. The inclusion of this Foundation Program makes the college experience five years for most candidates.

Conditions of Admission to Study at SQU

Candidates are admitted to the Art Education Department at SQU by the Higher Education Admission Center (HEAC) which is directed by the Ministry of Higher Education in corporation with the Deanship of Admission and Registration at SQU. Candidates who meet the general admission requirements of the HEAC must also meet the departmental criteria for admission to the art education program which the standardized artistic abilities test which is regarded as a key assessment for admission to the program including the colour-blind test.

The initial general admission requirement:

Candidates must have:

- A. General Education Diploma, General Education and Islamic Sciences Diploma, or General Education Diploma for the Royal Guard of Oman Technical College (Bilingual) with the minimum requirements of:
 - Minimum of © grade in the following subjects: Core Arabic Language, Fine Arts and Core English Language.

Or

B. IB-Certificate

- Minimum of (4) points from (HL) or
- Minimum of (5) points from (SL) in Arabic Language and Fine Arts

Candidates who achieved the initial general admission requirement as identified by HEAC are qualified to attend the departmental requirements for admission to the art education program candidates must:

- Pass the medical test, in particular the colour-blind test.
- Pass the standardized artistic abilities test.
- Pass the admission interview in art education, disposition & values.

Candidates who meet the above admission requirements especially the department criteria for admission and who have achieved the highest standard in the artistic abilities test will be admitted to the program. The final decision for admitting candidates into the Art Education department is made by the HEAC and this decision is based on the highest grade of General Education Diploma as well as the standardized artistic abilities test results done by the Art Education Department, SQU.

Outcomes of the Art Education Program at SQU

With recognition of the mission, vision and aims of the art education Department, the distinguished graduates in the discipline of Art Education expected at the end of his/her study candidate will be able to:

1. Demonstrates in-depth basic knowledge of theories, techniques and artistic skills and artistic of disciplines of arts.
2. Transfers and applies art competencies related to the art studio, Art History and Analysis, advanced applications and art processes in real-world and educational situations.
3. Practices abilities and skills of planning and constructing artworks in various art disciplines using traditional and modern art materials and techniques.
4. Concentrates his/her artistic practice in one or more of art disciplines.
5. Demonstrates knowledge of the historical development regarding art styles and techniques; and art philosophy.
6. Distinguishes the various major art styles and techniques throughout different periods and times.
7. Makes aesthetic judgments about art productions based on depth knowledge of the art history, art criticism, and aesthetics for the works of artists and pupils.
8. Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of new scientific theories that are related to disciplines of arts and their teaching methods and the psychological principles of pupils' learning.
9. Demonstrates knowledge of the principles of curriculum development and planning and teaching approaches of the diverse age, social, cultural backgrounds and individual personal thoughts.
10. Knowledgeable about special traditional and contemporary approaches and strategies of teaching disciplines of arts and their assessment techniques.
11. Reflects on own art practices and art teaching in order to develop self-assessment and the learning process.

12. Establishes positive relationships with school colleagues, parents, pupils and other authorities in the local society in order to promote pupils' learning.
13. Makes positive attitudes towards the professional career of teaching art education.
14. Observes the Omani values and morals in professional of teaching art education.
15. Uses new technology in art making, planning, teaching and assessing of pupils' learning.
16. Demonstrates basic research knowledge and skills in the art and art education discipline.
17. Experiments and investigates continuously throughout various art materials and processes to exam their potential for teaching and creating art.
18. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the researches-based practices in the discipline of art.
19. Knowledgeable about skills of Action Research based on description, analysis, interpretation and judgments.
20. Encourages pupils' reflection and self-assessment with the aim of promoting and developing the education process.

(Art Education Department, 2014, p.5)

The above outcomes were developed and aligned with the mission, vision and the conceptual framework college of education as well as the university vision and mission.

Art Education Program at SQU

Graduate of Art Education program will have completed a minimum of 125 course hours of study, which includes 12 credit hours for the core and elective university courses, 102 credit hours for the major requirements in Art Education including educational courses requirements and 11 credit hours for major electives in Art Education. In addition to the Foundation program. The following paragraphs showing more information about both the foundation program requirements and Art Education Program requirements with references to the degree study plan. (College of Education, 2010-2011, p.16)

First: the Foundation Program Requirements

Before the candidates start their study on any program in the college, they must enroll on the Foundation Program (FP), which have been designed according to the Oman Academic Standards that were published by the Omani Authority for Academic Accreditation in the form of learning outcomes for English, Mathematics, Information Technology and Study Skills.

During the Orientation weeks, before teaching commences, the FP administers a Placement Test (PT) to determine each candidate's proficiency level in English, Math and IT. Based on the results of the PT, candidates are then allocated to groups of equal ability. Candidates who pass exit level of the PT in one of two areas are permitted to take entry courses from their study program while taking the courses they have not passed in the FP. After candidates pass all levels in each of English, Math and IT, they sit an exit test and based on their results, they are passed or failed.

Accordingly, they are permitted to take credit courses from their study program or repeat the fail courses within two years; otherwise they are asked to withdraw from the SQU.

Second: Art Education Program Requirements

The Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) Art Education program prepares teachers to teach Arts in basic Educational schools (grades 1-10) and in the secondary schools (grades 11-12). A candidate on this program will have completed a minimum of 125 course credits hours of study. This program includes the following requirements:

- University courses (6 credit hours)
- University Electives (UE) (6 credit hours)
- Major Requirements (AR) (102 credit hours)
- Major Electives (AE) courses (11 credit hours)

The specialization requirement includes the courses from the department of educational foundations and Administration, psychology department, Curriculum and Instruction department, Instructional and Learning Technologies Department and Art Education Department. The candidates explore creative activities in the disciplines of ceramics, textiles, basics of design, printmaking, sculpture, painting and drawing with various materials and traditional crafts.

This program, Bachelor of Education within specialization of art education, trains teachers to teach Fine Arts in both preparatory and secondary schools. Students in the Art Education department explore creative activities in the fields of ceramics, textiles, basics of design, printmaking, sculpture, painting and drawing with various materials and traditional Omani crafts. A graduate of this program can expect employment opportunities as a teacher of fine arts within the schools of the Sultanate. Self-employment as an artist is also a possibility. In order to ensure the quality of the candidate of the art education program, the SQU adopts the following key assessment which presented briefly in this study.

Key Assessments of the Program:

According to Al-Amri (2011) the importance of assessment in art education is crucial for proving and improving learning in art. An ongoing discussion on assessment and evaluation is needed in the field of art higher education in order to inform instructional planning with clear decisions to remediation, reinforcement or extension of student learning. However, in the previous study of Al-Amri (2010) it appeared that there is a need to re-think the current practices of teaching art at SQU and a need to try to find new mechanisms for implementing best practices effectively especially assessment practiced at SQU. Therefore, it is important to have appropriate assessment strategies in assessing candidates of art education program at SQU. As Al-Amri (2011) recommended that the staff professional development in the alternative assessment techniques is the key issue that SQU should consider in order to 'close the gap' in the knowledge and skills regarding art assessment in the SQU. His research's results confirmed that the assessment techniques used in this department should be monitored, evaluated and developed systematically by the art education faculty at SQU. In order to obtain the substantial equivalence from the National Association of

School of Art and Design (NASAD), the art education department at SQU did radical changes in the program based on input, process and product evaluation system and these has been used in a large number of assessment programs across all educational disciplines' programs. The following paragraphs are presenting briefly outline key of the assessments used at this program in order to ensure the quality of the outputs of the art education program at SQU.

Ministry of Education Employment Test (MEET)

The Ministry of Education Employment Test (MEET) is offered by the Ministry of Education (MOE) as a mandatory exam for every Teacher Candidates (TC) who plan to become art teachers in the Omani schools and this test became a requirement test to all candidates who want to work as official art teachers in public schools. The MEET is designed to measure the candidates' knowledge in subject matter of art education. It measures art content knowledge in art disciplines and educational and psychological knowledge. The MOE decided to test TC since 2010. Therefore, passing an employment test became a requirement to work as an Art Education teacher in public schools. The MEET consists of (100 items) in form of multiple-choice test questions focus on content knowledge in Art education and educational and psychological knowledge.

In 2013 a new version of the MEET has been implemented along with Art Production Test. This new adaptation test measuring candidates' artistic skills associated with one or two art disciplines in practice-based exam and this test is designed to assess the breadth and depth of candidates' experiences as makers of art. In this case, the MEET has three main categories: Content knowledge in Disciplines of Art Education, educational and psychological knowledge, and Art Production Test. The art disciplines in the first category (The Theoretical Test) are always the same but items weight for each discipline is slight different from test to another and the MOE modifies the test every year to assure confidentiality. (Art Education Department, 2015)

Content knowledge in Art Education

The content analysis test and GPA analysis are carried out within art education courses by the art education department at the college of education with assistant of assessment office for accreditation. These forms of analysis done with seek of granted that the candidates are acquired subject knowledge according to the college of education, SQU's standards and this procedure make sure that the candidate is ready to take the mission of professional teaching practice with highest standard that requested. Analysis of GPAs is from 8 key courses taught by the Art Education Dept. These courses represent the core content of the B.Ed. program prior to Student Teaching. (GPA is calculated on a 4 point scale) Art Education program strives to instill professional knowledge, skills, motivation and attitudes to enable our Teacher Candidates (TCs) to become independent thinkers, creative artist and learners to contribute effectively in a rapidly changing in Art education arena in Oman. Art Education program offers a complete range of courses, artistic skills, praxis, advance applications in art specialization majors and field experiences. Therefore, this key assessment is designed to assure that our TCs are fully equipped with the tools that support his/her career. (Art Education Department, 2015)

Unit plan

The unit plan assessment is intended to assess the candidates' ability to design instruction in their major of study in Art Education. This assessment tool exams candidates in terms of contextualizing a unit plan within educational, socioeconomic and cultural context and linking theories within practices, ability of setting goals and objectives with reference to assessment tools to be used to assist the outcome of this unit. The candidates are required to design or re-design unit plan from the art education curriculum (grades 1-12) according to template provided by the college of education. The unit plan should have the following components: general basic information about the unit, Introduction and description of context, theoretical framework, unit goals and objectives, assessment of student learning, pedagogy and description of the teaching methodology to be used, lesson plans (at least three), expectations of implementation and appendix with other criteria directed to the NASAD Standards in general and the 3rd Standard in specifically which is related to Teaching Competencies. This unit plan is a requirement in the course Methods of Teaching Arts Education II (CUTM4027) and it assessed at the end of this course using rubric score for each teaching competencies. (Art Education Department, 2015)

Teaching Practice Observation Form

The teaching practice observation form is designed to measure candidate teaching performances in seven major criteria using rubric scores. These criteria regarding as teaching competencies which include: introduction to the lesson, mastery of the subject (content & specialized skills), diversifying teaching and learning approaches, organizing the learning environment, employment of learning resources, effectiveness of evaluation methods and lesson closing. Each of these main teaching competencies has subheadings expelling specific teaching competencies for each main one with total of twenty eight sub-categories. Some of these components are general of every teaching process and some of them specific for teaching art. Candidate will assist during field experiences (teaching practice) for whole semesters by university supervisors and cooperative teacher from the school for three or four times. (Art Education Department, 2015)

Art Student Teaching Portfolio (ASTP)

Art Student Teaching Portfolio (ASTP) as a key assessment for this program designed to provide evidence on the teaching learning practices performed of the candidates in their specialization area (Art Education) as well as to measure candidates' impact on students learning. The candidates design their portfolios of the teaching practice in a way that is centered on the conceptual framework of the college of education as well as their acquired knowledge of the teaching profession. This assessment tool is designed to meet the 3rd NASAD Standard specifically and other NASAD Standards. This key assessment regarded as a comprehensive evidence to assess candidates' abilities in supporting their student learning and development as well as creative, critical thinking abilities. (Art Education Department, 2015)

Advance Application for Art Studio Practice

The Advance Application (Art Studio practice) course as key assessment is designed for those interested in expanding their experience in any art discipline. It integrates the theory and practice, combining studio projects with writing assignments. The course allow students to work in an interdisciplinary manner, and encourage them to consider visual issues in the field using media of their own choosing to explore and respond to class discussions at an advanced level. Each student creates his/her artworks, as determined by the instructor. This is associated with ARED 4260 course which assessed through two main components: art exhibition and visual essay and each outcome assessed using rubric scores. The outcomes of this course are assessed by evaluators: one external examiner, one internal examiner and the professor of the course in each art discipline. (Art Education Department, 2015)

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is possible to reconsider the data results of above key assessments in order to exam the impact of the program. However, this study only focused on preparation of art teacher at SQU with references to the new development regarding the key assessment implemented at this program. This stud has also dealt with historical information regarding teacher education in Oman in generally and art teacher training in particularly. It is important to understand the advantages and disadvantages for each of key assessment in terms of implementation and impact in the current development of art education at SQU. It has suggested that this program needs further development, especially in terms of academic accreditation processes which the department targeted for. In the researcher's view, it is critically important as long as the quality of the content and the contexts of the program is maintained, which should be reflected in the quality of its graduates and the impact on students learning at the school situation.

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