

*New Approach of Using Social Media in Graphic Design at the Higher Education
in Sultanate of Oman*

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The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2018
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Over the past decade, Social media has supported education and has become the most common means of digital communication, articulating the advantages and disadvantages of its different platforms for instructors and students to sustain confidentiality and provide tips for applying social media-based teaching into the training curriculum. From this point of view; this research explores the perspectives and abilities of using Instagram, Facebook, and Google plus in the pedagogical of graphic design courses at faculty of art education in sultan Qaboos University in order to play a vital role in teaching methodologies. It was denoted that, Omani art students are interested in employing new media applications in this kind of practice to find new techniques for creating artwork based on Art and design principles, where the flexibility and fluency of this new media introduce infinite possibilities that involve further exploration, investigation and development. Such developments not only encourage the students toward creativity and divergent thinking, but also eventually assist them to obtain contemporary artistic skills that links directly to their art practices, careers, and lives to develop their own styles and techniques in expressing their ideas, issues and thoughts.

Keywords: Art education, Graphic Design, Omani students, Social media, Student creativity, Teaching performance

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Introduction

Humans are social creatures –relationships and conversations between people are part of human nature [1].

Nowadays, Creativeness, innovativeness, affordability and cooperation are highly necessary for successes in the global markets of today [2].

The information and the technology development do shape the routine life of the individuals, especially by making the Internet users gain new attitudes and behaviors [3].

Technologically based developments is seeking to be effective and beneficial for learning and teaching, this can be taken place by enhancing the learning demands in terms of display such as images; color graphics, audio, videos and transferring of information and offer flexible delivery with respect to time, space and place in short period of time [4], [5].

In today's world; by means of growing technological improvements and innovations; life is now easier than it was before. The digital era didn't change this, but did change the way we communicate. Today we have many ways of digital communication where People are becoming more comfortable using the Internet [1], [6]. The internet was first used by the academy and then flourished worldwide as a large knowledge database [1].

The year 2004 established Web 2.0 as a term designating an entire range of interactive and collaborative aspects of the Internet. Web 2.0 is mostly defined as the online applications, and the social media is defined as the social aspects of such applications [7].

Therefore, digital content and information is no longer made available to Internet surfers only by the mass media, but also by private individuals, connected with one another via the social sites of the moment such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Google+. In a strong interconnection with these tools, technologies and services has been evolving „social media” as a generic term covering a large range of Web 2.0 platforms and applications [8] which has become a humanistic communication means which the basis of is sharing and discussing without any limitations by the time or the space [3]. For example, we have Facebook to keep in touch with friends and family by sharing posts, links and pictures. We have WhatsApp for instant messaging, Twitter for micro-blogging, and YouTube for videos, Instagram to share pictures and LinkedIn for business social networking. In addition, there are many other sites, some for specific needs while others for specific groups [1]

Recently, It is well-known that the internet signifies the main technological innovation that tolerates education earners to modify the institutional level. Digital culture is changing the dual relationship between teacher and student in a three-part process involving the teacher, the student and the technological device [9].

The digital tools are defined as instructional practice that is using technology to support classroom teaching and learning to strengthen the student learning experience [10]. For example, dictionaries, encyclopedias, references, databases etc. changed the concept of time and place where they play an important role in collaborative distant learning among students from different educational institutions in the same and different countries, also enables discussion of different problems with them by offering alternative and creative methods of learning. These evolving technologies have introduced opened, personalized and innovated novel trends in education with greater emphasis on lifelong learning [11]. For example; wikis build a wiki-based glossary that play an important role in facilitating students to work together, providing them with opportunity to comment and support instructor in designing for learning [12]. Wikis and blogs are mainly beneficial writing tools that assist composition practice, where education is more like a conversation and learning [13].

In design education, diversity of perspectives is elaborate to identify creativity, due to the differences between graphic design students themselves, which caused by numerous mental, personal, social, and environmental factors, in which computers can assist them to find creative solutions for graphic problems that might be encountered in the society. Further, graphics lecturers must play a vital role in delivering the pedagogical strategies through the various graphic design courses and have to be duty-bound to help students in practice problem solving techniques within a supportive environment by stimulating their divergent thinking that would increase their motivation so they can interact with people from different societies with different segments. As a result, the students can then interact creatively and learn collaboratively, and be critical and implement the collaborative reflection skills [14].

As we know in general that Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications or a collection of websites and web-based systems built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content through mass interaction, conversation and sharing among members of a network [15], [16], But in specific, the higher education has shifted from the concentration on knowledge skills and has become interesting to the use of highlighting long learning in terms of skills [17], [18], shifting attention to apply in teaching and learning the social media [19], because Several studied of its tools as; Facebook, Myspace, Twitter in addition to blogs and microblogs and folksonomies to activate the collaborative learning and the motivation of cognitive skills reflection and metacognition which lead to enhance the performance of learners [17], [20-22]

In the field of researches, social media platform opens valuable information and knowledge sharing among people such as SSRN, Social Science space, Academia.edu and ResearchGate [23] increases the students' publishing, sharing, and participation [24] [25]. Resulted in; this application is becoming popular among students of higher education because it is connecting people free of cost and facilitate the sharing of information in different formats on several topics [26] as well as boosts education in higher institutions of learning [27].

Creative talents play a dynamic part in the sustainable growth of any country and the establishment of its foremost place in competition with the other countries. Therefore, many countries build strategic development of creative programs especially in the field of education.

Art education tolerates people to be productive and creative, enables them to communicate easily with each other by activating their good feelings to be effective in finding solutions to the problems, thinking creatively in every area, gaining aesthetic value, self-evaluating and self-recognition in order to keep up the innovations of the age [28-30]. At this point, it is an undisputed fact that art education has an important role to pass modern society from a traditional society and it is effective on individual's social development and having qualifications which are required by the age [28].

Therefore, the prosperity of the whole society could be achieved. Hence, creative art education is regarded as the solid basis for the sustainable development of creative industries, which accounts for the perfect system for the cultivation of creative talents from undergraduates to postgraduates [31].

The reception of media has influenced the very concept of art education, which has been circulated globally thanks to current technological capabilities, favoring the creation of a mass form of technological digital culture regarding, technology, interaction, production and dissemination processes, ideology, values and aesthetics [32], [33]. As a result, it is an appropriate time to consider how future educators value and address the concept of artistic education [34].

Through literature, several researches in relation with higher education were studied and denoted that social media is reported to use either utilitarian or hedonic technologies based on corresponding TAM foundations which reports positive influences of perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use on social media adoption behavior [18], [35]. On the other hand, it was found that interactive blogs play a significant role in the peer interaction among students leading to a better academic achievement [36].

In Oman Sultanate, most Omani governmental and private institutions apply computerized environments in teaching to undergraduate students that would help graphic students to produce a piece of design more quickly where the computerized environment provides a high level of digital facilities by offering a wider variety of solutions for most design problems that can promote creative thinking and stimulate students' behavior [37].

Otherwise The Omani graphic design education system lacks a unified framework towards the concept of creativity. One of the consequences of such a lack is a shortage of pedagogical structured programs that can enhance creativity of Omani graphics students. It is believed that this is a result of underestimating the importance of creativity in Arabic traditional educational systems in general [38]. As a result, the educators who are interested in establishing a central role for creativity in universities

and higher education institutions need to ensure that there are suitable opportunities, a supportive environment, and enthusiastic motivation for their students. In addition, they need to activate the innovative and imaginative experiences whilst teaching graphic design to ensure creative thinking in solving problems which is required in developing countries.

Finally, owing to continue moving towards the novel pedagogical approach by using the greatest potential goal of social media to improve the self-regulated learning and provide students the advantage of having control over their learning activities [39], the purpose of this research paper is to explore the perspectives and abilities of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and google plus and their educational applications in the pedagogical practices This was carried in general, in art education and in particular in graphic design by using a descriptive observation and case-study approach, in addition to some classroom observation tasks that had done by students in “Graphic Design 1”, and “Graphic Design 2” courses taught in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 in the Art education department at Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman. This can help to understand the academic use of social media among students in order to reduce the phenomenon of learning distraction and enhance their online engagement to be applied in an international context.

Methodology of the Study

The study has applied the descriptive/ analytical survey approach. It was conducted in the Art Education department at the Faculty of Education at Sultan Qaboos University on all the enrolled (36) students in the Graphic Design course during Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 semesters.

The study was built on the relationship between graphic design and social media where both of them are connected by media technology. It was designed to address the interaction skill gained in the relations between student and student, student and the instructor, students and their surrounding environment (society). The students have begun to think about how to benefit from the skill of using social media not only during their current education, but also for a stage after graduation. This can be done either by transferring their experiences in education and learning to teachers in schools or through their self-teaching of students in schools. On the other hand, it can also be used in building their portfolio professionally to act as an advertisement or marketing to help graduate students to start in small projects and community service. This strategy took place through four key concepts which are central to the prospect and perception of our students. These concepts are: 1) how the social media can act as a tool for learning and be connected to graphic design? 2) How students feel about applying social media to support learning? 3. How students and their parents comprehend social media in education and learning? And 4) Are there any negative image about the use of social media in Omani society, if so; how can we do anything to overcome this negative image?

Firstly, it was primarily carried out with a quantitative approach using a survey methodology via a Google online questionnaire. This was done by sending the link

via email to the faculty members at the Faculty of Education, the enrolled students in Graphic Design Course and the parents of those students. The data was analyzed by the suitable statistics to obtain the answers to the research questions and translated it into useable information. Secondly, a teaching strategy was carried out on the enrolled students in the Graphic Design Course to encourage them to build up branding names and a ‘professional account’ rather than a personal one to allow sharing their designs, artistic productions, experiences, conduct interactive discussions and take opinions etc. Finally, the instructor tried to capture more feedbacks from the other faculty members in the form of qualitative information about the role of social media in developing the learning skill of these students and how these skills may affect their future work after graduation.

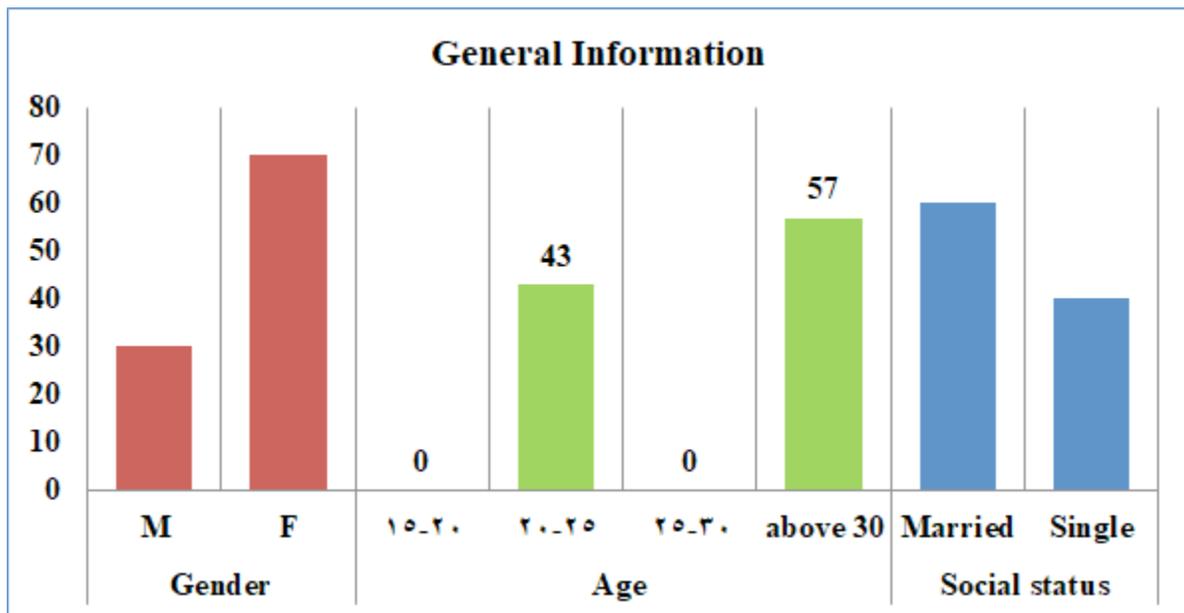


Figure 1: General information about the participants of the questionnaire

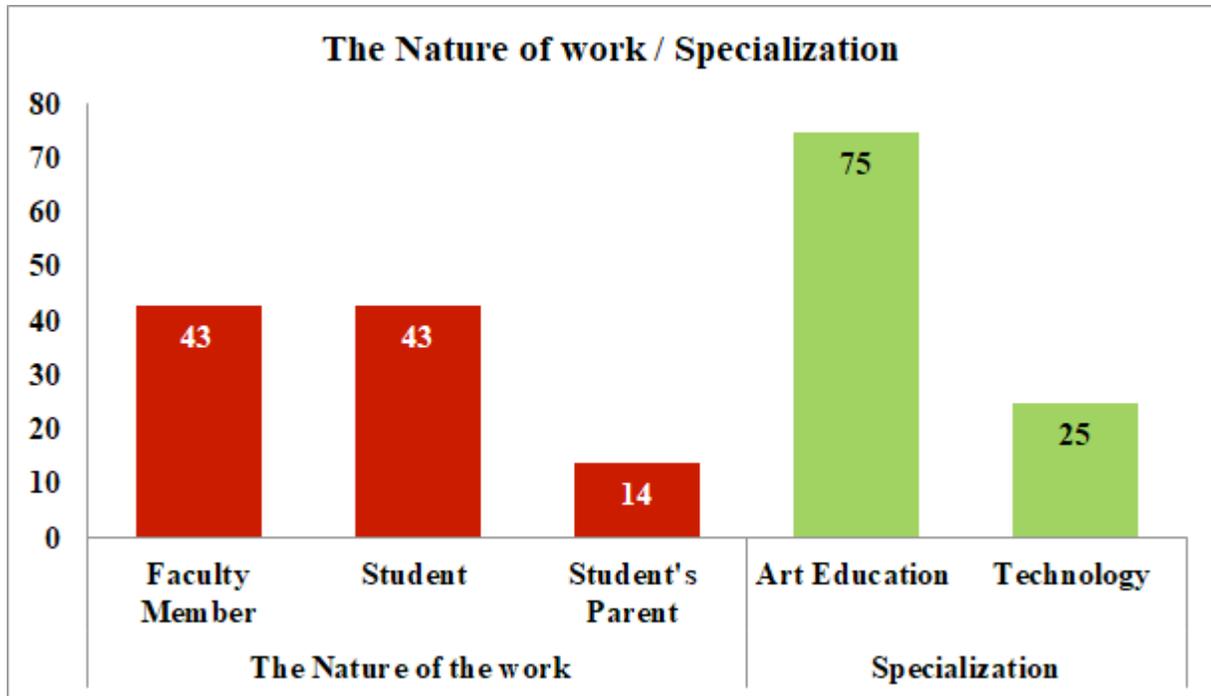


Figure 2: The nature of work/ specialization of the participants of the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

A systematic scientific method was followed to arrive at the final outcome of this study and to ascertain its suitability for the professional, educational and ethical standards. Through the results, it was denoted that the applied strategy of social media in learning and teaching through the graphic design course exhibited a wonderful experience for students, their parents, the academic staff at the Faculty of Art Education and the trained teachers in schools by the students in the Graphic design course during their field training. So that everyone reacted amazingly not only to the students of the course, but also to their fellow who viewed their work and portfolio on the social media.

The primary results have confirmed that social media can be used to enrich students' imaginative and creative approach towards learning. Students of art education can use social media to develop mental, physical and psychological talents and capabilities. Social media can also be used to learn different techniques in teaching graphic art because by using modern technologies that appeals to them such as E-learning and Google drive, where these tools causes students to have a stronger tendency to learn and interact well with information via uploading the course files and designs on the mentioned social media where then can be handled easily on cell phones. Students have reacted positively to the use of social media in different educational situations. The first was its application in other curriculums in the faculty of Education such as the Microteaching course which is taught in the department of technical learning. The second was with the training of school teachers. It is expected for the usage of social media in teaching to be applied in the future in schools across the sultanate through

the teachers who have acquired this technological skill and to use it for the benefit of collaborative learning by establishing a kind of communication and dialogue which will allow the spread of educational materials for everyone. This highlights the importance of the use of social media in education where it allows the expansion of understanding and cooperation beyond the boundaries of traditional classrooms. From the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire, data indicate the following information;

Do you have an account in a social network		Do you have difficulty dealing with such sites		Do you register in social networks with your real name			Do you encourage others to use social networking sites			Do you think that social networks have a role in the development of individual personality?		
Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	May be	Y	N	May be	Y	N	May be
96	4	5	95	64	7	29	79	3	18	64	32	4

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for participants’ responses of the questions (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) of questionnaire.

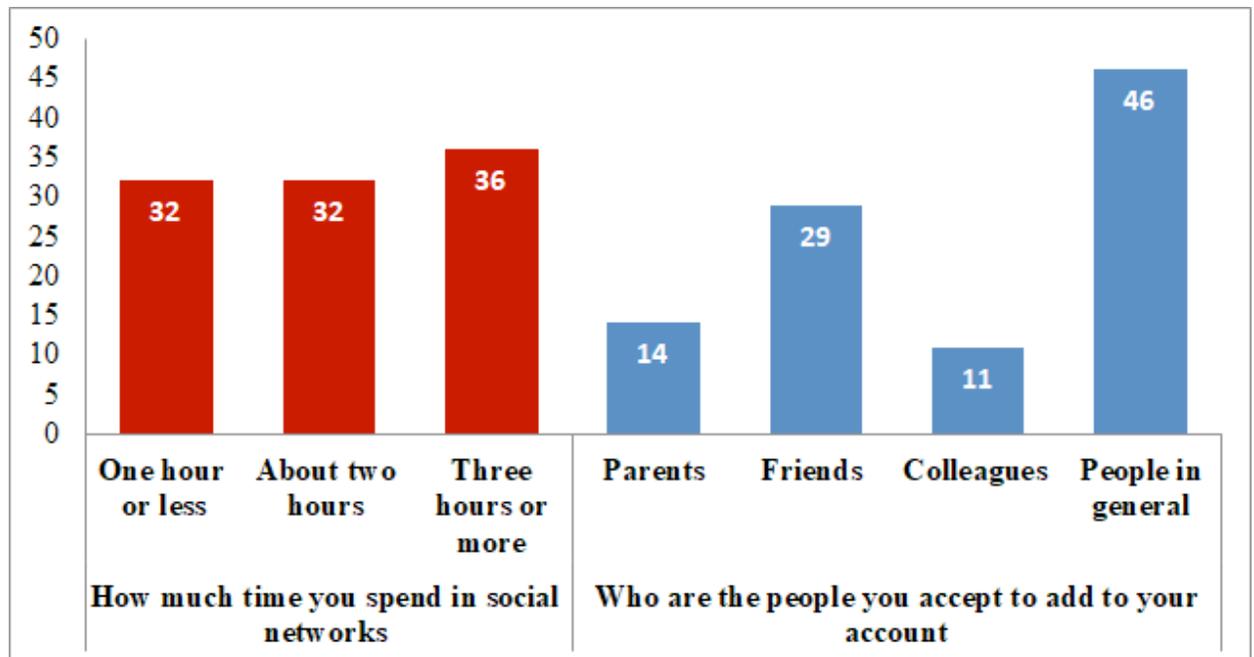


Figure 3: The responses of the questions (6 and 7) of questionnaire.

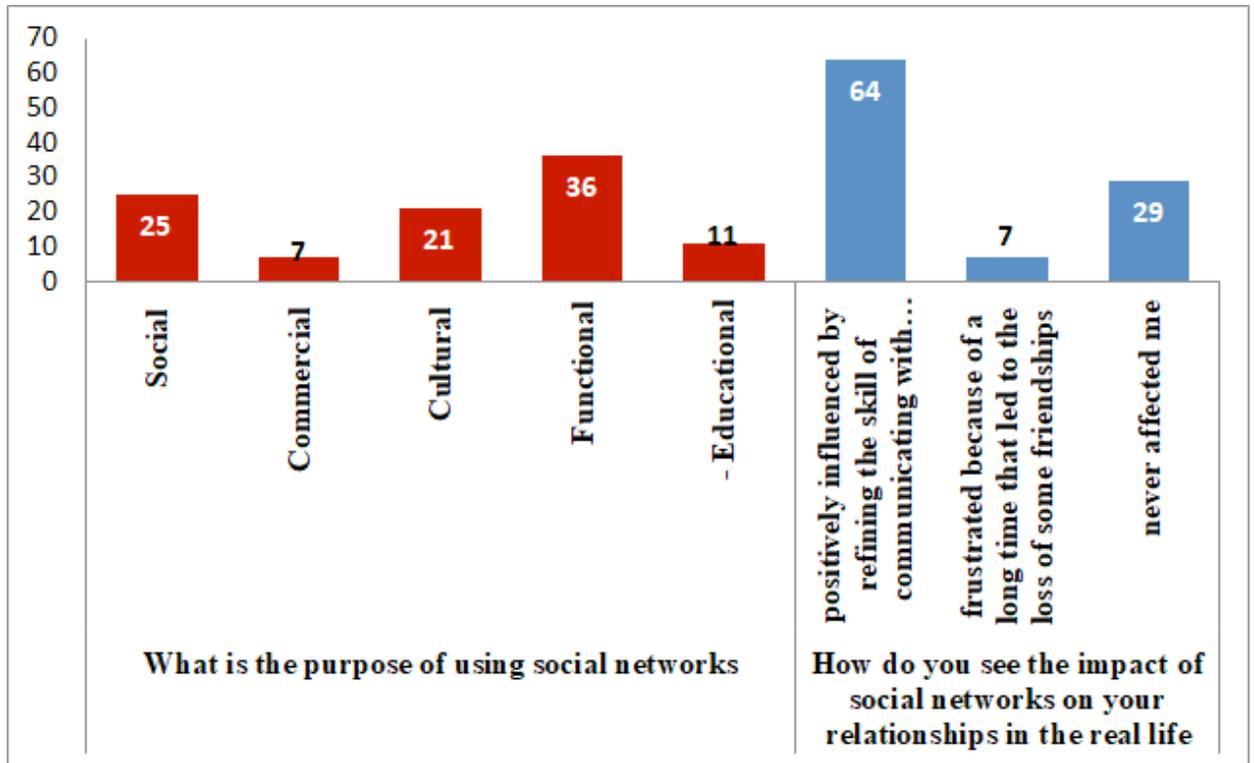


Figure 4: The responses of the questions (3 and 4) of questionnaire.

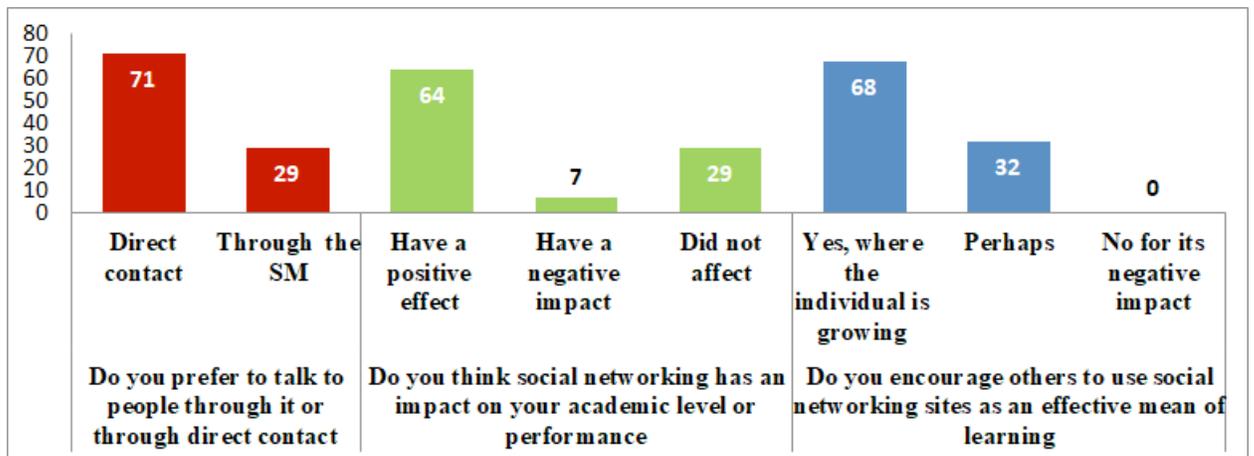


Figure 5: The responses of the questions (8, 9, and 10) of questionnaire.

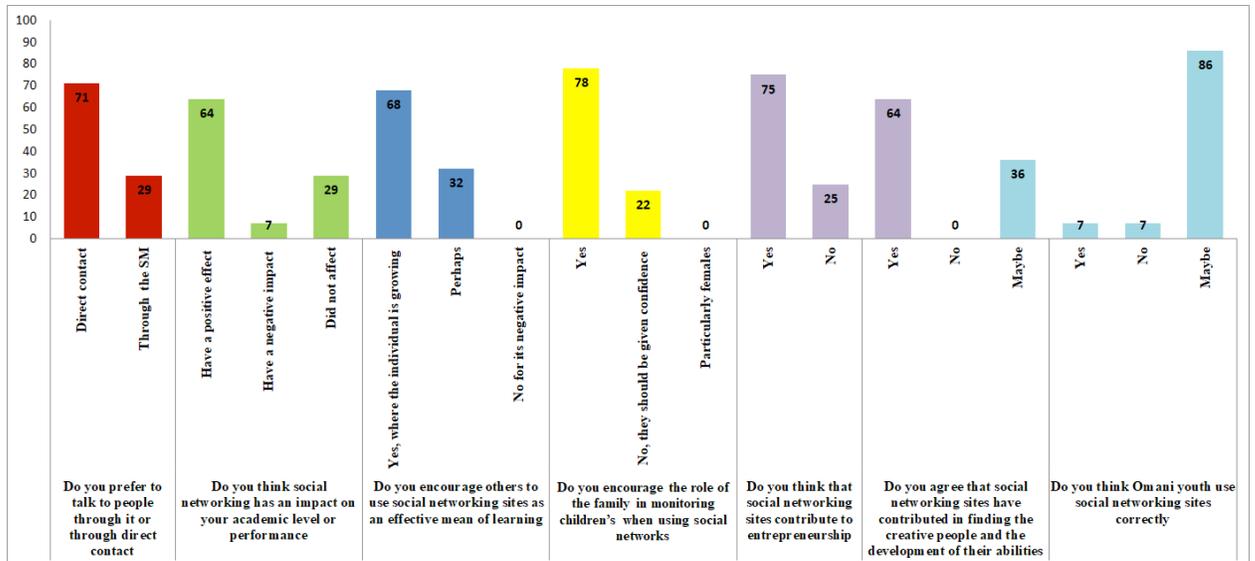


Figure 6: The responses of the questions (11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17) of questionnaire.

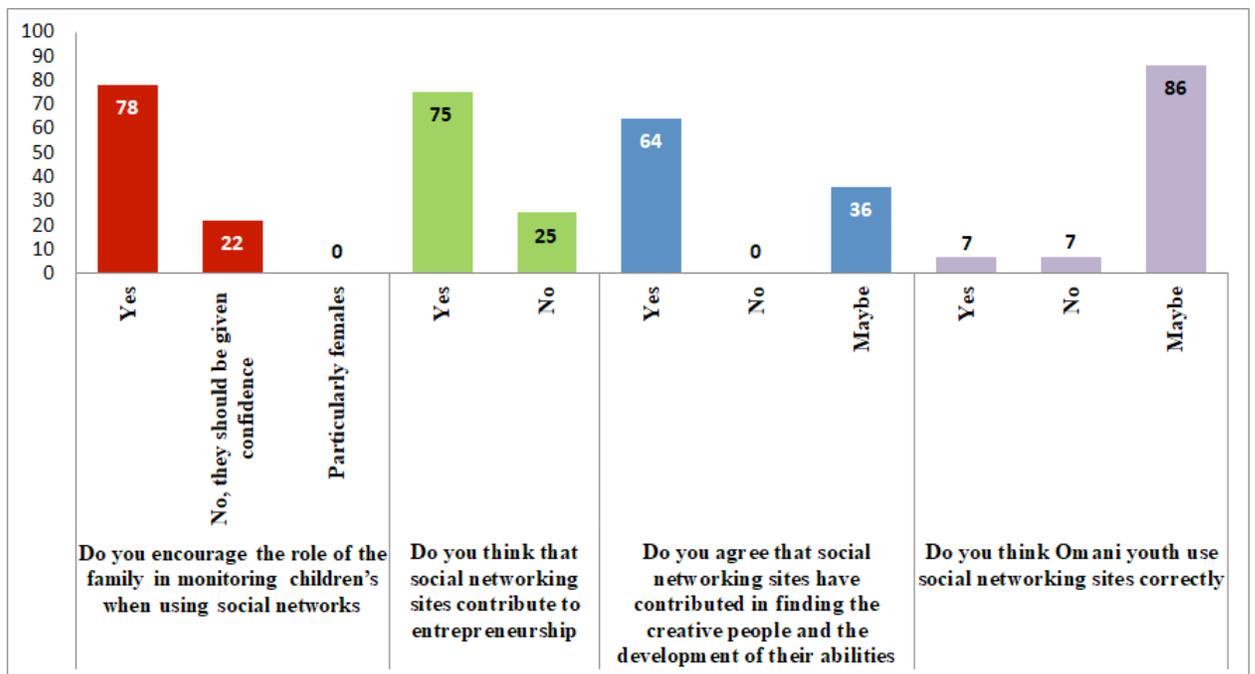


Figure 7: The responses of the questions (18, 19, 20 and 21) of questionnaire.

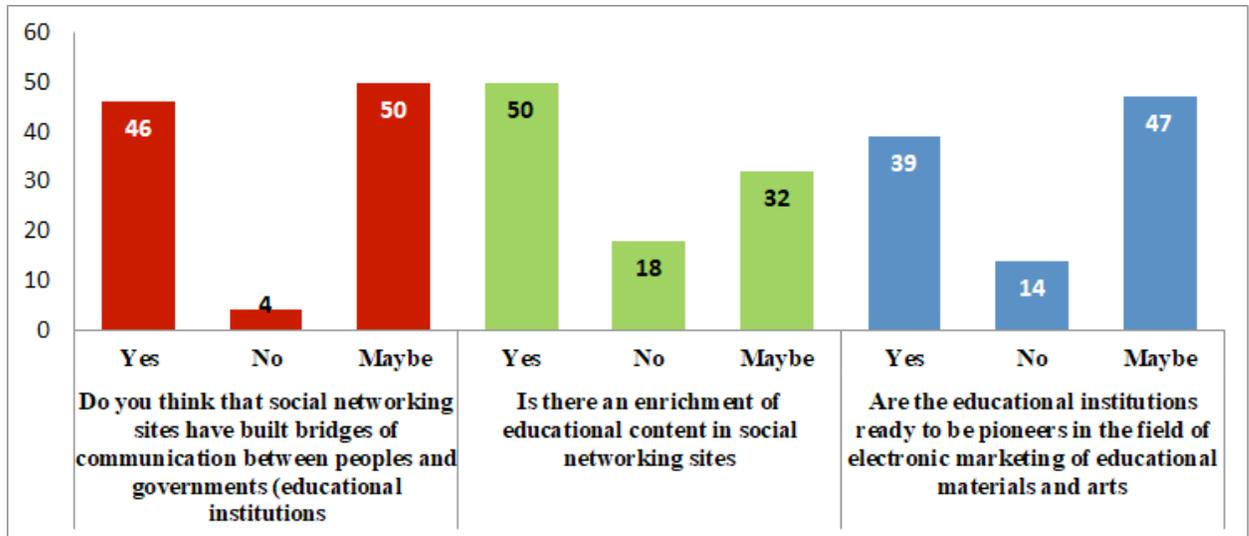


Figure 8: The responses of the questions (22, 23, and 24) of questionnaire.

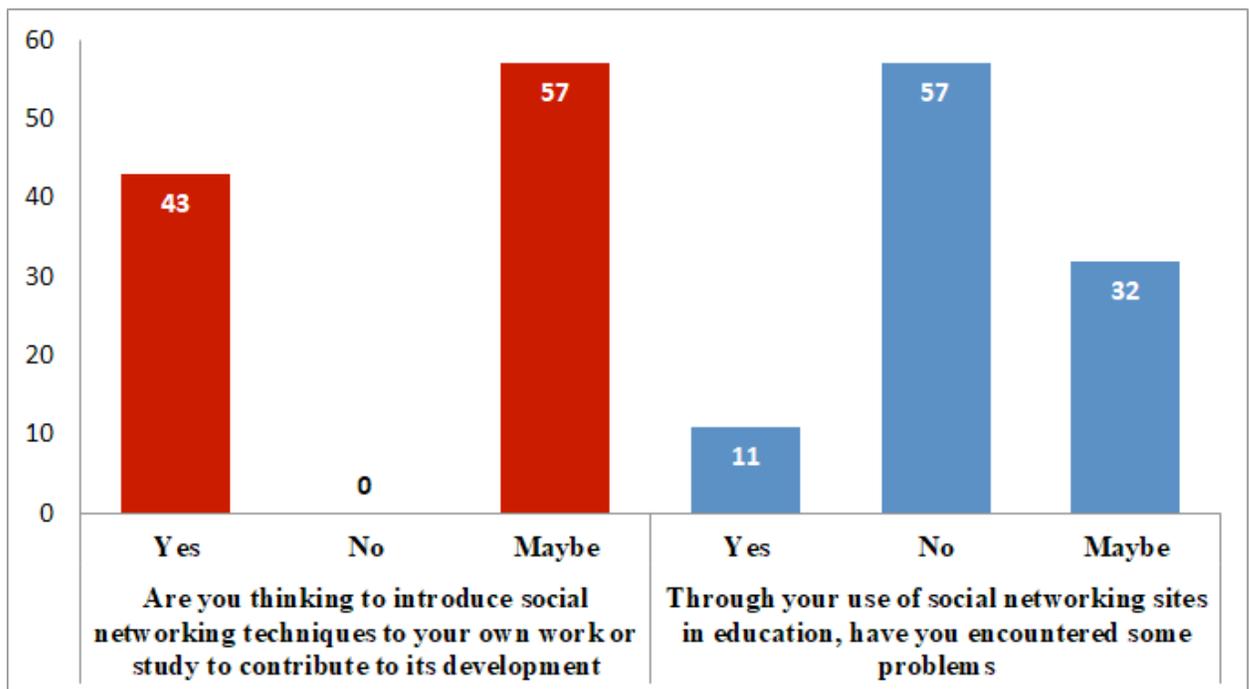


Figure 9: The responses of the questions (25 and 26) of questionnaire.

From the qualitative Analysis, it was denoted that the graphic design course assisted the students in art education department to apply the social media in teaching and learning processes. This was reflected not only on the other courses in the same department, but in the other departments at the whole faculty of education, especially through the Teaching Practice course which aims at enabling the trainees at the faculty of education to employ modern technology while practicing teaching and to support students' evaluation and demonstrate the specialized knowledge they have obtained so as to strengthen their professional practices and their teaching competencies, providing them with opportunities to apply, in a practical and direct way, the components of the conceptual framework of the college since these

candidates are considered as resident teachers in partner schools who are soon after continuously communicate with other teachers, parents and civil society institutions so as to improve teaching practices. The trainees of students at faculty of education interacted with the social media positively during the teaching practice training in schools in the spring of 2018 through the introduction of modern technology, implementation and evaluation of teaching, as well as planning the design and research processes of teaching through technology in the global network. During their supervision, many cases have been monitored that demonstrated the extent to which how these students are active in the use of social media in teaching and learning processes based on what they studied in the graphic design courses. These cases were recorded as follows (Al-Amry,2018; Fawzy, 2018; Hatem, 2018)

- The application of WPS Office in smartphones has been intensified with many other applications related to virtual reality concepts such as the Quiver application to present and conduct teaching data to students, either between the trainees or between the trainees and schoolchildren.
- The adoption of trainees to the recruitment of some graphics programs for processing images such as Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator as they develop modules to enrich the educational content and learning methods.
- Many students were directed to help their colleagues through sharing their technological and graphic experiences they learnt in graphic design course to activate the technological media during teaching art education whether in direct interviews with each other or Via social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram, and Google Plus.
- Activating the social media with some schoolchildren where the trainers gave their students their email or Facebook in order to communicate and interact with each other to stimulate the talents of schoolchildren especially the time allocated for teaching fine arts in schools is not sufficient for many technical operations to be completed.
- Activating the interaction between trainees during their teaching in schools and their supervisor at the faculty of education during the field training through the establishment of the social communication groups, the Email, Google drive, E- learning and live text system to share teaching plans and methods and to discuss the issues and problems where it was very necessary for trainees to quickly get speedy feedback to suit their accelerated school attendance with daily requirements for planning and teaching, increasing the positive achievement and transfer of experience from the university to cooperating schools in field training.
- The trainees of students apply many applications of social media learnt in graphic design course in teaching at schools, not only to the schoolchildren but also to their teachers in order to present, explain, exchange ideas, portraying the art sessions of some academic faculty in workshops to spread their

teaching strategy of arts. Also , the trainees use their pages on the social media to exhibit their art works as educational tools for the schoolchildren.

- The trainees have gotten an access to many international art experiments and experiences and participated with their schoolchildren's artistic work in the International Week of Artistic Education of UNESCO, in addition of making a hash tag (#MoreArtnotLess) which put the trainees of Sultan Qaboos University on an international map as art education lecturers in the world.
- The trainee designed a documentary file (portfolio) which is one of the key factors in evaluating the trainee during field training through many evaluation tools that intersect with the pillars of the conceptual framework of the faculty of education, including the use of modern technology design and application.

In addition, it was denoted that this skill was also reflected on other courses in the faculty of Education as TECH3007 (Introduction to Educ. Tech) course in fall semester 2016 which helps the students to develop their professional skills required for designing, developing, evaluating, and innovating curriculum, where it was recognized by the instructor that the art students especially who were taught graphic design course were active students among their partners in term of using Web 2.0 tools for designing and creating their portfolios. They were also active contributors to the Internet. They were confidence in using Web 2.0 tools that it was easy for them to create their work more interactive and innovative, because they have a good background in the design principles and the layout (Elhaj, 2016).

Conclusion

Responding to the digital age and online speech in teaching and learning. Graphic design course in the department of art education at sultan Qaboos university opens the wide opportunity for students to focus on the impact of social media on student academic teaching and learning in higher education to excite their critical thinking skills, collaboration, and knowledge construction especially in building their professional portfolio which can increase the productivity of their art works and help them learn how to work well in groups as an integral part of developing their career or building a business to survive in the business world.

A survey was conducted and the responses of more than 90 participants were analyzed. In addition, a qualitative analysis was monitored through the experience and opinion of some faculty members. Results denoted that most of the academic educators in Faculty of Education are using social media and be in agreement on the benefits of social media in education. The study discovered some obstacles from the students' parents especially for females that prevent the use of social media, however, through the academic awareness of how to direct social media to the service of education and learning with the ethics and rules of use, it became possible to persuade most of the parents and the students were able to use the social sites and open accounts with their brand names instead of applying Nicknames as usual especially in conservative Arab Muslim societies such as the Sultanate of Oman.

The study discovered the easy handling of the social and professional sites on cell phones which provide a great contribution in solving many problems that encountered students during their practical education or during their training through the teaching Practice course. Finally, this study might meet students' expectations by offering more dynamic and appropriate pedagogy by increasing student collaboration, inspiration and commitment with course material. Removing barriers to self-expression, in addition to contribution and instilling responsibility with self-confidence through free writing expression and portfolios. On the other hand, the trainees of students in the field of art education were able to transfer their technical and scientific expertise from the campus to the scope of application in the collaborating schools through practicing some applications of social media in education, providing students with the applied contemporary technological skills of this century in instructional processes which could assist their employability and raise the standard of living.

Recommendation

1. The educational institutions must train teachers and faculty to maximize the educational potential of these social media technologies in learning and teaching to identify and create new ways of connecting with students that may be more effective than traditional judicial norms.
2. The use of social media in various activities of the university beside teaching as in research, community service and marketing.
3. Sultan Qaboos University should design frameworks to reposition the applications of new media in policies and legislations of education that can benefit the entire education system inside and outside the University.
4. College of Education should develop a philosophy that values the role of social media an important tool of education that can enrich the abilities of students in learning and teaching.
5. Art educators of The Departments of Art Education should start the implementation of social media into their course teaching.
6. Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) should discuss the executions of social media in learning and teaching among SQU academic faculty, and to be included the Centre training courses.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to all of the academic members in the faculty of education at Sultan Qaboos University; Dr. Mohamed Al- Amri, Dr. Yaser Fayzi, Dr. Ahmed Hatem, and Dr. AbdulRahman Elhaj who provided us with some extensive professional guidance and feedbacks in the form of qualitative information about social media and Web 2.0

and their application in learning and teaching. The Thankful goes to the art education faculty members, students and graduates, their parents, and other educators who participate in the research surveys and observation. Great appreciation goes to the Chairperson of The Omani Visual Arts Research Group (OVARG) who encourages the group research between members of OVARG in which this research was a result of such activity.

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