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Pioneering Entrepreneurship Using Art & Design Pedagogy – A case study of Scientific College of Design, Oman

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the instructional methods in art and design education applied in the Scientific College of Design (SCD), Sultanate of Oman. We present a depiction of creative, studio-based instruction in the college with a specific focus on the role of knowledge, values, and ambiguity when the studios doors are opened for our students. This is a tumultuous approach that helps in teaching, learning, and assessment in art and design. This study explores on how art & design pedagogy can lead to entrepreneurship in educational context, society and also its role in enhancing economical and industrial activities allowing students to succeed in a complex and changing environment. The authors discuss approaches used in art and design pedagogy as well as how values and attitudes might help advance existing conceptions of innovation and entrepreneurship. This supports students in art & design specializations to prosper and compete in the complex modern world, to invest their innovative skills, uniqueness and knowledge to develop their future career and support nation through problem solving. Focus is given on different styles of teaching/coaching adopted in art & design pedagogy which leads to gain creative and innovative skills in students. Furthermore, provides an overview on impact of basic values, beliefs and attitudes in this process can lead the present concepts of creation/innovation can enhance economic perspectives through entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Art, design, pedagogy, creativity, entrepreneurship.

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1. Introduction

This piece of study is based on the observation in Scientific College of Design that established an approach of teaching art and design through practice and student-centered approach. For most of our students gaining knowledge and skills in the area of art and design was an ambition to be a professional artist/designer in the market. The college adapted 'practice based teaching' wherein the pedagogy was predominately lab and studio based. In art and design, the basic idea is to learning through practice (doing) which is usually by means of project brief. Art & Design pedagogy deals with exploring, understanding and open-mindedness of ambiguity which enables students to prosper in the

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complex world of competitiveness. It mainly emphasizes in describing and motivating to take risks, handle change of meanings, change of definition, ambiguity related to knowledge, skills and practice. These need specific learning environments to recognize and value the skills and are relied on different thinking process, problem-solving, creativity and innovation (Danvers, 2003). These fields are basically based on society and are led by practice, yet they are distinctive from the other fields of subjects where solutions are developed and concluded based on theoretical analysis (Gibb, 2005; see also HEA–NESTA, 2007). In education the three basic philosophies for problem-solving are:

1. To seek novel ideas and develop novel designs and artwork,
2. While trying novel, do in a way to face and survive failure and
3. Be clear with difference between success and failure, if needed (Design Commission, 2011).

Art & design is not about creativity and aesthetics. These field are challenging, complex and with advancement in technology drastic change is seen. Creativity requires rule breaking, criticality and most important is to take the challenge thinking beyond the traditional norms. This process can be instilled via education and practice to acquire a variety of creative skills by the students. Varied teaching methods are applied in these fields of education that support students to learn and change student's mind with new ideas, values, beliefs, and ways of performing (Danvers, 2003). However, this doesn't effect on heritage or culture change. Furthermore, in this discipline most vital is Art Criticism which acts as a facilitator between artwork and its audience. In pedagogy its role is to communicate the historical, hypothetical and contemporary context of an artwork and artist/designer to shape talent in the area of creativity and innovation.

2. Creativity, the ponder of Innovation

In Art & Design, creativity is an academic skill vital to augment as an artist/designer. However, to understand it only in scientific way wouldn't be helpful while arguing its effect on personal and societal enhancement. Main aim of creativity is to succeed in transferring imaginative insight and to instill new ideas; linking to innovation. Bowkett (2005) states 'creativity is an attitude as it's a systematic approach with a set of mental processes'. It integrates curiosity, playfulness, understanding, awareness and most important independence. If this vital talent is not realized and recognized people lay behind on monotonous thinking and are left as hidden skills among many people. This usually happens due to not realizing this talent and also uncertain attitude of society towards creativity.

The goal of art and design pedagogy is to help students learn a variety of creative talents. Art and design pedagogy has been defined as a pedagogy of ambiguity because of the variety of pedagogic methods used (Danvers, 2003). It is a field focusing on problem solving and invention rather than convergent thinking. It is a constructivist educational theory based on the premise that learning is ultimately about changing one's mind, and that an educational encounter leads to a change in one's ideas, beliefs, values, ways of being, knowing, and doing (Danvers, 2003). If we agree that innovation arises from a need, we must analyze what it takes to recognize a need, as well as how creativity may help us create something that does not currently exist by allowing for conceptual leaps, lateral thinking, and norm breaking. Critical thinking, rule breaking, and questioning conventional thinking are all required for creativity. The more a society expects its peoples to follow the rules and accept societal norms without inquiry, the more probable it is to prohibit or compartmentalize the nurturing of creativity that might lead to creative expression. This can be accomplished via a range of societal means, including education, hierarchy, and the law. The trained repression of creativity becomes more vital for individuals in these systems as the state becomes more dictatorial, in order to meet their more basic desire for safety (Maslow, 1943).

In human creativity is a characteristic, vital for development of concepts, communication, culture and civilization. Although these are considered as basics, but necessarily they are needed components to enhance as an artist/designer to survive in the competitive market. Oman society values artists'/designers' knowledge and skills by acknowledging their creation as a key component for growth. Furthermore, these skills play in fostering the innovation. Creativity and innovation are considered as human traits and are assumed that these are easily acquired in any society if only proper training/coaching is given. As pedagogy, usual practice is to handle and located by, a Studio Culture whereby 'learning in theoretical context' is considered as above 'learning in practical environment'. In

general Art & Design majors are considered more easily transferable than other subjects. But, without a holistic methodology of learning processes, the capability to teach/coach on the desired program learning outcomes of these majors will remain challenging. In general notion it is believed that 'creativity/innovation comes out of some dire need'. Furthermore, it is vital to interpret on 'what enables an artist to recognize the need' and 'in what way creativity can enable an artist/designer to visualize an idea that perhaps not existing'. This will be achievable if an artist is allowed to theoretical jump, imagination and to break norms.

In the current era, particularly knowledge-driven industries have acknowledged immediate need for the establishing and enabling the business environment away from the creative/design units. This gives an understanding on high commercial aims by international companies such as Google, Yahoo and eBay look like a curative's platform. Cox Report (HMT, 2005) states, 'creative business is creative all the way', as a pathway to innovative products/services, leading as a way to high productivity. These international companies are encouraging creative talent and attracting potential creative professionals by motivating their ability to innovate. This talent to innovate needs some basic encouragement in attitude of a student and by nature a person's attitude is closely inclined to values coming from the society. These values are implicit in all human and are considered as foundation of artists/designers.

3. Impact of society

In the search of demand for creative expression, passion in a student is vital to train and be a challenging entrepreneur. But, passion is purely dependent on motivation and motivation is interconnected with a person beliefs and values. In creative communities' motivations and values are not rooted in traditional business aims and financial gain. Art & Design education values critical, creative and lateral thinking skills which are central to innovation. As said 'without breaking/deviating a norm, growth is not possible', it gives a clear understanding that Art & Design pedagogy encourage/motivate norm-breaking attitude to develop innovative idea leading to entrepreneurial behavior. These strategies are already inbuilt in Art & Design education which trains a student with positive aspects such as risk-taking and rule-breaking leading to prominent innovation by going beyond the 'status quo' (HMT, 2005). With the economy slowdown in the Sultanate of Oman, the creativity skill in local community needs an immediate call to enable, adapt, introduce the spark, and survive supporting creativity and imagination skills in graduates. Local government ought to recognize such talent, beliefs and engage young talent in their economic effort, else graduates from these fields are withheld if the motivation from the government is lacking.

3.1 Discussion on entrepreneurship to art & design schools

Despite the fact that entrepreneurship is frequently taught in a business school setting, data suggests that a disproportionate number of entrepreneurs have benefited from a liberal arts background and have taken unconventional pathways. When the venture capital firm Point Judith Capital examined data on the number of entrepreneurs who graduated from Bowdoin College, they discovered that "liberal arts college graduates are uniquely oriented substantially above index in terms of entrepreneurial value creation and innovation as compared to other college graduates" (Bloom et al., 1956: 22). At the college, we provide our students with the abilities and competencies to understand, remember, analyze, evaluate, apply, and create, which were first described in Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). While many attempts have been made to express learning, Bloom's taxonomy approach retains a foothold in higher education teaching. In this process, critique is frequently used to develop academic knowledge. Critique, in and of itself, can be hurtful; by dismantling arguments and looking for gaps and holes in evidence, it frequently becomes de-constructive. While they are essential components of "good" academic thinking, they may limit our students' ability to see beyond their own preconceived views of limitations and bounds. This is how students are taught to think, focusing on what they already know and what they can do. This manner of thinking and critiquing has the effect of suffocating original thought, which is something entrepreneurs thrive at. Focusing on professional entrepreneur tactics may enable students to experiment with different strategies and uncover their own potential in new and distinct ways. One of the key methods is effectuation. (Sarasvathy, 2001).

In general research proves there are discussions and a need to bring 'business point of thinking' to 'Art & Design institutions'. However, for the benefit of society it would be better to 'Artistic thinking' to business schools. It is observed entrepreneurship is often a required course in business management but, a high number of entrepreneurs have gained the benefit from liberal arts education. A famous firm Point Judith Capital conducted a research and emphasized graduates from Bowdoin Liberal Arts College proved to be successful entrepreneurs with their distinctive skills in creation and innovation as compared to graduates from business management. This proves that there is a correlation between Art & Design graduates to become a successful entrepreneur (Point Judith Capital, 2010).

In addition, majority of graduates believe that to be a successful entrepreneur one should recognize values admired in the society along with their economic value (HEA-NESTA, 2007). In the 21st century business world Design thinking (DT is an approach for problem solving, used to tackle complex issues by understanding customer needs and creating new ideas through brainstorming in a practical environment) and Creative Intelligence are extensively recognized skills which give benefit in many disciplines. Furthermore, for future business success and national prosperity is to be skillfully managed, implemented and properly employed with some fundamental education in creativity and design to relate this knowledge and skills to the business environment and enhancement of economic growth (HMT, 2005).

3.2 The value of art & design entrepreneurship

When it comes to art and design entrepreneurship education, there are no guarantees. It does, however, increase the possibilities of success for artists and designers. Many of our students come to college in order to boost their skills and work prospects. On the other side, the current standard is to focus in all art and design technique and less practical business ability, which contributes to the stereotype of the starving artist. To help artists and designers overcome this preconception, it is critical that they be provided with the 'missing puzzle piece' of art and design education and value of entrepreneurship in their career. In these fields, entrepreneurship is not a new concept. It's realistic to assume that artists and designers have always run their own businesses. Entrepreneurship is a visionary and creative endeavor by one person or a group of individuals is creating opportunities for himself and others, such as jobs, economic stimulation, products, culture, and art. Entrepreneurs, like artists and designers, are motivated by the desire to create value for others.

The Sultanate of Oman is a small but attractive country with a long history of international trade to its geographic location straddling major East-West trade routes. With a stable political environment, a well-established legal system, and worldwide banking norms and regulations that stimulate investment and enterprise, Oman is one of the most progressive countries in the Middle East (Khan and Al-Moharby, 2007). Small and medium firms are widely acknowledged as being the driving force of innovation in an economy, in addition to alleviating poverty and providing jobs (Potter and Proto, 2007). Smaller, more entrepreneurially oriented businesses have been found to have a favorable impact on both innovation and growth in studies (Harms et al, 2010). Indeed, entrepreneurship has been at the forefront of inventing new products and services, serving as a "critical tool for economic progress and prosperity," according to the report (Ahmad, 2010). The contributions made by our alumni as entrepreneurial individuals in terms of creation, innovation, provision of employment, diversifying the situation are significant. Having recognized the vital role, they play, it is clear these creative enterprises will flourish and self-employment will motivate many other upcoming designers to opt business as their profession.

However, at present there is much to be done to inculcate such an idea in the youth. To achieve this goal, college support for incubation to be done in order to accomplish this. On the other hand, finance is a one of the important resource. So availability of finance with low interest rate, investment by rich investors, funding will be a positive step and a right direction to encourage entrepreneurship. As a fact that lack of proper training might hinder the entire situation, the nation incorporated 'Entrepreneurship' within the curriculum of all disciplines. This gives our students basic business skills to nurture themselves as potential entrepreneurs. Images below are some of the examples of our graduates who initiated their own small business and started to develop partnerships with industry.



Figure 1. Omani traditional outfit designed by Ms. Amal Al-Riyami (SCD Alumni & owner of Dar Zafaf LLC, Oman).



Figure 2. Arab outfit designed by Ms. Ahlam Al Ramashani (SCD Alumni & owner of Dreams, Oman)



Figure 3. Graphic designs by Mr. Sarmad Alzoubidy (SCD Alumni & owner of Montadhir United LLC, Oman)



Figure 4. Designed by Interior Design alumni Ms. Fatema Ak Sedairi & Ms. Bashayer Al Baluchi (Owner of Design Skills LLC, Oman)

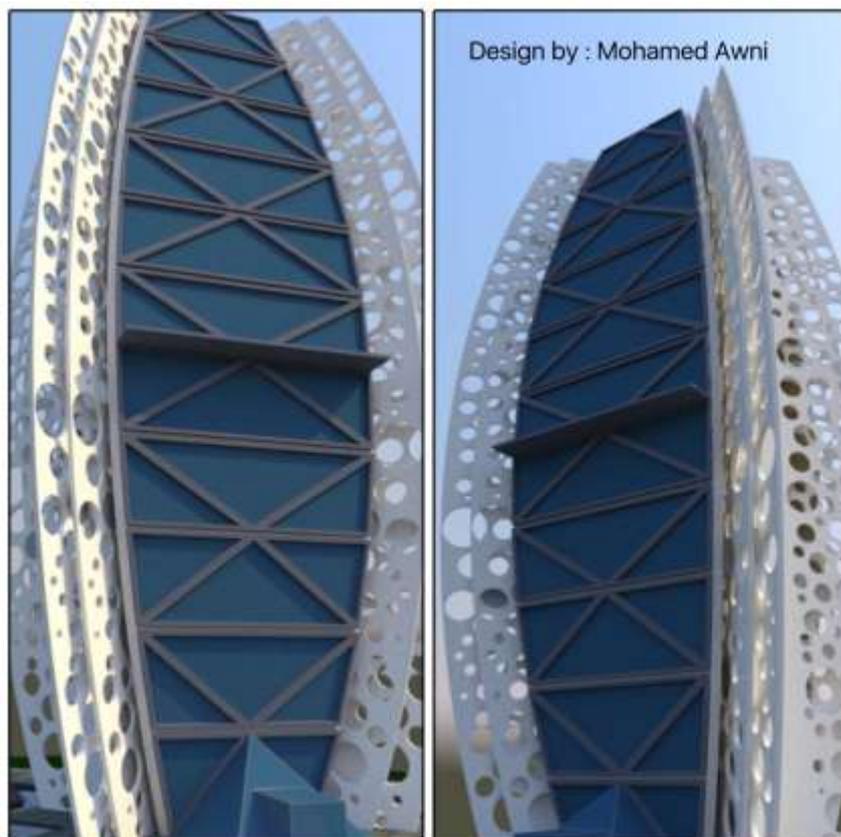


Figure 5. Designed by Interior Design alumni Mr. Mohamed Awni (Owner of Civil Technology Engineering Consultancy)

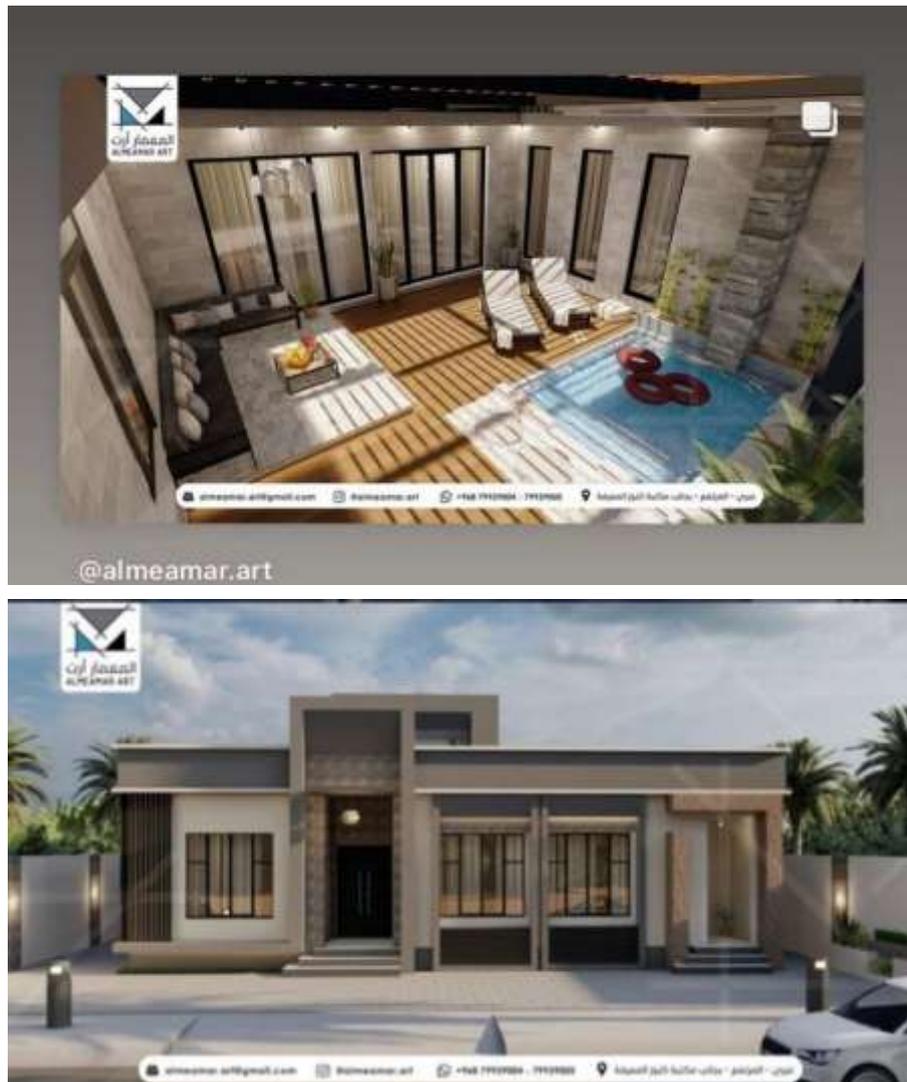


Figure 6. Designed by Bachelor of Architecture alumni Malik Hammad Al Kalbani and Bachelor of Science in Interior Design alumni Al Moatasem Said Al Sakiti (Owners of AlMeamar Art Studio)

4. Conclusion

This paper studies about the idea that the art and design education, in particular, have uniquely effective pedagogical methodologies for teaching innovative action and entrepreneurship, and that it would be beneficial to apply these pedagogies to a much broader educational strategy. In art & design education unique pedagogical approaches are used to teach creativity and innovation to students leading to risk taking attitude with high entrepreneur skills. However, this needs a formal training/coaching so as to get knowledge and understand this application with a realization that human values and attitudes are intrinsic yet needs to be transformed so as to add greater value to the society. This stream of education carries a greater ability to contribute and also in the process of transformation of future entrepreneurship. To fully exploit the creative potential in these creative communities, government must demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of these values, as well as establish an economic environment that provides motivational goals beyond merely economic growth. These communities value financial stability over endless development. Sustainable economic growth is recognized as an existential objective for post-industrial society, but in order to achieve it, a concentration on what this economic growth means is critical.

Design Thinking is a creative process. Entrepreneurship can benefit from Design Thinking when going through a creative problem-solving process or exploring new opportunities and challenges. If students have a greater understanding of the dynamics and power of Design Thinking, they will benefit from the incorporation of entrepreneurial skills in the curricula. If art and design education can foster a

feeling of human participation based on ethics and concern for its students, then this sense must be extended to the local community when promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. As the Oman economy grows more challenging, the creative and digital domains will once again be called upon to help survive and adapt, as well as infuse the vibrancy and adaptability that communities deserve. This is highly supported by ensuring that art & design pedagogies enhance individuals and encourage the students to get trained by means of design thinking and creative intelligence strategies. In order to get the full benefit of the creative graduates in the society, local government should understand and encourage this talent by providing younger generation with a learning platform which delivers art & design education with motivational goals to balance unstable economic growth.

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