The Contemporary Challenges Facing College of Education Students as Future Educational leaders at Sultan Qaboos University from their View Points
Survey Study

By

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The contemporary challenges of young people are matter of high priority, and one of the crucial issues since they are considered as a major part of human capital in Arab States and over the entire world. This study was conducted to investigate the contemporary challenges facing young people as perceived by faculty of education students at Sultan Qaboos University in Sultanate of Oman. Also, the study aimed to determine the extent to which students view points facing contemporary challenges according to their gender, study area, residency, academic year, and grade point average. The main instrument was a questionnaire consisted of (55) items represented the contemporary challenges to gather data from (403) randomly selected participants. The reliability co-efficient of the questionnaire (Chronbach- Alpha) was (0.90) for total items. Means, standard deviation, t-test and analysis of One Way ANOVA were used to analyze data.

The result of the study reveled significant differences at (α=0.05) level due to gender variable in cultural, humanity and information and media domains for the benefit of females. The findings also show statistically significant differences in students' responses in the culture and humanity domain according to the study year variable in favor of forth-year-student compare with the first-year-student. Concerning the contemporary challenges facing young people, the sequence ranks of students' responses begin with the highest mean (4.12) for the information and media, fellow by consuming(3.95), economical (3.89), humanity(3.75) and culture (3.54) respectively. Depending on the results of the study, several recommendations were concluded and suggested.

1. Introduction

Studying youths' challenges is one of the crucial issues since youths are considered as a major part of human capital in Arab States and all over the world. Age youths wise are no longer children but not yet adults and with this transition stage, they are facing different problems such as pressure of hopes, needs, images, effects of globalization phenomena, wars, violence, unemployment, poverty, early marriage, sicknesses, lack of family guidance and drug abuse. All these encountering has had a serious impact on youth social life at the family, community, national level and the international level over the last two to three decades (Furlong, & Cartmel, 1997).

Since education and culture do not stand apart, they integrate with each other in a mutual relationship and influenced by social, political, economical changes. Today the majority of scholars, social theorists or informed observers, to a greater or lesser degree, have been more accepting of globalization as an expansive social and cultural historical reality which has an impact on youth especially in the labor market, by raising the percentage of unemployment among them (Cairns, Lawton & Gardner, 2001). Beside that, more than 40 per cent of the world's total unemployed are youths and the majority of new jobs are low-paid and insecure with no protection, benefits or even prospect for the future (Irwin, 1993; Annan, 2001). Then a strong connection has to be made between youths' perception toward leadership and education which need to be developed in order to prepare them to labor market easily and smoothly(Edelman, et al, 2004).

Youth and cultural issues are considered one of the challenges facing university students as culture respects a set of values. In the meantime values are also culture-bound too, and since the economic development has obviously brought about large changes in youths' lifestyles and their standards of morality, in which everything appears to depend on money and self-fulfillment depends on having the opportunities made available by money (Brown, Larson, & Saraswathi, 2002).

Arab governments show great intentions toward youth population through youth affair programs, sport programs, and skill learning centers. But such programs may also be geared toward securing youths' political allegiance, even if indirectly. Critics of governmental youth programs and services in the Arab World usually do not question intentions, but they do raise issues of utility, quality, and implementation. In the States of the Arab Gulf authorities have established dozens of expensive cultural and sports clubs for youth. Yet these clubs have failed to attract substantial numbers; young people appear to prefer picnicking in the desert or strolling through markets (Brown, Larson, & Saraswathi, 2002). So far, building an effective leadership programs for youths are extremely needed in order to develop youths' positive attitudes toward serving their community, as well these program should be build on solid youth development principles, and these principles should depend on a holistic approach that encompasses social, psychological and career related needs(Kerka, 2003).

Citizenship is currently riding high on the political and social policy agenda. However, lack of opportunities for youth to communicate their political and cultural expressions in a wide range of groups and engage in constructive dialogue is considered another challenge facing young people who are searching for a free and democratic society (Torney-Purta, 2000).

2. Aims of the Study:

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the extent to which Faculty of Education Student (FES) view points facing contemporary cultural challenges of youth in Omani society as future educational leaders.

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e the following:

l challenges facing youth in viewpoints of FES?

ace cultural challenges in the society?

2.3.   Is there statistical significant differences in regard to FES responses according to gender, study area, residency, academic year, and grade point average?

3. Importance of the Study:

The importance of the current study stems from the following points:

3.1.   Identifying the major contemporary cultural challenges facing youth from FES perceptions as future educational leaders.

3.2.   Exploring the extent of different issues on youth education and social and personal life.

3.3.   Raising awareness among teachers, scholars, and theorists who are interested in studying youth affairs, issues and problems.

3.4.   Helping social investors who are really concerned about youth affairs to establish welfare and recreation center and areas for them in order to empower their participation in the community.

4. Methodology and Research Design:

The main instrument was a questionnaire developed by the researcher by generating a list of current and future challenges derived from literature and a pilot survey given to FES, beside the researcher's experience in teaching Foundation of Education course in the college as a requirement (Bash, & Green 1995; Furlong, & Cartmel 1997). The face validity of the list was calculated by presenting it to a group of referees in the area of educational foundation, students' guidance and social sciences.

The total list consists of (55) items representing the contemporary challenges facing Arabs youths as future educational leaders, with Likert type questionnaire, marks run from 1(low) to 5 (High). Then the reliability coefficient was measured by Cronbach Alpha and it was found to be (0.90) for the total items in the instrument. The questionnaire was then distributed to random sample of FES to reflect their perceptions.

The list was converted to a questionnaire, composed of two sections. The first section, for general information was about the respondent and the second section was including list of (55) items. The preliminary list and the questionnaire were used to collect information on the first research questions. An analytic descriptive approach was used to answer the second and the third questions, and the following statistical treatments were used in data analysis: means, standard deviations, t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA).
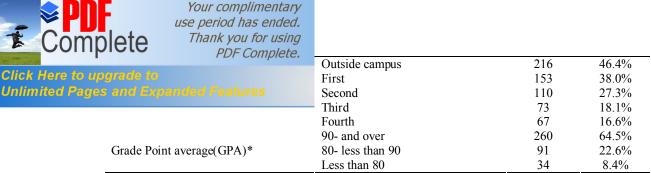
5. Participants:

The population of this study included 2510 members representing all departments in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). Participants were 403 FES who responded to the questionnaire. This sample represented 16.06% of the total population. The participants were described in terms of study variables, as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1

Frequencies and percentages for study independent variables

Independent Variables	Type	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Male	140	34.7%
	Female	263	65.3%
Study Area	Social science major	108	26.8%
	Math & science major	75	18.6%
	Art and physical education major	64	15.9%
	Arabic and English major	156	38.7%
Residency	On campus	187	53.6%

	Outside campus	216	46.4%
	First	153	38.0%
	Second	110	27.3%
	Third	73	18.1%
	Fourth	67	16.6%
	90- and over	260	64.5%
Grade Point average(GPA)*	80- less than 90	91	22.6%
	Less than 80	34	8.4%

* 18 missing value (with no responses)

6. Results and Discussions:

Concerning the first question, that measured the extend, to which FES perceived the contemporary challenges, the means and standard deviations were used to obtain the results. The result will be discussed for all domains of study which are shown in table 2.

Table 2

Means and standard deviation of the participants' responses to each domain of the study

Rank	Challenges Domains	Mean	Standard Deviations (S.D.)
1	Information and Media	4.12	0.51
2	Consuming	3.95	0.57
3	Economical	3.89	0.49
4	Humanity	3.72	0.46
5	Sociocultural	3.54	0.49
	Total	3.83	0.37

6.1. The First domain deals with information and media challenges. As shown in Table -3, the means of statements are between 4.48-3.49. Statements number 37, 36, and 42 show the highest means (4.48, 4.35, and 4.26 respectively). These talk about domination of fun and sexual excitement over all TV youth program. Most satellite programs are negatively directed to youth emotions and instincts, missing out family care and responsibilities in addition to the unimaginable future in information technology and innovations wrought by, for example, genetics and pharmacology, new technologies which have unknown implications for the future of youth's education, social lives, leisure time and core attitudes (Larson, 2002). In addition there are risks and the dangers youths face on the internet, particularly related to unwanted sexual solicitations and pornography (Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolak, 2000).

Statements number 45 and 41 take the lowest means (3.71 and 3.49 respectively) clarifying lack of satellite youth programs which discuss and concern their issues and problems. Mean while, university students get most their information from reading their required university text books. The result agrees with Brown (2002) who stated that youths learn having grown up in a digital environments and they are considered to be lifelong learners, by sharing knowledge and as cyber navigators.

Table 3

Means and standard divination of the informational and media challenges domain

Rank	No.	Items	Mean	S.D.
1.	37.	Domination of fun and sexual excitement over all TV programs	4.48	0.79
2.	36.	Most satellite programs are negatively directed to youth emotions and instincts.	4.35	0.95
3.	42.	Family irresponsibility about what is watched on satellite by their children.	4.31	0.84
4.	39.	Information media marketing of material goods and	4.26	0.78

Rank	No.	Items	Mean	S.D.
		...erest in reforming Islamic traditional ...dia	4.26	0.90
6.	38.	Media press is mainly directed by huge companies in order to serve their greedy needs.	4.20	0.84
7.	40.	Most information media is interested in western culture and civilization.	4.20	0.91
8.	44.	Most satellite programs lack good serious educational programs which meet youth needs	4.12	0.96
9.	46.	most satellite programs lack of presenting of Islamic education in modern language that is easily understood by youth.	3.97	1.03
10.	45.	Lack of satellite youth programs which discuss and are concerned with their issues and problems	3.71	1.09
11.	41.	University students get most their information from reading their required university text books.	3.49	1.32
		Total mean	4.12	0.51

6.2 The Second domain deals with consuming challenges. As shown in Table -4, that the means of statements are between 4.33-3.26. Statements number 50, 49, and 54 show the following highest means (4.33, 4.24 and 4.22 respectively). these demonstrate that youth's interest in material thinking takes them away from urgent societal issues; most youths today are considered consumers rather than producers, and youths are prefer odd fashions, that are unacceptable by their social values and customs. This result shows that young people face difficulties related to irresponsible behaviors toward themselves and their society. In the meantime they should be able to take positive attitudes in taking any action or doing deeds that help to awaken their latent social conscience (Hefner, 1998).

Statements 55 and 51 show the lowest means (3.71 and 3.49 respectively) clarifying that youth thinking is mixed up by good and bad values, and that youths today are unable to work and compete in the labor market.

Table 4

Means and standard deviation of the consuming challenges domain

Rank	No.	Items	Mean	S.D.
1.	50.	Youth's interest in material thinking takes them away from societal urgent issues.	4.33	0.79
2.	49.	Most youths today are considered consumers rather than producers.	4.29	0.84
3.	54.	Youths prefer odd fashion that is unacceptable by their social values and customs.	4.22	0.85
4.	48.	Popularity of undependable and irresponsible behaviors among youths.	4.10	0.82
5.	47.	Youths are proud of what they consume of other products.	4.08	0.96
6.	53.	Youths nowadays live in their day dreams away from their life needs and reality.	3.91	1.00
7.	52.	Youth judgments depend on the outlook rather than logical and rational thinking.	3.85	0.89
8.	55.	Youths thinking is mixed up by good and bad values.	3.55	1.15
9.	51.	Youths today are unable to work and compete in the labor	3.26	1.22

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| | | | | mean | 3.95 | 0.57 |

6.3. The Third Domain deals with economic challenges. As shown in Table 5, the means of statements are between 4.29 - 3.54. Statement number 30, 34, and 26 show the following means: (4.29, 4.22, and 4.17 respectively). These statements deal with the western world dominate most international production investments, the increasing amount of unemployment among university graduates, and loosing the balance in qualifications between graduates and market demands. Our findings totally correspond with the findings of Larson (2002), who stated that the increasing complexity in adult occupations coupled with a quickening of human lives, a long side higher-speed technology demand a great need for educating about choice.

Statements number 25 and 28 take the lowest means (3.56 and 3.54 respectively) (Table 5). These represent the increasing migration among youths, due to searching for jobs and information. Society is not equally serving the interest of all national states. Larson (2002) suggested to move positively toward the social sector attitudes for involving young people in the work place and giving more attention to their rights and developmental needs.

Table 5

Means and standard deviation of the economic domain

Rank	No.	Items	Mean	S.D.
1.	30.	Western world dominates most international production investments.	4.29	0.89
2.	34.	Increasing the number of unemployment among university graduates.	4.22	0.88
3.	26.	Loosing balance in qualification between graduates and market demands.	4.17	0.87
4.	31.	The uniaxial control (western axis) on global economy.	4.06	0.93
5.	32.	Domination of international, private institutions and companies over state control.	3.90	0.98
6.	33.	Domination of multinationality of production companies and institution.	3.84	0.91
7.	29.	Increasing the gap between western and developing countries due to digital dividing line.	3.82	0.96
8.	27.	Increasing the economic depression over the world economy.	3.71	1.00
9.	35.	Popularity of speculation in labor market.	3.68	0.88
10.	25.	migration of youth searching for jobs.	3.56	1.06
11.	28.	Information society is not equally serving the interest of all national states	3.54	1.05
		Total mean	3.89	0.49

6.4. The Forth Domain deals with humanity challenges. As shown in Table 6, the means of the statements are between 4.34 - 3.72. Statements number 32, 24, 19 and 22 shows the following highest means: 4.35, 4.25, 4.09 and 4.05 respectively. These statements deal with weaknesses of self-control and faith in God among youth. Also youths' will is weak in facing self-indulgence beside the dominance of material values over non- material (spiritual) values, and the domination of irrational thinking, which is distant from piety, faith, and truth among youths. This study provides important evidence that youths nowadays are unstable in their beliefs, which have a bad impact on their psychological well-being (Taylor, 2002).

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16 take the lowest means (3.26 and 3.24 respectively) ...ing is extremely free from social pressures and bonds, ...rsical and virtual worlds. This result reflects how youth feels about their embraced social values, which still affect their thinking and personal identity (Johansson & Miegel, 1992).

Table 6

Means and standard deviation of the human challenges domain

Rank	No.	Items	Mean	S.D.
.1	23.	Weakness of self-control and faith in God.	4.35	0.87
.2	24.	Youths' will is weak in facing self-indulgence.	4.25	0.92
.3	19.	The superiority of material values over none material (spiritual) values.	4.09	0.92
.4	22.	Domination of irrational thinking, which is distant from piety, faith, and truth.	4.05	1.07
.5	20.	Domination of human- tool communication instead of human-human relationship	3.82	1.10
.6	21.	Challenge between human being and robot rather than among human being themselves.	3.74	1.00
.7	18.	The popularity of personal obligation rather than civil law.	3.41	1.01
.8	17.	Lack of ability in dealing with human duality of time and place	3.40	0.95
.9	14.	Dealing with virtual world deepens youth's thinking.	3.30	0.76
.10	15.	Escaping from social values, bonds and restrictions.	3.26	1.10
.11	16.	Loosing identity between reality and virtual world.	3.24	0.84
		Total mean	3.72	0.46

6.5. The Fifth Domain deals with socio-cultural challenges. As shown in Table 7, that the mean statements are between 4.48-2.90. Statements 12, 13, and 11 show the following highest means (4.48, 3.94, and 3.90, respectively). These discuss absence of youth awareness regarding the useful investment of their free time. Youths are missing their cultural symbols and absolute values, and there is absence of public sharing of decision making. Statements number 5 and 8 take the lowest means (2.94, and 2.90 respectively), which clarifies the following: refusing multiculturalism concept among youths and loss of culture identity since we live in a bondless, global world.

This result can be attributed to the fact of weaknesses of among Youths University in mastering the minimum level of life skills such as the free time investments, awareness of their value patterns, and utilizing strategies that enable them to manage life successfully (Phelan , Davidson, &Cao Yu, 1998). In the meanwhile they are facing difficulties in the way of understanding their value system according to their needs. This will make it difficult for them especially with the absence of accountability in dealing with various situations and life aspects.

Table 7

Means and standard deviation of the socio-cultural challenges domain

Rank	No.	Items	Mean	S.D.
1.	12.	Absence of youth's awareness in the useful investment of their free time.	4.48	0.78
2.	13.	Missing our cultural symbols and absolute values.	3.94	1.08
3.	11.	Absence of public sharing of decision making.	3.90	0.94
4.	4.	Lack of Islamic values in our public education.	3.76	1.22
5.	2.	Arab culture is starting to loose its special unique features	3.75	1.14

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		...mporary issues with inclusion of concepts,	3.67	1.08
		...ities have been lost due to modernization.	3.65	0.94
8.	7.	People's rights and freedom are lost.	3.54	1.19
9.	10.	Creating discrimination between groups of different race.	3.25	1.17
10.	1.	Refusing to communicate with others from different cultures in order to preserve our cultural values and norms.	3.12	1.17
11.	9.	Difficulty of safe communication with the global information nets.	3.11	1.21
12.	5.	Refusing multiculturalism.	2.94	0.98
13.	8.	Lost of cultural identity since we live in a bondless, global world.	2.90	1.06
		Total mean	3.54	0.49

To investigate the statistical differences among FES perceptions toward contemporary challenges due to gender, and residency, the researcher conducted means of all variables and t-test. The results of t-test analysis show in Table -8.

Table 8

The result of t-test of gender and residency

Domain	Type	Mean	S.D.	Equality of Mean t- value	Significance (2-tailed)
Sociocultural	Male	3.44	0.48	2.980*	0.003
	Female	3.59	0.49		
Humanity	Male	3.65	0.47	2.102*	0.036
	Female	3.75	0.45		
Economic	Male	3.85	0.48	1.245	0.214
	Female	3.91	0.50		
Informational and Media	Male	4.03	0.51	2.587*	0.010
	Female	4.17	0.51		
Consumption	Male	3.89	0.50	1.602	0.110
	Female	3.99	0.60		
total	Male	3.76	0.36	2.917*	0.004
	Female	3.87	0.37		
Residency Variables					
Socio-cultural	Out of campus	3.50	0.50	1.840	0.067
	On campus	3.59	0.48	1.846	0.066
Humanity	Out of campus	3.68	0.48	1.791	0.074
	On campus	3.76	0.44	1.802	0.072
Economic	Out of campus	3.89	0.51	0.109	0.913
	On campus	3.89	0.47	0.110	0.913
Informational and Media	Out of campus	4.09	0.50	1.270	0.205
	On campus	4.16	0.52	1.266	0.206
Consumption	Out of campus	3.96	0.53	0.057	0.955
	On campus	3.95	0.61	0.056	0.955
total	Out of campus	3.81	0.37	1.389	0.166
	On campus	3.86	0.37	1.388	0.166

* Significant difference at ($\rho \leq 0.05$)

Table- 8 shows there were significance differences ($\rho \leq 0.05$) due to the gender variable in sociocultural, humanity, informational and media domains, and to the total benefit of females. The mean for females was higher than for males (Table 8). There was no significant difference due to residency variable, and this result reveals that female students perceptions related to those contemporary challenges is higher than males especially in cultural, humanity, and informational and media domains. Irwin, (1993) stated that girls are

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...es dealing with the digital world and social cultural ...nally seen to be structured around different principles.

The ANOVA result for study variables: academic years, GPA, and study area

Variables	Domain	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F value	Significance
Academic Year	Sociocultural	2.204	0.734	3.071*	0.028
	Humanity	1.917	0.639	3.052*	0.028
	Economic	0.412	0.137	0.569	0.635
	Informational and Media	0.905	0.301	1.162	0.324
	Consumption	0.933	0.311	0.965	0.409
Grad Point Average GPA	Sociocultural	1.547	0.773	3.248*	0.040
	Humanity	1.142	0.571	2.759	0.065
	Economic	0.557	0.278	1.141	0.320
	Informational and Media	1.005	0.502	1.918	0.148
	Consumption	0.450	0.225	0.695	0.499
Study Area	Sociocultural	2.662	0.887	3.728*	0.011
	Humanity	2.255	0.751	3.604*	0.014
	Economic	4.204	1.401	6.050*	0.000
	Informational and Media	3.138	1.046	4.118*	0.007
	Consumption	4.558	1.519	4.856*	0.002

* Significant level at ($\rho \leq 0.05$)

From the findings shown in Table-9, it can be concluded, that there are significant differences in student perceptions toward facing contemporary challenges for items of cultural, domain related to academic year in favor of forth year students (3.70) compared with first years (3.49), besides to the cultural domain in favor of the forth year student level (3.82) compared with the first year (3.65), as well as in the humanity domain. This result reflects that fourth- year-students give higher levels of considerations to the these challenges related to socio-cultural issues and humanity, which may be due to a long period of time spent at the university, by attending lectures and seminars at college or university levels, and this might affect their perception about what urgent issues and challenges face them in the society.

Looking at the GPA variable, the ANOVA findings revealed that there is a significant difference in students perceptions related to the humanity domain in favor of (90- and over) (3.73) and (80- less than 90) (3.76) compared with (less than 80) (3.55), while at the study area variable, it is concluded that there are significant differences in student perceptions related to cultural domain in favor of social science students (3.64) compared with art and physical education students (3.41). In the humanity domain, the result shows in favor of social science (3.79) compared with math and pure science (3.58). This result agrees with Bash & Green(1995) stating that students who study only theoretical abstract subjects (math and physical science) find it difficult to understand the moral spring of human action, and lack insight into human feelings and actions. .

In the economic domain, the result shows, that there is a significant difference between student perceptions related to study areas in favor of social science students (4.00) compared with art and physical education students (3.70). Finally, according to both the informational and media and consumption domains, the result shows there are significant differences between students' perceptions in the study area variable in favor of social science students (4.19) compare with art and physical education students (3.92) in informational and media domain, while in the consumption domain the result shows that there is a significant difference between student perceptions in favor of

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ith both art and physical education (3.80) and math and ...lt agrees with an early study of (Woodbrige, 1989) that ...g youths in a technocratic society to attain moral independence and acquire moral preparedness to withstand the various ideological and moral onslaughts and to strongly survive in the complex and fragile global economy which carries with it instability, violence and domestic conflict.

7. Conclusion and recommendations:

This paper tried to analyze the major challenges facing youth at the university level today, whom will be a future leaders in the near future. The challenges concerned may be attributed to the fact that youths are suffering from diverse conflicts facing their social life and community besides the complexity of globalization for human lifestyle. Finally the study makes several recommendations as follows:

7.1 . Encourage youth to study English as second language to help them in navigating in hyper-reality, to upgrade their awareness of issues around the world.

7.2 . Establish a development program to meet youth's needs in technology and multimedia use in order to cooperate effectively with the informational and knowledge world.

7.3 . Educate young people by directing them to acquire knowledge through readings such as great recommended elective books which establish a core of knowledge meets their needs.

7.4 . Conduct public sessions, seminars, and discourses titled the mentioned Challenges facing young people in order to awaken them to the realities of the world they live in, and the trend which they have to depend on to lead it.

7.5 . Establish clubs to meet youth needs, interests and dispositions and through conducting various activities, reflect their ideas, opinions, and thoughts related to their society norms and culture.

7.6 . Bridge the gab between college graduate and market demands by improving graduate competency in different disciplines such as leadership intellectual skills.

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