# Attitudes and skills of Omani teachers of social studies to the use of computers in instruction

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining the knowledge, skills and attitudes of Omani social studies teachers to the use of computers in instruction. The sample consisted of 622 teachers from four regions and four stages. Data was collected by using a questionnaire. The results showed that social studies teachers lack computer skills but had positive attitudes towards their application in teaching. The study also showed that these teachers depended on themselves in developing their computer skills. Findings revealed differences in teachers' computer skills and attitudes towards using computers according to the region and stage they teach; but there were no differences according to gender. Results also showed that half of social studies teachers do not know any websites of Social Studies Centers or journals in either English or Arabic. It was also found that these teachers do not benefit from information provided by internet search engines because of their lack of skills in using search engines. The study recommended developing teachers' computer skills and knowledge about journals and centers' websites, to benefit from them in teaching.

*Keyword: Computer, Skills, Attitudes, Social Studies Teachers*

## INTRODUCTION

There has been a global proliferation in the use of computers in schools as an instructional, communicative and informational resources tool. Pelgrum (2001) states that using computers could revolutionize an outmoded educational system, better prepare student for the information age and accelerate national development efforts. Cuban (2001) considers computers a vehicle for reforming educational practices, to be used as an instructional tool by teachers at all levels of education. McAllister and Mitchell (2002) add that using computers will make the learning process exciting for both students and teachers. Jonassen (1996) explains this global proliferation by saying that when students use databases, spreadsheets, multimedia, e-mail, and network search engines to complete their projects, such processes provide greater potential to promote cognitive development. Also according to (Johnston,1987; Budin, 1991; Rose and Ferlund,1997; Shavinina, 1997; Thomas,2003) computers raise the potential to equip students with higher-order skills such as inquiry, reasoning, problem solving and decision making abilities, critical and creative thinking and learning how to learn. Research also showed that using computers has a positive effect on students achievement compared to traditional methods (Sterling and Gray, 1991; Lewis 1995; Christensen & Knezek, 2001)

However, other educators argue that computers are a vehicle for reforming education because they have little value without teachers' involvement (McKinney, 1998; Galligan, 1995). Others question the value of computers in instruction because of their minimal positive effect on teaching and learning (Healy, 1998; Stoll, 1999). Results of some studies go further than that showing that around 49% of teachers believe that using computers is a waste of time and that they negatively affect interaction (Vermette *et al*, 1986). McAllister and Mitchell (2002) stressed the negative effect of computers on the social communicative aspect of the teaching- learning process,

suggesting that students use computer, they are interacting with a machine rather than with human beings.

Despite these arguments, the use of computers in schools is continuously increasing (Russell *et al*, 2003). According to Heywood and Norman (1988) this is due to the fact that students demand the chance to work with computers because they like them better than other teaching methods. Moreover, according to TAAP (1996) the aim of training students in the use of computers is to prepare them to become technologically literate citizens.

The global proliferation of computers requires qualified teachers (Bird and Rosaen, 2005). This raises the issue of computer technology standards. These standards were set to guide preparing teachers to understand technology and use it to support students' learning in classroom instruction. A US Department of Education (2000) survey on teacher skills in using computers found that one third of teachers reported feeling either well prepared or very well prepared to use computers and the internet for classroom instruction. Also Handler (1993) found similar results where 25% of teachers graduating from some US institutions considered themselves "adequately to thoroughly" prepared for using computer in instruction. Moreover, Oliver (1993) found that Western Australian beginning teachers rated their computer use in teaching lower than that of more experienced colleagues. The low level of computer skills was reflected in teachers' application of computers in schools as indicated by Robert's and Albion's (1997) findings, where only around 40% of Australian teachers in secondary schools use computers. These results strengthen the need to spend more effort to develop teachers computer skills to ensure that they are qualified to use computers in their classroom.

Developing teachers' computer skills requires changing teachers' attitudes towards computers, because their application of computer in their classroom is affected by their attitudes. Albion (2001) stressed that teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards computer are among the significant issues to be addressed. Watson (1998) asserts that developing teachers' positive attitudes towards computers as an information communication technology is very important to ensure not only computer integration, but also to avoid teacher resistance to use computer in their classrooms. This point of view was supported by the results of some researchers who found that teachers' attitudes towards computers strongly affect their use of computers and their belief in the benefit of their use (Keiffer et al, 1998; Bullock, 2004). Also some researchers found that teachers' planning and classroom practice are strongly related to these beliefs and attitudes which influence their behavior in the classroom (Marankiewicz, 1994). Oliver and Shapiro (1993) indicate that there was evidence to support the importance of this construct as a critical predictor of future trends in computer attitudes and usage patterns. Recent studies have shown that the successful application of computer is strongly influenced by teachers' attitudes towards their use , and their belief in the value of their use. Al-Oteawi (2002) concludes that teachers who showed the most negative attitudes towards using computers in teaching lack knowledge and skills in their use. Pelton and Pelton (1996) also found that teachers' lack of knowledge and experience lead to a lack of confidence to introduce computers in their instruction.

However, these differences in attitudes vary according to gender. Some studies show that males hold higher positive attitudes towards the use of computer than females (Wilder et al , 1985; Masssoud, 1991; Moon et al, 1994; Shashanni, 1996; Makrakis and Sawada, 1996; Durndell and Thomson, 1997), while other studies showed that females prefer to use computers and have more knowledge about them than males (Allen,1995). However, Galanouli et al (2004) found no difference between males and females. In general, the literature shows that males hold more favorable attitudes toward computers than females.

Rose & Fernlund (1997) stress that using computers in social studies teaching makes the learning-teaching process meaningful, integrated and active. Akengin (2007) states that the

content of social studies is generally abstract because it is concerned about people, history, culture, flora, landscape, climate; therefore using information technology enables students to understand these facts easier and make them participate in the learning process more actively. Hassell (2000) presents several uses for computer in geography: presentation packages, data logging (weather), data handling (databases and spreadsheets to analyze information), simulations and modeling software, mapping and graphic information, GIS (geographic information system), digital images, electronic communications, multimedia authoring machines and information rich sources (CD-ROM and World Wide Web). Huckel et al (1969) believe that the benefit of using computers in teaching social studies, particularly in geography, has been known for a quarter a century. Mason et al (2000) argue that using technology in social studies teaching provides unforeseeable facilities and makes effective learning more accessible, compared to traditional classrooms. Davidson (1996) mentions that computers can be used by geography teachers as a teaching –learning tool. They also can be used in fieldwork for data collection and analysis. Also computers can be used as laboratories for investigating the world, and as instructors (Unwin,1991).

The Basic Education System in Oman considers computers as a main resource for acquiring knowledge and as a teaching tool. So schools have been provided with computer labs and computer technicians. The significant effect of teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes on their classroom instruction has been shown above in other contexts. Hence, the present study aims to investigate social studies teachers' computer knowledge, skills, use and attitudes in the Omani context.

## RESEARCH PROBLEM

In Oman, little empirical data is available about the extent of social studies teachers' computer skills, attitudes and applications in the Education System. Since computers are widely used in Omani schools by social studies teachers as a source of information and as a teaching tool, it is important to investigate social studies teachers' computer knowledge, skills and attitudes to ensure the proper application of the computers in the social studies classroom. It can also be noticed from the above literature that teachers' computer skills have not reached the expected level yet. This and the acute shortage of studies of the Oman context makes it necessary to look into the level of Omani social studies teachers' attitudes and skills in the use of computers in the classroom.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research questions

This study addresses the following questions:

**Question 1: How do social studies teachers rate themselves regarding computer general information?**

**Question 2: How do social studies teachers rate themselves in the skills of using program software, benefiting from internet facilities and using computer in teaching?**

**Question 3: Do teachers' rating of themselves in the skills of using program software, benefiting from internet facilities and using computer in teaching differ according to their gender, the stage in which they teach and their region?**

**Question 4: Are social studies teachers aware of journal and centers of social studies websites on the internet?**

**Question 5: Do social studies teacher benefit from social studies websites on the internet?**

**Aims of the study:**

o      To investigate Omani's social studies teachers' computer knowledge and skills.

o      To investigate social studies teachers' attitudes towards using computer in teaching.

o      To investigate the extent to which the teaching of social studies benefits from using internet facilities.

**Concept Definitions**

The Education System in Oman is under reform, therefore there are two systems at work: the first system is called General Education; the second system is Basic Education. Therefore the sample of the study has been taken from the two systems.

o      General Education: includes three stages: elementary stage from Grade 1 – 6, Preparatory stage from Grade 7 - 9 and Secondary stage from Grade 10 – 12.

o      Basic Education include: the first cycle, from Grade 1- 3; the Second cycle from Grade 4 – 10 and Post Basic Education stage from 11 – 12.

**Population and Sample**

The population consisted of all social studies teachers in Oman (2489 maleand female teachers). However, due to logistical difficulties, four regions were selected to administer the questionnaire, namely: Capital area (Muscat), Al-Batanah, Al-Dakiliah and Al-Sharqia. The selection of school within these regions was based on the distance(300 km) from Muscat , the total number of social studies teachers within this distance was 900 teachers. A total of 900 questionnaire were sent to these teachers, some questionnaires were handed to teachers, while others were sent by mail and via social studies supervisors. The returned rate of the questionnaire was 672 (69.1%). Some of the returned questionnaires were eliminated for being incomplete. The final number was 622 (26.9% of total population). Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample according to area and gender.

*Table1: Distribution of the study sample*

| Variable | | N | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 157 | 622 |
| | Female | 465 | |
| Area | Muscat | 246 | 622 |
| | Al-Batanh | 156 | |
| | Al-Dakilia | 132 | |
| | Al-Sharqia | 88 | |
| School stage | First cycle | 114 | 622 |
| | Second cycle | 170 | |
| | Preparatory | 74 | |
| | Secondary | 264 | |

**Reasons for selecting the sample**

This study was conducted only on Preparatory and Secondary stages from the General Education System. The elementary stage was eliminated because it ended at the time of this study was applied. The sample from Basic Education includes only teachers from the first and second cycle, Post Basic Education stage was eliminated because reform had not reached this stage when this study was applied

**Data collection**

A questionnaire was developed by the researcher to collect data. It consisted of seven parts: the first part includes two sections (yes, no) and (rating questions) aimed at gathering general information. The second part examines teachers' skills in using software programs. The third part examines the benefit to teachers from internet facilities. The fourth part examines using computer in teaching. The fifth part examines teachers' attitudes towards using computers in teaching. The sixth part examines teachers' knowledge of social studies internet websites. The seventh part examines the benefits to teachers from using social studies internet websites. (See appendix).

**Validity and reliability of the questionnaire:**

The validity of the questionnaire was established by a panel of eight experts in Social Studies Curriculum, Psychology and Instruction Technology Departments at Sultan Qaboos University. Based on the referees' responses, some items were deleted and some were modified. The questionnaire's reliability was established by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient because it allows an investigation of how well the different items complement each other in their measurement of different aspects of the subject. The value of Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire was (.**8556**) established from the results of the pilot study.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Questions1: How do social studies teachers rate themselves in computer general information?**

Data gathered under this question was divided into two sections :Section (A) investigating teacher information about owning computers and their training in the use of computers while section (B) aimed at investigating teacher skills in using computer.

**Section A:**

Table (2) shows the percentage of teachers' ratings of themselves in their command of general information about computers.

*Table 2: Percentages of teachers' responses about computer general information*

| General information | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Do you have your own computer? | 76.8 | 23.2 |
| 2. Have you attended computer courses? | 28.5 | 71.5 |
| 3. Do you wish to attend computer courses? | 88.3 | 11.7 |
| 4. Do you wish to attend course about using computer in teaching? | 90.4 | 9.6 |
| 5. Do you use the internet at home? | 50.3 | 49.7 |
| 6. Do you use the internet to update your information about teaching? | 51.3 | 48.7 |

Table (2, item 1) shows that the majority of social studies teachers have their own computers. Around 24% of them do not have computers despite the fact that the Ministry of Education program allows teacher to buy his/her own laptop through an installment program. The high number of teachers who have their own computers is a promising indicator because this reflect their understanding of and attitudes towards the importance of computer in their life, in the teaching and learning process.

The results (item 2) also show that the majority of social studies teachers did not attend any computer courses, which means that they just depend on themselves in developing their computer skills. Such results indicate that the Ministry of Education programs for the professional development of teachers neither help in developing these teachers' computer skills, nor match the spreading the number of computers in Omani schools.

The previous results also reflect weakness in pre-service teacher preparation programs in developing graduates' computer skills. The finding of this study supports the findings of previous studies which showed a lack of teacher computer skills (US Department of Education, 2000; Handler,1993: Oliver,1993, Abdal-Haqq,1995). The results of this and previous studies stress the need to pay more attention to developing teacher computer skill because it is not enough to increase the number of computers in school, as the literature showed; it is more important to have qualified teachers who know how to use them in the teaching and learning process.

The finding of (item 3) present that the majority of social studies teachers wish to have computer courses to develop themselves in this field. Such results raise positive sign that social studies teacher are aware of the importance of being qualified in computers, and have high motivation to develop their computer skills if they are provided with computer training courses. This results

contradicts of the finding of (Al-Oteawi, 2002) which showed that the lack of teacher knowledge and skill in the use of computers made them hold negative attitudes toward computers.

Moreover, the results of item (4) highlights the lack of social studies teachers' skills in using computers in teaching, where 90.4% of them wish to have computer courses about using computer in teaching. This result reveals that these teachers believe in the role of computers in the teaching process, and that they feel they have poor skills in this area. Such results indicate that these teachers want to apply computers in their classrooms but they don't have the necessary skills to this.

The results of items (5 and 6) reveal that around 50% of social studies teachers use the internet at home. This result reflect the low degree of benefit of Omani social studies teacher from the internet. This result raises a question mark about the state of our educational system, which looks to the internet as a source of information together with textbooks, so how much can our teachers benefit from provided internet services in school, when half of the social studies teachers do not use the internet?

**Section (B):**

The following table (3) shows the extent of teachers' computer use in teaching, their computer skills and the time they spend on the internet.

*Table 3: Percentage of teachers' using of computer, computer skills and time spent on internet*

| General information | Rating (%) | | | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Good | Fair | Poor | |
| 7. To what extent are you skilful in using computer | 11.3% | 57.6% | 31.2% | 1.8006 |
| | Always | Sometimes | Not at all | |
| 8. To what extent do you use computer in teaching | 15 % | 53.4% | 31.7% | 1.8328 |
| | 1-5 hr | 5 -10 hr | Over10 hr | |
| 9. How many hours do you use internet per week | 38.9% | 11.4% | 49.7% | 2.1077 |

Interpretation of Mean: from 1 - 1.59 (low), 1.666 - 2.29 (moderate), 2.333 - 3 (high)

The results of (item 7) show that around a third of social studies teachers have poor computer skills, while half of them are fairly skillful. This result indicates a the need for more training in the use of computers because the fact that around a third of teachers have poor computer skills is a negative indicator in the educational process in Oman. The percentage could be higher if we think about the total population of social studies teachers in Oman. Such results reflect the shortage on both pre-service teacher preparation programs and in- service training.

Low computer skills have an effect on social studies teachers' use of computers in teaching, where a third of them do not use computer at all, and half of them use them sometimes (see item 8). Such a finding may raise questions about the benefit of providing computers and internet services in school, if such a high percentage of teacher are not qualified in computer skills. Even though the number of teachers using computers in their classrooms is not high, this is still an encouraging percentage indicator, which matches the findings of Eteokleous' 2008 study, which show that a few teachers do use computers in a progressive way.

The results of item (9) show that a low level of skill in computer use affects social studies teacher time spent on the internet, where around 40% of them spend just 1 – 5 hours a week and around 50% of them spend over 10 hours a week.

**Question 2: How do social studies teachers rate themselves in the skill of using program software, benefiting from internet facilities and using computer in teaching?**

Table (4) shows means and standard deviations of teacher rating: skills of using program software, benefiting from internet facilities and using computers in teaching**.**

*Table 4: Skills of using program software, benefiting from internet and using computer in teaching*

| Domains | N | Mean | STD |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Skills in using program software | 622 | 2.10 | .75 |
| 2.  Benefiting from internet facilities | 622 | 1.97 | .91 |
| 3.  Using computer in teaching | 622 | 1.93 | .82 |

Interpretation of Mean:
      from 1 - 1.749 (low), 1.75 - 2.5 (moderate), 2.499 – 3.25 (high), 3.499 – 4 (very high)

Findings in domain (1) suggest that teachers' skill in using program software such as Word, PowerPoint, Flash, Excel, SPSS were moderate, despite their importance in the teaching process, particularly in teaching some topics in social studies such as : population growth, and economic investment etc. This result explains why a third of teachers do not use computers in teaching (see item 8 in table 3). These results support the findings of (Bakar & Mohamed, 1998) which show a lack of teacher knowledge and skill in the use software programs.

The results of domain (2) show moderate benefit from the internet such as search engines, emails, downloading files, which means that these teachers seem not to be communicating with their students by email because they don't know how to use it. It also mean that they don't benefit from the huge amount of information provided by search engines, which means that our students in school are not connected with worldwide information resources.

As social studies teachers have only had moderate skill in using program software, their use of computers in the teaching process, such as in presentation, feedback, assessment and the recording of grades was moderate (see domain 3). These results indicate a need for the educators in the educational system in Oman to rethink the situation regarding the application of computers in the Omani educational system.

**Question 3: Do teachers' rating of themselves in the skill of using program software, benefiting from internet facilities and using computers in teaching differ according to their gender, the stage in which they teach and their region?**

**A- Gender**

 Table (5) shows the results of t-test comparing differences of teacher rating in the three domains according to their gender.

*Table 5: Results of t-test*

| Gender | | Skills of using program software | Benefiting from internet facilities | Using computer in teaching |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Mean | 2.09 | 2.06 | 2.00 |
| | SD | .78 | .98 | .91 |
| Female | Mean | 2.11 | 1.93 | 1.91 |
| | SD | .731 | .89 | .79 |
| T-Test | | .744 | .135 | .272 |

The results reveal that there were no significant differences between male and female teachers rating in the three domains, This result could be due to the fact that all of these teachers had graduated from the same colleges, with generally the same programs, and haven't had any in-service professional development courses. This result contradicts the results of (Makrakis &Sawada,1996; Liang & Chao, 2002) which showed that males are more skillful and knowledgeable in computer than females.

## B. Stage they teach

Table (6) shows the results of One Way ANOVA comparing differences of teacher rating in the three domains according to their stage.

*Table 6: Results of ANOVA for stage comparisons*

| Domains | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Skills of using program software | Between Groups | 8.08 | 3 | 2.69 | 4.868 | .002 |
| | Within Groups | 342.19 | 618 | .554 | | |
| | Total | 350.28 | 621 | | | |
| 2. Benefiting from internet facilities | Between Groups | 1.827 | 3 | .609 | .723 | .539 |
| | Within Groups | 520.50 | 618 | .842 | | |
| | Total | 522.33 | 621 | | | |
| 3. Using computer in teaching | Between Groups | 9.527 | 3 | 3.17 | 4.733 | .003 |
| | Within Groups | 414.66 | 618 | .671 | | |
| | Total | 424.19 | 621 | | | |

According to Table 6, there were significant differences between teachers' ratings, due to the stage they teach in domain one and domain three. A Tukey post hoc test was used to show the directions of differences. It was found that first and second cycle teachers are more skillful in using computer software program than teachers of the secondary stage. It also showed that second cycle teachers are using computer in teaching more than teachers of the secondary stage. This could be due to the fact that first and second cycle schools are provided with computer labs (information learning resources lab) as a part of educational reform in Oman and teachers have to use this facility together with textbooks, while at the secondary stage, it is still not applied.

**C. Region**

Table (7) shows the results of One Way ANOVA comparing differences of teacher rating in the three domains according to their regions.

*Table 7: Results of one way ANOVA for regions comparisons*

| Domains | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Skills of using program software | Between Groups | .658 | 3 | .219 | .388 | .762 |
| | Within Groups | 349.62 | 618 | .566 | | |
| | Total | 350.28 | 621 | | | |
| 2. Benefiting from internet facilities | Between Groups | 7.784 | 3 | 2.59 | 3.116 | .026 |
| | Within Groups | 514.55 | 618 | .833 | | |
| | Total | 522.33 | 621 | | | |
| 3. Using computer in teaching | Between Groups | 8.992 | 3 | 2.99 | 4.462 | .004 |
| | Within Groups | 415.19 | 618 | .672 | | |
| | Total | 424.19 | 621 | | | |

According to Table (7) there were significant differences between teachers rating due to the region where they teach in the second and third domain. A Tukey post hoc test was used to show the directions of differences. It was found that Al-Sharqia teachers benefit more from internet facilities than Al-Dakiliah teachers. Al-Sharqia teachers are also using computer in teaching more than Muscat and Al-Dakiliah teachers. This could be the result of the school leadership in those regions motivating teachers to apply information technology in their schools, and also could be due to the teachers themselves having more interested in computers and their applications. This result support the finding of Brinkerhoff & Koroghlanian (2005) which showed differences in teacher skills according to their region.

**Question 4: Do teachers' attitudes toward using computers in teaching differ according to gender, stage, and region?**

**Gender**

Table (8) shows the grand mean of social studies teachers' attitudes and the mean of their responses according to their gender.

*Table 8: Results of T-Test*

| Gender | | Attitudes | Grand mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Mean | 2.86 | |
| | SD | .28 | |
| Female | Mean | 2.84 | 2.8497 |
| | SD | .41 | |
| T-test | | .660 | |

Interpretation of Mean: from 1 - 1.59 (low), 1.66 - 2.299 (moderate), 2.333 - 3 (high)

The results show that the social studies teachers hold high positive attitudes towards using computers in teaching (2.8497). This result is encouraging because most of them did not have

computer training. This contradicts the literature, which indicated that teachers who do not have computer training showed negative attitudes towards using computers in teaching (Al-Oteawi,2002; Pelton and Pelton, 1996). The differences between the findings of this study and previous studies may suggest that Omani teachers' perceptions of the importance of computers encourage them to develop more positive attitudes towards computer use, despite their lack of knowledge and skills. This study supports the findings of Tondeur et al (2008) which showed that teachers hold positive attitudes towards computer in the educational process.

The result also revealed that there were no significant differences between male and females teachers. This result contradicts some previous results which showed that males hold more positive attitudes than females do (Wilder et al, 1985; Masssoud, 1991; Moon et al, 1994; Shashanni, 1996; Makrakis and Sawada, 1996; Durndell and Thomson, 1997) and other studies which showed that females prefer to use computers and have more knowledge than males (Allen,1995). Differences between the results of this study and the previous studies may be due to different cultures, graduating programs, and educational systems.

**Stage and Region**

Table (9) shows the results of One Way ANOVA comparing differences of teacher attitudes according to their stage and region.

*Table 9: Results of one way ANOVA for the two independent variables: stage and region*

| Variable | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (stage) | Between Groups | 2.743 | 3 | .914 | 6.219 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 90.85 | 618 | .147 | | |
| | Total | 93.60 | 621 | | | |
| (area) | Between Groups | 1.690 | 3 | .563 | 3.788 | .010 |
| | Within Groups | 91.91 | 618 | .149 | | |
| | Total | 93.60 | 621 | | | |

**Stage**: The results show that there were significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards using computers in teaching due to their stage and region. A Tukey post hoc test was used to show the causes of differences. It were found that the secondary stage teachers hold higher positive attitudes compared to those in the first and second cycles. These higher positive attitudes at a time when they lacked knowledge and skills, could be explained by the perception of secondary stage teachers of the importance of computers. It could also be related to their feelings about their lack of such skills, which may personally affect them, compared with teachers who are teaching in the first and second cycle.

**Region**: The results also show that teachers from Al-Batanah region hold higher positive attitudes than those in Muscat. This result may be due to influence of workshops, teachers' desire to develop themselves in computer skills, and motivation from teacher supervisors in this region.

**Question 4: Are social studies teachers aware of journal and centers of social studies websites on the internet?**

Table (10) shows the percentage of teachers' knowledge of social studies websites.

*Table 10: Percentage of teachers' knowledge of social studies websites*

| Items | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Do you know English websites of social studies journals? | 18.8 | 81.2 |
| Do you know Arabic websites of social studies journals? | 40.2 | 59.8 |
| Do you know any English specialized websites or center about social studies? | 17.3 | 82.7 |
| Do you know any Arabic specialized websites or centers about social studies? | 44.5 | 55.5 |

The results show that the majority of social studies teachers (80%) do not know any internet website related to journals of social studies in English language, and around 60% of them do not know even internet websites of Arabic journals. The majority of these teachers lack knowledge about internet websites of social studies centers in English language and half of them lack knowledge about internet websites of Arabic social studies centers. These results could be due to the shortage of computer skills and knowledge about benefiting from internet as an information resource. It could also be due to the shortage of workshops which develop teachers' knowledge about these websites and how to benefit from them. Such results show the extent to which our social studies teachers lack knowledge of such journals' and centers' websites. This requires a great deal of consideration from those who are responsible for reforming the educational system in Oman.

**Question 5: Do social studies teachers benefit from social studies websites on the internet?**

Table (11) shows the percentage of teachers' responses.

*Table 11: Shows the percentage of teachers' responses*

| Items | Yes % | No % |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Have you ever used the internet to get information related to social studies? | 65 | 35 |
| 2. Have you ever benefited from the internet to support your social studies textbooks? | 56.6 | 43.4 |
| 3. Have you ever benefited from the internet in your classroom activities? | 46.6 | 53.4 |
| 4. Have you ever benefited from the internet in developing your knowledge about teaching methods? | 40.2 | 59.8 |
| 5. Have you ever benefited from the internet in developing your knowledge about assessment in social studies? | 28.6 | 71.4 |
| 6. Have you ever communicated with some social studies experts through the internet? | 26.2 | 73.8 |

It can be noted from the response to (item 1) that over half of social studies teachers use the internet to get information related to the social studies curriculum, which is a good indicator, but

still the websites they use for such information are mainly Arabic ones. Around half of the teachers (item 2 and 3) benefit from the internet in updating and expanding of data in social studies textbooks and in classroom activities. This result reveals a gape in the application of information technology in our schools. This result could be due to the weakness of social studies teachers command of the English language as a possible reason for not been using in English websites. It could be also due to the limited number of Arabic professional websites in education and particularly in social studies.

Results of items (4 and 5) show that more than half of social studies teachers are not benefiting from the internet in developing their knowledge about teaching methods and assessment in social studies, although there are a lot of websites in the internet, which provides updated articles related to geography, history, politics, economic and websites which provide activities, games , ideas to social studies teachers to help them with their teaching. Such results need to be considered in the workshops introduced by the Ministry of Education for in-service social studies teachers, to equip them with knowledge and skills which would allow them to benefit from these websites.

The result item 6 reveal that the majority of social studies teachers do not communicate with specialists or experts in their field; this could be due to poor internet skills and poor English language skills.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It can be noted from the results above that there some positive indicators about social studies teachers in Oman in the area of applying computers in the teaching process. Teachers hold positive attitudes towards the importance of computers in teaching ,and are concerned about developing their skills, since they wish to attend computer skills training sessions.

However, there are some negative indicators which suggest that the Ministry of Education in Oman needs to spend more time and effort on developing teacher skills in using computer program software, using the internet, using computers in teaching, and developing their knowledge about social studies internet websites (journals, centers etc) both in Arabic and English language. The situation of social studies teachers now is not encouraging because most of them lack computer knowledge and skills, which negatively affects their use of computers in the teaching process.

The study suggests conducting more research in this field to investigate the views of human resources development personally in the Ministry of Education about the situation of teachers' computer skills, and teacher views about types of in-service training courses they need in this area. It is also suggested that courses or workshops in program software, internet and its application, and the use of computers in teaching need to be introduced.

The study suggests that pre-service teacher-training programs need to do a lot more to develop the abilities of their graduates in computer skills before going to the classroom. It also suggests that the Ministry of Education needs to consider that the increase in the number of computers and internet services in schools will require that teachers should be qualified in computer skills. Technicians cannot be expected to sort out weaknesses in the system which result from a deficiency in teachers' skills.

### Suggested studies:
o      Investigation of social studies teacher computer skill and attitudes in all Oman regions.

o   Assessment of pre-services social studies teacher preparation program in terms of developing graduates' computer skills and information technology.

o   Investigation of in-service professional development programs provided by the Ministry of Education in the area of computer skills.

o   An observation study to assess the use of computers in the teaching process by social studies teachers.

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**APPENDIX**

**Omani social studies teachers' knowledge skills and attitudes in using computer in instructions**

*This study aims at acknowledging your computer skills, attitudes and its application in instruction. Gathered information will be confidential and it will only used for research purposes.*

**Gender:** …………………………. **Region:** …………………………………………

**Stage in which you teach:** …………………………………………………………………

**Please put tick () in the box which express your computer skills, attitudes and its application in instructions.**

**Section 1: (A): General information:**

| General information | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Do you have your own computer? | | |
| 2. Do you use internet at home? | | |
| 3. Have you attended computer courses? | | |
| 4. Do you wish to attend computer courses? | | |
| 5. Do you wish to attend computer course about using computer in teaching? | | |
| 6. Do you use internet to update your information about teaching ? | | |

| General information | Rating | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Good | Fair | Poor |
| 7. To what extent you are skilful in using computer | | | |
| | Always | Sometimes | Not at all |
| 8. To what extent you use computer in teaching | | | |
| | 5 hr | 5 -10 hr | Over 10 hr |
| 9. How many hours you use internet per week | | | |

**Section 2: Program software**

| To what extent you are skilful in | Good | Fair | Poor | Not at al |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Word and its facilities (opening- printing, frames…) | | | | |
| PowerPoint | | | | |
| Statistical packages (Excel – SPSS) | | | | |
| Photoshop | | | | |

### Section 3: Benefiting from internet facilities

| To what extent you are skilful in | Good | Fair | Poor | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Using search engines (Google….etc) | | | | |
| Using emails and sending files | | | | |
| Using favorites and bookmarks | | | | |
| Downloading from internet | | | | |
| Using acrobat reader to read files | | | | |

### Section 4: Using computer in teaching

| To what extent you use computer in the following | always | Sometimes | rarely | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Presentation | | | | |
| Feedback | | | | |
| Assessment | | | | |
| Recording marks | | | | |

### Section 5: Attitudes toward using computer in teaching

| Using computer will: | Agree | uncertain | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| Increase my students achievement | | | |
| Make classroom management more difficult | | | |
| Increase communication skills between students | | | |
| Valuable equipment which we should benefit from it | | | |
| Make transferring information to students easier | | | |
| Develop my teaching skills | | | |
| Encourage students to participate in classroom activities | | | |
| Reduce the use of traditional teaching media (whiteboard ...etc | | | |
| Cause stress for teachers who have poor computer skills | | | |

### Section 6: knowledge of journal and centers of social studies websites

| Items | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Do you know English websites of social studies journals | | |
| Do you know Arabic websites of social studies journals | | |
| Do you know any English specialist or center websites about social studies | | |
| Do you know any Arabic specialist websites or center about social studies | | |

### Section 7: Benefiting of social studies websites

| Items | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Have you ever used internet to get information related to social studies? | | |
| Have you ever benefited from internet for your social studies curriculum? | | |
| Have you ever benefited from internet in your classroom activities | | |
| Have you ever benefited from internet in developing your knowledge about teaching methods? | | |
| Have you ever benefited from internet in developing your knowledge about assessment in social studies? | | |
| Have you ever communicated with some social studies experts through internet? | | |

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