Online Courses in Art and Design During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Teaching Reflections From a First-Time Online Instructor

Nouf Alsuwaida

Abstract

Online courses became the primary means of delivering instruction for higher education classes during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Although institutions provide training and support to faculty members teaching online for the first time, for some faculty, including those in art and design, the online course design process seems vague and arduous. This article explores the challenges experienced by one such faculty member teaching her first online art and design course during the pandemic. With an autoethnographic approach to examine her online courses, the author reflects on the challenges and successes when designing and delivering a traditional face-to-face course in an online environment. Particular attention has been paid to the tools used to encourage student-student and student-teacher interactions. Recommendations are also provided for practical ways in which other art and design instructors can create online classrooms that promote student engagement and interaction.

Keywords

online courses, coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, student interaction and collaboration, art and design classrooms, online teaching

Introduction

The global pandemic shook the world’s educational system in 2020. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presented both opportunities and challenges for educational institutions. Many institutions found it necessary to move their courses online (Toquero, 2020). Online courses played an essential role and online platforms allowed instructors to continue teaching during the pandemic. Distance learning became the primary means of delivering instruction for higher education in some art and design classes. The key factors in the development of an effective online community are social presence and identity, and collaborative learning with shared goals and resources. Besides, online courses involve distance learning with guidelines and policies to help learners communicate and interact. A research by Conrad and Donaldson (2011) points out that “Engaged learning is an application in an online environment that requires special consideration to maximize learning. The challenge both educators and learners face is how to facilitate the transition between the mindset and the one required to be an engaged online community member” (p. 13).

Both instructors and students in Saudi Arabia struggled with their first online art and design course during the COVID-19 pandemic because some classes have laboratories in on-campus classrooms. The biggest challenge for art and design instructors was to create an effective lesson plan for the online course. This involved organizing online courses to allow students to understand the course process and avoid confusion or isolation. In the article “Saudi University Students’ Perceptions toward Virtual Education During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Language Learning in Blackboard,” Al-Noifaie (2020) explained that issues pertaining to students’ readiness for this mode of education were among the main concerns in Saudi universities at the time. One of the issues was that students were not accustomed to virtual classes before COVID-19. She suggested that universities should seek out more practical lecturers and designers of professional development online courses in the near future. Additionally, there is a need to improve online education based on learning experiences during the lockdown. As the pandemic and its repercussions are expected to continue,
instructors should consider preparing for the coming years and ensure achieving pedagogical and accreditation standards (Ali et al., 2021). Many art and design instructors are accustomed to traditional methods of teaching and some of them do not have the skills required to teach online. Instructors require professional training to learn how to design, teach, and communicate via technology.

Since online courses may be challenging, art and design students need to learn how to communicate effectively with others online. Lee et al. (2019) observed that “learners should actively make connections with others, online discussion forums or social networking services could be vital sources of help-seeking behaviors” (p. 33). In the article “White Heat or Blue Screen? Digital Technology in Art & Design Education,” Radclyffe-Thomas (2008) emphasized the significant role of technology in preparing the art and design curriculum. The use of online resources fosters creativity in both teachers and students, strengthens the relationship between them, and encourages collaboration to improve art and design teaching and learning within a hierarchical model. Instructors must be equipped to help learners use technology in art and design courses and interact with them online.

The findings of this study are relevant to anyone interested in designing online learning courses, not just art, but other subjects also. Moreover, the results highlight the challenges faced by art students pertaining to communication and interaction during online courses in Saudi Arabia and other countries. Thus, this study’s results are potentially beneficial to educators as models and resources for their teaching and learning endeavors.

Technological tools can help instructors succeed in teaching, indicate professionalism, and improve performance. This study explores modes of interaction, communication, and collaboration for online course delivery and development from the instructor’s perspective. The online courses were developed based on constructivist and connectivist pedagogical principles, emphasized learner engagement, learner empowerment, and attention to access issues. The study is qualitative and intends to present the instructor’s perspective regarding the effectiveness of art and design courses that were offered online for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical Framework:
Constructivism and Connectivism

The term “learning theories” refers to the theoretical frameworks that explain the absorption, processing, and retention of knowledge during learning, such as constructivism and connectivism. Constructivism is a term applied to collaborative learning in education. It addresses the zone of proximal development, in which students learn social interaction mediated by a language (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). Constructivism is based on scientific study and observation concerning how individuals learn. This theory holds that learners gather knowledge concerning the world through their experiences and by reflecting upon these experiences (Richardson, 2005). To elucidate, when a learner encounters a new information, they reconcile it with previous ideas and experiences, altering what they believe, or alternatively discarding the latest information as irrelevant. Therefore, according to this theory, people actively gather knowledge by asking questions, and by exploring and assessing what they know.

Studies have identified emotional, cognitive, environmental, and experiential elements as factors pertaining to how people acquire an understanding of the world. The curriculum improves student learning with the help of technological tools. These tools also assist instructors in teaching. Constructivism explores the manner in which the learning processes of students are reflective of underlying social environments. Technology restructures how people live, learn, and communicate (Siemens, 2005), and more specifically, the instructional designs for improving learning and teaching effectiveness. According to Johann Friedrich Herbart, technology supports a systematic approach to instruction (Wolman, 1968). In other words, an instructor must use technological tools in the context of instructional design to devise a more effective pedagogical approach.

The theory of connectivism explores technology-enabled learning. Students use technological tools to improve their learning and networking skills, utilize the information resources at their disposal, and collaborate with their communities. Particularly, the theory of connectivism explores the manner in which people find other people and connect with them. It is a theoretical framework that embraces pedagogical and technological revolution and guides our understanding of technological learning. Siemens (2005) pointed out that “connectivism presents a model of learning that acknowledges the tectonic shifts in society where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity. How people work and function is altered when new tools are utilized” (p. 7). For example, students use technological tools to find, curate critically, and apply vast and networked information resources, effectively collaborate and communicate within learning communities, and improve or develop learning and networking skills. Moreover, Downes (2008) suggested that connectivism relies on knowledge embedded in networking structures and learning attitudes that characterize and define such networks.

Siemens (2005) explained that connectivism theory is a digital age theory focused on practical knowledge. Dunaway (2011) believed that learners learn “when learners make connections between ideas located throughout their learning networks, which are composed of numerous information resources and technologies” (p. 676). This learning approach can transform education by focusing on learners who are autonomous, self-determined, and capable of handling complexities in the contemporary world (Blaschke, 2012). Blaschke proposed Heutagogy for applying emerging technologies in distance learning and enabling instructors to create and convey instructions using modern age technologies.
Methodology

The ethnographic approach involves immersion in the lives and experiences of participants, and exploring the social, psychological, and emotional implications of such experiences. Autoethnography is centrally focused on the reflections of the researcher/instructor. As a foundation for exploring and investigating social challenges and corroborating institutional problems, ethnographic research often involves the practice of collaborative autoethnography.

Methods employed in this study include a literature review and autoethnography based on the author’s own experience as an assistant professor teaching several online art and design classes during COVID-19 at a university in Saudi Arabia. As a first-time teacher of an online course in art and design, the author explored the development of class activities and some of the challenges in terms of interaction and collaboration among students online. Technological tools were used to facilitate collaboration and design activities for engaging students. These tools also served as interactive devices in facilitating cooperation, planning, time management, compilation of resources, and analysis. The author engaged in an autoethnographic exploration of individual and collaborative experiences to investigate the design and delivery of online courses and collated the recommendations of faculty members in this field. The research question for this study was “How effective are group communication, collaboration, and cooperation among students in online art and design courses?”

Discussion and Results

Group Collaboration and Interaction

Constructivist theory holds that students construct knowledge through collaborations and interactions with their classmates. This study analyzed interactions including those between the instructor and students, among the students themselves, and between students and the material in the online courses. In each online course, the art and design professor engaged the students with the course content by allowing them to devise their own learning methods to meet learning objectives or competencies. Interaction among students was classified as a type of learner-learner instruction and social learning. Students were required to interact with each other in the online courses and these interactions were evaluated; encouraging social interaction in this manner enabled students to realize how helpful the online courses were.

Online communities foster social presence and identity with collaborative learning. In the online courses, students shared goals as well as resources and interacted with each other online. The instructor set the policy and guidelines that helped students successfully complete the online classroom activities. Engaging the students in an online learning environment required special consideration and measures to maximize learning. The challenge was to address the difficulties students faced when changing their existing mindset to engage with the online community (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011).

The professor clearly explained to the students enrolled in the course how and when they were required to communicate, participated in discussions, and provided feedback and grades. In addition, the instructor offered learning activities to help students interact and engage them in a process of active learning. Pappert (1991) focused on the art of learning through making or doing. In the online course, students gained knowledge through cognitive interactions with tools, people, and culture. The use of technology was beneficial because it supported learner collaboration. It also informed the quality of interaction during the peer critique process where students examined art and design sketches. There were also high levels of social presence with high-quality peer feedback, supporting the design community’s creative process. As Elbaum et al. (2002) pointed out, “Achieving a strong community doesn’t just happen; however, instructors need to build in the structure and activities to offer this ‘coming together’ opportunity to the students” (p. 47).

Group assignments required students to submit projects on which they worked together, such as peer review, group work, and discussions. Interactions with other students improved the learning experience and made the online course more attractive, which produced better outcomes. Students actively created knowledge when they asked questions, and explored and assessed the information available to them based on constructivist theory. Students benefited from group work when they helped each other clarify ideas through discussion and debate. Furthermore, they thought more thoroughly and critically when solving problems. Engaging students in learning activities increased their skills and knowledge in relation to the course content (Stavredes, 2011).

However, an instructor may require students to submit their work for group discussion two or three times in a single semester of an online class to enhance their learning experience and improve their communication skills. Students were encouraged to take part in the discussions and forums and express their views. Instructors asked the students to share their feedback after each class and topic to evaluate their quality of learning experiences based on the objectives.

Communication Tools for Art and Design Students

Online courses are developed based on pedagogical constructivist and connectivist theories. Students participate in a module that explores online course interactions and the development of activities involving both group and individual participation. The most important part of a group interaction and communication strategy is to understand the role of each member. The assignation of the roles of leader, recorder, editor, and connector builds on the strengths of team members. Defined roles also help organize work activities in online courses to facilitate the participation of each learner.
and provide them with open access to communication through the web. When students used technological tools in online courses, they understood the theory of connectivism, improved their learning and networking skills, and collaborated and communicated with their peers. The course also involved different activities, such as reading, comprehension, and watching videos, and provided an interactive forum that formed an outstanding community for the teaching assistants, professors, and students. The structure and design with regard to the means of communication used in online courses varies for each individual project. The primary means of communication are as follows: (1) an interactive learning and management system, such as Blackboard and (2) the assimilation and aggregation of several distributed platforms (Web 2.0).

An interactive learning and management system, such as Blackboard. According to Carroll et al. (2016), “Higher education has also seen a rise in the use of instructional technologies such as video tutorials, web-conferencing tools, and learning management systems [LMS]” (p. 125). Blackboard is one such learning management system tool, a personalized learning platform that allows professors to use different Web 2.0 tools in an online course. Blackboard has various tools, such as the collaboration tool, for online instructors to communicate with students or students to communicate with each other.

Assimilation and aggregation of several distributed technology platforms and Web 2.0 tools. Web 2.0 tools are digital tools that enable access and production of knowledge. Solomon and Schrum (2014) define Web 2.0 tools as “the term given to describe a second generation of the World Wide Web that focuses on the ability of people to collaborate and share information online” (p. 2). The boom in the popularity of Web 2.0, with the advent of the digital era over the last decade, has led to an increased interest among the younger generation to study art and design with technology. Art and design students use technological tools in an interactive classroom environment to create inspiration for artworks. Instructors believe that the use of Web 2.0 in a classroom environment is an exciting way to promote digital-age literacy (Solomon & Schrum, 2014). During the online courses, when the author’s students wanted to form a group, they chose several technological tools in addition to Google Groups tools, such as general Google tools, Doodle, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Pinterest.

Google tools: In the online courses, the professor taught the students how to use technological tools for communication, including Google Docs, Google Slides, and Google Hangouts. Group members were required to sign a group contract before the course started, with information concerning group roles and the technological tools to be used for collaboration. Technological tools, such as Google tools, can be used strategically to assist students in meeting course goals. These tools allow them to access multiple files anywhere and anytime via the internet and save their PowerPoint slides, sheets, and forms. In addition, these tools also enable students to share their documents with instructors and the rest of their group. The professor was able to use these tools to chat with students in groups and leave comments on shared documents. In this manner, she was able to integrate Google Docs into the course curriculum. Before using Google Docs, she asked her students to sign in using their Gmail accounts. Then they shared access to documents by inviting the instructor and other members of the group to collaborate. Sudrajat and Purnawarman (2019) noted, “All activities in the document are automatically saved in the drive, [so] the document owner and other editors can track them easily” (p. 211). In addition, students were able to create presentations and share them with instructors or peers. Google Slides is a tool that helps students access and edit presentations from a phone, tablet, or computer. Google Hangouts allows students to send invitations to each other and interact via the use of text, video, and audio communication (Rosenbaum et al., 2016). Students in groups learned how to use Hangouts because it is a useful tool for arranging group meetings with each other online.

Doodle: A flexible and practical schedule was drafted for the benefit of all the members of the group. Doodle, an online calendar tool, was used to plan and schedule meetings, and help with time management. The member assigned the role of connector was required to assume the responsibility of creating the Doodle account. Doodle Poll sent invitations to all group members via email. The members confirmed and fixed the time and date for the meeting. In short, students used this tool to address scheduling issues within the group.

Twitter: Luo et al. (2019) mentioned that using Twitter for academic purposes could improve student motivation in online courses in higher education. It helps create a learning community among students because they can use Twitter to discuss online courses (Luo et al., 2019). The groups, in the present study, learned how to use Twitter for class activities during the online classes. Taskiran et al. (2018) explained that using Twitter assists both teachers and students in education. The professor promoted the usage of Twitter in the classroom as a 21st century skill, and students were able to interact and communicate from anywhere without meeting face-to-face. The instructor was also able to communicate with students outside of the classroom at any time by using Twitter on her iPhone. She shared art and design resources via Twitter, in the form of relevant pictures, paintings, articles, or information about fashion shows.

WhatsApp: WhatsApp is an application that can enhance group communication between the teaching faculty and students (Bouhnik et al., 2014). The professor used WhatsApp to communicate with students in her online courses, and there were several groups for each online course. She was glad to use this app because her students loved to communicate with it, and she watched them interact via the app and learn how to help each other. When some students did not
understand the work assigned or had difficulties completing it, other students provided them with help and guidance. If such kind of networking and communication can be ensured and implemented, it would improve overall results and facilitate students’ success.

**Pinterest:** A wealth of accumulated knowledge and established methodologies that have been tried and tested over several years of teaching design have helped students and fashion professionals learn how to work with an illustrator (Tallon, 2013). An artist or illustrator uses a computer to work faster and spend more time creating rather than processing. A computer is a powerful tool that offers students the chance to learn and use many techniques, such as drawing sketches, editing images, arranging the layout of pages, and web design (Burk, 2006). During her online courses, the professor chose Pinterest as an efficient technological tool for her students to create ideas and inspiration. Everyone in the group loved this tool because it helped them explore different ideas and become more creative. Students also used this tool to watch videos and tutorials pertaining to art and design. Pinterest improved students’ experience of learning and helped the instructor in teaching.

**Challenges Faced by Art and Design Students**

Art and design students can develop remarkable artistic skills in design, photography, video, and sculpture through online courses. Students can discover new methods and techniques to advance their artwork. However, online courses require collaboration and coordination among students. At the outset of the online courses considered in the study, groups were formed based on their expertise and aptitude for a particular subject. These groups were assigned activities to be completed through mutual collaboration and understanding. Online courses provided an opportunity for the art students to understand mutual working mechanisms. Learner engagement was also significant in online classes. Students engaged in the online course when they became active learners. The learning activities and assessments required students to solve problems, understand, and retain knowledge. One such activity was a simulation—an inductive teaching and learning method that allowed the students to practice, improve skills, and recognize outcomes. In addition, it helped them realize what worked and what did not work (Keengwe & Agamba, 2015). However, when tasks were assigned, the students formed their respective groups focusing on different technological aspects. The real adventure began after this phase when students with different mentalities had to work in a single group. They had to choose the appropriate medium of communication, which had to be practical and flexible. However, the following issues were encountered in the course of collaborating and communicating as a group in the online course:

**Issues relating to conflicting personal characteristics and communication skills.** Communication was the most critical factor in the success of the online courses because online courses emphasize group work, where the members have to share their ideas and contribute. Communication was challenging for some students because they felt isolated, confused, and frustrated, since this was their first online course. The professor taught them how to use new technological tools, engage with new subject material, and communicate within a group, which can be seen daunting for a first-timer. Communication within the groups was often disrupted due to stubborn attitude of some members. Another significant challenge was that some group members lacked experience in distance learning. The professor believed that all students should work together in spite of differing personalities and backgrounds. However, Croft et al. (2010) emphasized the need for instructors to improve communication skills within online courses at institutes of higher education. Communication skills differed based on each student’s circumstances, and were influenced by learning styles, personal situations, information and communications technology skills, confidence, and attitudes. Students need motivation, which is an influential learning factor for online courses. Instructors must encourage and motivate students by designing online courses with interesting material. Not everyone will be as comfortable working individually as in a group. However, some of the professor’s students wanted to work individually on assignments. She respected their inclination and provided them with individual and group assignments.

**Issues with students having fixed mindsets.** Many people worldwide opt for online courses as an effective means for improving one’s abilities. Some students with fixed mindsets did not follow the guidelines and essentials of an online course. They challenged and complained about their group grades because they contributed more to the group and hence expected a higher grade. Therefore, they preferred to work individually. During the online course, the professor explained that all group members would receive the same grade. However, there was a sizable gap in collaboration and coordination among the students. She hoped to reinforce the need for collaboration and coordination among all group members by ensuring that they were aware of the common group grade evaluation. When some students know what to do and others do not, instructors are required to help them fulfill their potential and provide them with tools to overcome this knowledge gap (Dweck, 2006).

Students actively participated in communicating with each other about their ideas and development in the online environment. Group projects for solving target issues were formulated to encourage learners to think about diverse perspectives, community values, and critical discourse regarding the problem. When students learn to interact with others from diverse backgrounds and try to bond with them, their learning experience is enhanced. Dweck (2006) observed that people differed because they had different backgrounds, experiences, training, or ways of learning. In the present
study, students were placed in groups based on their level of learning, despite having different mindsets.

The primary purpose of group activities was to learn to cope with differing ideas and ways of thinking. Students learned to be tolerant and sensitive even if they did not like other group members’ ideas. Although online classes provided a way of educating the students, it demanded much coordination among them when they had to form groups later. Therefore, for optimum utilization and maximum output from the online course, the professor recommended that students set their differences aside and work as a group to achieve greater outcomes. Johnson and Johnson (1991) asserted that the definition of collaboration was to “sink or swim together” (p. 115). Hence, when one student succeeds, the whole group succeeds; when one student fails, all fail. There are challenges with collaboration in any online course, and it was necessary for the groups in the study to work together, trust, and respect each group member to succeed.

**Issues concerning time management.** Should students and instructors be more flexible with respect to time during online learning? Online courses are more challenging than face-to-face ones for students because of the short duration and multiple assignments that need to be completed. Thus, for the groups under consideration, the level of communication varied over with time. The students were required to develop a proper working method. The online courses taught them that time management was the cornerstone for successful completion of tasks and for any other accomplishment. In the courses under consideration, loopholes in coordination and collaboration were observed.

Time management between group members was essential in online courses. Keis et al. (2017) argued that although students can access online courses any time, some students discontinued these courses for two reasons: (1) lack of time and (2) extrinsic motivation. Lee et al. (2019) pointed out that group members or learners should schedule, plan, and manage their time. The main reason for students dropping out from the course was poor time management. Due to absence of proper time management, group members failed to get good grades. This inspired them to learn to work together and enhanced their abilities to work in a group in future. McKinney and Sen (2016) explained that although students want to achieve high grades, they are likely to be unsure of how to do this when engaged in group work. Groups can be unsuccessful if they attempt to break up projects into isolated tasks and if the group members do not work collaboratively with each other (p. 378).

However, the professor encountered some scheduling problems with her students because a few of them missed an important meeting in the online course. Later, she discussed this issue with her students and suggested that use of technological tools was an excellent way to organize group scheduling, and any haphazardness would prove to be disruptive. Her students used Doodle to solve the issue and the groups had to decide on the schedules and timelines for carrying out their work. Working as a group, they were required to choose the medium of communication and deadline effectively and sagaciously.

Online courses provide many guidelines and applications with regard to proper means of communication, which emphasize mutual coordination and collaboration. If students are new to the experience, an online course provides them with a background to improve their learning standards and effectively manage the time allotted for accomplishing the task, since interactions based on time management are essential for any work within or outside the course. Thus, group members needed to adapt to group work environments for optimum utilization of their expertise to work together and attain better results for their group.

**Recommendations**

Even though online courses present challenges for collaboration, standardized guidelines can help students learn about topics through interaction and engagement. Online courses also stimulate research interests and help students explore issues outside of the classroom. Online classes can provide active learning environments for students to participate and improve their knowledge of art and design. Teaching art and design online has its advantages as well as disadvantages. The following three recommendations for designing online environments support success, not just for art and design, but for other subjects also:

**Recommendation 1: Utilize Discussion Forums and Learner-Choice Activities**

To begin with, there is an opportunity for instructional designers to improve online courses in art and design or any other subject by providing clear strategies for students. The development of an effective teaching strategy requires an understanding of what determines success in online learning. This helps students in distance education, allowing them to address their needs, providing them with new experiences and skills, and motivating them to reuse these educational services (Alsabawy et al., 2016). In addition, it is important to ensure that the learning experience of art and design students in online courses is of the same or higher quality than that offered by a traditional classroom curriculum (Dilmac, 2020). When instructors consistently use a web-based course design that incorporates the students’ current values, needs, and experiences, this improves the academic performance of students. Discussion forums and learner-choice activities are beneficial strategies that support access issues related to the use of difficult language and excessive information. Students struggle in online courses when they find the instruction unclear and difficult to understand. Although body language is essential during face-to-face meetings with instructors, blended courses is the best option for art and design students.
because they can have both lectures and labs. To conclude, instructors should plan and present the online course carefully to help students understand the course content. Some instructors provide students with an excess of information or assignments that can cause a lack of understanding and frustrate or confuse the students.

**Recommendation 2: Facilitate Development of a Growth Mindset and Pedagogical Practices**

Rissanen et al. (2019) explained that professors’ perceptions of the causes of student behavior and their implicit beliefs about intelligence strongly shape their own behaviors and interactions with students. Teachers can shape students’ views of their abilities and influence their motivation and achievements (Rissanen et al., 2019). Teachers with a growth mindset often praise their students’ qualities and recognize their strengths when they fail. Furthermore, professors’ perspectives about intelligence predict their views of their responsibility for their students’ performance.

A research by Rissanen et al. (2019) focused on interventions during the actualization of teachers’ mindsets in the classroom, and their daily pedagogical practices that continually shape students’ mindsets. Rissanen examined how teachers with fixed or growth mindsets make sense of the behavior, learning, and achievements of their students, and how this meaning making influences their understanding of the teaching–learning process and classroom practices.

The professor found that some students do not pay attention in the classroom activities because they have fixed mindsets. Students with growth mindsets are constantly learning but students with fixed mindsets quit. However, the teacher plays an important role in developing student interventions. Dweck (2006) explained that teachers should set high standards and guide students toward achieving these standards. When students work hard on the fundamentals, they learn how difficult assignments become easier with practice and discipline.

**Recommendation 3: Actively Participate in Training Opportunities**

Instructors require training to integrate technology into higher education pedagogy for demonstrating the significant correlation between practicing pedagogical integration and technological literacy (Georgina & Hosford, 2009). Some lack information to assist them in finding practical ways of using the tools in their online classes to encourage engagement and student-student interactions. Instructors are required to attend professional development workshops involving the use of technology to teach online or blended courses in art and design. They need to learn to use technological tools in the art and design curriculum, such as devices, software programs, online games, and social media. These tools teach students how to integrate these technologies into online learning. Furthermore, instructors can upgrade the curriculum with the use of technology to develop more effective online or blended modes of delivery.

In one study, Dilmac (2020) observed, “the students stated that laboratory studies could not be carried out with distance education. They need a safe laboratory for this application, and they cannot perform their experiments at home as some of the studies in art education can only be carried out in a workshop environment” (p. 123). Some art courses that include lectures and laboratory work should emphasize the importance of blended learning because students need a face-to-face workshop to practice drawing and painting. Instructors are required to guide their students through practice workshops on campus. Blended courses offer the best modes and methods of teaching art and design. Students should also have access to training programs and technological resources for online and blended courses in any educational institution.

**Conclusion**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online courses became an effective means of delivering instruction in higher education. This article explored the challenges faced by a new online course developed for teaching art and design during the pandemic. Using an autoethnographic approach, the author reflected on the experience of teaching an online course and explored the challenges and successes of courses in an online environment. Principles of constructivism and connectivism were used for the theoretical foundation for course design and data analysis. Some results reported in this study related to group collaboration and instruction, communication tools for art and design students, and challenges faced by the students. The instructor’s role was to raise the level of pedagogy using technology in online environments. Recommendations were provided for art and design faculty to build online classrooms and encourage student engagement and interaction.

More research is necessary to engage students in online art and design courses. As a first-time online instructor, the author devised strategies for engaging her students and discovered the importance of student engagement in meeting learning outcomes in an online environment. Online courses allow students to collaborate with others, negotiate from multiple perspectives, and share information and experience. Instructors must establish a clear plan and utilize activities that help students stay motivated, interact successfully, collaborate within an online learning environment, and engage in independent knowledge building. It is the author’s desire, as an online instructor, to encourage other instructors to use online or blended courses to meet the unique needs of art and design students as the world moves beyond the pandemic.
Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID ID
Nouf Alsuwaidah https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3224-0098

References
Ali, M., Allihyani, M., Abdulaziz, A., Alansari, S., Faqeh, S., Kurdi, A., & Alhajjai, A. (2021). What just happened? Impact of on-campus activities suspension on pharmacy education during COVID-19 lockdown – A students’ perspective. *Saudi Pharmaceutical Journal, 29*(1), 59–66. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jspjps.2020.12.008

Al-Nofai, H. (2020). Saudi university students’ perceptions towards virtual education during COVID-19 pandemic: A case study of language learning via Blackboard. *Arab World English Journal, 11*(3), 4–20. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.1

Alsabawy, A. Y., Cater-Steel, A., & Soar, J. (2016). Determinants of perceived usefulness of e-learning systems. *Computers in Human Behavior, 64*, 843–858. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.07.065

Blaschke, L. M. (2012). Heutagogy and lifelong learning: A review of heutagogical practice and self-determined learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 13(1), 56–71. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v13i1.1076

Bouhnik, D., Deshen, M., & Gan, R. (2014). WhatsApp goes to school: Mobile instant messaging between teachers and students. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research, 13*(1), 217–231. https://doi.org/10.28945/2051

Burk, S. (2006). *Fashion computing: Design techniques and CAD*. Burke Publishing.

Carroll, A. J., Tchangalova, N., & Harrington, E. G. (2016). Flipping one-shot library instruction: Using canvas and Pecha Kucha for peer teaching. *Journal of the Medical Library Association JMLA, 104*(2), 125–130. https://doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.104.2.006

Conrad, R. M., & Donaldson, J. A. (2011). *Engaging the online learner: Activities and resources for creative instruction* (Vol. 38). John Wiley & Sons.

Croft, N., Dalton, A., & Grant, M. (2010). Overcoming isolation in distance learning: Building a learning community through time and space. *Journal for Education in the Built Environment*, 5(1), 27–64. https://doi.org/10.11120/jcebe.2010.05010027

Dilmaç, S. (2020). Students’ opinions about the distance education to art and design courses in the pandemic process. *World Journal of Education, 10*(3), 113–126. https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v10n3p113

Downes, S. (2008). Places to go: Connectivism & connective knowledge. *Innovate: Journal of Online Education, 5*(1), 6. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/innovate/vol5/iss1/6

Dunaway, M. K. (2011). Connectivism: Learning theory and pedagogical practice for networked information landscapes. *Reference Services Review, 39*(4), 675–685. https://doi.org/10.1108/09907321111186686

Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House Publishing Group.

Elbaum, B., McIntyre, C., & Smith, A. (2002). *Essential elements: Prepare, design, and teach your online course*. Atwood Publishing.

Georgina, D. A., & Hosford, C. C. (2009). Higher education faculty perceptions on technology integration and training. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(5), 690–696.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, F. P. (1991). *Joining together: Group theory and group skills*. Allyn & Bacon.

Keengwe, J., & Agamba, J. J. (2015). Models for improving and optimizing online and blended learning in higher education. In J. J. Agamba (Ed.), *Models for improving and optimizing online and blended learning in higher education* (pp. 129–145). IGI Global.

Keis, O., Grab, C., Schneider, A., & Ochsner, W. (2017). Online or face-to-face instruction? A qualitative study on the electrocardiogram course at the university of ulm to examine why students choose a particular format. *BMCMedicalEducation, 17*(1), 194. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-017-1053-6

Lee, D., Watson, S. L., & Watson, W. R. (2019). Systematic literature review on self-regulated learning in massive open online courses. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 35*(1), 28–41. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.3749

Luo, T., Shah, S. J., & Cromptom, H. (2019). Using Twitter to support reflective learning in an asynchronous online course. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 35*(3), 31–44. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.4124

McKinney, P., & Sen, B. (2016). The use of technology in groupwork: A situational analysis of students’ reflective writing. *Education for Information, 32*(4), 375–396. https://doi.org/10.3233/efi-160983

Nyikos, M., & Hashimoto, R. (1997). Constructivist theory applied to collaborative learning in teacher education: In search of ZPD. *Modern Language Journal, 81*(4), 506–517. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1997.tb05518.x

Papert, S. (1991). Situating constructionism. In S. Papert & I. Harel (Eds.), *Constructionism* (pp. 1–11). Ablex.

Radclyffe-Thomas, N. (2008). White heat or blue screen? Digital technology in art & design education. *International Journal of Art & Design Education, 27*(2), 158–167. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-8070.2008.00571.x

Richardson, V. (2005). Constructivist teaching and teacher education: Theory and practice. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Constructivist teacher education* (pp. 13–24). Routledge.

Rissinan, I., Kuusisto, E., Tuominen, M., & Tirri, K. (2019). In search of a growth mindset pedagogy: A case study of one teacher’s classroom practices in a Finnish elementary school. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 77*, 204–213. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.10.002

Rosenbaum, L., Rafaeli, S., & Kurzon, D. (2016). Participation frameworks in multiparty video chats cross-modal exchanges in public Google hangouts. *Journal of Pragmatics, 94*, 29–46. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2016.01.003
Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A learning theory for a digital age. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning, 2*(1), 3–10.

Solomon, G., & Schrum, L. (2014). *Web 2.0 how-to for educators*. International Society for Technology in Education.

Stavredes, T. (2011). *Effective online teaching: Foundations and strategies for student success*. John Wiley & Sons.

Sudrajat, W. N. A., & Purnawarman, P. (2019). Students’ perceptions on the use of google docs as an online collaborative tool in translation class. *Lingua Cultura, 13*(3), 209–216. https://doi-org.sdl.idm.oclc.org/10.21512/lc.v13i3.596

Tallon, K. (2013). *Creative fashion design with illustrator*. Batsford.

Taskiran, A., Gumusoglu, E. K., & Aydin, B. (2018). Fostering foreign language learning with twitter: What do English learners think about it? *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 19*(1), 100–116. https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.382734

Toquero, C. M. (2020). Challenges and opportunities for higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic: The Philippine context. *Pedagogical Research, 5*(4), em0063. https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/7947

Wolman, B. B. (1968). The historical role of Johann Friedrich Herbart. In B. B. Wolman (Ed.), *Historical roots of contemporary psychology* (p. 33). Harper & Row.