



A Dialogue on
the Future of
Design
Education

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We are both educators and we want to discuss:

How well are our current programmes responding to our changing world?

How may we change design education programmes in the future to prepare students for emerging local and global contexts?

What are the current contexts of design education?

What do we think are the future contexts for design education?

What do we think are the potential future pathways for design education?

Summary

Who are we,
what are our
backgrounds
& what are we
bringing to
this dialogue?

Naomi:

Design Management formalised in the 1980s

Two Programmes:

- Royal College of Art, MA Design Management 1989
- Brunel University, MA Design, Strategy and Innovation 1994

Core Syllabus:

- Case studies, current design and management literature
- Team Building for investigative research projects
- Formal industrial collaboration leading to employment opportunities

We are investigating the “conversational life of organisations” (Stacey 2002) with regard to the integration of design. Students understand the value of research and especially successful exposition of findings for a non-design audience

Graduates have moved into new areas by developing new service design consultancies; they hold senior design management posts in large organisations including: BAA, Proctor & Gamble, Eurostar and there is an exciting new educational initiative being led by an RCA Graduate

Since the 80's there are now up to 26 Design Management or Design Management related MA's in the UK alone, with new programmes being developed annually

My question is, how do we bring our successful formula, appropriate for the time it was developed, into today's world?

Talking to Ian will give me a fresh view of
change in design education

Ian:

1999, New Courses in Product Design at GSA:

Two Programmes:

- MEdes
- Bdes(hons)

Core Syllabus:

- Designing for society
- Educating designers for a changing world
- Humanities centered design approach for sustainable design education

MEDes

- 5 years, integrated Masters degree (3+2)
- Konstfack, Taik, Politecnico di Milano, Kisd, Kunste Akademie, Les Ateliers and GSA
- 2 years at home, 2 years away, 1 year at home

Bdes(hons)

- 4 years, Bachelor degree with honours
- Integrated 1st year
- first 2 years, common with MEDes
- European language teaching
- 15 partner global exchange programme
- Integrated Social Sciences

Talking to Naomi will give me a fresh view of
change in design and business

What are
the
current
contexts
of design
education?

Naomi:

New educational experiments in Europe and the USA during the last two decades

- Authors have an acute awareness of global changes in industry and society
- Disparate nature of programmes
- Potential institutional vulnerability

Client side:

- Existing traditional business practices must be humanised
- Meta-view of a new economic system is required to deal with fluctuating markets and uncertain business environments

Design consultancies:

- A new type of innovation consultancy

In-house design teams and design managers:

- Expanded new world opening up for designers
- Expectations of designers' knowledge and position in business life significantly heightened

Ian:

- Much has changed in the world
- Sustainable design is increasingly important
- There is convergence in thinking but divergence in action
- Two diametrically opposed approaches

1

- Quantitative
- Reactive
- Market centred
- Exclusive

• Standard of Living

• Linear - expects society and culture to change little and supports the existing economical model

2

- Qualitative
- Proactive
- Context centred
- Inclusive

• Quality of Life

• Holistic - expects society and culture to change drastically and anticipates a changing economy

Sustainable design education is developing far too slowly

Action inhibited by:

- Modular programmes
- Increasing bureaucracy
- Reduced funding
- Research into the purely theoretical
- Students chasing grades

What do we
think are
the future
contexts
for design
education?

Naomi:

Education of designers entrenched when other areas are adapting to new global conditions rapidly:

- Very structured, discipline-specific culture
- Complex funding arrangements
- Evaluation criteria
- Assessment requirements
- Increased research demands

Development of design in the Far East will
outstrip provision in Europe and the USA

Can global capitalism and western democracy make
the limited economic adjustments necessary to
keep global warming within bounds?

Many designers making the choice of direction
they wish to pursue

Designers must find the problems, not simply
solve them

Design graduates will be representing “design”
as a whole

They will need to communicate ideas of
meta-design, not simply the discipline -
graphic, product, interior, fashion - in which
they’ve been trained

Graduate numbers from new, innovative programmes
are too low

A critical mass is required for a significant
change to be recognised and time is of the essence

Urgency in this discussion

Ian:

We are, to a large extent in denial of the challenges we face. We are negative. We should be positive

This may be the best design project ever

“The great thing about the dilemma we’re in is that we get to re-imagine every single thing we do . . . there isn’t a single thing that doesn’t require a complete remake. There are two ways of looking at that. One is: Oh my gosh, what a big burden. The other way, which I prefer, is: What a great time to be born! What a great time to be alive! Because this generation gets to essentially completely change this world” (Hawken 2007)

Sustainable design at GSA:

- Is focused on the experience of living
- Works with, real issues, real people, real situations and real life
- Works in a virtuous cycle of philosophy and action

Believes that:

- Design can help with the issues of global warming, energy descent and the reduction in biodiversity
- We should not use design to exploit other cultures to prop up our consumerist addiction

What do we
think are
the potential
future pathways
for design
education?

Naomi:

“Thoughtful designers must find one another and continue to ask tough questions”

(Keeley 2004)

- Design management must move with the times
- We must re-visit and re-examine the emphases of our educational models

“Metamorphosis of Design Management” 3 symposia
2007 / 2008 – Key themes:

- Changing contexts within which design management practice operates
- The changing roles of design management practitioners help to inform the process of new academic programme development

The ds21 project “Tools for Metadesigning”:

(Wood 2006)

- Ecological design as a discipline is still too over-specialised, politically confused and emergent to make a significant impact
- Designing a “total living style” is too complex for traditional modes of design
- Such a high level of complexity calls for the development of an appropriate mode of “metadesign” that will incorporate synergistic methods within whole systems

- How do we teach metadesign to design students and to practicing designers?
- Should there be a separate discipline of metadesign education alongside traditional design education?
- Should design education remain as it is, highly discipline-based and allow other related professional disciplines ie; sociology, anthropology and media to move into metadesign education?

Learning from my own and other graduates experiences
a new educational model for design begins to take shape
for discussion:

Traditional design education

- Design discipline pathways
- Individual projects
- Designers relating only to design
- Starting from zero
- Technical skills
- Design in theory

Towards Metadesign education

- Understanding design holistically
- Working in teams
- Designers and synergetic context
- Value of constraints
- Analysis and synthesis
- Design in practice

Ian:

Designing with and for ecologically aware societies

The transition town movement:

- Is actually developing a positive ecological aware society
- Its views and actions forms a real opportunity in which to design and test new pathways for future sustainable design

It's one way to discover how design could work with an ecological aware society and how such a society could work with design

A joint project with transition town Totnes:

- The Glasgow School of Art, Plymouth University and HDK Göteborg - Spring 2009

The main theme:

- Design as a proactive agent in a transforming society

Key philosophies:

- Eco sufficiency and resilience

Eco-sufficiency:

- Requires a reduction in the level of production and consumption
- Has potential to reduce, substantially, the use of natural resources without compromising human wealth

Wide spread eco-sufficiency will only occur when less material wealth brings increased well being or happiness to individuals and societies

(Wuppertal Institute 2005/06 & SERI's 2007)

Resilience:

A resilient system:

- Is adaptable and diverse
- Has some redundancy built in
- Acknowledges that change is constant and prediction difficult in a complex, dynamic world
- Understands that in manipulating individual pieces of a system, it changes it in unintended ways

(Ward 2007 & Dixon 2007)

Design can't change the world but
but can be a significant part of a
world that is changing

*“Designers must work in this world
rather than about or upon it”*

(Wodiczco 1999)

Summary

As yet there is no conclusion:

- This is an ongoing work which will continue
- There are common characteristics in ourselves as well as others with whom we work which can be built upon and consolidated
- There are institutions which value this kind of work and will allow it to develop and grow

Common characteristics:

- A highly developed antennae for the remarkable changes in our economy, technology and society
- A willingness to challenge and transform outdated traditional design roles
- An ability to generate a rich field of opportunities for the development of design
- A strong belief in our programmes which is conveyed to our students
- A desire to create future employment opportunities for our students
- Long-term ambitions for world wide economic and social transformation and improvement

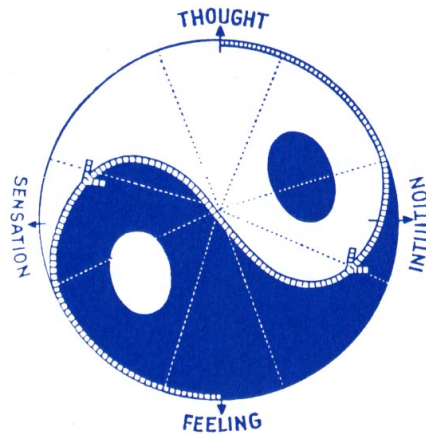
We believe that:

- We are all a part of revolutionary global changes which will carry designers towards new and meaningful roles
- Change in education must be actively pursued by many, rather than just a few
- It is imperative that we achieve graduate critical mass to engender this necessary change
- Action is more important than theory in this accelerating arena
- A comprehensive survey is needed to map the current state of play internationally and thereby determine a rationale for new programmes to develop and flourish

Finally we believe all this to be possible and that, ultimately, the proof is in the doing, not in the talking

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete” (Buckminster Fuller)

“First they laugh at you, then they ignore you, then they fight you and then you win” (Ghandi)



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