The Art of Textile Design Research: Educator Approaches to Creative Practice

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Abstract

In art and design higher education (HE) in the United Kingdom (UK) the significance of educator creative practice to learning and teaching has been widely recognised. However, pressures existing in the HE system and the continual emphasis on research have led to a shift away from the prominence of professional practice. This situation is existent in textile design HE in the UK, where there is minimal documented discourse surrounding relationships between textile creative practice and research and textile design research methodologies. This paper therefore centres on this context and examines textile educator approaches to creative practice and research. The methods used comprise a self-case study of the author's evolving designer educator role, an online quantitative survey and case studies consisting of primarily qualitative interviews. Educational employment is described in relation to mode, function, research activity and frequency of creative practice. A wide range of opinions and approaches to creative practice and research are evident. Analysis of the case study data highlights seven different approaches; these are described and subsequently discussed in terms of *designerly* practices for commercial creative practice and *designerly* practice for research. A shift from *designerly* to more *artistic* practice is apparent due to the research emphasis in several of the case study examples. In addition to discussion surrounding other findings, areas for further research are described.

KEYWORDS: textile design, creative practice, research, methodological approaches, designer educator, higher education

Introduction

This paper centres on textile design HE in the UK and specifically educator approaches to creative practice and research. Although the disciplinary and geographical context is set, it is intended that this paper be insightful to alternative areas of art and design and individuals in HE in other countries. Existing literature highlights that educator engagement in own creative practice is important to learning and teaching in art and design. Factors that impact

upon the educator role and therefore ability to undertake creative practice are discussed. Increasing emphasis on research activity is a key factor that has led to a shift away from the prominence of educator professional practice. There is a lack of discourse surrounding creative practice and research in textile design HE, to which this paper contributes. The project described used a multi-method approach comprising a self-case study, survey and case studies. These methods and the rationale for selection are explained. The survey data provides broader insight, whereas the case study examples give an in-depth perspective. Factors such as educational employment, research activity and frequency of creative practice are discussed independently and collectively. Variation in opinion regarding textile educator approaches to creative practice and research are evident. With reference to creative practice contexts, output production and methodological utilisation, different approaches are examined. The paper concludes with explication of the key findings relating to educational employment, creative practice and research. Varying approaches to undertaking creative practice and research are discussed in terms of *designerly* and *artistic* practices and future research suggestions provided.

Contextualising Educator Creative Practice & Research

Throughout the evolution of art and design HE in the UK the creative practice undertaken by educators and the part-time employment of creative practitioners has been recognised as vitally important to learning and teaching (Strand, 1987; Bird, 1992; Macdonald, 2005). The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2008) recognises that these types of educators facilitate significant links between education and professional, creative practice. Recent research found that teacher-practitioners bring '…enthusiasm, inspiration, motivation, critical judgement and specific industry guidance to the student experience.' (Leith & McInnes, 2010, p. 64) Due to the links between education and the world of work, personal contacts are used to facilitate 'live' student projects (Shreeve, 2006). Teacher practitioners ensure that curriculum content remains responsive to industry and relevant to real world practice (Clews, 2010). For textile educators, undertaking own creative practice has been proven to be of paramount importance, particularly when teaching involves digital technology, due to the continually evolving nature of practice in this area (Britt, 2008).

Situations existent in the HE system can be counterproductive to educator creative practice; it is not uncommon for educators to '…fail to develop capability in practice as they move through an academic career...' (Evans, 2009, p. 4). Qualitative research into fashion and textiles discovered '…inherent difficulties in maintaining currency in practice after the design practitioner accepts a full-time lecturing post, due to the varying demands of the pedagogic role.' (Goworek, 2007, p. 62) The Art and Design: Enabling Part Time Tutors (ADEPTT) Project (2003) found that issues arise for creative practitioners, employed for their subject expertise, who are subsequently expected to become academics. The Artist Teachers Scheme (ATS) provides professional development events and courses to assist teachers in regaining or developing their personal art practices. The scheme arose because teachers of art experienced '…widespread anxiety over 'lost' practice, exacerbated by the demanding nature of teaching, which obstructed creativity.' (Adams, 2003, p. 184)

Pressure from increased administrative work, requirements to obtain teaching qualifications, involvement in assurance and auditing activities impact upon the educator role. The emphasis on staff to undertake research, gain funding and produce outputs has led to a shift away from prominence of professional practice. In the UK, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 will assess higher education institutions (HEIs) on the vitality and sustainability of the research environment, doctoral student numbers, quality of staff research, research income and impact (REF, 2012). For this exercise the definition of research is '…a process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared.' (REF, 2011, p. 48) Included in this, is work directly pertinent to '…the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights…' (REF, 2011, p. 48). Existing knowledge can be used '…in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.' (REF, 2011, p. 48) As with the previous Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), REF 2014 will grade institutional research, enabling the distribution of public funds by the HE funding bodies based on the quality of research undertaken (Stefani, 2006).

The emergent art and design research culture, with initially low numbers of staff holding Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) qualifications, small cohorts of research degree students and historical prominence of professional practice resulted in a limited depth of understanding regarding the nature of research (Durling, 2002). The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) found that academic members of staff required support to develop research understanding and acquire the ability to undertake research independently (Rust et al., 2007). The AHRC (2012) definition of research is principally concerned with the process of research, as research is funded before it takes place. Applications for funding are required to articulate the '…research questions, issues or problems…', describe the aims and objectives, context, rationale, projected contribution to knowledge and understanding; methods and reason for selection (AHRC, 2012, p. 71). Creative practice can be, '…an integral part of the proposed programme of research…' if made explicit (AHRC, 2012, p. 72). Termed *practice-led* research this should include '…documentation of the research process, as well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and as a record of critical reflection.' (AHRC, 2012, p. 71) Work produced solely from individual creative or professional practice, no matter how reputable, is unlikely to meet AHRC (2012) requirements. Anxieties exist surrounding the status of professional and creative practice to research and division between practitioners, teaching only staff and those described as 'research active' (Drew, 2007; Rust et al., 2007).

Textile design education in the UK has been intrinsically linked to regional industry, with the majority of programmes able to trace routes from this foundation (Malarcher, 2006). The textile industry occupies '…an important position in the supply of domestic industries as diverse as home furnishings and fashion to industrial areas such as automotive and medical.' (Studd, 2002, p. 37) Textile designers can be found working in one or a combination of situations, for example, in-house or external to companies, on a freelance or commission basis, as designer-makers (Gale & Kaur, 2002). Bye (2010, p. 207) claims that textile design '…has not been a visible part of the discourse of design as a discipline or design research.' This is due to the prominence of tacit knowledge resulting in '…a considerably less active role in the pertinent debates of design research...' (Igoe, 2010, p. 5) The prominence of

propositional knowledge and writing for research purposes, over tacit knowledge, which can be complex to articulate, is problematic (Niedderer, 2009). Due to this situation, there is a scarcity of research and literature surrounding relationships between textile creative practice and research and textile design research methodologies. Therefore, this paper examines educator approaches to creative practice and research in textile design HE in the UK.

Researching the Textile Designer Educator

The methodology used to undertake the research reported in this paper included a self-case study into the author's evolving role as a designer and educator, a UK wide survey of educators employed in the HE textile design sector and seven case studies with educators from varying HEIs. The methods were carried out sequentially. The self-case study provided in-depth insight into the situation of study from which key themes emerged, survey and case study methods were used to increase understanding from alternative perspectives, to ensure objectivity and support the validity of the research. Analysis of data collected from one method informed the line of questioning pursued utlising the subsequent method. Due to the multi-method approach, different analysis techniques were applied depending on the type of data and for comparative analysis.

As terms in existing use did not reflect accurately the role to be investigated, *designer educator* was adopted and defined to describe individuals who engage in their own creative practice and work in design education. 'Creative practice' is understood to be a designing or making based activity. The designer educator self-case study covered a three-year period. This method was deemed most appropriate as it offered '…a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.' (Robson, 2001, p.5) Evidence included photographs, sketchbooks, designs, textile samples, products, diagrams and an activity log. Reflection was vital throughout the self-case study, whether 'reflection-in-action' while carrying out activities, or retrospectively after an experience or event had taken place, 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1987). From the self-case study key themes emerged relating to the designer educator role, working with digital textile technologies, creative practice and research.

To increase understanding surrounding the emergent themes it was necessary to gain further insight into the phenomenon at the centre of the investigation from the perspective of others. As is the nature of real world enquiry '…there may be other key individuals…whom you could consult: perhaps thoughtful, experienced or committed individuals who are experts on the context you are investigating…that you have to seek…out' (Gillham, 2000a, p. 33). An online survey was undertaken, primarily as a means to locate others operating in roles comparable to that of the author and to gain broader insight into the textile designer educator role, creative practice and research. The survey method was considered appropriate as this type of '…research is almost always conducted in order to provide a quantitative picture of the individuals, or other units concerned.' (Robson, 2001, p. 124) 81 respondents completed the survey; analysis of data was primarily statistical. Certain responses were analysed to ascertain who out of the respondents could be classified as designer educators; from this group case study participants were requested.

In order to increase understanding regarding the designer educator role and approaches to creative practice and research, case studies were undertaken so as the multiple cases would provide '…commonality or variety…' and could be '…a set of examples, instances, events, behaviours [or] roles…' (Wisker, 2001, p. 193). Differing from the self-case study, which provided in-depth insight into a developing situation, over a period of time, the case studies were an opportunity to gain insight at a certain point in time. Therefore, the self case study was '…embedded in a wider study…[to] throw light on the relationships, or even suggest alternative views of the phenomena.' (Robson, 2001, p. 149) Case study participants' survey responses, images of creative practice, exhibition details, books, publications, doctoral theses, conference contributions and journal articles provided data for analysis. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were the main method used because research which '…aims to achieve an understanding of people in a real-world context…' is likely to need interview data '…to provide illustration, some insight into what it is like to be a person in that setting.' (Gillham, 2000b, p. 12).

Content analysis was applied to interview data; initial categories were formed from the questions, with others devised and amended in relation to the responses contained within the interview transcripts. Data was 'interrogated through an inductive process where categories emerge as a result.' (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 133) Analysis of case study data prompted further reflection on and comparison with the self-case study and survey findings. The purpose was '…to discover similarities and/or differences by the use of comparison and contrast…to form categories, establish boundaries, find inconsistencies, discover patterns and connections...' (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 133) The multi-method approach and cross data analysis verified '…the validity of the information collated…', referred to as triangulation (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001, p. 84). This assisted in getting '…a 'fix'…in order to understand more fully the complexity of issues by examining them from different perspectives…' (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 31) Case study participants' survey responses are abstracted and discussed to contextualise this sample within the wider context provided by the survey responses, comparison is also made with the self case study.

Designer Educator Educational Employment

Respondents to the survey were employed at 36 different HEIs in the UK. Table 1 shows the employer HEIs for the case study participants and their positions of employment.

		Position of Employment	Employer HEI
Respondent no	1	Associate Lecturer	Leeds College of Art & Design
	2	Senior Lecturer	Chelsea College of Art & Design
	3	Senior Lecturer	Nottingham Trent University
	4	Senior Lecturer	Bath Spa University
	5	Research Fellow	University of Wales Institute Cardiff
	6	Senior Lecturer	Buckingham Chilterns University College
	7	Visiting Lecturer Research Lecturer	Robert Gordon University The Glasgow School of Art

Table 1. Case Study Participants Position of Employment and Employer HEI.

During the self-case study the author's employment in education changed from working as a visiting lecturer on a part-time, ad hoc basis at The Glasgow School of Art (GSA), the Royal

College of Art, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, to part-time contracted employment as a lecturer at GSA. The mode of educational employment for the case study participants is shown in table 2.

		Mode of Educational Employment		
		Full-time	**Part-time**	**Visiting**
Respondent no.	1		X	
	2		X	
	3		X	
	4		X	
	5	X		
	6	X		
	7		X	X

Table 2. Case Study Participants Mode of Educational Employment.

Figure 1 shows that of the designer educator survey respondents, 55% were employed in education on a *full-time* basis, 35% on a *part-time* basis and 10% on a *visiting* basis.

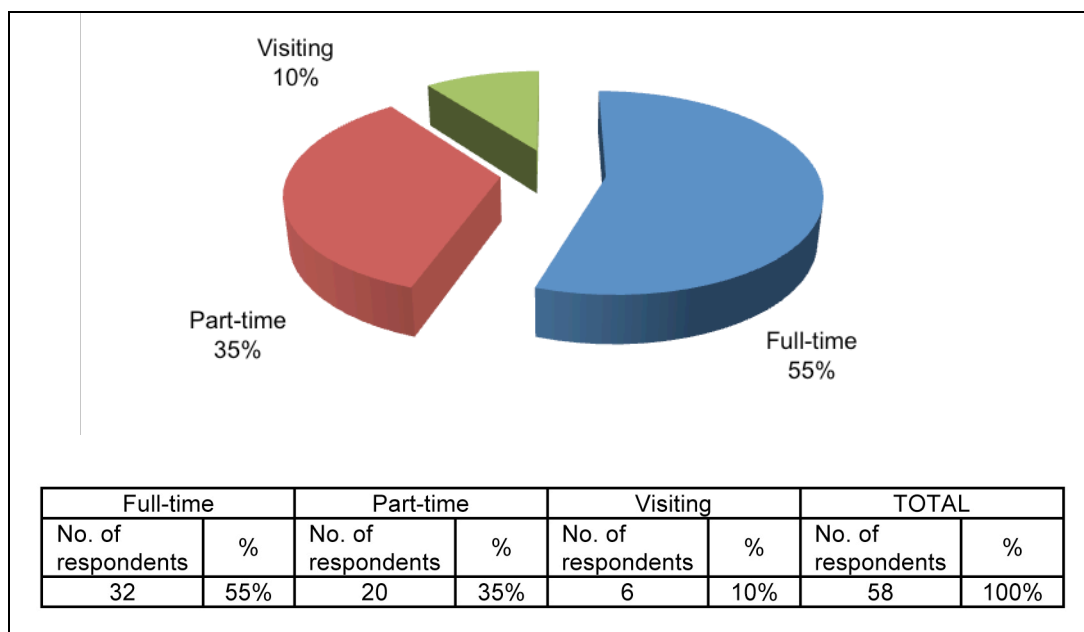| Full-time		Part-time		Visiting		TOTAL	
No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%
32	55%	20	35%	6	10%	58	100%

Figure 1. Designer Educator Survey Respondents Mode of Educational Employment.

The function of employment in education for the majority (62%) of designer educator survey respondents was *teaching and research* (figure 2).

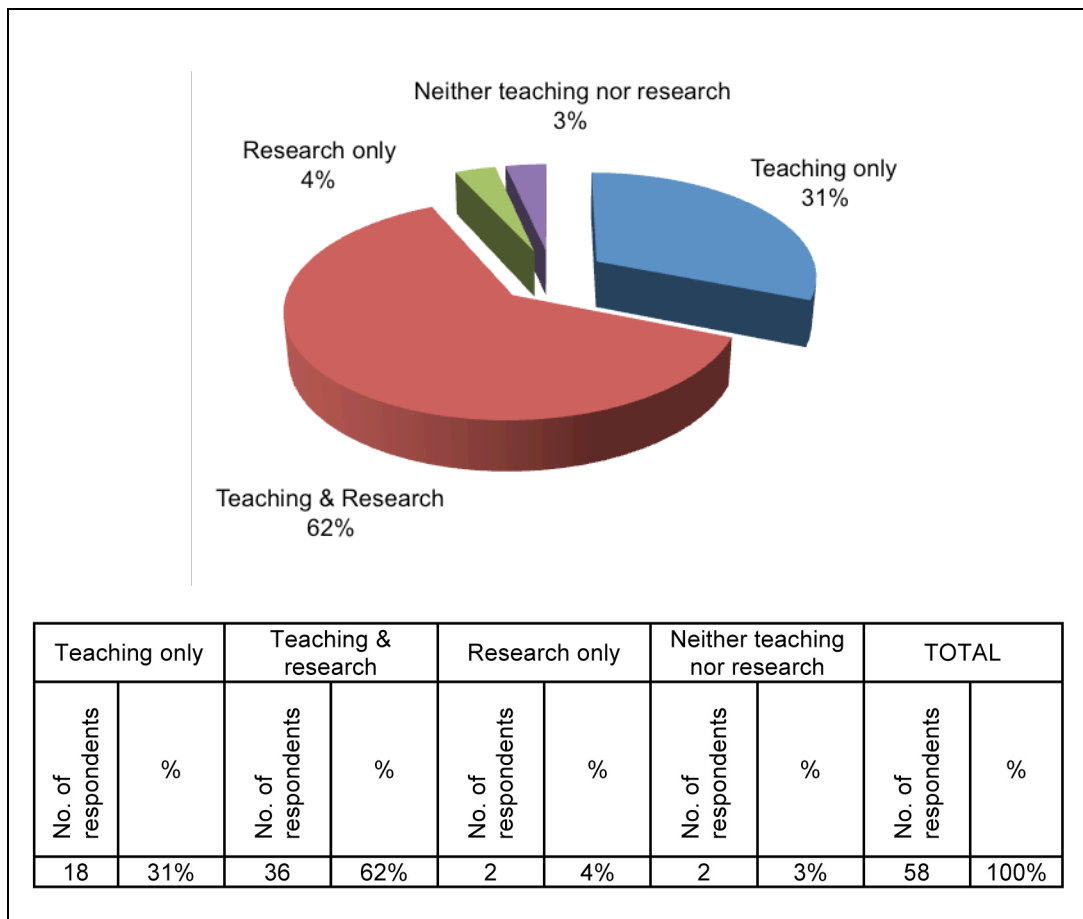| Teaching only		Teaching & research		Research only		Neither teaching nor research		TOTAL	
No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%
18	31%	36	62%	2	4%	2	3%	58	100%

Figure 2. Designer Educator Survey Respondents Function of Educational Employment.

31% functioned in a *teaching only* capacity and 4% *research only*. At the beginning of the self-case study when employed as a visiting lecturer the author's function of educational employment was *teaching only*, when contracted to a permanent part-time position this changed to *teaching and research*. All but one of the case study participants' educational employment function was *teaching and research*; respondent 1's *teaching only* position was the exception (table 3).

		Function of Educational Employment			
		Teaching only	**Teaching & Research**	**Research only**	**Neither teaching nor research**
Respondent no.	**1**	X			
	2		X		
	3		X		
	4		X		
	5		X		
	6		X		
	7		X		

Table 3. Case Study Participants Function of Educational Employment.

Respondents 5 and 7 held researcher positions, however their function of employment was *teaching and research*. Respondent 5's teaching was one day per week, a requirement of a two-

year temporary research post. Respondent 7 held a research post at one HEI and taught at another.

Designer Educator Research Activity

Although the survey responses showed that 66% (62% teaching & research, 4% research only) of designer educators function of employment in education involved research (figure 2), a greater number, 74% stated that that they were research active (figure 3).
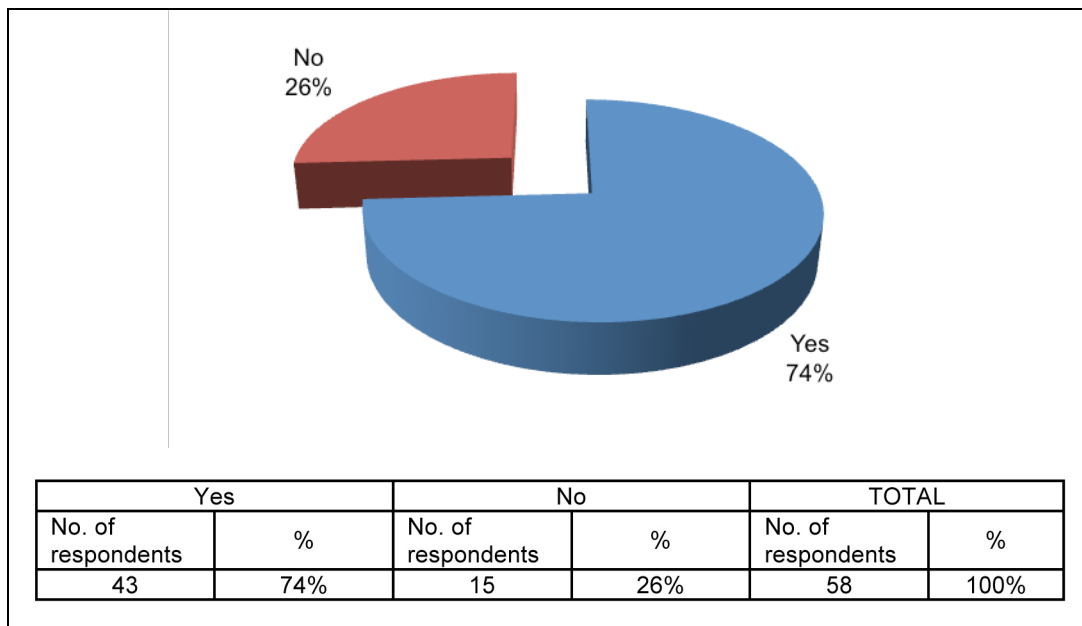

Yes		No		TOTAL	
No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%
43	74%	15	26%	58	100%

Figure 3. Designer Educator Survey Respondents Research Active.

This indicates that a small percentage of designer educators believed they undertook research even when not a function of educational employment. By comparing responses for research activity (figure 3) with function of educational employment (figure 2), figure 4 shows that 11% of survey respondents who functioned in a *teaching only* capacity undertook research.
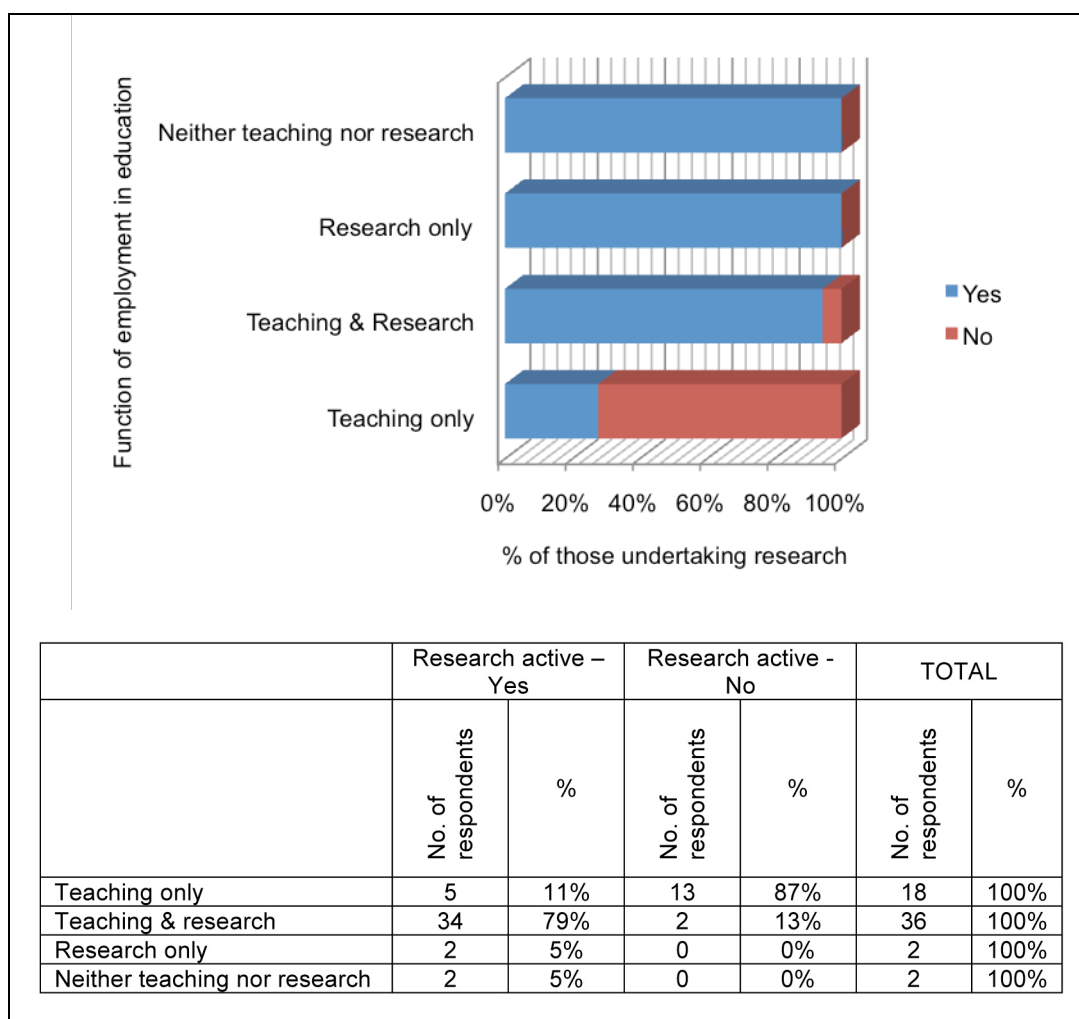
	Research active – Yes		Research active - No		TOTAL	
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%
Teaching only	5	11%	13	87%	18	100%
Teaching & research	34	79%	2	13%	36	100%
Research only	2	5%	0	0%	2	100%
Neither teaching nor research	2	5%	0	0%	2	100%

Figure 4. Designer Educator Survey Respondents Research Activity Compared with Function of Educational Employment.

Contrastingly, 13% of designer educators employed in a *teaching and research* capacity did not undertake research, even though the function of their educational employment included this activity. The survey results also showed that designer educators in *full-time* and *part-time* positions were more likely to be research active than those working in a *visiting* capacity (figure 5).
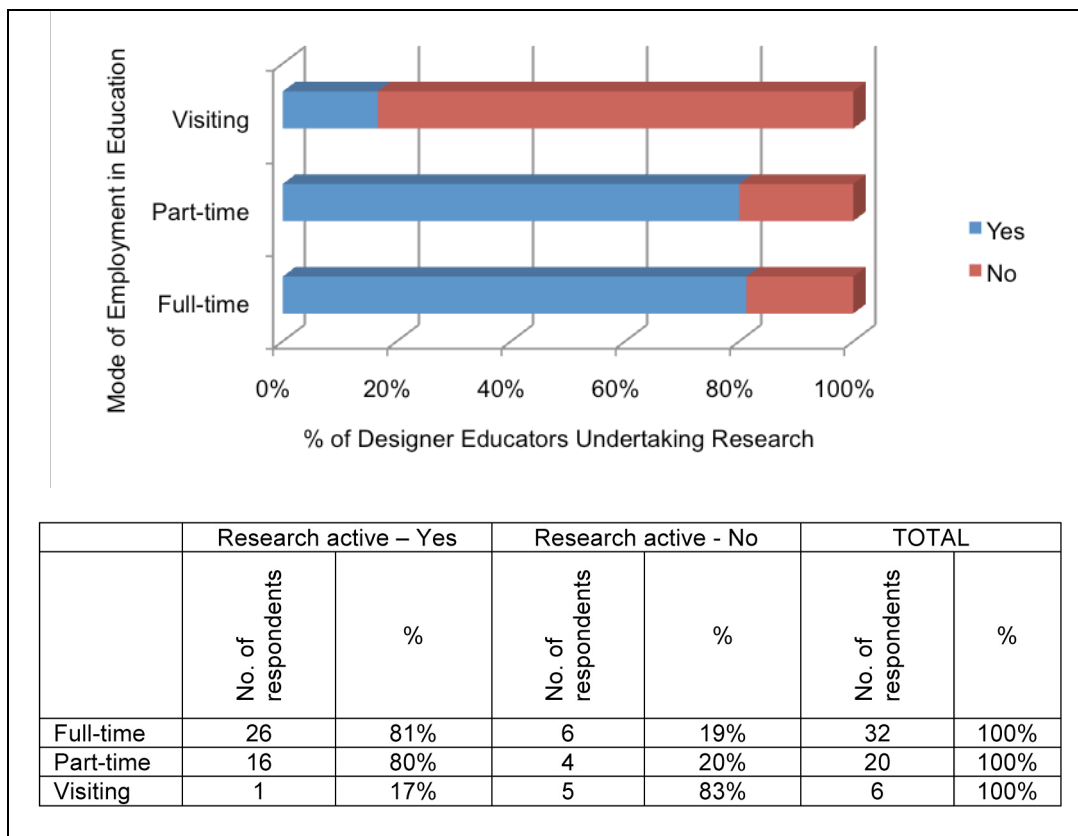
	Research active – Yes		Research active - No		TOTAL	
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%
Full-time	26	81%	6	19%	32	100%
Part-time	16	80%	4	20%	20	100%
Visiting	1	17%	5	83%	6	100%

Figure 5. Designer Educator Survey Respondents Mode of Educational Employment Compared with Research Activity.

Except for respondent 1, all case study participants were research active. When initially employed as a visiting lecturer the author was undertaking PhD research, this continued when employed in a permanent part-time teaching and research position and research activity became a requirement of the educator role.

Designer Educator Frequency of Creative Practice

Figure 6 shows designer educator survey responses when questioned about the frequency of their creative practice, the *never* category has been removed as respondents selecting this option were not classified as designer educators.
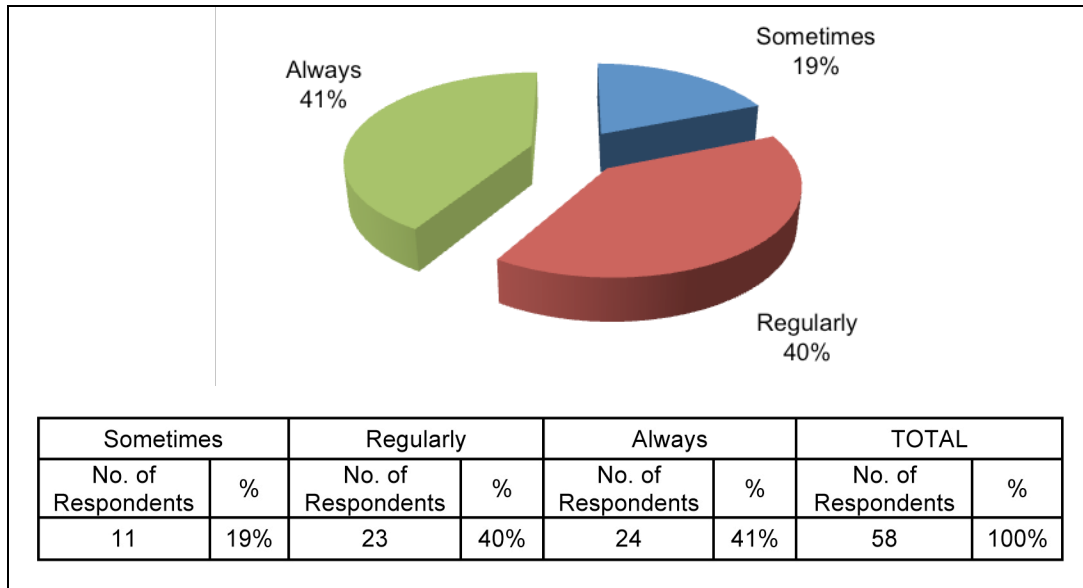
Sometimes		Regularly		Always		TOTAL	
No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
11	19%	23	40%	24	41%	58	100%

Figure 6. Designer Educator Survey Respondents Frequency of Creative Practice.

41% of designer educators selected *always* and 40% *regularly* to describe the frequency of their creative practice; while for 19% creative practice was *sometimes* undertaken. Frequency of the author's creative practice varied throughout the self-case study and related to changes in mode of educational employment. At the beginning of the self-case study when employed in a *visiting* capacity, teaching was infrequent and creative practice a major feature of daily activity, as teaching responsibility increased, own creative practice decreased. Table 4 shows frequency of creative practice survey responses for the case study participants.

		Frequency of Creative Practice		
		Sometimes	**Regularly**	**Always**
Respondent no.	1	X		
	2		X	
	3		X	
	4			X
	5	X		
	6	X		
	7			X

Table 4. Case Study Participants Frequency of Creative Practice.

Respondents 4 and 7 selected *always* to describe frequency of creative practice possible due to part-time educational employment and the use of time outside of this for creative practice. Similarly, respondent 1 *regularly* undertook creative practice, possible due to educational employment on a two day a week, term time only basis. Respondents 5 and 6 held full-time positions in education and both selected *regularly* to describe frequency of creative practice, indicating that these individuals either undertook creative practice as part of educational employment or did this outside of their educator roles. Of the respondents employed in education on a full-time basis 34% selected *always*, 44% *regularly* and 22% *sometimes* to describe frequency of creative practice (figure 7).
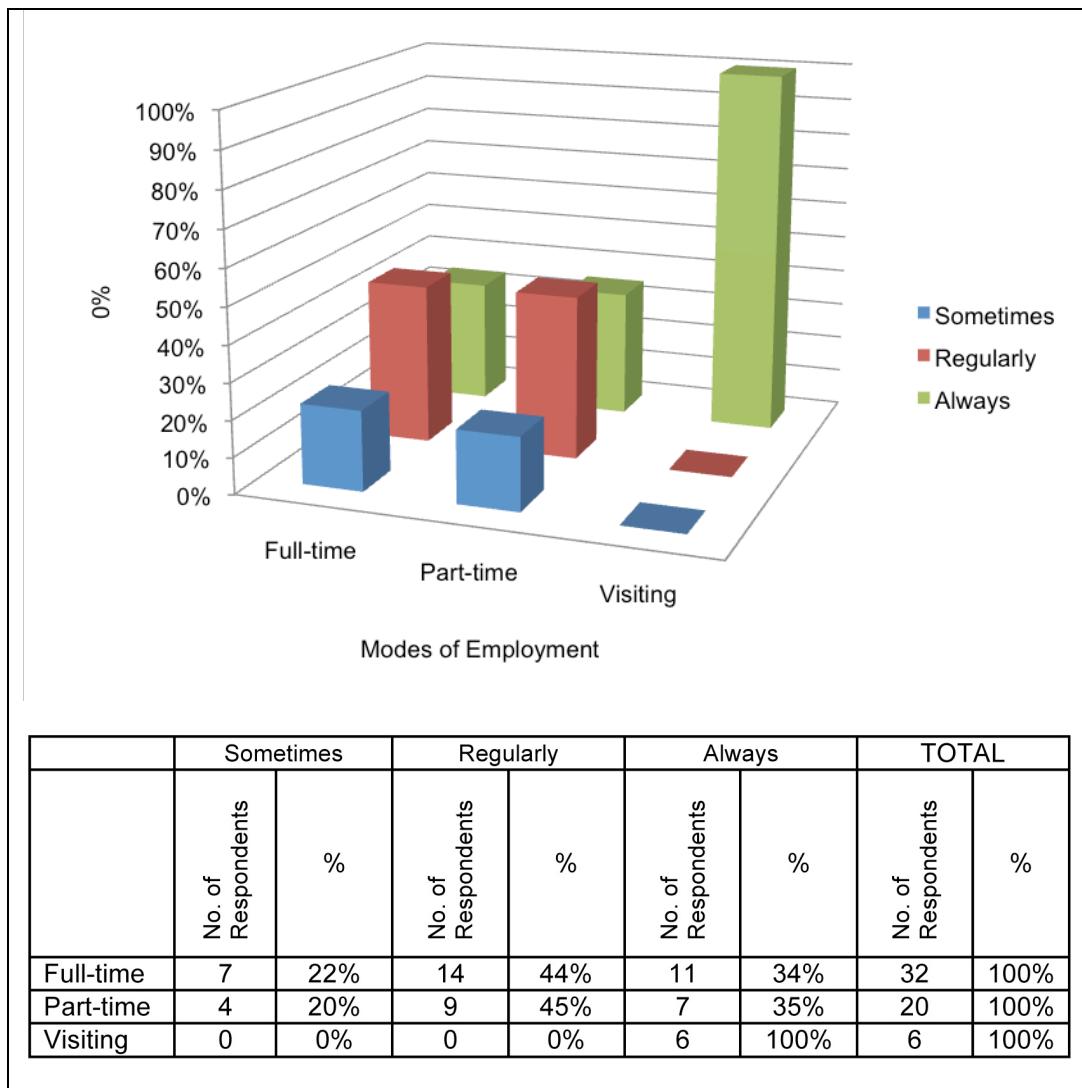
	Sometimes		Regularly		Always		TOTAL	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Full-time	7	22%	14	44%	11	34%	32	100%
Part-time	4	20%	9	45%	7	35%	20	100%
Visiting	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%	6	100%

Figure 7. Designer Educator Survey Respondents Mode of Educational Employment Compared with Frequency of Creative Practice.

Although the numbers of *part-time* respondents was lower than those in *full-time* positions, the results as a percentage for frequency of creative practice were almost identical, 45% of *part-time* respondents selected *regularly*, 35% *always* and 20% *sometimes*. All respondents, whose mode of employment in education was visiting, *always* undertook creative practice, highlighting this mode of employment as ideal for continuation of creative practice.

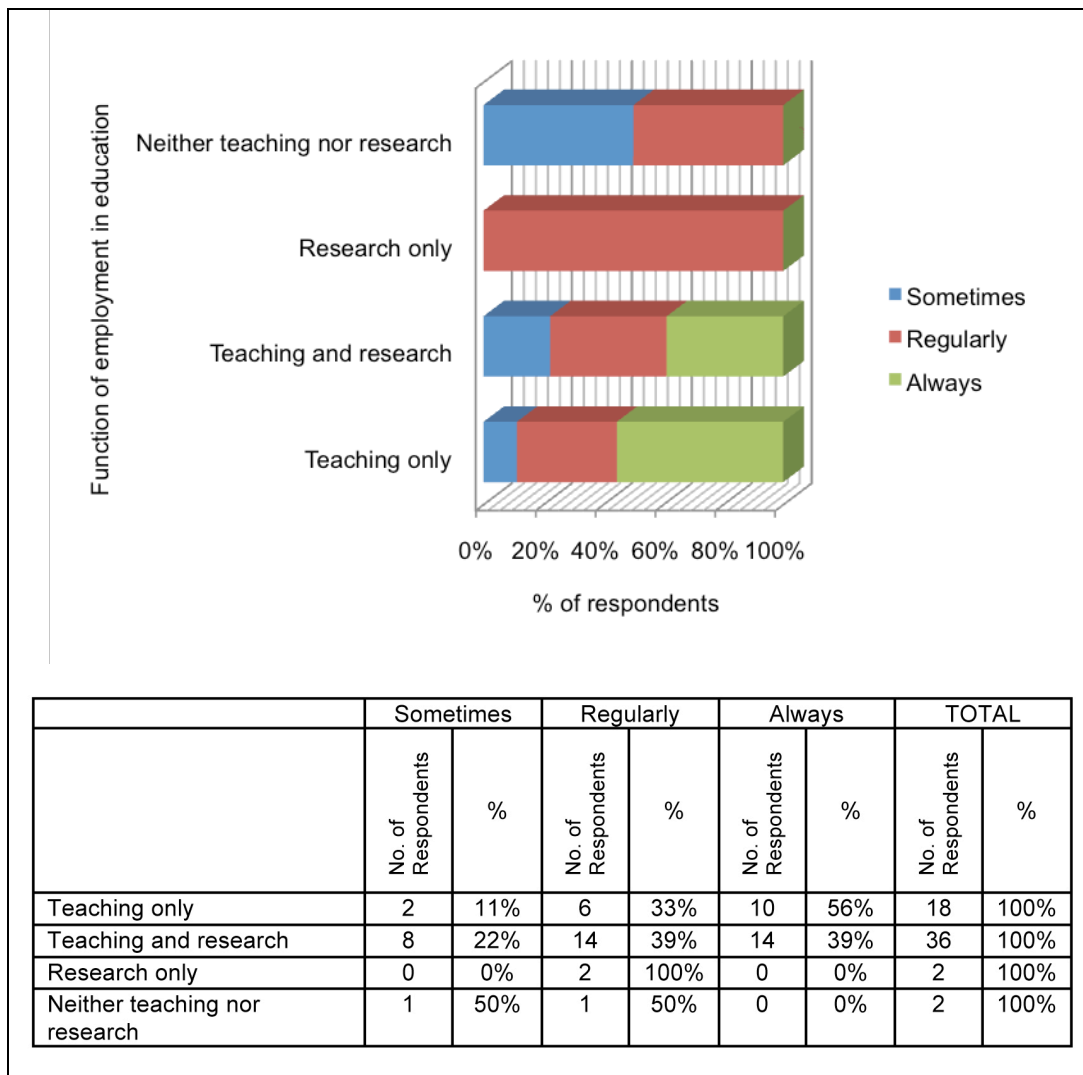Figure 8 shows function of educational employment (figure 2) compared with frequency of creative practice (figure 6).

	Sometimes		Regularly		Always		TOTAL	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Teaching only	2	11%	6	33%	10	56%	18	100%
Teaching and research	8	22%	14	39%	14	39%	36	100%
Research only	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	2	100%
Neither teaching nor research	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	2	100%

Figure 8. Designer Educator Survey Respondents Function of Educational Employment Compared with Frequency of Creative Practice.

The highest percentage (56%) of respondents selecting *always* for frequency of creative practice were those functioning in *teaching only* positions. A further 33% of *teaching only* respondents *regularly* undertook creative practice. The small number of respondents in *research only* positions stated that they *regularly* undertook creative practice. For those whose function of educational employment was *teaching and research* the same percentage (39%) undertook creative practice *always* and *regularly*. Analysis of case study participants survey data did not indicate that function of employment in education impacted upon frequency of creative practice. However, during the self-case study the author's mode of employment changed from *visiting* to *part-time* and function of employment from *teaching only* to *teaching and research*. This impacted upon use of time and therefore frequency of creative practice.

Research Activity and Frequency of Creative Practice

Figure 3 showed that 74% of designer educator survey respondents believed they were research active, frequency of creative practice for this group is shown in figure 9.
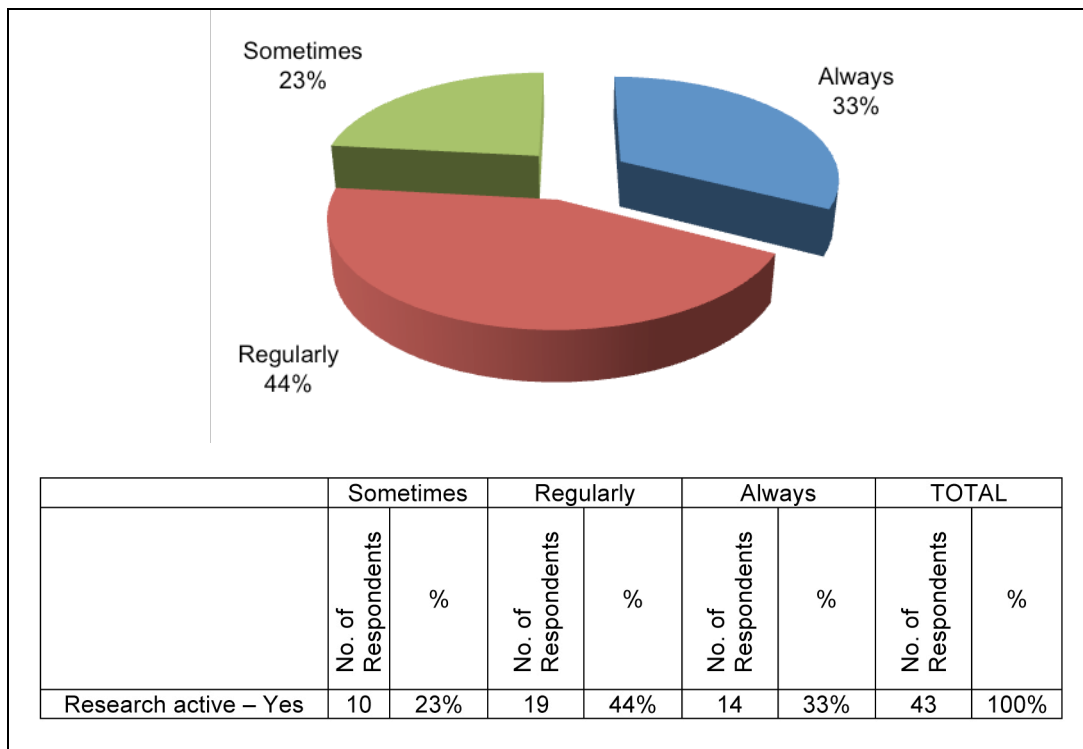
	Sometimes		Regularly		Always		TOTAL	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Research active – Yes	10	23%	19	44%	14	33%	43	100%

Figure 9. Research Active Designer Educator Survey Respondents Frequency of Creative Practice.

44% of research active designer educator survey respondents stated *regularly* and 33% *always* for frequency of creative practice. In comparison, with the survey respondents who did not undertake research, 27% stated *regularly* and 67% *always* for frequency of creative practice (figure 10).
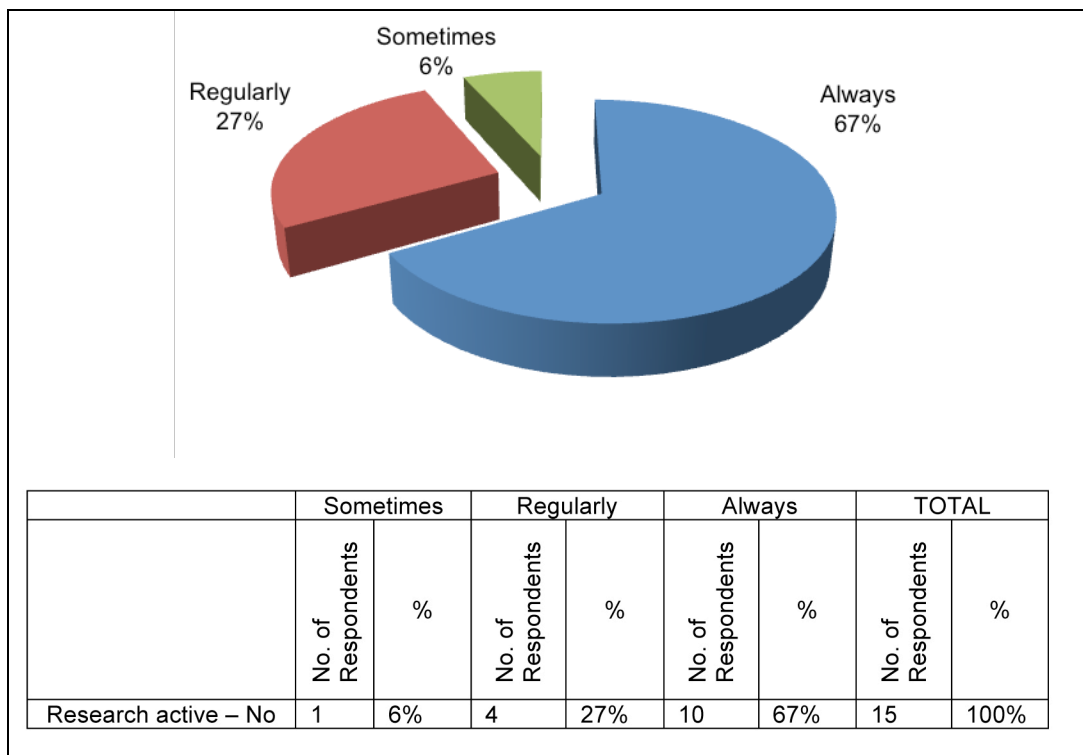

	Sometimes		Regularly		Always		TOTAL	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Research active – No	1	6%	4	27%	10	67%	15	100%

Figure 10. Non-Research Active Designer Educator Survey Respondents Frequency of Creative Practice.

Comparing figures 9 and 10 indicates that designer educators who do not undertake research, more frequently undertake creative practice than those who are research active. This is further emphasised with the percentage of respondents who selected *sometimes* for frequency of creative practice; 23% of research active designer educators (figure 9) selected this option, whereas for those who did not undertake research, this was only 6% (figure 10).

Approaches to Creative Practice and Research

To establish connections between textile designer educator approaches to creative practice and research, the survey asked respondents to select from a series of scaled options to the statement 'My research involves my creative practice' (figure 11).
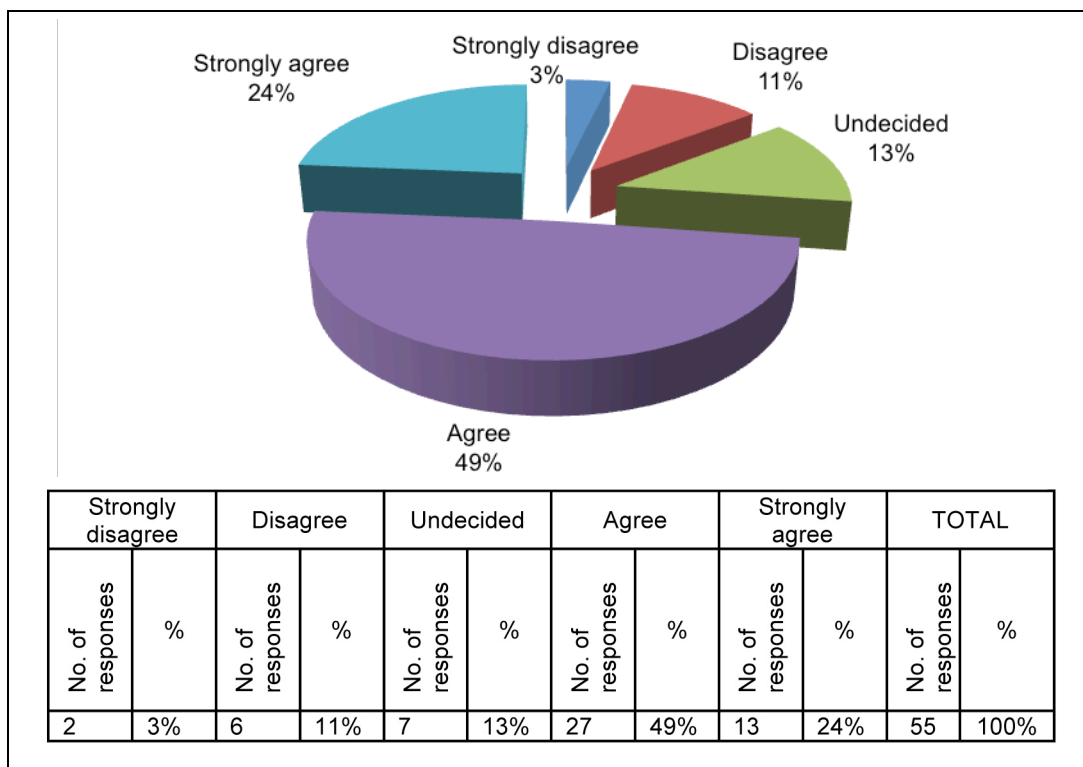

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree		TOTAL	
No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%
2	3%	6	11%	7	13%	27	49%	13	24%	55	100%

Figure 11. Designer Educator Survey Responses to 'My research involves my creative practice?'.

49% of respondents agreed and a further 24% strongly agreed with the fact that their research involved their creative practice. 14% stated that their research did not involve creative practice (11% selected *disagree* and 3% *strongly disagree*) and 13% were *undecided*. Case study participants held the same opinion as the majority of survey respondents, as they all selected either *agree* or *strongly agree* (table 5).

	'My research involves my creative practice?'				
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1					X
2				X	
3					X
4				X	
5					X
6				X	
7				X	

(Respondent no.)

Table 5. Case Study Responses to 'My research involves my creative practice?'.

There was greater variation in designer educator opinion with regard to the statement 'My creative practice is the same as my research?' (figure 12).

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree		TOTAL	
No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%
6	10%	9	16%	16	28%	20	35%	6	11%	57	100%

Figure 12. Designer Educators Survey Responses to 'My creative practice is the same as my research?'.

Almost half (46%) of designer educator survey respondents viewed their creative practice as the same as their research, as 35% selected *agree* and 11% *strongly agree*, 28% were *undecided*, indicating ambiguity in opinion. 26% viewed their creative practice as different from their research, as 16% selected *disagree* and 10% *strongly disagree*. The case study participant's survey responses also indicated variation (table 6).

| Respondent no. | 'My creative practice is the same as my research?' | | | | |
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1		X			
2				X	
3			X		
4					X
5	X				
6		X			
7				X	

Table 6. Case Study Responses to 'My creative practice is the same as my research?'.

Case study respondents 4, 2 and 7 all agreed that their creative practice was the same as their research; respondent 4 selected the *strongly agree* option. Respondent 3 selected *undecided*, whereas for respondents 1, 5 and 6, creative practice was not the same as research; with respondent 5 selecting *strongly disagree*.

The survey results show that differences exist in textile designer educator opinion surrounding the extent to which creative practice is distinct from or the same as research. The case study examples provide a more in-depth insight into variations in the contexts for designer educator creative practice and therefore differing approaches with regards to relationships between creative practice and research. The varying approaches are written in *italics*; an explanation is then provided.

Creative practice is undertaken independently.

Respondent 1's function of educational employment was teaching only. Therefore creative practice was undertaken independently from her educator role and involved the design and production of textiles for a range of different clients.

Creative practice is only undertaken for research.

Respondent 3 undertook creative practice solely for research as a component of educational employment. Research questions were formed, investigated and resolved through creative activity and the production of practical outcomes, the aim of which was to innovate through digital technology utilisation. This practice-led research built on respondent 3's PhD thesis. Outcomes resulting from the research have been disseminated through exhibitions and conference contributions. 'Clients' were not involved in this example of creative practice, instead the production of work is in response to an 'event' taking place with academic 'peer review' an essential part of the process (respondent 3).

Creative practice is undertaken independently and viewed as a contribution to research.

Respondent 4's creative practice involved the design and production of wallpaper for architects, interior designers and the public, produced to order from existing collections or to specific customer requirements. Wallpapers were exhibited at trade shows such as the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF), New York, 100% Design, London and in

galleries. For this designer educator creative practice was viewed as research activity, '…it's always assumed that my practice will be my research, that my wallpaper practice will be my research, going to trade shows and participating in trade shows will be my research and that's…become part of the…universities research…' (respondent 4). This designer educator also authored a textile-printing book.

Respondent 7 described three differing types of creative practice: the design and production of textile products such as table linen, the creation of textiles for gallery exhibitions and the production of commission-based work for public and corporate interiors. The latter form of practice and the creation of textile artefacts were viewed as contributing to the research (respondent 7). This designer educator described creative practice and research as 'integrated' and used '…as a way of evolving certain aspects of…own practice…'. Respondent 7 also authored a book on textile printing and dyeing.

Different forms of creative practice are undertaken for commercial and research contexts.

Respondent 5 undertook different forms of creative practice for commercial and research purposes. Designs were created for tableware, paper products, plastics and textiles on a freelance basis. Respondent 5's educator role primarily involved undertaking research and related activities, this included the production of outputs from completed PhD research, '…so there has been a lot of writing…alongside that…getting funding…investigating funding possibilities and putting together an ongoing long term project…'. The methodology used in the PhD project was phenomenographic and creative practice was used to investigate issues surrounding digital technology utilisation for collaboration and communication. Creative practice undertaken for research was described as 'art practice'. This was due to the restriction imposed when working commercially: '…there is no freedom…because you have a deadline and you have to meet the deadlines of your client so you can't just explore…the art practice allows for things to go wrong and doesn't have defined deadlines and constraints which inhibit creative practice.' (respondent 5) At the time of interview, post-doctoral research involved working with a textile artist, to investigate further the impact on creative practice when technology is used to communicate and collaborate. For respondent 5 artistic practice was a means to generate data and seek answers to research questions. Commercial design practice was not used as part of the research process, although areas of interest may overlap. Outputs generated from research activity included exhibitions, journal articles and conference contributions.

Creative design practice is used as a method to generate data as part of the research process.

Although the above statement relates to the examples of respondents 3 and 5, the approach taken during the self-case study differs. For respondents 3 and 5 creative practice formed part of the research process, commercial design practice was either not undertaken or an activity separate from research. Throughout the self-case study, creative practice was used as a method to investigate utilisation of digital technology in textile design. Creative practice involved the design and production of interior textiles and textile-based products i.e. soft furnishings and lighting (figure 13).

Figure 13. Self-Case Study Design created using *3DS Max* and *Adobe Photoshop*, digital print onto leather.

Textile products were exhibited and sold on a yearly basis at 100% Design, London. Feedback gained from architects, interior designers, retailers and members of the public were assessed and signalled areas for further development. Each phase of creative practice included periods of reflection, planning, investigation, production, exhibition, feedback and analysis, resembling the action research process. As creative practice was part of the self-case study, which was a component of the author's PhD project (Britt 2008) aspects of the research were disseminated through conference contributions.

Creative practice is undertaken as a means to develop and display skills.

While the above statement could be said to be true for the majority of the case study examples, creative practice as a means to develop skills was particularly pertinent for respondent 2. This participant stated that although she was '…a very active designer…' she did not '…particularly outlet…design…' (respondent 2). This designer educator described her research as 'design work' (respondent 2). Creative practice had involved working with digital technology to produce a series of scarves, the purpose of which was not to sell but to '…show…design skills…' (respondent 2). Although the production of this product was not viewed as a 'commercial venture', respondent 2 planned to exhibit at *Origin: The London Craft Fair* and designs were sold at the trade show *Indigo, Premiere Vision*, Paris. Future creative practice was to explore possibilities for digitally printing onto organic base fabrics, with the resulting artefacts featuring in a group exhibition in respondent 2's employer HEI. As creative practice involved utilisation of CAD software, insights gained informed tutorials used as a teaching resource. At the time of interview respondent 2 was writing a book described as '…a series of tutorials…an education book of what I teach…'.

Creative practice is undertaken, as is research, however these activities differ.

Respondent 6 worked on a freelance basis designing collections of trend-based fashion textiles, which were exhibited and sold through an agent and at trade show exhibitions such as *Indigo, Premiere Vision*, Paris. At the time of interview, respondent 6's creative practice was changing from producing freelance textile designs to 'one-off pieces' for exhibition, using a combination of hand and digital processes. In addition to this, respondent 6 produced written outputs from a recently completed PhD project, the written outputs being a requirement of her educator role. The PhD research was historical in nature, so did not involve designer educator creative practice, however respondent 6 may attempt this in the future.

Findings and Conclusions

The high percentage of individuals frequently undertaking creative practice (figure 6) highlights the importance of engagement in this activity for the textile designer educator. Frequency of creative practice by educators employed in teaching only and visiting positions was greater than those in teaching and research positions. Designer educators need to find ways to operate so that they can engage in creative practice activity. Employer HEIs should look to support this engagement and research involving creative practice provides a solution. An unexpected finding was the high percentage of designer educators employed full-time in education who selected *always* and *regularly* for frequency of creative practice (figure 7). Further research could be undertaken to establish how those in full-time educational employment undertake creative practice on such a frequent basis. The majority (74%) of designer educator survey respondents undertook research (figure 3). Some respondents in teaching only positions undertook research, whereas a small number in teaching and research positions did not undertake research. Supplementary qualitative research could be carried out to examine factors that prevent educators from undertaking research, and to gain insight into the nature of research undertaken by those in teaching only positions.

Responses to the survey showed that a high percentage (73%) of designer educators believed their research involved their creative practice (figure 11). However, there was extensive variation in opinion and ambiguity regarding the extent to which creative practice was the same as or different from research. Designer educator case study respondents 3, 5 and 6 held doctoral qualifications and articulated use of their creative practice as part of a research process. For these individuals, outcomes from research included, artefacts, exhibitions and textual outputs associated with more traditional forms of research dissemination. Whereas, case study participants without doctoral qualifications (respondents 2, 4 and 7) produced outputs related closely to commercial textile practice (i.e. artefacts, exhibitions) and authored books on textile design and production. The author witnessed a change in practice due to educational employment and PhD study. Design practice was initially a major focus of activity. Requirements to produce texts for doctoral thesis submission and disseminate research through conferences and journals meant that time for design practice was eradicated. Due to the range of existent educator practices, HEIs should ensure they continue to employ individuals operating in varying modes and functions, so that students benefit from exposure to a range of insights. Discussion could take place between

individuals, institutions and on a UK-wide disciplinary level to extend discourse and further clarify the extent to which textile design creative practice and research can be assimilated.

Variation in opinion and approaches to creative practice and research were evident. Seven different designer educator approaches to undertaking creative practice and research have been described. In respondent 1's example, *designerly* practice was purely for commercial textile design practice. This was the same for respondent 4, although *designerly* practice was viewed as research by the individual and employer HEI, highlighting a textile design practice as research approach. Respondent 3's *designerly* practice was purely for practice-led research. The self-case study used *designerly* practice for commercial textile design creation, as a component of a project, which used other research methods. Respondent 5 described *designerly* practice for commercial design purposes with an *artistic* approach adopted when undertaking creative practice for research, deemed necessary because of constraints imposed when working commercially. In the examples from respondent 2 and 6, a shift in *designerly* practice appeared evident. These individuals operated as freelance textile designers selling work through agents and exhibiting at trade shows. However, this appeared to be changing, directed towards a more art-based form of practice to produce textiles for gallery-based exhibitions. Although this evidence is not fully conclusive, further research could be undertaken to examine the impact of the research agenda, funding and assessment exercises on textile *designerly* practices.

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