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Practice what you teach? Examining the significance and complexities of textile designer educator creative practice

ABSTRACT

Learning to practice is central to undergraduate and the majority of taught post-graduate art and design programmes in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the creative practice of educators employed to teach, including part-time and visiting lecturers, has long been recognized as contributing to student learning. An emphasis on undertaking research has prompted educators, initially employed due to their expertise as creative practitioners, to formulate and adopt practice-led and practice-based approaches to research. The benefits of educator research to learning and teaching are also recognized. The higher education (HE) system is in a continual state of change, higher education institutions (HEIs) and educators respond to government policy and initiatives. Operating in the United Kingdom HE system together with pressures encountered can be counterproductive to educator creative practice. While research can involve creative practice activity there are issues, for example, with adoption of appropriate methodologies and difficulties with explicating tacit knowledge through writing. As a discipline, textile design exists on the periphery of design and design research discourse. The research project featured in this article responds

KEYWORDS

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designer educator
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learning and teaching
creative practice-
teaching linkages

to the context described and the deficit of literature surrounding contemporary textile design HE and educator creative practice and teaching linkages. The focus is on the textile designer educator role in the United Kingdom and examination of creative practice activity, to establish the means by which educator creative practice informs teaching and therefore influences student learning. The investigation used a combination of self-case study, survey, interview and case study methods. Findings indicate that textile designer educator creative practice is important to HE due to the positive impact that engagement has on teaching. However, issues are encountered and these are discussed in order to propose suggestions to improve the existent situation and to highlight areas for further investigation.

INTRODUCTION

This article contributes to minimal existent studies regarding contemporary textile design HE in the United Kingdom; the educator role; creative practice, research and teaching linkages. Existing literature is reviewed to contextualize the educator role in HE. Due to the scarcity of studies regarding textile design education, much of the material analysed concerns art and design education and HE generally. Initially, the focus is on creative practice learning and teaching approaches. The focus shifts to examine the value of educator creative practice and research to higher education institutions (HEIs). Pressures encountered from operating in HE, which impact upon educator creative practice and research, are discussed. Issues arising from the contextualization are summarized to highlight the situation to which the research project, described in this article, responds. The term textile designer educator has been adopted and a definition is provided. The article centres on the textile designer educator role to examine how creative practice informs teaching and therefore influences student learning. Textile designer educators encounter difficulties with creative practice engagement and specific issues are discussed. The final section of the article summarizes the research findings, highlights areas for future research and proposes suggestions to enhance the current situation regarding support for textile designer educator creative practice engagement. Although the research described in this article focuses specifically on textile design HE in the United Kingdom, it is intended that the findings and concluding propositions are relevant to other creative disciplines and geographical contexts.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE EDUCATOR ROLE IN HE

The majority of undergraduate and taught postgraduate textile design programmes in the United Kingdom focus on the training and preparation of students for industry employment, self-employment and working on a freelance or commission basis as creative practitioners. Therefore, as with art and design HE generally, textile design programmes provide opportunities for students to learn to practice through ‘... engagement with authentic activities in context’ (Drew 2007: 7). Through teaching, educators assist in the construction of others’ identities as creative practitioners (Shreeve 2009). There are varying concepts in the way that educators approach teaching, those who view ‘... learning as engaging with a practice, by exemplars, stories, narrative and through experience’ demonstrate a community of practice dimension (Drew 2004: 11). A signature art and design pedagogy is ‘dialogue’, a means ‘... of teaching and learning which specifically prepares students for ways of

thinking, being and acting in the professions' (Shreeve 2011a: 13). An example of this includes the exchanges that take place between students and educators, to enable the development of students' 'designerly' thinking (Shreeve 2011a). Therefore, to facilitate students' understanding of creative practice, educators are required to possess relevant creative practice experience.

The United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency (QAA 2012, 2008) recognizes that the creative practice undertaken by educators working in varying capacities in art and design HE makes important contributions to learning and teaching. Part-time and visiting lecturers, who are also active artists, designers and designer-makers, facilitate necessary connections between education and professional, creative practice (QAA 2008). Similarly, studies of teacher-practitioners, individuals working in the creative and cultural industries who contribute to the learning experience of students, influence pedagogy and curriculum development, increase student participation and engagement in learning and provide opportunities for students to learn employer relevant skills (Clews 2010; Clews and Mallinder 2010). Fashion and textiles teacher-practitioners enhance student learning and employability through transference of understanding regarding current trends, new developments, technological applications, business practices, entrepreneurial skill, methods of communication and presentation (Leith and McInnes 2010). They also guide students to 'realistic and commercial solutions' and 'pass on' design methodologies (Leith and McInnes 2010: 58).

The developing research culture in art and design HE has accentuated the necessity for educators to engage in research activity, gain funding and produce outputs. Success in the national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and now the Research Excellence Framework (REF) equates to enhanced reputation and financial gain for HEIs. Benefits of creative practitioner educator research to learning and teaching are understood; see for example A. Jenkins et al. (2007), C. Rust et al. (2007) and Supporting New Academic Staff (SNAS) (2007). The link between teaching, learning and research is iterative, as curricular developments highlight new areas for research exploration (SNAS 2007). Educators recognize the benefits of formalizing research in art and design with support for and resource access to produce new work, removed from market demand (Wareham and Trowler 2007).

The HE system is in a continual state of flux, directed by government policy and initiatives, to which HEIs and educators respond. For example, engagement in quality assurance and auditing activities places greater emphasis on administrative and related tasks, which change the academic role (Group for Learning in Art and Design 2008). Reduction in state funding and the shift to student payment of full cost tuition fees has prompted improvement of the student experience (Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2011). This has been coupled with demands for HEIs to reduce spending and demonstrate effectiveness, efficiency and value for money (Universities UK 2011). Legislation has added complexity to the employment of staff on an ad hoc basis and budget cuts make the employment of non-contracted staff vulnerable. In addition, institutions and those involved in teaching have responded to widening participation and internationalization agendas resulting in a diverse student population and drive to create more flexible modes of study (BIS 2009). Consequently, pressures placed upon educators due to working in the HE system can be counterproductive to undertaking own creative practice.

Although educator creative practice engagement positively impacts upon learning and teaching, the relationship can be complex. Unease with the

situation can result in part-time practitioner tutors leaving their academic roles and returning to practice (Shreeve 2011b). When segregation exists between an educator's '... worlds of practice and academia there is no sense of a two-way exchange between practice and teaching...' (Shreeve 2011b: 82). In this situation, teaching negatively impacts upon creative practitioner identity, instead of being a positive experience (Shreeve 2011b). Similarly, the Artist Teachers Scheme (ATS) was established due to anxieties surrounding 'lost' practice, exacerbated by teaching demands, found to obstruct creativity (Adams 2003). There are calls for greater recognition and value of the positive impact that educator creative practice can have on the learning and teaching environment. In particular, teacher-practitioners would welcome staff development opportunities for creative industry professional development (Clews and Mallinder 2010).

The research emphasis has prompted educators, initially employed due to their expertise as artists, designers and designer-makers, to adopt and formulate research approaches involving creative practice. Practice-led, practice-based, creative research and practice as research are terms used to describe creative work undertaken in the HE environment (Smith and Dean 2011). L. Candy (2011) describes practitioner research in the arts as a discipline still emerging, with the adoption of appropriate methodologies an issue. An RAE2008 report highlighted that art and design research content and process could be better articulated and that '... there was considerable variety in levels of scholarship...' and difficulty '... assessing evidence of enquiry...' in design, when practice is used as a method and with more traditional art practices (RAE 2009: 6). Initially, the emergent art and design research culture resulted in a limited depth of understanding regarding the nature of research (Durling 2002). More recently, it has been recognized that there is '... considerable divergence of views about creative work and research not only within universities, but also amongst academics...' (Smith and Dean 2011: 16). With art and design research, writing and communication can be problematic, attributed to complexities involved with making tacit knowledge explicit (Niedderer and Reilly 2010). Referring specifically to textile design, it has been suggested that the prominence of creative practice for commercial contexts and the tacit knowledge involved in textile making has caused the discipline to exist on the periphery of design and design research discourse (Bye 2010; Igoe 2010).

The research project disseminated through this article responds to the context described. It is widely recognized that educator creative practice is valuable to learning and teaching in art and design. The benefits of educator research are also evident and this activity can involve creative practice. The pressure of responding to change and operating in the United Kingdom HE system impacts upon the educator role and can be counterproductive to creative practice engagement. In addition to this, there is a scarcity of existing studies and literature relating to contemporary textile design HE, the textile educator role and creative practice, research and teaching linkages. The term textile designer educator has been adopted for the purposes of the project described in this article, to denote individuals who engage in their own creative practice and work in textile design HE. This was deemed necessary, as existing terms did not reflect accurately the role at the centre of the investigation. Focusing on HE in the United Kingdom the research project examined the textile designer educator role, to establish if textile designer educators undertake creative practice and the means by which creative practice activity informs teaching and therefore influences student learning. Creative practice

for industry contexts and creative practice for research purposes are discussed simultaneously. The complexities that educators encounter with undertaking creative practice are examined. Insights gained enlighten the formulation of suggestions and areas of further research to enhance the existent situation.

RESEARCHING THE TEXTILE DESIGNER EDUCATOR ROLE

The methods used to undertake the investigation included a self-case study into the author's evolving role as designer and educator, a survey of educators employed in the HE textile sector in the United Kingdom and case studies with textile educators from various HEIs. The methods were carried out sequentially. Analysis of data generated from one method informed the line of questioning in the subsequent method. From the self-case study key themes emerged, survey and case study methods were used to increase understanding from alternative perspectives, to ensure objectivity and support validity. The self-case study covered a three-year period during which time educational employment changed, from occasional visiting lecturer at three HEIs, to regular visiting lecturer at one HEI and then permanent contracted part-time employment at The Glasgow School of Art (GSA). As a visiting lecturer function of employment was *teaching only*, when contracted to a part-time permanent position this changed to *teaching and research*. The self-case study method was used as it offered '... a strategy for doing research that involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Robson 2011: 136). Sketchbooks, photographs, designs on paper, textile samples, products, diagrams and an activity log were generated as evidence. Reflection was vital throughout the self-case study, whether 'reflection-in-action' while carrying out activities, or retrospectively after an event or experience had taken place, 'reflection-on-action' (Schön 1987). From the self-case study key themes emerged relating to the research questions, designer educator role and creative practice.

To increase understanding it was necessary to gain further insight from the perspective of others. An online survey was undertaken that targeted textile design educators; 81 respondents completed the survey; analysis of data was primarily statistical. Certain survey responses were analysed to ascertain which respondents could be classified as textile designer educators. This totalled 58 respondents, employed at 36 different HEIs (28 England, 4 Scotland, 3 Wales, 1 Northern Ireland). A total of 55% of textile designer educator survey respondents were employed in education on a *full-time* basis, 35% *part-time* and 10% in a *visiting* capacity (Figure 1).

The function of educational employment for the majority (62%) of designer educator survey respondents was *teaching and research*, 31% functioned in a *teaching only* capacity and 4% *research only* (Figure 2).

Full-time		Part-time		Visiting		Total	
Number of responses	%						
32	55	20	35	6	10	58	100

Figure 1: Designer educator survey respondents – mode of educational employment.

Teaching only		Teaching and research		Research only		Neither teaching nor research		Total	
Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%
18	31	36	62	2	4	2	3	58	100

Figure 2: Designer educator survey respondents – function of educational employment.

A total of 3% of responses were received in the *neither teaching nor research* category (Figure 2), open-ended responses indicated that these respondents were employed as support staff and as their roles did not involve either teaching or research, their responses were excluded from subsequent analysis. Further sets of criteria were applied to the survey responses to elicit those individuals operating in textile design practice and teaching positions comparable to the author. Seven case studies were completed. 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 1).

Respondents 5 and 7 held research positions, however their function of employment was *teaching and research*. Respondent 5 held a two-year temporary research post, which involved teaching a small group of students on a weekly basis. Respondent 7 held a research post at one HEI and taught at another. 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 that ‘... 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 2000: 12). With content analysis applied to interview data, initial categories were formed from questions, with others devised and amended in relation to the responses contained

	Employer HEI	Mode of employment	Function of employment
Respondent no.	1 Leeds College of Art & Design	Part-time	Teaching only
	2 Chelsea College of Art & Design	Part-time	Teaching and research
	3 Nottingham Trent University	Part-time	Teaching and Research
	4 Bath Spa University	Part-time	Teaching and Research
	5 University of Wales Institution Cardiff	Full-time	Teaching and Research
	6 Buckingham Chilterns University College	Full-time	Teaching and Research
	7 Robert Gordon University The Glasgow School of Art	Visiting	Teaching and Research

Table 1: Designer educator case study participants – educational employment.

Sometimes		Regularly		Always		Total	
Number of responses	%						
11	19	23	40	24	41	58	100

Figure 3: Designer educator survey respondents – frequency of creative practice.

within the interview transcripts. Analysis of case study data prompted further reflection on and comparison with the self-case study and survey findings. The multi-method approach meant that different analysis techniques were used depending on data type and for comparative analysis. Throughout this article survey data are used to contextualize the situation, with specific examples provided by the self and case studies.

TEXTILE DESIGNER EDUCATOR CREATIVE PRACTICE FREQUENCY

From analysis of the research data it is evident that textile designer educators often undertake creative practice. Figure 3 shows frequency of creative practice for the survey respondents, the *never* category has been removed as those selecting this option did not qualify as designer educators.

A total of 41% of respondents selected *always* and 40% *regularly* to describe the frequency of their creative practice; while for 19% creative practice was *sometimes* undertaken. Table 2 shows frequency of creative practice survey responses for the case study participants.

Respondents 4 and 7 selected *always* to describe frequency of creative practice, possible because of part-time educational employment and the use of other time for creative practice. Similarly, respondent 1 *regularly* undertook creative practice, due to educational employment on a part-time, term-time only basis. Respondents 5 and 6 held full-time positions in education and both selected *regularly*, this indicates that these individuals either undertook creative practice as part of educational employment or used time outside of this employment for creative practice activity. For the author, creative practice frequency varied throughout the self-case study and related to changes

		Frequency of creative practice		
		Sometimes	Regularly	Always
Respondent number	1		X	
	2		X	
	3		X	
	4			X
	5	X		
	6	X		
	7			X

Table 2: Case study participants – frequency of creative practice.

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.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATIVE PRACTICE

The high percentage of respondents frequently undertaking creative practice indicates the importance of engagement in this activity for the designer educator. This is supported by case study interview responses. For example, respondent 4 believed it possible to ‘... stop being an educator...’ but if the designer component of the role ceased the educator component would suffer. For respondent 2, design practice was ‘most important’ due to educational employment demands in recent years, which adversely impacted upon individual creative practice activity. At the beginning of the self-case study the author taught digital design and textile printing technologies. Prior understanding and experiences acquired through own creative practice informed teaching approaches and workshop content. Continued engagement in creative practice ensured development of own understanding related to methods and processes, the discipline and wider field, which influenced further teaching practice. The research data revealed varying means by which textile designer educator creative practice impacts upon teaching.

BEING CONTEXTUALLY AWARE

It was evident that case study respondents’ creative practice involved updating own awareness surrounding textile design and related disciplines, which infiltrated into aspects of teaching. For example, for respondent 6, this encompassed viewing the work of other creative practitioners, trend information, visual references and techniques considered innovative which permeated into teaching. The necessity to ‘go out and see’ and continually search for this type of contextual material was communicated to students (respondent 6). Similarly, when respondent 4 visited and exhibited own creative practice at trade shows, collected information is shared with students and other HE colleagues. This linkage was also evident during the self-case study, references discovered through exhibiting at, or visiting trade shows, other exhibitions and viewing secondary sources (i.e. books, magazines, postcards, promotional material and websites) relating to a range of subjects (i.e. the work of other practitioners and companies, materials, techniques and processes) for the purposes of own design practice, were referred to when providing guidance to students, used as examples on project briefs and communicated to colleagues when relevant.

ADVANCING SKILL

Engagement in creative practice can develop textile designer educators’ skills, which can influence teaching content and hence inform student learning. For example, the skills gained by respondent 2 through individual use of computer-aided design (CAD) software, informed tutorials written; the discovery of new techniques through own creative practice prompted the creation of new tutorials. This transference of insight was also expressed by a survey respondent, ‘... practice research into CAD processes results in the production of

new teaching methods and filters through to the student experience'. The release of new versions of software and improvements with peripheral devices and output technologies require educators to update skills and understanding to ensure that teaching remains relevant to the wider practice context. This view was reflective of the author's opinion throughout the self-case study, expressed by case study participants, and summarized by this survey response: 'Standards with software and hardware evolve constantly and there will always be a need to put into practice new developments with technology. I believe you need to practice what you teach'. Use of the Centre for Advanced Textiles (CAT) at GSA throughout the self-case study, for digital print sampling and production, increased the author's awareness of potential technological utilization. Insights gained through using the CAT Digital bureau service, communicating with staff at the Centre and operating equipment were communicated to students through workshops, handouts, group and individual tutorials and the development of an online learning resource, formulated with other staff. Updating digital technology skills through own creative practice enhanced confidence when teaching (respondent 2) and was felt necessary to 'be one step ahead' of increasingly digitally literate student cohorts (respondent 6).

EXPERIENTIAL REALIZATION

Continued creative practice by textile designer educators extends individual approaches to addressing issues and overcoming problems encountered throughout the design process, this can then inform the guidance given to students when they face similar situations. In certain cases this was described as 'reflection on own experience' to guide students (respondent 7) and 'empathy towards students' going through similar processes (respondent 3). During the self-case study and with the majority of case study participants, experience gained through own creative practice assisted students in realizing their ideas. Respondent 4 described this as an ability to '... visualize the end of the line...which involved showing and explaining to students '... potentially where something could end up' (respondent 4).

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND NETWORKING

Insight gained by textile designer educators regarding working as a designer in industry and operating in a self-employed capacity informed teaching practice. This was indicated by case study interview responses and was also evident during the self-case study. For example, different situations encountered through the author's design practice were communicated to final year students. This included describing examples of alternative working procedures, such as undertaking commissioned work involving exclusivity agreements, working for agents on a predetermined percentage cut of the income gained, establishing royalty agreements and calculating trade and retail prices. Awareness of the necessity for students to possess certain business skills and entrepreneurial abilities increased through developments in own practice, which influenced curriculum content. The dissemination of educators' creative practice work to the wider community, through platforms such as exhibitions and trade shows, provides opportunities for networking. Contacts made can be viable for establishing student industry-based projects, work placements and internships.

ENCOUNTERING ISSUES

Although textile designer educators frequently undertake creative practice and engagement in this activity remains significant due to the positive ways in which teaching is influenced, the research discovered that issues are encountered with maintaining and developing creative practice. Also, there was uncertainty regarding the extent to which employer HEIs valued textile designer educator creative practice, evident with survey responses to the statement ‘My creative practice is valued by the educational institution for which I work’ (Figure 4).

While 59% agreed (33% *agree* and 26% *strongly agree*) with this statement, 31% were undecided and 10% in disagreement. This suggests that although a high proportion of respondents believed that HEIs valued their creative practice, almost half were uncertain. Respondent 6 felt that working as a designer was no longer appreciated by employer HEIs due to the need for educators to be of ‘commercial value’ in terms of research. A survey respondent also indicated this:

Too much emphasis is put upon academic research that will bring money into the University. Creative practice is not valued to the same level, even though this would benefit [...] students [...] Universities are interested mostly in staff that have a high research profile, than ability to teach or have worked in industry.

Another survey respondent believed creative practice, research and teaching to be ‘separate and disparate’ activities, describing this situation as unfortunate. Analysis of self and case study data revealed specific issues textile designer educators encounter with undertaking creative practice.

CREATIVE PRACTICE TIMING

Finding time to undertake creative practice can be problematic for textile designer educators. Individuals, to undertake creative practice often use weekends and holidays. For the author, prolonged blocks of time were found to be most productive. Respondent 6 stated that a concentrated period of at least three weeks was necessary to produce satisfactory work. Also, time for re-acquaintance with practice can be required after a period of inactivity. Scheduling time for educator creative practice within academic term time can be an issue. Respondent 4 required time out from teaching at ‘... inconvenient times [...] within term time...’ to exhibit work, highlighting the fact that the ‘... design world does not work on an academic timetable, the design world

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	
Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%	Number of responses	%
2	3	4	7	18	31	19	33	15	26	58	100%

Figure 4: Designer educator survey responses – ‘My creative practice is valued by the educational institution for which I work’.

works on its own design timetable and the pair of them clash'. During the self-case study trade show participation was possible as the exhibition took place prior to the start of the academic year, this permitted creation of work and preparation during the holiday period. However, the timing of orders and commissions received from participating in the event was unpredictable and scheduling time to undertake production of this work around educator responsibilities was problematic.

ACCESSING TECHNOLOGY

In certain cases textile designer educators benefit from access to and use of resources in employer HEIs for own creative practice use. However, issues were encountered with undertaking own creative practice in the learning and teaching environment. For example, equipment utilization tends to be restricted to when student demand is minimal. Respondent 6 expressed anxieties with students seeing work in progress due to possible negative opinions. Initially, the author regularly undertook creative practice using departmental facilities and enjoyed the atmosphere when working in this environment. However, as educator responsibilities increased, undertaking creative practice in the educational environment became increasingly difficult as teaching and related activities dominated and were a continual distraction. Working from home became more productive, particularly as owned computers were higher specification than those accessed in the HEI. Similarly for respondent 5, the majority of CAD work took place in a home studio due to higher specification technology; frustration was felt with HEI equipment geared towards administrative tasks.

ACKNOWLEDGING RESEARCH

For textile designer educators, undertaking research provides opportunities for creative practice activity. However, finding time for research can be an issue. For example, respondent 2 used time outside of educational employment for research activity and respondent 3 described research as '... something that I slip in when I can'. As with creative practice, the author regularly used time out with the academic term to engage in activities primarily considered to be research (i.e. carryout data analysis, preparing and writing abstracts, papers and conference presentations). As with creative practice, difficulties were encountered with continuing research projects and producing quality outputs during short and infrequent periods of time available between weekly teaching schedules.

PRODUCING WRITTEN OUTPUTS

Although research undertaken as part of the textile designer educator role involved the production of practical creative work such as designs and artefacts, the necessity to produce written outputs was cited as counterproductive to creative practice. Respondent 5 found that '... more of the research is writing rather than making so it's constantly a battle to keep the visual [...] going'. Respondent 6 believed that the necessity for HEIs to have staff producing research outputs had led to the employment of individuals '... who have a certain way of doing things through research, that is not practical necessarily, unless the practice is geared towards that outcome that can be evaluated'. Undertaking historical doctoral research prevented

respondent 6 from designing, lasting a period of five years. The initial intention of the author's research project was to use design practice as a method. As the project evolved it was necessary to collect data using other methods. The time required for documentary and numerical analysis, dissemination of the project and writing meant that own design practice was non-existent for an extensive period.

BALANCING DEMANDS

The following quotations taken from the case study interviews indicate that textile designer educators struggle to balance the varying components of their roles and that there is ambiguity regarding how to improve the situation:

I need to find a balance...it's how to juggle all of these different things and teaching because teaching, it's really demanding.
(Respondent 2)

I think there aren't enough hours in the day. I don't know what the answer is, really you just have to be superhuman and split personality.
(Respondent 5)

... it's not particularly how I want it to be all the time but [it is] just the hard reality of working in higher education.
(Respondent 3)

I haven't found the answer yet, to be able to click into these different creative spaces [of teaching and designing].
(Respondent 6)

During the latter part of the self-case study, when contracted to part-time employment, the author's role evolved to include teaching and related activities. Yearly activity planning provided an opportunity to balance different activities, however, as a greater percentage of time was for teaching and related activities, this component of the role tended to dominate over time set aside for creative practice and research.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that a high proportion of textile designer educators in the United Kingdom frequently undertake creative practice. The case study examples indicate that creative practice activity is possible when individuals operate in both part-time and full-time educational positions. However, the author found that creative practice frequency decreased as educator responsibilities were extended and time spent in educational employment increased. Further research could be undertaken to establish how textile designer educators, particularly those in full-time educational employment, frequently undertake creative practice. Building on this, a group of designer educators could be studied over a period of time to ascertain changes to the textile designer educator role and impact upon creative practice frequency.

Textile designer educator creative practice appears to remain important to HE due to the positive impact that engagement can have on teaching. Opportunities are required to view a range of references, attend and

participate in exhibitions and other events, learn and develop skills relating to process and technique. As digital technology continues to evolve and students enter HE with increasing digital awareness, continued textile designer educator creative practice provides opportunities to update digital skills and inform teaching and resource development. Individual experience of the design process influences guidance suggested to students to overcome problems and resolve design ideas. This highlights the necessity for students to access a range of opinions so as not to limit design process insight or restrict design development to a single viewpoint. Textile designer educator understanding regarding entrepreneurship informs teaching and therefore student learning. The textile designer educator perspective is central to the research undertaken, therefore, there is scope to examine how teaching, which has been influenced by designer educator creative practice, specifically enhances student learning. Further research that seeks textile design student and graduate opinions and the views of other stakeholders such as HE managers and industry employers would extend understanding.

Analysis of the research data indicates that textile designer educators encounter issues with undertaking creative practice. Greater recognition of the value of textile designer educator creative practice to HEIs is required. Finding and scheduling time for creative practice can be problematic, if engagement is important then time needs to be attributed. Blocks of time for creative practice activity appear to be beneficial; therefore HEIs could offer educators greater flexibility to permit creative practice activity within term time. To facilitate this it is likely that a larger group of teaching staff will be required. Sabbaticals, work placements and internships could also provide opportunities for educator creative practice re-acquaintance and development. Although these suggestions will cost HEIs, benefits of enhancement to the student experience are highly probable. The creation of academic timetables, which parallel calendars showing industry-based creative practice events such as exhibitions, would highlight opportunities for educator involvement during periods of teaching downtime. Educators and students could also create work simultaneously for inclusion in the same industry-based events. Bringing textile design education and industry together in this way would also enhance student understanding of the wider community of practice. Alternatively, the ATS scheme could be developed specifically for textile design. Events could be organized involving input from industry and access to workshops or studio space to permit creative practice days or residencies for educators. If HEIs value textile designer educator creative practice, resource development could be further extended to consider both student and educator utilization. Specific studio or office spaces separate from the teaching environment could exist as hubs for textile designer educator activity.

Creative practice can be undertaken as part of research activity, however scheduling time to undertake research can be problematic. As with suggestions made regarding parallel timetabling of teaching activities alongside industry-based events, this could be extended to encompass activities and dissemination opportunities linked to research, such as conferences. As with creative practice, opportunities to undertake blocks of research are beneficial. The production of written outputs for research can be counterproductive to textile designer educator creative practice. However, it is necessary for the textile discipline to continue to contribute to design research discourse; to do this will require submissions to traditional dissemination platforms such as journals and conferences. Support for writing and research projects involving

both textile designer educators and colleagues with writing experience could enhance the existing situation. Throughout this article textile designer educator creative practice for industry and research contexts has been discussed simultaneously. Further examination of the similarities and differences between textile designer educator creative practice for these contexts would enhance discourse surrounding the nature of the textile design discipline and the designer educator role. Further investigation could be undertaken to establish how the various components of the textile designer educator role can be organized and balanced. To do this, examples of good practice could be sought and analysed, from creative industry disciplines and from other practice-based areas with an established research culture.

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