

The professional practice of design: a qualitative study of design processes and their suitability for teaching academic design

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Keywords

Design Education; Pedagogy, Design, Teaching, Design Process, Methodologies, Project; Higher Education

Partner Institutions

Expected Future Partner Institutions

ALMA DESIGN; André Teoman Studio; CIFIAL; Design Gonçalo Campos; Designer Miguel Estima (Diverge); Designer Toni Griolo; Emotional Objects; Estúdio Christophe de Sousa; EVERYTHINK; FAMO; GlammFirE; IDUNA; ITALBOX; LEVIRA; Miguel Palmeiro Designer; Mor Design; Pedro Sousa Studio; Wewood

OBJECTIVES

Analyze and correlate the practices, instruments and methodologies used professionally in the design process with those tested in an academic environment

Identify gaps between professional practice and academic teaching and harmonize the project's didactics with the processes used by designers in the exercise of their profession

Adapt project teaching and promote faster learning of the skills currently required in professional practice

Create synergies between design specialists, professionals working in the field of design and the academic community of higher design courses

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ABSTRACT + IMAGES

This research project is based on the mission of Portuguese polytechnic education, which is guided by an applied research and development perspective, aimed at understanding and solving concrete problems and aims to provide a solid cultural and technical training, develop the capacity for innovation and critical analysis and impart scientific knowledge of a theoretical and practical nature and its applications with a view to the exercise of professional activities (DGES, 2022)

Over the past few years, there have been several attempts to bring the business community and academia closer together. This trend stems from the mutual recognition of the added value and advantages, for both parties, that the creation of synergies and knowledge sharing can bring both to design professionals operating in the labor market and to higher education in design.

The study to be developed lies in the need to contribute to the field of higher education in design the particularities identified in a professional environment, which can be introduced in the academic process and which better suit and prepare design students for the expectations and requirements with which they will be faced when entering the labor market. Bonsiepe (2012, p.15) speaks of the danger of excessive "academicization" of design education. For this researcher, "there is a risk of the predominance of traditional criteria of academic excellence, erudition and the production of papers, relegating the practice of design, which is the essence of design, to the background". With this, the distance between the academic world, on the one hand, and, on the other, the solutions to the real problems of companies and society tends to grow"

According to Norman (2010) we need new types of designers, people who can work across disciplines, who understand human beings, business and technology and the appropriate means of validating claims.

For Friedman (2012) the most important thing is the fact that designers need to learn more than they learned before to succeed in a first-rate design program. Upon graduating, they must know more than they did before to work at the higher levels of the profession and require a higher level of integrative skills to succeed.

Findeli (cited in Wang, 2010) argues that design education needs to develop a systemic theory that allows for an understanding not only of planned artifacts, but also of the invisible relationships between the inner worlds of the designer and the client(s) and the external worlds of society and the biosphere.

Given the nature of the research project, it is foreseen that fieldwork will be carried out by traveling to the partner entities' own workplaces and thus observing in loco the working methodologies, the dynamics and all the particularities of the designer's activity.

In addition, surveys and interviews will be developed in order to obtain information of a qualitative and quantitative nature that will allow the creation of a comparative analysis framework on all the elements identified in the scope of the study.

Throughout the process to be developed, we seek to identify, in a first approach, criteria that are at the base of the gap between the reality of the design professional and that verified in higher education environments in design, and which may be the basis of innovation. pedagogy in the field of design. Thus, methodologies, instruments, work phases, duration times, work dynamics, or even strategies, are factors that a priori are foreseen as elements of analysis and study and that can provide relevant information to replicate in academic projects.

The first phase of the study should culminate in the creation of an analytical framework to identify all the elements that are decisive for the practice of the design professional.

In a second part of the work, it is intended to disseminate, through the exercises developed in the Curricular Units related to the design project, the criteria and other particularities verified in the study. It is expected that after applying the assumptions arising from the study carried out, it will be possible to obtain quantitative data, compared to previous years, as well as qualitative data, resulting from criteria that are difficult to quantify, such as the motivation and interest of students in embracing the new practices.

In the development of this phase, several moments are considered for the participation of designers and other specialists identified in the study, so that they can cooperate and collaborate and thus also be able to actively participate in the transfer of results and validate them.

At the end of the study, actions to disseminate the results are expected to be carried out, either through the creation of digital communication media, or through articles and participation in conferences.



SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE FOR THE DISCIPLINE

The research project to be developed focuses on the search for a closer relationship between the work that is carried out professionally by agents integrated in the labor market (designers, companies, offices/ateliers) and higher education in design, aiming to replicate in the academic environment. the practices, instruments and methodologies in design recurrent in professional work processes.

With the development of this research, we seek to transfer knowledge between both parties involved - academia and the labor market - in order to be able to imprint on the practice of the project exercises developed academically, particularities, instruments and methodologies similar to those practiced by the agents to work. in companies, offices and other entities that develop work in design.

This confrontation will allow the practice of new pedagogies associated with the training context of higher education courses in design, adapting the profile of the design trainee to the requirements and expectations of the designer's professional activity.

EXPECTED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Research, given its academic character and purpose, does not aim to achieve the economic and social impact in an immediate and direct way.

It is expected that the contribution of this study in strengthening ties between design specialists (professionals and companies) and students, will allow the exchange of perspectives and the transfer of knowledge between the two realities and thus indirectly contribute to companies and for higher education in Design.

The social impact of this research project results from the involvement of the business community, professionals and also the academic community resulting from the process of creating synergies between all the parties involved.

RESEARCH PLAN AND TASKS

The research to be carried out aims to bring together the realities that occur in academic and professional environments in the field of design.

The aim of this investigation is, at first, to assess the current state of work produced in professional design environments in Portugal and, at a later time, to analyze how the same processes can be adapted to the project exercises developed by the students of the higher courses in design.

With this approach, we seek to narrow the professional and academic realities in order to obtain an appropriation for the area of higher education in design of the methodologies, instruments and procedures that currently prevail in professional circles in design and thus better adapt the training curriculum of future students. designers. This approach seeks to imbue design students with the demands and expectations they will be faced with when they enter the job market, as well as fostering practices that are recurrent and appropriate to the constraints of the design profession and designers today.

The work to be carried out has as its methodology, at first, the identification of a study body (sample) made up of partner entities, such as companies, design offices, liberal design professionals, who are willing to cooperate with the ongoing research, to later be able to carry out fieldwork with them and thus be able to deepen the study on the processes that occur in professional environments.

At a later stage, with the identification of the "know-how" of design professionals and consequent analysis of the information collected, the study aims to adapt the identified processes, transposing them into practice in the development of projects developed by design students in the development of their projects. academics. This approach seeks to test how professionally verified reality can be replicated in a classroom context through project exercises.

In the next step, tests will be carried out with different groups of students in two polytechnic higher education institutions: one of the groups experiences the result of the study elaborated in the first phase of the work, being able to confront its applicability in the context of the classroom, and a second group of students (control group) will receive the information and make decisions in a conventional way. Testing principles, instruments, methodologies and practices emanating from the study carried out, applying them to the development of the academic project in design, is the objective of this phase.

During the testing process with the students, validate the methodologies that best suit, the most used work tools and practices ("know-how") that may be in force in the training plan of higher courses in design and thus contribute to facilitating the passage and the transition between the student and the future design professional.

The study hopes to obtain a set of principles and procedures to be implemented in the field of design disciplines in design, as structuring curricular units of the courses, in order to better adapt the profile of the design student to the reality that characterizes the intervention of the design professional. nowadays.

At the end, it is expected to clarify how the training process in the area of design, especially in the field of design projects, can be rethought in order to better prepare future designers for the characteristics of the design activity and design professionals. nowadays. It is therefore expected that the study to be developed can also be a working tool for design courses and that they can assess their training offer, giving the Curricular Plan characteristics that correspond to the expectations and demands that the job market has. about future design professionals.

EXPECTED SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

As a way of disseminating the results obtained, it is foreseen the elaboration of scientific articles and other forms of publication that intend to make known the results obtained, as well as the exposition of the proposals developed by the students, through the communication of the development and of the processes and results. obtained by them. The reproduction of the results obtained on a digital platform is also considered.

BUDGET: € 7.500,00

The costs associated with the implementation of the research project fall on trips to the various partnerships that are associated with the study, representation expenses, as well as the acquisition of goods and services to support the activities and actions involved in the study.

Expenses inherent to the processes of dissemination and dissemination of the intermediate and final results of the research process are also foreseen, such as publications and attendance at conferences.