Educating those involved in changing human futures

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Designing & Human Futures

• The purpose of undertaking acts of designing is to produce designs for artifacts that are intended to change human futures.
• Acts of designing occur in a wide variety of disciplines - mainly by untrained individuals.
• Designing is a key element of most forms of professional activity.
Human futures integrates design education

Core issues in designing are:

• *Social* - designing is a human activity & creates complex change for humans.

• *Ethical* - designing involves human values in choosing good/bad, include/exclude, do/don’t do etc.

• *Environmental* - designing is intended to change human environments.
Fields of Design Education

There are three main groupings:

• Technical fields of designing - e.g. engineering, software, and systems (45%).
• Fields of designing based on Art & Craft traditions - e.g. graphic designing (5%).
• Other fields of designing - e.g. organisation designing, instructional designing, policy designing (50%).
Fragmentation of design education

• Fragmented and uncoordinated across fields and professions in its approaches, content, methods and practices.

• Divided by single discipline issues about:
  – Disciplinary cultures
  – Theories and perspectives
  – Organisational issues
  – Praxis
Integrating Design Education

Integrating ‘Art and Craft’ and ‘Theory’ cultures of design education shows up weaknesses in coordinating:

– ontology
– epistemology
– concepts
– theories
– terminology

These are core issues in building design education!
Some problem areas

• Educational content limited to single discipline.
• Ontological, epistemological and theoretical foundations different for different disciplines.
• Little agreement about key concepts.
• Single discipline focus problematic for multi-disciplinary designing for human futures.
• Poor basis for communication between designers from different disciplines.
• Single discipline designers limited inability to draw on knowledge from other disciplines.
Multi-disciplinary designers

- Similar level of understanding as a university-qualified practitioner in technical, social, business and other disciplines.
- Involves more than supplementary courses in e.g. ‘social issues’, ‘business ethics’, ‘contextual issues’, or ‘cultural analysis’.
- Requires full-strength final year units from other disciplines, and a significant reduction (say >50%) in current course content.
Types of designers involved in the building human futures

• Designers of visual outcomes and surfaces
• Technical designers in e.g. engineering, information systems, architecture
• ‘Other’ professional designers in e.g. management, government, agriculture.
• All human beings undertaking the often hidden acts of designing that help define & shape possible human futures
Defining the activity of designing

• Test: “Can X occur without Y?”
• This test separates ‘the activity of designing’ from many associated activities such as; drawing, calculating, analysis - even thinking.
• The test implies that ‘the activity of designing’ cannot be easily separated from ‘the activity of feeling’.
• The above distinctions are important to defining appropriate education for designers.
Summary: Key understandings in educating designers

• Improving human futures is a key aspect of designing and design education.
• Designers have responsibilities because of their influence on the development of individuals and societies.
• Substantial contributions available in Futures Studies research literature.
Summary: adverse factors

• Current discipline-based aims and pedagogies of design education & practices.
• Assumption that designing is only done by single discipline design professionals.
• Conceptualising designing in terms of associated skills - rather than as a distinct activity itself.
Designing and the design education to improve human futures

• Multi-disciplinary designers able to analyse and utilise findings of many disciplines that they tertiary level of skill.
• Wide-ranging analyses of factors impacting on designing & broader effects of designed artefacts.
• Grounded in Futures Studies methods, theories and projections.
• Include the acts of designing of all persons - professional or not - involved in creating the future
Separating designing from associated activities - basic issues

Clarifies many issues about:

• Who is doing the designing.
• What skills designers need.
• Which education processes, content, and pedagogies are appropriate.
Separating designing from associated activities - research

It opens up research avenues including:

• making explicit different aspects of human functioning related to designing.

• Exploring how humans bring together ‘designing’ with associated activities e.g. drawing.

• Exploring how actthes of designing are shaped by each designer’s past experiences and physiology.
Separating designing from associated activities - education

- Offers the extension of design education into most disciplines.
- Clarifies & resolves many cross-disciplinary conceptual conflicts in design education.
- Provides the basis of a broad education aimed at improving individuals’ cognito-affective designing processes.
- Provides the basis for identifying the educational content and training is necessary to educate designers who are fluent in a wide variety of disciplinary areas.