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Riding the seven c's, developing an international cross-cultural design educational model

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Themes addressed:

Cross-cultural communication in today's curriculum; social responsibility and sustainable practices as factors in curriculum development

Paper title:

Riding the seven c's, developing an international cross-cultural design educational model

Key words: cross-cultural, creativity, cross-disciplinary, international

Abstract

This research paper questions how we can enrich and enhance the international and cross-cultural diversity perspectives of curricula in graphic design education?

In a period of constant educational change and global education opportunities (UNESCO) it is apparent that staff and students need to re-position themselves and be reminded that 'the development of a culturally sensitive learning environment should be viewed as a shared responsibility amongst teachers, developers, administrators and learners', which involves consultation of participants to ensure a rich and purposeful model is being developed'. (GOODEAR, 2001).

This is both an opportunity and necessity in enabling UK and international design students to proactively learn, culturally liberate themselves and subsequently develop invaluable transferable design skills in a global economy. There are educational dangers if we are not proactive in developing sustainable cross-cultural pedagogies in our education environments 'the sanitizing of cultural differences has the potential to limit the educational opportunities that can be found in culturally diverse learning environments'. (GOODEAR, 2001).

This paper will offer practical and theoretical insights by proposing an educational model developed by the author 'the seven c's'; consisting of cross-cultural, communication, collaboration, commerce, creativity, cross-disciplinary and community. The model has been developed working within an international educational environment at postgraduate level consisting of students from the 'seven seas', represented from countries as diverse as Qatar to China.

Contextually the research builds on and openly questions the cross-cultural work outside of design by Trompenaars, Hofstede, alongside initiatives by UNESCO on the global citizen and educational sustainability. It also engages with cultural design debates initiated at the Seattle ICOGRADA conference and issues in graphic design of the global/local (TWEMLOW). The research is also informed by previous cross-cultural work by designers Tenazas and Steiner.

Clearly, design needs to develop its own research and practices within cross-cultural contexts. The paper illustrates an educational cross-cultural working process specifically for the subject of design and particularly graphic design. The paper highlights how an active model can be developed through learning by doing (GIBBS, 1998) and thinking (RAMSDEN, 2003) however, coming from a perspective which addresses creativity across cultures (LUBART), cross-

disciplinary and importantly by a practice-based collaborative international team project approach.

The research methodology is predominantly an action research one through problem-solving. It is also situated within a pedagogic research-informed teaching approach where teaching draws upon enquiry into the teaching and learning process itself (JENKINS AND HEALEY, 2005). Methods incorporated have been cross-cultural international focus groups attended by students, interviews and student case studies. The practical pedagogic findings will be of use to anyone working in design education wishing to develop cross-cultural curricula.

The paper will be contextualized and presented through student project images and a short film by the author entitled: 'research is like a pair of scissors', which derives from a Japanese student questioning design research.

Biography

Joseph F McCullagh

Joseph F McCullagh is the MA programme leader for Graphic Design at Nottingham Trent University. He has worked as a graphic design consultant in a number of companies both in the public and private sectors. His typographic interests are in concrete poetry and expressive typography.

Joe's research as an educator is within pedagogic international cross-cultural work. The ma at of which he leads has cross-cultural design at its heart. He has lectured internationally and he currently acts as an educational design consultant in South Africa He is also the external examiner for the MA in Graphic Design at the University of the Arts, London, UK.

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