INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENGINEERING AND PRODUCT DESIGN EDUCATION
6 & 7 SEPTEMBER 2018, DYSON SCHOOL OF DESIGN ENGINEERING, IMPERIAL COLLEGE, LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

CULTURE OR BEING CULTURAL? CONTENT IN DESIGN IN GENERAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
Some of the changes in justification for design education seen at university level are mirrored in changes at the primary and secondary school levels in Norway. The country is shifting away from seeing design as mere form and function toward viewing it as a societal building stone for universal, ethical and environmental solutions based in practical studio work. This focus is being tested by the introduction of externally led 'culture and creativity' programmes at these lower educational levels. These 'artist led' programmes mostly focus on 'fine art' and the individual pupil's experience of art. This paper pinpoints several challenges evident after introducing two 'owners' – external artists and Art and Design teachers – deciding the content in art and design education and student learning outcomes in these programmes. After introducing the concepts involved, the paper addresses the challenges for art and design teachers, and the 'bump signs' in the professional boundaries, by examining the outsourcing of design education in primary and lower secondary schools through the use of a Norwegian case study. The question then asked is: Can the programme, in its current form, be justified by the learning outcomes of the pupils involved, and what ideas has the change in content focus added or supplanted?

Keywords: Cultural education, civic oriented design, general design education, design education

1 'MAKING PROFESSIONS' AND CHANGING JUSTIFICATIONS

Despite the relatively short international history of research into the field of design education and design professions, also labelled 'making professions', Nilsson and Dunin-Woyseth [1] see such research as vital to the practice worldwide. The growing relationship between 'design research connoisseurs/critics' and 'design practice connoisseurs/critics' is a positive development; according to the authors, 'The development of the field of practice-related design disciplines makes it more and more possible that there will be an increasing number of people being both' [1, p. 9]. This new research orientation, in which the practitioners and educators are also the researchers, has led to educators establishing theory-led studio practice in universities and colleges. A new stage in what can be called the 'professionalization project' has been reached [2]. The practitioners not only develop their work within the studio but also engage in research into professional practice and education. Such a relationship is also evident in teacher training programmes for teacher training programmes for art and design education in primary and secondary school.

1.1 General Design Education and its Justification

In both educational content and studio practice, designers are shifting from the sole production of products, to thinking of design as a step towards the betterment of society as a whole. This change is also visible in the subject-matter didactic of design teacher training, where the legitimisation of design education at lower educational levels is currently debated. The making professions' justification of purpose—design as a driving force in the development of an inclusive and sustainable society—is mirrored in the content and rationalisation of design education in primary and lower secondary schools in Norway. While art and design education in primary and lower secondary schools is focusing on studio work and ethical choices, schools in Norway (and across Europe) choose to outsource parts of the education to external artist-led 'culture and creativity programmes' more focused on art appreciation. There is a real concern that this shift towards 'cultural education' will be counterproductive to developing citizen educated in sustainable design.

This paper will highlight two areas of concern in this new development. The findings are based on my own research into [3] [4] [5] more recent reports [6] [7] [8] [9] and studies of the early stages of a current culture and creativity programme (DKS) in Norway [10] [11]. First, I will address the challenges faced by professional art and design teachers due to outsourcing of design education in primary and lower secondary schools, and the resulting shift in professional boundaries. Second, I will consider whether the programme, in its current form, can be justified by the learning outcomes of the pupils involved, and how changes in content have supplanted certain education concepts.

1.2 Framing the Educational Practice: What, Why and How?

The Scandinavian countries base their educational purpose and research on Germanic didactic and pedagogy traditions [12]. The Design Research Society and design scholars use the concept of design pedagogy closely connected to content and method [13]. However, the Germanic pedagogy mainly focuses on learning and *bildung*—self-cultivation—on an overarching level [12], which makes it simultaneously too narrow and too wide. While it may sound paradoxical, pedagogy offers a general theoretical approach to learning and self-cultivation that, while necessary, does not relate specifically to a field of expertise such as specific subject-matter/content questions related to design education [14]. Didactic on the other hand is defined by the question: What basic design knowledge should the next generation of citizens or professionals have, why is it needed and how can this be achieved? This incorporates the philosophy of education, the philosophy of design and the knowledge of design history; professional practice; studio and workshop experience; and design theory [16]. The response to this question also articulates the justification of the field in education and in wider society addresses current needs to develop new directions in design education or professional practice and signals a commitment to the future based on the purpose the profession assigns to design [15]. The 'What?', 'Why?' and 'How'? questions are asked at all levels of design education and are never static [17]. They are also hard to see as separate: from 'Why?' follows 'What?' and from 'What?' follows 'How?' My background, general education with a specialisation in design, shapes my belief that continuous learning in design is a vital concern. What do we choose as content for design education at different levels, why this particular philosophy and focus, and how do we enhance education in the workshops, studios and classrooms? This paper questions the inclusion of politically initiated culture and creativity programmes, asking whether the ensuing projects contribute to or erode the values, evaluation criteria and collective considerations [18] attained through knowledge, skills and attitudes formed in teacher-led workshop practice, specifically in design. When externally led projects are introduced into education without considering the possibility they will introduce a different set of values, it is likely several 'bump signs' [4], if not a 'bump event' [15], will transpire. A new purpose, a narrow view of content consideration and an altered view of education as a whole comes into play [4].

2 A NORWEGIAN CASE OF OUTSOURCING CULTURE EDUCATION - DKS

Den Kulturelle Skulesekken (DKS), the culture and creativity programme in question, was established in 2003 nationwide in primary and lower secondary school. It is allotted lottery funds to bring professional artists into schools to collaborate with teachers within the frames of the curriculum; by doing so, it is meant to strengthen arts education from 1st to 10th grade (6–16 years). Artists and teachers in art and design are supposedly given the opportunity to jointly develop projects within the subject content (fine art, architecture, crafts and design). However, the 'art world' and the 'school world' are brought together to fulfil a professional task that lacks a clear framework and defined goals. In the year following the introduction of the programme, research shows that the individuals Nilsson and Dunin-Woyseth [1] call 'subject-matter education practice connoisseurs/critics', namely the studio teachers, are constantly questioned by external participants [4] [5] [7] [8] [9] [11]. The initiative then becomes a professional battleground where educational content is the weapon of choice for dismantling others' opinions.

2.1 Identifying Narratives of Justified Behaviour

Narratives of justification of professional choices from external artists and studio teachers within culture and creativity programmes not only present the reason behind their choices in professional practice, but also present the opposing choices as somehow not justifiable. In other words, they might depict the *hero* and the *obstacle*. Ambiguous instigated critiques are often cited as a means to identify the values that drive the parties, and the need for justification tells a story of opposing views. The book

On Justification: Economies of Worth by Boltanski and Thévenot [19] examines the concepts used, the aims to strive for, and the people of authority that the actors refer to in order to define the value sets, or worlds, the actors use as bases for justifications. In an early article, the authors show that actors reflect on and judge their own choices and those of others, although they 'rarely make explicit the general principles of their actions' [20, p. 210]. The most important indicator is the Higher Common Principle (HCP), as all other indicators are correlated to this.

To more easily identify sides in a conflict, when the situation is described, points of view are accentuated as oppositions [21]. As Riessman writes: 'Like all social actors, I seek to persuade myself and others that I am a good person. My narrative is inevitably a self representation' [22, p. 11]. These narratives enhance the values that underlie any professional choice, and are, as such, an invaluable tool for understanding the basis of conflict at both the professional and personal level. The narratives themselves are a form of appraising the moment, either justifying the narrator's own choice or criticising the other party's solution to the problem [23]. People explain themselves in a manner opposed to or in concert with others [24], and use language, HPC and authority figures to form group identities in a socialisation project of belonging or opposing [25]. Justification is performed through taught patterns of narration and through worth and value [26]. Thus artists and art and design teachers operate within their professional traditions and values that underlie their understanding of art and education while involved in DKS. The actors are forced to make an argument in which they rely on values to justify their actions and their position. While artists can rely solely on values; teachers have to justify their choices whilst also taking into account laws and regulations that affect the professional practice. This makes the teachers' justification narratives less strong than the artist that can operate on an ideal level. Their persuasive efforts are visible in professional justification narratives in which artists involved in the DKS collaboration choose to explicitly state their position through exclamations such as: 'But you have to agree that…' or 'Even you must see that...' In light of a theory of justification, the actors do not *have to* agree or see the other actors' contrasting point of view as valid. The values possessed by the actors in regards to their professional practice, surface in the arguments they use when trying to organise the chaos into new and more harmonious stories. Justification departs from value sets, develops them further and its narratives allow us to find a profession's governing values.

2.2 The 'Artist Hero' and the 'Teacher Obstacle': A Professional Challenge

At its core, art and design education aims to foster knowledge within the subject content and at the same time encompass *bildung* [4]. The children should develop both a strong knowledge base as well as a moral compass—a cultural repertoire of values [26]. However, as this paper will show, a narrow concept of culture dominates the discussion. It becomes impossible to criticise the view of 'fine art' for the masses, as the initiative to bring culture to children is seen as laudable in itself. This helps validate professional stereotypes and create labels such as *artist hero* and the *teacher obstacle* [4] [5]. Such labels indicate the creation and distribution of stereotypes are one dimensional, and the story told by artists and artist organisations in the public realm is primarily one sided. As it stands, art and design teachers are not given the opportunity to explain their views to the public via the media, and as such the construction of these stereotypes is based on one profession's value sets. The agenda of the artists and artist organisations creates such stereotypes, not research into the field [4]. At the start of the Norwegian programme, Selmer-Olsen cautioned against such a predicament, saying '[K]nowledge in the field is defined by special interests and a lack of a unifying perspective. The distribution of culture is to a great extent guided by good will, politics and ideology, and not by research based knowledge and systemized experience' [10, p. 3].

The value set that guides legislation regarding educational practice is based in the *civic orientation* of social democracy, common causes, equality, universality and shared opportunities, and the *industrial orientation* of professionals, expert knowledge and results. These values surface occasionally in media narratives, but are subordinate to and dominated by the *inspired orientation*, focused on the individual, the sole genius, the lone revolutionist, and as a result are often listed as the primary obstacle. This is alarming in light of the DKS programme and its placement within the school institution. Artists are seen as 'brave survivors' of the institution—the toil and monotony of the classroom, liberating the children from the constrictions of society in favour of an individual focus. The narrative contrasts the 'school world' that limits and hinders, and the artist that sets free and helps. *Pedagogisation*—that of bringing pedagogical considerations into an art education context—becomes a negative concept,

which makes it impossible to initiate a discussion on the quality of the offered content. To question the fact that craft, design and architecture are not often included in these initiatives is inconceivable, even though these subjects are an integral part of culture education, both in the wide and narrow sense of the word. The civic orientation, evident in universal design, environmental design and ethical design amongst others, is replaced by the concept of 'creativity', which is valued by those with an inspired orientation but not linked to any specific knowledge area; rather, it is a generic justification for 'free expression' and the absence of a curriculum.

3 CULTURE IN SCHOOL OR SEPARATE FROM SCHOOL?

The design education community with the Kyoto declaration as a basis is in the process of establishing a common value ground based in ethical design. However, the debate over art and design education at the primary and lower secondary levels in Norway also centres on how to balance civic-mindedness with the individual development of the inspired orientation. This discussion poses a challenge for teachers when they meet strong justification narratives from 'inspired' artists. The professionalism of design teachers is scrutinised by 'artist experts' invited into the discussion with a different agenda and understanding of the concepts involved, and even the purpose of education as a whole [4]. Instead of bridging the two sides, the easier choice for the teacher can be to not cause conflict over the inclusion of civic-oriented content [17]. In addition, the idea of culture in education, or even cultural education, has been introduced. Researcher Egil Bjørnsen [7] addresses the problem of cultural education, noting that different interpretations of *bildung* can explain the propensity to accept the understanding of 'culture' as something children can access through external resources and exhibitions visiting the schools to ensure that children have *access* to culture. He states there are two approaches to *bildung*: subject-oriented and object-oriented. Subject-oriented *bildung* views culture as something that makes society what it is, and through participation in all areas of life an individual will develop a moral sensibility and a depth of cultural undersanding [7]. In this view, the school as an institution becomes one of the main cultural arenas of a nation, and subjects are not divided into 'cultural' and not. This understanding of culture and *bildung* has the potential to foster a sustainable culture [18, p.1].

Object-oriented *bildung* promotes the educational potential of legitimate/elite fine art for children, as a sort of externally given cultural capital [27]. In certain initiatives culture is defined as something that can be obtained through fine art, but as the definition of 'fine art' is narrow, cultural education is reduced to behaving in a certain manner—'being cultural'. An individual should attend the 'right' exhibition, listen to the 'right' music, read the 'right' books and discuss cultural heritage through art and craft. Exposure to the 'right' art is believed to lead to moral growth and better humans [7]. In this approach, the few, on behalf of the many, decide which aspects of fine art create individuals that 'are cultured' and enhance human potential. It is no longer located in the common understanding of values, but becomes a force that separates those who 'know' from those who 'know not'. Culture becomes an act of forming an audience for appreciation of someone else's effort, rather than learning through one's own work.

4 WHAT, WHY AND HOW IN DESIGN EDUCATION

When discussing culture in general education, culture should transcend the specific subject and function as an overarching sets of values. Culture can then be seen as the values and positions that permeate society, a means by which to evaluate what is beneficial to the population, the moral standards that should be met and even what constitutes a democracy [18]. Adopting such a position in education will provide a more in depth approach in all subjects, not just the arts. However, the narrow interpretation of culture is increasingly common in policies involving art and culture, especially in relation to art and design education [5] [7] [8]. Even if it is framed as inclusive, it remains subject specific to art and cultural education [28]. Culture then shifts from a communal reference to national values and considerations to fragments of the world separated from general knowledge. In such policies, it is followed by words such as 'creativity' that cloud the discussion of a common ground. Documents and initiatives targeted to culture and education seem to combine 'art education', 'aesthetic education' and 'culture education' [8]—all of which can be said to hold different connotations in an education setting.

As culture is often confused with fine art, the push for cultural education becomes a campaign for art education as cultural capital in an extremely narrow sense [28]. In light of this, the landscape of cultural education can be perceived as somewhat paradoxical. For some time now, the trend in art,

craft or design education across Europe is to slowly outsource it to external forces through projects such as teaching artists [29], creative partnerships [30] [9], DKS [31] and Skapande skola (Creative School) [32]. At the same time, many initiatives such as Horizon 2020, the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme, advocate for citizenship education with a focus on creative problem solving, 21st century skills and designing a better future [34]. It is worth asking if culture really exists in a separate realm apart from education.

4.1 Shifting focus: From Civic Content towards Individual Free Expression

We are left with culture programmes in which students assume the role of audience members rather than practitioners. Research shows that these visits, if not anchored in everyday teaching plans and content-specific knowledge, are easily forgettable, while true collaborations with content-led workshop activities produce high-value learning outcomes [4] [7] [9] [11]. When politicians accept that content and values should be outsourced to a programme with an object-oriented perception of culture, there is a real danger that art and design in primary and secondary school will become more oriented towards appreciation of fine art rather than the workshop-led practice it has been, grounded in values relating to citizenship and responsible design [33]. If culture is viewed simply as a creative individual and relegated to art education, it will lose the potential for education to instil a civic mind-set that produces design literate citizens who believe in a shared future [6]. To simply accept that such a concept can be distinguished and separated into a subject labelled 'cultural education', which corresponds to a small portion of a student's day, produces further questions. At the least, there must be a discussion regarding the meaning of this division, and if it is fruitful in terms of developing an education with a focus on sustainable design. It might be necessary to view youth as active agents of change, rather than appreciative audience members serving as passive 'culture consumers'. Yet a crucial question remains: By whom and how is the content of general design education established?

This article outlined two approaches to culture in education, and argues for the need to reawaken and reintroduce the wider concept of culture in relation to sustainable design education and student learning outcomes. A curriculum should present a vision of future society and how and if design will play a part in a sustainable development, both nationally and globally. As such, it is essential to consider how the culture of the many, strengthened through compulsory education based on values and ethics, can be a step towards a sustainable future. I can only conclude that a discussion of the role of culture and creativity programmes in schools needs to be revisited in light of recent research and the consideration of a shared purpose of ethical development through design.

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