Improving the Quality of Teaching- Learning Process in Design Education

*Mr. K. Arul

*Assistant Professor, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Chennai

Introduction

Teaching-learning quality in any subject is dependent on the instructor and the methods of instruction employed. Design education being a practical subject, it requires quality teaching for learners to be able to apply prior skills and knowledge acquired in the classroom in the field. In achieving quality teaching learning, institutions have come up with Total Quality Management (TQM) departments to guide teachers and ensure what is achieved in class is excellent. Educationists have been doing their best to improve the teaching strategies in the teaching field as a whole. Higher education institutions are focused on excellent teaching, creativity, research and innovation as other concerned professionals look for better ways of teaching learners.

Encouraging Independent Learning

When the scope is trimmed down to quality teaching in design education, strategies employed are critical in ensuring that desired outcomes are achieved consistently. As mentioned, design is a practical subject and requires the student to take up opportunities and explore their work, as their instructor acts as a dramaturge (Orr, Yorke and Blair 39). Their research explores the roles of the lecturer, content and suggests a new theory of students learning. The role of the teacher is presiding over and giving direction to learners. A teacher is looked at as 'a midwife for students work' (39). This role has been explored in the context of performing where the teacher is viewed to make the student perform his best yet the work is students'. Students are left with some considerable autonomy for them to achieve their best, and by doing things on their own; they become creators of their own designs. Concerning subject matter, Orr, Yorke and Blair suggest Project centered learning be taken as a curriculum by the stakeholders (40). This leads to them further coming to a consensus that there is no agreement in what the curriculum should entail.

In realizing the excellent practices in teaching design education in institutions, the instructors should focus on helping the learners not only in their educational development but as fully fledged designers at the end of the course. For quality teaching learning to take place in design, Taboada and Coombs (30) believe that better part of education should focus on processes and not results. This has to start by teachers reviewing their teaching processes while learners relooking at their learning approaches. As instructors teach, learners should have the best strategies of conceptualizing the ideas and theories delivered in class and use them to gain skills and knowledge required in the field.

Environment and Quality in Teaching

In improving teaching design, first the current environment has to be put into consideration. Most of the institutions currently have their halls over flowing with students and only teach theoretical part of the content. The developing media technology has brought about a field with sophisticated design problems. With the influx in institutions, learners are left to discover on their own the link between theory taught and practical skills. Some students who are not interested may not take time to think about their practices and skills required in that field. The evolution of technology has adversely impacted on design teaching. It has translated into low class attendance by tutors (31) and students know where to exactly get the material they want whenever- the internet. His has led to a huge difference between what the job market requires and the skills acquired by prospective employees in the market. Technology has made learners not to think and thus end up just passing through the e design education. With the changing needs of customers in the design world, current practice requires them to think and offer solutions- thinking are considered a fundamental skill (32).

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The ability of the teacher to make his learners the best they can become can be termed as quality teaching. Although as mentioned there are several factors that influence the quality of teaching, such as teacher characteristics, instruction materials, classroom and surrounding environment. The teacher is at the center of it all. They have to incorporate all these factors and deliver quality teaching. Teachers have to use an approach that takes care of the ever changing economic, social and technological dimensions of the society. All stakeholders may arrive to an agreement that problem solving is the best and interdisciplinary approach that can be employed to improve the quality of teaching learning process. Design teachers sometimes are unaware of the environment in which current designers are operating in and the skills those joining the field need to possess (Fleischmann and Daniel 35). This has made the design bodies and practioners to raise an alarm over the disparity between taught content and the practiced one.

POOL Model framework and Group Learning

A wide review carried out in establishing other teaching and learning framework in the practice of design education, a POOL model framework was developed (38). Learners are put to work in groups known as pools just as the name suggests. As students work in these collaborative groups, they get to acutely discern, and develop a better understanding of knowledge from other fields (38). The framework really proved to be successful in achieving the desired outcomes   and projects completed. They conclude that if design educators took over a multidisciplinary approach, then it would be certain that students will be able to use these approach even in future environments to accomplish tasks successfully (44). The engagement of tutors with their learners also reveals the type of outcome expected. (Taboada and Coombs 32) concur that 'the ultimate transformative experience (32) design teaching will come from a bonding of creative trust between students and their teachers which should provide stronger engagement'.

Research in Design Education

Research is one important aspect of teaching that ought not to be left out of the teaching and learning design education. One of the pillars of higher education institutions is research. When teaching design, research should be emphasized to the learners. Research and design go hand in hand in the turbulent social economic environment. The approach taken should be one that equips future designers with a' balanced view of research for human-centered designing' (Harninton 18). As a designer, a learner who incorporates research with design education develops the ability of problem solving through a systematic process. They are impacted with skills in problem identification, information gathering through data collection, solutions generations and evaluation of outcomes (20). Designers who have research skills really keep pace with the changing market needs and are able to solve problems they encounter in their field of practice.

Teaching Methodology

Learning on the other hand cannot take place without teaching. The quality of learning is dependent on the quality of the methods of teaching. The skills, knowledge and expertise imparted into the learners have to be of quality for the benefit of the general society. The quality of learning has to reflect in the value of the work of the learners. They should also be able to fit in the dynamic market. The approach taken by lecturers in teaching design education determines the level of preparedness of design graduates. Many tutors in the design education face issues of preparing future designers to be ultimate perfect designers in the field. Even learners in the design course feel that what they are taken through is not relevant or what they ought to be learning. This forces a majority of them to gradually drop off classes or just keep off from lecture theatres.

The poor methods used by students especially at institutions of higher learning are reflected in the assessment process. They are reluctant to engage in new and a bit challenging

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tasks unless they are sure they are examinable in one way or another. These behaviors are blamed on the problems these students encounter or anticipate to encounter after course completion. Unemployment and poor pay being the main cited issues (Toaboda and Coombs 33). There are students in the field who engage in proactive learning of problem solving research oriented learning, many of them get withdrawn by the anxiety about the future. Most students feel that when the future looks gloomy especially in their field, they may not give their best to achieve what is required in the course. As much as their tutors may be willing or change their methodology in teaching, most learners may decline class attendance thus hampering effective learning (34).

Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary approach

Interdisciplinary/ multidisciplinary approach kept learners abreast and ensured they are up to date with the course (Blair 47). The author suggests design students to be working in groups of at least five. This will help them in idea sharing as well as being able to complete their tasks within a stipulated time period. He further advocates for a blog communication format that a teacher will contribute to (48). Work delegation should be by consent in the group to enable every member deliver the best of what they can do or avoid blame games. In his research, Blair (48) goes ahead to conclude that with the inter-disciplinary approach, the learners were being equipped with fundamental skills for future practice as he believes that this will nurture 'elastic thinking' in students. (48).

Designeducation and Real life experience

In design education, decisions made are a mirror of the people's thoughts, and desires (Lee and Breitenberg 59). Design education should give a framework that teaches the learners the expertise they require in order to be active in the changing of the human world positively. By looking at the design of things around them, students discover things that shape the way humans behave. This education can help increasing academic performance and enhancing the relationship between what students learns in class and the 'real life issues and experiences' (59). For continuous improvement of design education, strategic investments in networking, resources, training and further research supports have to take place. Lee and Breitenberg (60) conclude that when the factors are integrated, they will impact positively to the learners and the society around them.

Design Thinking and Problem Solving

The learning strategies that that should be employed have to be the one that boost the comprehension and analysis and synthesis and generation of concepts (McAauley 113). The focal point should be the ability of the learner to read and convert abstract themes in a plain text into conceptualized visual images (114). This cannot happen without instruction on learning (127). Just like any other humans, learners have an inherent capability to employ an analogical approach in analyzing ideas and concepts, provided they have direction from their instructor. A learning method can be formed and applied in a creative situation (128) according to the research carried out. The design thinking usually enable learner not to just concentrate on what they are seeing but think deep and outside the box to arrive at a solution to the prevailing problem or situation. Employing analogical approach help learners to stretch their reasoning capacities and solve problems.

Enhancing Teaching Skills

To achieve quality teaching learning of design education requires engagement of both learner and tutors. The methods employed in delivering curricula to the learner have to be learner centered , multi-displinary, and one that give the learner an exploratory advantage to seek more knowledge in the field. This will help them to be solution finders to problems they encounter in different contexts. The quality of instruction materials has to be reviewed; instructors if possible can also undertake in-service training to enhance their skills as instructors. This may also help them to freshen up, keep pace with the changing needs of the

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learners and also learn new ways of delivering content in class. Most researchers have a consensus on teaching processes (Chen a, Chen b and Chen c 39). Teachers should concentrate more on processes rather than the end results.

Developing teaching processes links enables teachers to step by step implement and slowly boost their instructional levels in the course of developing their expertise in the profession (40). When new and fresh approaches have been executed in teaching, the issue shifts to sustaining the quality teaching. Tor maintenance of teaching quality in design education, sustainability program should be incorporated for not only attaining the desired outcomes but to enable it last. Design instructors should act as drivers of change into the school in their teaching methods in order to improve quality of teaching learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Wild (426) observes that performing teachers in design education are focused on 'efficiency systems' in the institutions, it may prove difficult in their assessment. Schools and institutions have to establish support systems that will assure teachers that their new ideas and approaches are welcome in their station. New and vibrant ways of doing things emerge when individuals work together .Thus accommodating new ideas is fundamental to improving teaching-learning quality in design education.

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