
Teaching Graphic Design Students of Now as Digital Thinkers during the Pandemic Times

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Abstract This paper examines how the remarkable effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in various changes in how people in Design have responded to this evolving environment. The teaching of graphic design has been subjected to changes even from the onset of the pandemic. Educators are still working on to strategies to assist learners through distance and online education via various tools and techniques.

Keywords teaching graphic design, pandemic, education, on-line platforms

1. Introduction

This paper aims to examine how the remarkable effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in various changes in how educators in graphic design have responded to this evolving environment. The most common proposition that has evolved in this context is that the changes need to be accepted and utilised to develop a reaction against them, allowing for more efficiency and effectiveness. Undoubtedly, the pandemic changes have affected how we think and react in numerous challenges. The teaching of graphic design has been subjected to changes even from the beginning of the pandemic. Furthermore, those involved in this field should reframe their response and their digital thinking, understanding and knowledge. The pandemic has triggered universities and other academic institutions closures for uncertain periods. Educators are working to find strategies to assist learners from afar through distance and online education through various tools and techniques.

i. Teaching Graphic Designers and traditional methods.

There has been a considerable shift with the arrival of digital media and the increase of use by students or professionals. The subsequent impact has been reflected on many graphic design students who have been "abandoning" their traditional spaces and moved into the digital world. The changes have also been brought about with the diversity of media that most audiences have been using. Digitalisation has thereby made the learning of graphic design computer-aided (Swanson, 2020).

As a graphic design lecturer, I firmly believe that traditional design teaching approaches are valuable in training students to grasp, comprehend, and follow the creative design process. This is since, in some places, traditional graphic design schools prioritise technical skill over design thought.

Educators have urged students to be more sceptical about their use of new technology by teaching graphic design in a conventional setting. Students who were "courteous and thoughtful of others, punctual, enthusiastic and industrious, popular with their classmates, well-rounded, attentive to other people's ideas, and obedient" are frequently preferred by lecturers in Cyprus educational culture.

To conclude this part, successful systems of teaching graphic design may require the use of advanced technologies alongside specific traditional educational methods. From the author's experience in teaching, it might be argued that the computer and new technology gives the learner a plethora of size, arrangement, variety, and colour options. Each option presents a decision-making opportunity. Furthermore, the only thing worse than an utterly digital design school, it is suggested here, is an utterly analogue one. As a result, computerised learning and digital technologies should keep a significant percentage of design education, especially in the early years of any graphic design study plan.

ii. Teaching graphic designers of now with new technologies.

The arrival of technology has brought considerable changes in the role of the graphic designer from what it had been a few years ago or more. Graphic design careers are one of the many pathways that have been affected by technological advances in an essential manner. The advances in technology have changed how procedures were conducted, made the job much faster, and made certain things appear more

straightforward or uncomplicated. There have also been changes in how student designers used to publicise their work. Therefore, graphic design students have also become mediated with technology that earlier had been facilitated through more straightforward communication and word of mouth (Alhajri, 2016). During my career as an academic graphic designer, I have faced issues where students do not attend classes regularly, and I have managed to combine several online tools with supporting me sharing vital information with the students and empowered them to learn even from home. Through my teaching experience, I've learned a lot about successfully developing and executing interactive training and self-paced learning.

iiiv. Teaching graphic designers and prepare them for the future

From research, there cannot be any straightforward way for educators seeking to develop graphic designers. The educators aiming to train graphic designers should consider the diversity embedded in the experience while teaching the students of now. Gunnar Swanson (2020) proposed that thinking through making can be important while teaching in this new world. The aspect of thinking through making is also compelling as the future of design lies in tackling complex and more significant issues along with the immaterial ones. However, at the same time, it can be claimed that the inclination towards the immaterial project in most of the instances challenges the importance of the soft skills that the graphic design students are already expected to have.

In this contemporary scenario, the teaching of graphic design has suffered many changes. Significant concerns have been expressed to bring changes in graphic design communication whereby it has been suggested to direct the focus on the enthusiasm of the job market and the professionals' trends. It has also been claimed that changes must be brought about in design education to effectively address contemporary challenges and opportunities. The factors of globalisation have forced the changes and the opportunities, shift towards digital technology and the increase in the education economy driven by the market. The aspects of articulation, creation, and translation have been found effective in terms of contemporary time design practice.

2. How the pandemic influenced the teaching of graphic designers?

The social understanding of the impact of the pandemic and the resistance against the virus varies from one individual to the other. While some individuals wearing masks are identified as fighting against COVID-19, some maintain social distancing and minimise contacts, which can be considered effective methods. As per the response of the artist Juan Delcan, though designers are not doctors or medical supporters, even then, while they are at homes, they can make a difference by creating something meaningful (sightunseen.com 2020). The role of student graphic designers can thereby be directed towards understanding that they can save many people's lives by remaining home and creating something meaningful at the same time. The sense of being responsible within the global crisis can be spread with the help of beautiful graphic design work. It is the mindset that requires to be changed. The capacity of graphic designers has been directed towards creating images that are powerful in terms of the sense that they try to spread (Carella et al., 2021).

As such, the concern of graphic design students should be about changing their mindset and adapt to the changing scenario of the worldwide crisis with effective and imaginative interventions that they are capable of bringing to light. The role of graphic design students as digital thinkers has become crucial at these current periods where there has been a sudden shift to the digital world as there has been restriction and social distancing introduced and prevent the spread of the disease. Thus, students can intervene effectively to bring positive changes in their field of concern (dezeen.com 2020). Undoubtedly, many designers are also fighting with the challenges they have been subjected to, especially in the time of the pandemic. The challenges include the possible layoffs and radical changes that they have faced in terms of their work. With those who can help those in need, the individuals are also moved towards considering how they can bring about positive changes in their field environment. The most important thing that can be contributed to in the current time is slowing down the spread of the virus. At the same time, the spread of the virus can be slowed down with direct intervention from the people, following the guidance

from the government and guidelines following the social distancing and physical distancing (Jia et al., 2021).

Pandemic has opened up the ground for different initiatives to be undertaken and supported and collaborated with. The pandemic challenges require to be catered at various levels with the effort being collected from the broader section of the society. There has been an evolving need for practical skills in craft as well as the printing 3D face shield and prepare masks. The designers are thereby bestowed with the duties of contributing with their creativity and imagination. The tactical skills require the graphic design and visual communication students of now to extend their support (Cimunian and England, 2020).

Teaching graphic designers on online platforms: the pros and cons of the methods and with a comparison with traditional teaching methods in the studio

The first cons of teaching graphic design students through an online platform compared to the traditional design studio is embedded in the fact that there is a lack of interpersonal interaction and communication. The discipline of design and creativity is subjective, and as such, the teaching is subjected to communication that has been facilitated between the educator and the students. However, it can not be doubted that the computerised mode of learning graphic design allows the students to manage creative work and use the techniques to enhance the act of creativity. However, at the same time, it can be suggested that the integrated nature of human-computer interaction can harness the integrated nature of idea generation (Alhajri, 2016). Furthermore, the author has concluded in four simple steps that can help educators get in touch with their students effectively.

Simple stuff work better

An experienced academic knows what it is like to explain new instructions to their students. It frequently begins with a whole group walk-through, followed by an infinite flood of queries from participants to explain their following actions. Although this method can be overwhelming at times,

students can still depend on each other and the instructor in the room/space if they are lost.

One of the difficulties of distance education is that the instructor and the learners are no longer in the same space to address common misunderstandings together. Moreover, activities that require a high degree of self-direction would inevitably consume the majority of learning time.

As a consequence, keeping it simple is crucial. Designing distance learning experiences with straightforward instructions and just one or two tools is significant. It is also best to include tools like sharing information through PDFs that students can access anytime, from any device and any place as long as they have an internet connection.

Educators must have in mind that even simple meetings can necessitate much effort: as students find out what to do within given constraints, tasks with few instructions frequently lead to higher-order thinking. Online education should encourage teachers to consider how they can provide new knowledge in a leaner and more concise manner.

Create a digital home students can access with ease.

It is crucial to have a virtual base camp when teaching the designers of now in the context of convenience. Moreover, this can be a learning management system, such as a Virtual Learning Environment or Google Classrooms, Google Drive, or a self-created class website.

It is advisable to have a single digital, user-friendly and nicely designed portal where participants would go and get the most updated information at all times. It is appealing to switch between all of the excellent applications—especially since so many of them are currently running for free—but consistency and familiarity are essential. Students must feel at ease returning to an exact location to use the same materials. The more distance between the educator and the learners, the more critical it is to promote stability and follow the rules.

Furthermore, if participation were a problem before, online education would intensify it. As a result, students need a safe haven if they become disengaged. If the teacher cannot rapidly participate in person or group meetings at any time, filling in gaps can become increasingly difficult. Students

would have to take charge of their education. They know by now how to learn, and therefore, the teacher's objective is to provide a consistent structure that enables them to do so.

Plan correctly and think forward

When it comes to developing distance experiential learning, efficiency is crucial. Preparation can take longer and necessitate a high degree of attention to detail. When students are disengaged, teachers will not be able to fix errors or redirect quickly.

For the teachers to maintain their mind and flexibility, they must prioritise longer, student-driven tasks and projects that give the educator time to prepare future initiatives while still getting students off the screen. Furthermore, educators should develop long-term projects that give students independence and a simple set of objectives and milestones to meet. Develop chances for learners to explore what they are learning with their families whenever possible and provide a component of student choice to engage them.

Show the students you are there

The human interaction that is fostered in the classroom will be missed the most by the students. The little conversations in the stairwells, before and after the lesson, or during class breaks are invaluable. Although it is tempting to concentrate exclusively on the information shared through distance learning projects and instructional videos, building frameworks for customised touchpoints with students is critical.

Emails, video messages, phone calls, messages via the learning system, feedback on shared documents, and suchlike can all be used to build these touchpoints. Research shows that educators must establish a plan and stick to it. Students will notice this investment and understand that the educators are concerned about them. It is worth remembering that creating an enjoyable distance learning experience is difficult. It takes a lot of time and a lot of patience.

3. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the role of a blended system, online and traditional, in graphic design student groups and the classrooms is essential for providing them with a suitable education. It has thereby been suggested that traditional and digital education must be used to enhance the students' creativity in

problem-solving. Although the computerised system improves production, it does not necessarily suggest that efficiency and creativity have also been enhanced where only the traditional design education model comes effective (Baran and AlZoubi 2020). The pandemic has paved the way for various initiatives to be launched, promoted, and cooperated on. The pandemic concerns must be addressed at many levels, with contributions from a wide range of society members. Moreover, the academic institution can introduce changes in graphic design education, which will help students understand the concept of a blended learning system and grab the knowledge of unique, trending, and effective ways of creating designs.

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