

A6 - The Interactionary as a Didactic Format in Design Education

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Abstract

Project-based education allows students to explore real-world problems and challenges. It can also be more cost-effective than traditional teaching and individual tutoring. However, projects are sometimes messy, need a long takeoff roll and risk being difficult to monitor by teachers. There is a need to better understand and support students' creative design processes. We propose the 'interactionary' format as providing one way forward to meet these needs. An 'interactionary' is a highly time-constrained collaborative design assignment which forces students to complete a design task live on stage (Berkun, 2001). We present findings from three separate case studies in which the format has been tested. The studies involved students of interaction design (Ramberg, Artman, Karlgren, 2013) and chemical engineering (Artman, House, Hultén 2014) as well as multidisciplinary student teams (Artman, House, Hultén, Ramberg, Unpublished).

Our results show that the interactionary as a didactic format engages students and allows them to explore a messy design space. Furthermore, three phases of the design process were identified in all studies: ideation, sketching and reflection/evaluation. The groups displayed differences in their multimodal approach to design. For example, the engineering students mainly made use of ephemeral communication strategies (gestures and speech) rather than sketching with physical materials, while the two other student groups employed physical materials (clay, lego, paper sketching) to a higher degree. Furthermore, there was a tendency for the design objective to override the specific competences of the participating individuals whereby the design process became a collaborative team effort. Students mainly made use of their everyday knowledge, indicating a need to better address domain knowledge (in interaction design, chemical engineering or other domains respectively). Nevertheless, all thirteen groups in the three studies articulated and produced prototypes and basic use-scenarios within the time-limit which shows that the format engages the students and enables a short project takeoff. There remains, however, the need for research into how teachers can instruct, coach and intervene in the design process as well as in the use of disciplined domain knowledge.

References

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