

A Study on the Professional Relative Ability Performance in Business of Taiwan's Visual Communication Design Students who were ever awarded in Design Competitions – Focus on the Design Industry Talent Demand

ABSTRACT:

Department of Higher Education of Taiwan's Ministry of Education have set the Intercollegiate Fine Arts & Design Department Talent Cultivation Project, and to encourage students to participate international fine art and design competition.

” Is there any influence on the awarded students' choosing jobs after their graduation and the current of design industry business” The issue comes from the writer's experiences on design education teaching.

Based on the talent demand, the writer considers how far the award students' achievement can go in the design industry field. The method of the thesis first is case study on the teachers, the awarded students, the managers of design industry, and then literary study, field study, and focus group interview method. According to these methods, the writer hope to sort the teacher's, the awarded student's, the manager's of design industry, and professional designer's viewpoints; and analyze cause and effect context, and how it will affect the opinions of the design talent demand on the visual communication graduates the educators, the managers of design industry.

Keyword : Design Competitions , Design Industry , Talent Demand

I. EXORDIUM:

I-I. Research motivation

Since 2002 the government started to pursue the policy of “Cultural creative industry”, in which the Ministry of Education was responsible for “art & design talent training”. A Rewarding method to Encourage Students to Participate International Art & Design Contest” was proposed.

This project plan focuses mainly on collecting ways to participate in international art and design contests and related data and works out rewarding ways to encourage students to

participate in those contests. The data collected include contests put into such groups as global articles for daily life, product design, digital flash, plane design and handiwork design. Students are the main target of data collecting, for the purpose of expecting them to participate international contests. (The Ministry of Education, 2006)

This study focuses on the demand of talents in the design industry in the culture creation industry and tries to find out whether, after winning a design contest and starting to work in the design industry, the professional work graduates from the Visual communication design department do in their jobs shows difference from those who do not participate in the contests, and traces how teachers carrying out the plan, graduates from relevant departments and people in the design industry view on the practice of combining courses in school with the contests.

I-2. Research objectives

I-2-1 Hoping the result of the research can provide visual communication design department teachers the amendment suggestion on teaching courses, the students who join the competition the reference resources.

I-2-2 Provide student reference source before the competition.

I-2-3 Provide the related designer planning preparation before career.

I-2-4 Find out suggestion of the possible way of future design education through comparing the teachers' and students' thought and practice in the same time.

I-2-5 This could be the best introspected topic and could be the suggestion and resource of visual communication design teachers and students

I-2-6 hope the result of the research can feedback the design industry managers, and help them with the needing on design talent in the future.

I-3. Research method

The methods adopted in this study is investigation on the spot, deep interviews and documentation explanation (based on theories), including mainly masters' dissertations, thesis from journals and books, focusing mainly on analysis on documentations and interviews with teachers participating in combining school courses with contests and graduates from departments related to vision and communication (those who became professional designers when they started to work after winning prizes in contests), businessmen in the design industry.

I-4. Research scope

The study can be too extensive but not exquisite enough and too abundant but not complete if the scope is too great.

I-4-1. Teachers carrying out the plan: the scope of sampling teachers is determined by the subjects for Visual communication design in Taiwan. The scope then expands to private science & technology universities, the state science & technology universities, private and state universities. At present, due to limits in time and space, interviews were conducted with two teachers from each the Visual communication design departments of schools having been

set up for more than ten years or from the five private science and technology universities with institutes. Ten teachers who combined their courses with the contests or who led the students to the contests were first interviewed, and careful study on them was made.

I-4-2. Graduates winning contests: the scope of sampling is determined in accordance with the subjects in design education, and the scope of study was narrowed to graduates winning the contests in I-3-1. Participation in international contests was selected in the rewarding ways. Students from professional schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education who won gold, silver and bronze prizes in plane and advertisement design contests, those who won the best yearly golden calf prize, the gold, silver and bronze calf prizes, graduates winning gold, silver and bronze awards in contests that have worked as professional designers for longer than one year and those who had won more than 35 prizes and were recommended by their teachers. Ten of these graduates were selected in plane, advertisement and flash designs and, as professional designers now; they were the first to be interviewed for deep study.

I-4-3. People engaged in the design industry: samples were taken from the industrial field in the Annual Report on the Development of the Cultural Creation Industry in Taiwan in 2005. The scope of distribution of the sampling was set in 982 manufacturers in the design industry in Taiwan area. These manufacturers accounted for 51.01% of all interviewees that came from five design companies in Taipei area, one in Hsinchu and one Hualian. **(The Industrial Bureau of the Ministry of Economy, 2005)**

I-5. Research limitations

I-5-1. As there were too many interviewees, only some were focused in the study. The interviewees came from all over Taiwan, and to make things go smoothly recordings on the spot were taken as the main part and interviews by phone and recording machines as supplement. What they said were typed into scripts for later study after being confirmed by the interviewees.

I-5-2. Limits in human resources, finance and time. Private and state science and technology universities, state universities were in the scope of interviews. Short in evaluation tools,

interviews were limited to teachers from five private science and technology universities in Taiwan area.

I-6. Research flowchart

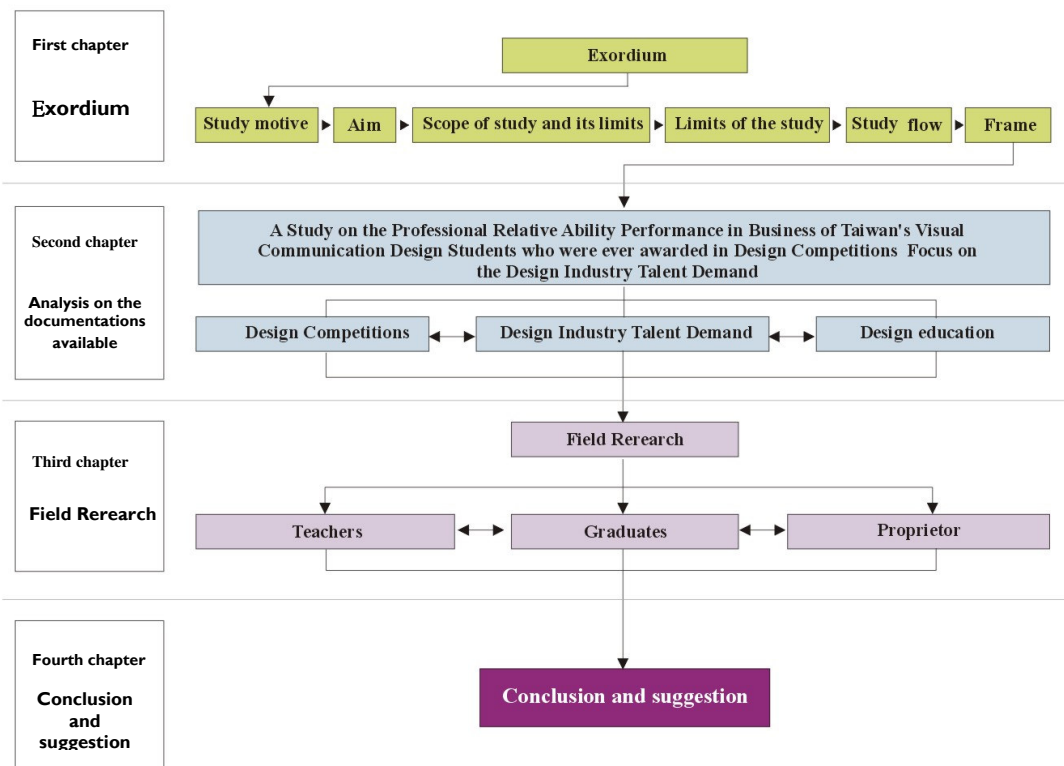


Figure 1: Study flow Relational chart (Material origin : This research reorganization)

I-7. Research framework

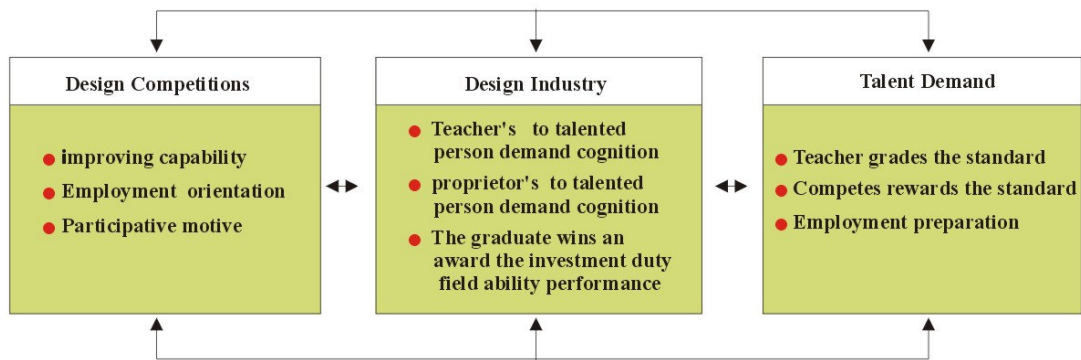


Figure 2 : Framw Relational chart (Material origin : This research reorganization)

2. Literature Review

2-1. Progression of visual communication design in Taiwan

Yang Meiwei (1998) In A Professional Look on Research on the Career Orientation of visual Communication Designers, the author conducts an analysis with professional sociology on the professional work of the vision and communication design in Taiwan, and positions the profession of the visual communication design as a “gradually emerging profession”. **Yang Mei-wei (1998)** .

2-2. Determining relevant fields in vision and communication design

It states in the Change in Modern visual Communication in Taiwan – A Study on the Local History of Design in Taiwan that “visual communication design is defined as ‘that expresses correct and beautiful things through vision and provides people with a happier and more comfortable life with it to make a completely perfect information environment in society. (Lin Pinchang, 2004) Thus one can have an idea of the definition and significance of visual communication.

2-3. Development of design contests in Taiwan

American Dickson Dictionary, “contests are competitions with others for prizes and competitions can be taken as tests of skills or capacities or professional contests for the purpose of winning limited awards, profits or fame in a certain time (Huang Jinmei, Liu Chiuse, 2000) .

Hsieh, Shen-Yu , Chuko , Cheng (2006) , The motivator for improving capability to student of visual communication design to education in Taiwan—with Design Contests as the Center that the basic spirit and significance of contests actually complement with the encouragement expected in design education. It is a process of culturing talents and enhancing professional ability in design education according plans (ideal education for future purpose) through design contests (simulating actual operation in contests). (Hsieh, Shen-Yu , Chuko , Cheng 2006)

One can see from the above that participation in design contests is of great importance for students in the visual Communication Designers communication design department to broaden their view in their professional capacity.

2-3-1. Design contests at home and abroad

From 1929 (the 18th year of the Republic of China) till 1992 (the 81st year of the Republic of China), various design contests were held in Taiwan area.

From the National Art Exhibition of the Republic of China held in 1929 till the Golden Calf Prize for Post Advertisements and the types of contests can be outlined roughly into two trends:

2-3-2. Art came into contests that included national art exhibitions, provincial exhibitions, Taipei art prize, Kaohsiung art exhibitions (Kaohsiung prize) and Nanying prize etc.

2-3-3. Design came into contests that included national design prize, prize for the packing star in Taiwan, the Golden Image Prize for Post Advertisements, 4A Free Creation Prize and the Golden Calf Prize for Post Advertisements.

It was mentioned in the Design Impression Magazine Volume—Designing a Stage for Contests that there were 30 contests related to plane design at home and abroad: in Taiwan, in Asia, in the U.S.A and in Europe. (**Lin Hungtse, 2004**)

From the documentation above, one can see that groups of contests include 4A membership companies, advertising corporations, social group, college group, student group and others.

One can also see that many contests mainly had the purpose of encouraging students to participate, and there were many contests for students from in majors of advertising, commercial, visual communication designs, and advertising.

Among them the Golden Calf Prize by the Post Advertisement (hereinafter referred to as the Golden Calf Prize) has had a history of more than 15 years in Taiwan and become the target for many college students to participate in. Although there were so many contests, a search of the documentation available found that not too much information had had concerns over the return and influence on these activities on design education. This is one of the motives that brought about the study on this subject.

2-4. Definition standards for the design industry in Taiwan

According to the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (referred to as ICSID), design is a creative activity, mainly for the purpose of setting up a process to serve people with special characters. It is an integrated activity combining science, technology, innovation and human resources that forward the interaction of culture and economy.

However, according to the Industrial Designers Society of America (referred to as IDSA), the purpose of design is a type of professional service that brings about a creative and optimized development and value between the users and the producers. **(The Industrial Bureau of the Ministry of Economy, 2005)**

2-5. Classification of the industry

According to the definition in the seventh version of the Standard Classifications of Industries of the Republic of China by the Department of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Taipei City Government of the Administrative Council, the design industry includes appearance design for products, clothing design, potent trademark design and other unclassified professional designs (mechanic and packing designs). **(The Industrial Bureau of the Ministry of Economy, 2005)**

2-6. Design Education

There is more than one way to learn design, but systematic professional design education is a basic route for the culturing of design talents. A society with a well developed design profession must have made great achievements in design education. **Bauhaus** is the pioneer having brought about the development of modern design profession. A country, therefore, in need of modernization should forward the development of design education. The expansion of design education needs on the one hand exploring constantly new aesthetic ideas and on the other learning lesson from practice. Whether teaching or learning, it needs to put theories into practice. **(Chin Luchiung, 1987)**

The characteristics of commercial design courses can be viewed in social, economic, education and employment. From the point of sociology, the courses of commercial design education should fit in the demand in society to teach the knowledge, skills, morals, attitude, value and professional ethics needed in the trade; From the point of economy, those courses should fit in the policies for the national economic development to keep up with the demand in human resources in job market and the progress of science and technology so that it is worth investing in education; In the respect of education, these courses should be effective in putting what is learned and done in school into practice in future jobs, and in the respect of employment, they should be helpful in cultivating practical skills to meet the expectations for work in job market. **(Tsuke Cheng, 1993)**

In a society of knowledge economy, knowledge and technology is the main base to maintain competition. A command of advanced knowledge and technology means strong competitiveness, and to keep this, knowledge workers must improve quality and seek for innovation, for personnel training is of great importance. This, of course, depends on education. In the professional education system in the knowledge economic times, it thus needs a global view to fit in the trend and operate in innovative ways, particularly in the

training of senior professional and management personnel, for this is an immediate subject in higher education in this era. (**Chen Weishao, 2000**).

2-7. The indexes of the capability to conduct professional design practice

According to An Exploration of the Analysis on the Demand for the Abilities in the Field of visual Communication Design in Taiwan by Lai Lijun (2002) and some investigations, the industry can be further divided into the industrial group and the academic group. The former explores the demand for the abilities of people newly engaged in the profession and the satisfaction of people with the talents trained in departments related to visual communication, while the academic group evaluates the knowledge of teachers' abilities and graduates' capacities to find out the demand for those abilities and the satisfaction. Here is how it goes:

2-7-1. Ability of general knowledge: this is further divided into basic professional knowledge and basic ability to work professionally.

2-7-2. Professional capacity: it is further divided into ability to design and ability to operation computer software.

2-7-3. Attitude and personality character: to explore how the professional attitude and ethics field and the academic circle look on the demand and satisfaction.

3. Field Rerearch

3-1. Outlines of the interviews

Design of the outlines is to develop topics from the documentations, hoping the interviewees to answer questions designed for the study, and then finding out from what they talked the influence of the involvement of the design contests in the design education at colleges and universities in Taiwan area on the work ability and job orientation of the graduates from the visual communication department.

3-1-1. Outlines of interviews with teachers

3-1-2. Outlines of interviews with graduates

3-1-3. Outlines of interviews with people engaged in the industry

3-2. Interviews sorted out and discussed

The ideas from the academic circle, the industry and the graduates and the reading and testing standards aim at three object groups for the focus interviews and the results were put into five groups:

3-3. Does the design education have any influence on the job seeking and orientation of those students winning prizes in contests?

In the teachers section (Question 9) it showed that many teachers carrying out the courses thought that winning a prize had no direction relation with the work students chose and their career planning. The purpose of participating in the contests was to test them and feel the competition. In the industry section (Question 6) they thought the experience of winning a prize was only a reference for operators to employ somebody, not the absolute condition. Those employees had to return to their majors and cultivate their overall capacities. In the teachers section (Questions 5 and 9) we found that winning another prize might bring about more problems in interpersonal relationship and adjustment of state of mind; in the graduates section (Question 2) it was found that the jobs those prize winners had had nothing to do with the winning items and in Question 7 it was thought that competition could help enhance ones' ability and have influence on their professional work at present. The popularity of the prize and the knowledge of their bosses also had some influence on their job orientation.

3-4. Reflecting on the students having won prizes in design contests from the demand for talents, how will they develop professionally after they were employed in the design industry ?

In the industry section (Question 6), businessmen interviewed thought that professional designers must have the three conditions: the modest attitude to learn, professional skills and cross-field knowledge; in the teachers section (Question 7) teachers hoped that students had the abilities to enhance themselves and the professional skills to survive in the market, as well as a correct attitude. This almost fitted into the standards of cultivating personnel in the academic circle and demand for talents in the industry. Thus when the demand came close to the goals of cultivation, it was found in the industry section (Question 7) that designers having won prizes had strong desires to work well, they had high requirements for themselves, were eager to seek for acknowledgement for their character and understood the importance of design strategy analysis; in the graduates section (Question 7) those having won prizes thought that the experience of winning contests had more or less influence on their professional work. This includes two parts: the improvement of the ability to think in actual work and the influence on the acknowledgement of themselves by others, for they would be acknowledged in their work.

3-5. Do you expect the study will make students in the visual communication departments correct the contents of courses in future?

In the teachers section (Question 4) most teachers were found to teach mainly according to the teaching outlines and with contests only as supplementation. There were no much difference in the teaching (Question 5) but teachers would ask the students to modify their work to fit in the topic if they wanted to participate in a contest. In the graduates section (Question 9) it was found that students had a positive evaluation of the combination of teaching with contests, thinking it was good for their learning, for it helped build up their confidence and relieve them from worrying about their courses. There was also the suggestion that students were to participate in the contests according to their own characteristics.

3-6. Preparations before contests

In the teachers section (Question 9) and the industry section (Question 4) it was found that topic and creation were the common standards both in the academic circle and the industry, and in the graduates section (Question 8) about experience sharing among students

winning prizes, it mostly took strategic analysis and data collection before a design as the important factors.

3-7. Preparations in design career planning for employment

In the teachers section (Question 9) it was found that winning a contest had no direct relation with later employment and career planning. The purpose of participating in the contests was to test them selves and feel the competition. In the industry section (Question 6) they thought the experience of winning a prize was only a reference for operators to employ somebody, not the absolute condition. Those employees had to return to their majors and cultivate their overall capacities. In the teachers section (Questions 5 and 9) we found that winning another prize might bring about more problems in interpersonal relationship and adjustment of state of mind; the experience of winning a prize in the teachers section (Question 6) would easily become the focus in a job interview and the reference condition to get some more scores. It would be better if graduates would look for jobs related to the design they had won a prize (Question 8).

4. Conclusion and suggestion

4-1. Conclusion

During researching the comparative professional capability of the students in the relevant visual communication department when they start their career after they have participated in the design competition and won the prize, the response from the majority of the winners to the problem whether the participation in such competition can improve their actual capability or not are positive, but that to the key variety factors basically remains vague, that maybe is affected by the course process of the teacher. Most teachers do not think the participation in the competition is not the purpose of course design, thus designing the competition became merely an assistant tool. Only those students excellent in class exercises participate such abnormal competition, after being conducted by their teachers, and in addition, during the competition judgment, there are so many causes and standards, including the students and teachers.

From the angle of talent demand in design industry, the industry operators visited generally think that the professional designers need three main qualifications, i. e. an open mind in study, professional skills and cross-field knowledge system. The professors, however, wish that the students can possess the capability of self-improvement and self-renovation, and the design skills for market competition, and thirdly the proper attitude. The cultivation standard of education industry is nearly in compliance with the talent demand of the industry under comparison.

Therefore, the designers who ever won the prize in industry exam paper show in their work performance such characters, i.e. the stronger ambition, the higher self-discipline and the eagerness of seeking for understanding. The students who ever won the prize in the graduate exam paper think that the experience of winning the prize would influence more or less the professional performance at present on two levels, one is the improvement of actual consideration capability, another is the influence of understanding to him/herself by the outside and that his/her performance would be easier to be positively appraised.

4-2. Suggestion for further studies

To have more interviews with teachers carrying out the plan in state and private universities all over Taiwan and take samples from students winning contests. Have more people for the interviews and classify graduates from the visual communication department into design, advertising and digital flash groups. There should also be more interviews with people engaged in the design, advertising and digital industries besides having outlines more precise for the reliability and validity of the study. This is for the reference of further studies.

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