

10 conversations on design

Summary statement

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Interdisciplinary Education

To display arguments for or against an interdisciplinary education seems appropriate within the frame of this conversation. But it isn't an argument a coherent series of statements leading from a premise to a conclusion, and in the process, leads us further and further away from the origin question? A series of statements, whether being in favour or with doubts, never enlightens the original question itself, because they enlarge the question and extend the context. A sudden appearance in my mind, let's call it intuition, seems very reasonable: 'interdisciplinary education is a necessity for design'.

Why: ..., because designing is thinking.

A coherent series of statements will follow for the purpose of designing the belief system we can use in order to act upon, i.e. to design our curricula and educational environments. As a follow up it 'leads to reflective thought, to conscious inquiry into the nature, conditions, and bearings of the belief' as Dewey stated ('How we think').

What can be perceived and what is often stated at the end of the 20th century is a tendency in the design world, which I call from the 'object to the process'. The traditional graphic design world, the design of books and magazine production has expanded into communication through photography, film, television and computer display. The traditional design of our everyday products – clothing, domestic objects, tools, instruments, machinery and vehicles has expanded into the interpretation of the physical, psychological social and cultural relationships between products and human beings. The design of activities and organized services has expanded into a concern for logical decision making and strategic planning and to make such experiences more meaningful, intelligent and satisfying. Complex system and environmental design is more and more concerned with exploring the role of design in sustaining, developing, and integrating human beings into broader ecological and cultural environments.

The understanding of design goes even further: 'Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones. The intellectual activity that produces material artefacts is no different fundamentally from the one that prescribes remedies for a sick patient or the one that devises a new sales plan for a company or a social

welfare policy for a state'. (Herbert Simon, The science of the artificial). If we consider Simons statement as a valuable argument we need interdisciplinary education to expose students to many perspectives of the same entity. This will improve the chance that there could be a perception of the essence, instead of just defining the category. That would be a better preparation for the future.