

T-shaped thinkers: Drawing and its role in art school professional practice

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Abstract

Teaching through drawing is fundamental to all areas of creative art practice and begins with challenging student perceptions of what drawing can be: attitude not outcome, process not medium. Drawing is the nearest activity to pure thought – through the agency of the ‘thinking hand’ comes invention and through this the construction of a ‘middle road’ between theory and practice: that of *poesis* (the uncovering of meaning through making).

This paper describes the synergy between drawing education and professional practice in forming creative graduates, stemming from drawing’s ‘attitude’ and the idea of the entrepreneur as a ‘seeker of opportunities’. It argues for the agency of drawing and its role (in the context of an increasingly instrumentalised art school curriculum) in developing student’s professionalism. As a means of communication in collaborative practice, as an expression of personal voice, as a way of generating ideas and revealing new forms drawing becomes a core process in the evolution of divergent thinking and the development of the arts graduate as entrepreneur. The paper holds as core tenets the centrality and agency of students, the necessity of looking beyond disciplinary, institutional, geographical and cultural boundaries and the developing of the reflexive and “T-shaped” thinking essential in negotiating an uncertain future of discontinuity and accelerating change. Key to this is collaboration, across levels and disciplines, and the evolution of a community of drawing practice leading debate and group critique.

The paper proposes that the cycle of teaching and learning that begins with drawing as the agent for the development of critical thinking, collaborative practice and the social construction of knowledge leads to a situation where students are actively engaged in the professional world they will inhabit as confident, opinionated, creative practitioners.