

ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM FOR BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN GRAPHIC DESIGN AT THE WESTERN UKRAINIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

TSIDILO IRYNA¹

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¹Western Ukrainian National University,
Ternopil
Ukraine

Contact: Iryna Tsidylo, PhD. - iryna.tsidylo@wunu.edu.ua

Abstract:

The study explores the understanding of various issues observed in design education at the university level worldwide; it examines the main contemporary design challenges; and analyzes the process of modernization of the educational and professional program for preparing a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design at the Western Ukrainian National University. The research emphasizes the need for integrating innovation, interdisciplinary approaches, and ethical principles into contemporary design education. Modern curricula should not only provide students with professional knowledge but also foster the development of critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to adapt to the rapidly changing technological and social environment. An important aspect is the flexibility of educational models that meet the demands of the innovative economy, promote sustainable development, and take cultural changes into account. Special attention should be given to the interdisciplinary approach, the integration of cutting-edge technologies, and sustainability principles in the educational process.

Furthermore, key factors include ensuring ethical standards, academic integrity, and the development of scientific research in the design field. This will help shape responsible and highly qualified designers capable of addressing global challenges, supporting innovation, and promoting ethical and cultural changes in society.

Keywords: design education, contemporary design challenges, graphic design, bachelor's educational and professional program.

FORMATION OF THE PROBLEM

The modern labor market demands, driven by the rapid development of digital technologies, advertising, branding, and the media industry, along with the analysis of the regional labor market [12], show the high demand for graphic design specialists. Given the economic and cultural development of the Ternopil region, the IT sector, advertising business, and creative industries are actively growing [8]. Based on this data, the goal of the Educational and Professional Program «Graphic Design» at the first (bachelor's) level of higher education at the Western Ukrainian National University is to prepare graphic design specialists of the new digital generation, who possess modern creative thinking, in-depth knowledge, and practical skills using professional equipment and design technologies. This will enable them to solve specialized tasks in the field of graphic design related to organizing artistic and project activities in the context of modern challenges and sustainable development [10].

The analysis of global trends in design education shows that the central theme today is preparing students and teachers for lifelong learning. Design education is open, individual, and personal. It allows designers to «live a life worth living.» Learning can be transferred, and most design programs focus on this aspect. On the other hand, education is an awakening that can be nurtured and supported but not transferred. The key is not to choose one or the other focus: both education and learning are necessary. Providing education is more difficult, but it should not be neglected. Designers need to be taught to master their craft, to be skilled and inventive, but we must also raise them to be culturally aware, socially responsible, and proactive.

Design education requires the transmission of established concepts and skills from teacher to student. The quality of the design research method depends on the quality of the design research group applying it. The entire design process – not just the process from idea to realization – from identifying the possibility

of intervention in design to assessing its final impact on reality – is a process of gradual understanding. This process of enhancing understanding develops from problem definition through research, prototyping, and iteration, until the final «reality check,» when the design product – material or immaterial – is realized at full scale. If the process is not limited to research at the beginning and evaluation at the end, design cannot be considered a responsible practice.

The rapidly changing modern world has fundamentally expanded the focus of education and stimulated the development of meta-competencies – essential life skills that enable a person to adapt to constantly changing circumstances. In addition to focusing on what students should learn about design, we must also encourage their desire to engage in lifelong learning and help them develop the skills and competencies required for a life full of flexibility and adaptation. There is very little research in educational studies that demonstrates how to expand this new horizon in design education. In addition to transferring the best modern conceptual and instrumental knowledge of design, we in design education must be prepared to help students learn to learn, become capable of thriving and adapting in changing conditions, and unlock the power of a love for learning [6].

INTRODUCTION

Today, the skills required to develop creative solutions to complex problems are becoming increasingly important. Organizations are beginning to realize that designers bring something unique to this type of work, a rational conviction grounded in numerous studies linking commercial success with a design-driven approach. As a result, conscious efforts are needed to develop the design profession both into a strong community of practitioners and into an effective educator, capable of fully understanding the value of design in the 21st century.

Design is a complex field. It is both a practice and an academic discipline. Each category encompasses numerous specialized fields, the parameters of which are volatile, poorly defined, and constantly changing, with a variety of different design societies dedicated to them. Modern design challenges can be divided into four categories: performance, systems, context, and globality. Performance challenges are related to what designers need to do, rather than challenges to their skill sets. Systemic challenges focus on solving problems within the entire system, rather than a single part of it. Contextual challenges are related to working with complex systems that are strongly influenced by the surrounding environment, local culture, and political issues. Global challenges pertain to working with complex socio-technical systems [7].

FORMULATION OF THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE

THIS ARTICLE AIMS to analyze the modernization of the educational program «Graphic Design» at the Bachelor's level, specialty 022 Design, at the Western Ukrainian National University.

The main objectives of the research:

- To clarify the understanding of various issues observed in design education at the university level worldwide;
- To investigate the primary modern challenges in design;
- To analyze the process of modernization of the educational and professional program «Graphic Design» at the Western Ukrainian National University.

PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE STUDY

As Buchanan (2020) states, «Education is the intellectual preparation for lifelong learning, developing the mind's ability to face new situations and respond with ingenuity, imagination, and creativity. This is what we mean by a liberal education, which goes beyond specialization, allowing the student to adapt to the changing environment with integrity and purpose. The essential elements of quality liberal education are, in essence, four dimensions of creativity. First, being inventive in perceiving new opportunities in the world. Second, being open to discovering new facts when an inventive idea is explored in the context of the circumstances of our lives. Third, being innovative and creative in exploring connections between different kinds of knowledge gained through university education and global experience. Fourth, being open to intuition in perceiving principles and values that provide organization, coherence, and interdependence in many systems surrounding us in our lives. Education of this kind is what we mean by the ability of people to expand and enhance human intelligence through creative exploration, responding to the development of artificial intelligence. Reliable education provides an enhancement of intelligence that balances artificial intelligence, which now surrounds us».

Friedman (2020) points out that universities differ from professional schools in that they have four main functions, which they realize in various ways. These functions are based on two pairs of values that can sometimes be in contradiction. The main tasks of universities include: 1) creating new knowledge and 2) preserving existing knowledge, as well as 3) preparing specialists and 4) fostering

conscious citizens. Research not only contributes to the personal development of the researcher but also benefits society by expanding the possibilities for applying knowledge. Education goes beyond professional growth and personal success, as it fosters the development of a harmonious and well-rounded individual.

Davis (2020) states: «On the other hand, education transforms and challenges worldviews. This involves more than mastering desired professional behavior, but rather confirming or recalibrating beliefs, values, and ways of thinking. Transformational design projects immerse students in a complex universe of issues, changing constraints, and competing values.» According to Poggenpohl (2020), «Education prepares a person to be more resilient and better engaged in lifelong learning and the cultural pleasures of life. Core competencies – or metacompetencies – must be offered by any university-level educational program to assist students in the humanities: linguistic, rhetorical, historical, anthropological, philosophical, computational, and scientific-statistical».

The content of the educational and professional program «Graphic Design,» which is the subject of analysis in this study, ensures the formation of general cultural and civic competencies, as well as the achievement of program learning outcomes, which imply the readiness of the student to independently analyze and identify patterns of social processes. The general preparation cycle ensures the acquisition of fundamental knowledge and the formation of basic general cultural competencies («History of Statehood and Culture of Ukraine,» «Philosophy,» «Political Science,» «Normative and Legal Foundations of Activity in the Field of Culture,» «Intercultural Communication»). The content of the educational program ensures the development of general cultural and civic competencies through general cultural courses that contribute to an understanding of the designer's role in society, the formation of ethical responsibility, and the ability to make decisions in accordance with the principles of democracy, rule of law, and human rights [8; p. 8].

According to Buchanan's (2020) research, teaching design thinking should become a key component of educational programs in both universities and specialized design schools. If we aim to restore design's role as a fundamental cultural art of the modern era – a position threatened by rapid changes – it is necessary to focus on four important aspects that should be enhanced or reconsidered.

First, improvement of communication. Future designers need to develop skills for clearly and meaningfully presenting their ideas. This relates not only to graphic and visual representation but also to the ability to formulate a problem, present a conceptual project idea, explain the logic of its development, and demonstrate

the potential impact of the outcome. Effective communication allows designers not only to showcase their ideas but also to involve a wider range of stakeholders in their realization.

Second, a deeper understanding of the nature of creativity. The modern cultural discourse excessively emphasizes innovation as the primary driver of the creative process, neglecting three other fundamental dimensions: inventiveness, discovery, and intuition. Expanding the understanding of these aspects will allow designers to approach creative tasks more flexibly, using various sources of inspiration.

Third, the ethical dimension of design. Design students are increasingly confronted with moral dilemmas in their work, but educational programs inadequately prepare them to make thoughtful decisions in such situations. Teaching ethics in design should not impose rigid rules but rather encourage students to think critically and analyze the ethical consequences of their decisions.

Fourth, awareness of the principles underlying design activity. Future professionals must distinguish between methodological principles specific to certain disciplines and fundamental principles that define the mission of design in serving society. This will enable students to better understand the goals of design and to defend their creative decisions with well-reasoned arguments.

As Friedman (2020) emphasizes, one of the biggest obstacles to the development of design education is cultural inertia. Most design schools continue to operate within the framework of traditional craft guilds, which create a certain resistance to change. The solution to this issue can be achieved in two ways: by radically creating a new model of education free from the constraints of tradition or by gradually but relentlessly developing design schools within research universities that strive for intellectual leadership and advanced approaches. Successful examples demonstrate that the driver of change is persistent innovative leadership, which shapes a new vector for the development of design education.

Another decisive factor is the broad intercultural analysis of design education. It is important not only to address local issues but also to understand the global context in which design education operates. Understanding the specifics of educational systems such as the Bologna model, Anglo-Australian, North American, and Chinese systems allows the integration of the best global practices into domestic educational processes. This interdisciplinary approach not only expands academic horizons but also shapes a new generation of designers capable of working in a globalized knowledge economy.

The implementation of the Bologna Process by the European Union serves as the

foundation for harmonization and is an example of how continental cooperation can lead to more flexible and consistent education. The Bologna Process encourages transnational cooperation in ensuring the quality of education. In addition to the Bologna Process, Erasmus and ECTS programs, Europe can also boast of OpenUpEd [4]. The academic and teaching staff and students of the "Graphic Design" educational program are involved in transnational cooperation in ensuring quality through participation in international educational projects such as Erasmus and OpenUpEd. WUNU has agreements with many foreign universities, making education in this program closely connected with the internationalization of the university's activities. According to these agreements, students can participate in international academic mobility programs, while teachers can undergo internships abroad, conduct scientific research, and review scientific papers in international publications. The department's professors are co-authors of international publications indexed in scientific databases and have participated in international conferences. Specifically, the academic staff of the educational program has transferred services and credits related to the fundamentals of graphic design from the California University of the Arts to the Western Ukrainian University via OpenUpEd. Furthermore, as part of the Erasmus+ Academic Exchange Program, the practical scientific experience of the University of Vienna (Slovakia, city of Prešov) has been adopted [8, p. 11].

According to Manzini (2020), the important issues for the development of design education are: Does the institution have a modern understanding of what design is in the 21st century? Development of a greater sense and sensitivity to social and ecological issues. Development of a research-based approach and, in particular, dynamic relationships between pedagogy and research. Focusing on project-based research. These aspects highlight the importance of updating the content of design education to address social, ecological, and scientific challenges, which are key for preparing contemporary designers capable of responding to rapid changes in the world and solving complex global problems.

Poggenpohl (2020) identifies four missing elements in design education: Design lacks a philosophy. Design research is in its infancy and poorly understood. Design action takes place within a cultural and technological context, not in a vacuum. Interdisciplinary collaboration requires respect for other disciplines and their methods. These four elements are closely interconnected. Collaboration, context, and research lead to the need for a philosophical position.

Buchanan (2020) suggests that modern design culture is shaping two key development vectors. The first is directed toward corporate design, digital product development, and the creation of large-scale platforms and systems that have become an integral part of our lives. Designers working in consulting firms

or directly within corporations focus on communication design, interaction, and service design, as well as product development. In some cases, their work extends to management and business processes, where design thinking methods are applied to strategic issues.

Given this trend, design education programs must include a strong component dedicated to the design of algorithms and forms that define the operation of digital platforms. Mastery of these skills is critically important for future designers, as without an understanding of how digital ecosystems function, they lose the ability to influence their architecture and development. Therefore, the integration of algorithmic design into educational programs is a key step in preparing designers who will not only adapt to technological changes but also shape the future of digital systems.

Davis (2020) emphasizes that the challenges faced by contemporary design education reveal the limitations of the traditional paradigm, which is based on a linear design process. The evolving nature of socio-cultural and technological changes calls for a reassessment of the designer's role and their interaction with users. Rather than exerting unilateral control over design decisions, designers are increasingly recognizing people as active participants in the creative process, not merely as consumers. This shift in focus moves away from creating static messages, objects, and spaces, and towards the development of interactive systems, communication platforms, collaborative tools, and communities. In this context, the significance of a research-oriented approach grows, including user needs analysis, process planning, and the integration of design thinking within a larger framework of social and technological transformations.

Manzini (2020) suggests that «Design education must clearly account for four things: (1) the complex nature of contemporary design; (2) the diversity of fields in which it can operate; (3) the variety of artifacts that designers can contribute to the conception and realization of; and, finally, (4) the speed with which the roles and opportunities of designers have changed in recent years. Given this, design education must provide students with a clear understanding of their specific role and contribution in co-design processes. Furthermore, they must have the ability to present themselves effectively and persuasively. In other words, young designers must be able to explain the tools (of design), competencies, and opportunities that they can and will use in each instance. Additionally, they should be able to describe the specific perspective they will adopt and the cultural contribution they will make.»

The primary focus of the analyzed educational program “Graphic Design” is the transformation of contemporary design in the context of the interaction

between tradition and innovation, which reflects the renewed national identity of modern graphic design. The educational and professional program provides the acquisition of knowledge and skills in graphic design and is aimed at the general and professional preparation of a competitive specialist who possesses the knowledge and skills to create aesthetically perfect objects through graphic design and understands their connection to the Ukrainian nation, whose artistic heritage is an important component of world culture [10, p. 6].

Poggenpohl (2020) concludes that modern educational programs must expand contextual knowledge and develop leadership skills for designers to overcome existing limitations. It is important to combine design with teamwork, decision-making, and an interdisciplinary approach. Research is essential for culturally significant and innovative projects. It involves not only seeking ready-made answers but also formulating new questions that guide the development of design. There is a distinction between applied research, which supports practical design, and fundamental research, which provides a deeper understanding of processes in higher education. Regardless of its type, research does not contradict creativity but, on the contrary, is an integral part of it.

Scientific activity is an integral part of the educational process within the «Graphic Design» educational and professional program (EPP), combining learning and research both in the classroom and in independent work. Lectures and practical sessions have a problem-discussion character, aimed at forming fundamental knowledge necessary for scientific research. Students perform independent research tasks, including the study of contemporary Ukrainian art, historical and cultural monuments, regional ornamentation, which are integrated into design projects. The «Design Project» component includes analytical research, mapping, and idea generation, while the «Qualification Project» involves design analysis of analogs and the development of original proposals using methods such as surveys, questionnaires, and crowdsourcing.

The educational and professional program (EPP) takes into account the scientific research conducted by the academic staff of WUNU in the field of design, involving students in data collection and analysis. This approach contributes to the development of their critical thinking and intellectual potential [8, p. 10-11].

Davis (2020) concluded that «curriculum development is a cyclical process of design, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Curriculum development must be both proactive and reactive. The curriculum is neither a 'job description' of technical skills corresponding to current entry-level positions, nor is it entirely composed of theories that are temporarily fashionable. The way faculty members define the distribution of various types of content should result from reasoned

forecasting of what is sustainable and what can be sold.»

Manzini (2020) emphasizes that «it is very important to better understand the role of design experts in new design networks. This also means being able to identify when and where new demands for design expertise arise (which may be far from traditional industrial enterprises, institutions, associations, or policy-developing organizations).»

The organization and implementation of the educational and professional program (EPP) involve employers whose practical experience helps shape the relevant professional competencies of students. The academic community and stakeholders also contribute their suggestions regarding the list of educational components, their content, and the formulation of topics for course projects or qualification work. Program reviews and public discussions occur annually [8, p. 5].

Meyer and Norman (2020) concluded that the changes in design education for the 21st century face several key challenges, including issues of productivity, systemic, contextual, and global challenges:

Productivity Challenges: Design operates in both the physical world and is closely linked to the world of intangible things. It addresses human needs and desires, sometimes focusing on specific tangible or intangible objects, and sometimes on abstract things like experience or goals. Design creates both material and immaterial environments, as well as social environments.

Systemic Challenges: We live in a world marked by ambiguous boundaries between artifacts, structures, systems, and processes. We work within large-scale social, economic, and industrial structures. We design for a complex environment of constantly changing needs, demands, and constraints. We design for a world in which intangible content often outweighs the value of physical substance.

Contextual Challenges: The problems associated with working with complex systems that are heavily influenced by the surrounding environment, local culture, and political issues. The projects, products, and services we design often cross boundaries between organizations, stakeholders, producers, and user groups. These projects, products, and services must meet the expectations of many organizations, stakeholders, producers, and users. They must comply with requirements at every level of production, distribution, acceptance, and control.

Global Challenges: We must address the fundamental social problems the world faces, including the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to «solve the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, as well as peace and

justice,» with the goal of achieving «each goal and target by 2030.»

The educational and professional program «Graphic Design» integrates the principles of sustainable development, fostering relevant competencies.

Quality Education (Goal 4) is realized through innovative teaching methods, an interdisciplinary approach, and modern information technologies. Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8) are supported by educational components that promote entrepreneurship in the cultural sector, technological innovation, and job creation. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (Goal 9) are supported through scientific research and entrepreneurial activity in design. Reduced Inequality (Goal 10) is implemented through social advertising that contributes to expanding rights and economic integration for various social groups.

The skills necessary to address these challenges include knowledge of progressive technologies, new computer design tools, as well as new materials and production processes. The skills required for addressing systemic challenges include management and leadership.

The educational components of the program ensure that students gain essential social skills (soft skills), such as: Information management; Presentation creation; Formulating opinions and decision-making; Communication abilities; Teamwork; High self-organization; Leadership skills, which are developed throughout the educational process by working in teams on creative, complex tasks and presenting results of their own artistic-project research.

The skills necessary for contextual challenges, similar to systemic challenges, primarily involve management and leadership skills, but with a focus on cultural and political acceptance. While both systemic and contextual challenges require interdisciplinary teams consisting of experts, government officials, and community leaders, contextual challenges particularly demand the use of a co-design approach, which emphasizes giving the community a primary voice in the process.

The educational and professional program offers a range of methods for involving the community in design education, which serves as a foundation for assisting in the planning of community participation and responsibility in decision-making during the design process. These project tools include: Surveys; Interviews; Focus groups; Design assessment tools. In the methodological recommendations for evaluating the quality of community involvement in design projects, a key evaluation criterion for the qualification work is interaction, which characterizes the cognitive and procedural outcomes as well as the authenticity of the interaction with the audience/community.

Solving the global design challenge requires teamwork, accompanied by a significant degree of cultural and political constraints. Today, we see a deeper and broader contribution from content from other academic fields to the tools, frameworks, and hands of designers. This is most clearly seen in new specializations such as service, information, and interaction design, which greatly benefit from cognitive and behavioral sciences [7].

The goals and learning outcomes of the educational program are defined in accordance with contemporary scientific research in design, cognitive science, visual communications, and digital technologies. The formation of learning outcomes is carried out with consideration of the latest theoretical approaches that combine design, information technology, and perception psychology. The program takes into account scientific trends such as cognitive aspects of design, the use of artificial intelligence, and others. It adapts to contemporary challenges through the analysis of relevant scientific publications, collaboration with professional communities, consideration of European design education standards, and support for international academic mobility [8, c. 5].

Design encompasses many sub-disciplines, some of which are quite new, requiring technological, analytical, and cognitive skills. Design is an applied field, and our students must practice the application of good design processes, often in a studio setting with real project work. However, we can certainly develop tools for teaching both the process and media more effectively than just relying on the transmission of tacit knowledge in traditional master-apprentice relationships [7].

The «Graphic Design» educational program provides comprehensive student preparation through the integration of knowledge from applied psychology, cognitive science, anthropology, political science, business, and ethics. The general preparation cycle forms foundational knowledge and general cultural competencies (history of statehood and culture, philosophy, political science, intercultural communication). The professional preparation cycle is aimed at developing analytical skills, the ability to conduct information searches, and the creation of nationally-oriented design products (history of art, design theory, entrepreneurial activity in the cultural sphere). The program fosters the formation of civic competencies, awareness of the designer's social role, and ethical responsibility. The logical structure of the program and the integration of disciplines with practical aspects ensure the training of competitive specialists [8].

According to the research by Meyer and Norman (2020), design schools must clearly define and enhance the key values of studio-based learning by

integrating interdisciplinary knowledge from established fields. Without this, designers risk losing their competitive edge to other domains such as cognitive sciences, information technology, engineering, and business. While these fields can complement design significantly, they do not always consider fundamental aspects of contemporary design approaches: analyzing root causes instead of symptomatic solutions, prioritizing the human factor, using a systems approach, and emphasizing rapid prototyping, testing, and iterative processes. Focusing exclusively on technology, economic feasibility, and efficiency without a deep understanding of the social context and the role of communities may limit the impact of design on society.

Historically connected with practical activities, design traditionally occupied a space within art, architecture, and design schools. However, contemporary design has significantly moved beyond the artistic domain, requiring the integration of technologies, social sciences, and business models. Designers now face new ethical challenges associated with globalization, sustainable development, and cultural differences. Academic reflection on design becomes crucial for the development of effective methodologies, analytical frameworks, and regulatory approaches that define the contemporary science of the design process [7].

The educational components of the «Graphic Design» educational program focus on both research activities for students and faculty, as well as practical experience. Great importance is placed on exhibitions, posters, and participation in competitions. According to the curriculum, the total volume is 7200 hours / 240 credits. Of the classroom hours (3211 hours), 34.5% (1108 hours) are lectures, 50.0% (1608 hours) are practical and laboratory classes, 10.0% (322 hours) are training sessions, and 5.4% (173 hours) are individual student work. Practice comprises 450 hours (15 credits), or 6.25% of the total credits. This illustrates a balanced approach to education, both within and outside of design, which, in our view, is necessary in the modern world [8].

Meyer and Norman (2020) note that modern design education balances academic rigor with the practical application of knowledge. An excessive focus on theory can narrow the interdisciplinary potential of design, which must remain a broad field integrating various approaches. It is necessary to develop assessment criteria that consider the uniqueness of design thinking, not just academic standards.

Design encompasses numerous subdisciplines, ranging from product and graphic design to digital technologies and textiles, highlighting its breadth and flexibility. Experimental learning plays a key role, and project-based activities should form the foundation of the educational process. It is important not only

to involve students in projects from day one but also to provide mentorship and critical analysis. Projects should be carefully selected to integrate the concepts being studied and motivate students toward creativity and innovation.

The structure of the «Graphic Design» educational program ensures practical orientation through a close connection between learning and real-world professional conditions. This includes solving applied problems during the study of educational components (EC), undergoing various types of internships at leading companies, and preparing bachelor's design projects as part of the qualification work. All of this is aimed at addressing real-world issues, responding to the challenges of the modern labor market [8, p. 8].

The design curriculum should combine practical and academic knowledge, as both are equally important for the development of a designer. Practical skills enable the ability to create high-quality projects, while academic knowledge forms a deep understanding of the principles and processes of design. Designers need to develop unique competencies, including the use of sketches as a tool for thinking and communication. Contemporary design education must transform into a community-driven collaboration, integrating interdisciplinary expertise. Key components of such a program include: design methods (human-centered design, creativity, leadership, research approaches); business fundamentals; computational methods; ethical aspects (social responsibility of designers, sustainable environments, community engagement). This approach will ensure the development of competent professionals capable of working in complex sociocultural and technological contexts [7].

The research by Carmel-Gilfilen and Portillo (2010) analyzes the development of design thinking through the lens of Perry's intellectual development model. Students at the introductory and intermediate design levels were assessed based on their intellectual development and design abilities. The results confirm a connection between the level of thinking, studio performance, and academic standing. The study indicates that dualistic thinkers tend to use fewer criteria, often perceiving them as constraints or simplifications in the design process. On the other hand, multiplistic thinkers integrate various criteria (formal, practical, symbolic, and behavioral), fostering a more holistic approach to design. Increasing awareness of criteria at all levels of education will encourage a more comprehensive consideration of design tasks. Further studies on experienced designers could reveal mechanisms for integrating radical criteria into the design process and promote the development of higher levels of design thinking [1].

In the “Graphic Design” EPP, information about the goals, content, expected learning outcomes, and assessment criteria for each educational component is

the starting point for the preparation and development of syllabi and course programs by the teaching staff. The order and criteria for evaluation are determined by the Regulation on the Organization of the Educational Process and are specified in the course syllabi and/or course programs. At the first lesson, instructors focus students' attention on the goals, content, expected learning outcomes, and familiarize them with the order and criteria for evaluation within a specific educational component [8, p. 10].

Davis (2016) discusses eight academic indicators that are often considered by ranking systems: entry requirements, learning outcomes, faculty, learning environment, final outcomes, resources, and research.

Regarding entry requirements, design programs at large universities use alternative selection criteria that better predict success in education than standardized tests. Design faculty members have significant workloads due to active student interaction, which limits their time for research. Limited resources for funding research and fewer peer-reviewed journals place design faculty at a disadvantage in terms of career advancement and grant support.

Davis's (2016) research suggests that the quality of teaching is more important than class size. A low faculty-to-student ratio in design programs can lead to financial pressure due to the high cost of studio-based education and low effectiveness according to credit hour criteria.

At the Western Ukrainian National University (WUNU), there are currently 103 students enrolled in the educational program. The normative part of the curriculum for this program is provided by 17 teaching staff, including 3 Doctors of Sciences, 9 Candidates of Sciences, 1 Honored Master of Folk Art, and 4 members of the Union of Designers of Ukraine [8].

WUNU actively engages employers and their employees in the organization and implementation of the educational process. Agreements have been made with companies specializing in providing services in the field of graphic design. Representatives of these institutions participate in the review and evaluation of the educational program, provide internship placements, and work closely with the Department of Culture and Tourism of the Ternopil Regional Administration and the Ternopil Regional Center for the Protection and Scientific Research of Cultural Heritage Monuments. Practitioners are also involved in classroom activities [8].

Davis (2016) highlights that graduates of creative specialties often begin their careers with freelancing, contract work, or apply their design education in non-traditional fields. Their first job serves as a continuation of professional learning,

where the key factor in choosing a workplace is the opportunity to receive mentorship, rather than financial motivation.

The key skills for innovation, according to the students, are generating new ideas, critically reflecting on concepts, presenting ideas to different audiences, and identifying promising opportunities. Mastery of one's own field is considered less important among the key skills.

Students consider higher education crucial for developing analytical skills but criticize the insufficient focus on social and behavioral competencies (collaboration, communication, creativity). Existing ranking systems do not always take into account the skills that are crucial in the knowledge economy.

Davis (2016) emphasizes that design as a research field faces limited access to scientific publications and the lack of consensus on publication quality standards. The focus on citations and patents favors traditional scientific disciplines, putting design at a disadvantage.

Design programs should effectively position their relevance in the context of educational policy, engaging partners and students. University administrations need to critically evaluate rankings as a planning tool and seek alternative sources of information. The development of a research culture in design should align its priorities with ranking systems or create its own standards for assessing the quality of education and research [3].

Davis (2016) concludes that a student's choice of educational institution should be based on their educational interests, professional ambitions, and personal goals, rather than solely on formal ranking indicators. These criteria highlight the need for a flexible approach to evaluating design programs and adapting educational strategies to the challenges of the innovation economy.

Comninos, McLoughlin, and Anderson (2010) focused their research on the development of education in the field of computer animation in the United Kingdom, specifically before the establishment of NCCA. They emphasized the intersection of artistic and computer education. The study explored the prerequisites and structure of NCCA, its philosophy, teaching, and research activities. A key theme was the creation of the first interdisciplinary Bachelor's program in computer animation, outlining its structure, curriculum, and the necessary resources for implementation. The success of the BA-CVA program was attributed to its innovative, well-thought-out design and interdisciplinary approach. The experience of NCCA can serve as a valuable guide for creating similar programs in the education of computer animation and digital effects [2].

The study by Faludi and Gilbert (2019) examines the practices of teaching

environmentally responsible innovation through interviews with educators, administrators, experts, and graduates. Recommended strategies include adapting curricula to the context and audience, particularly by integrating business knowledge, systems thinking, communication, and social justice. Project-based learning in interdisciplinary teams is an effective method that promotes academic integration of sustainable development. Deep integration of sustainability into core courses and specialized classes is optimal. Administrative support and external partnerships with industry, government, and the community are also crucial for success. This research combines academic and practical approaches, contributing to the development of innovative approaches to sustainable learning in higher education [5].

In the study by Vitchinkina (2023), it is noted that «unlike more ‘traditional’ forms and methods of control applied in the national EPP, the international EPP, according to the Attributes Structure of the Graduate of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, mostly uses forms of assessment such as project portfolios at the 4th and 5th educational levels. At the 6th educational level, assessment forms include dissertation, project, exhibition, conference, all related to the discipline and research topic (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2023)» [9].

In the «Graphic Design» educational program, the implementation of assessment forms includes the presentation of design projects, particularly through exhibitions of qualification works in social advertising within the framework of an agreement with the public organization «Institute of Urban Culture» (Ternopil). The results of these works will also be tested at scientific and practical conferences. The evaluation of qualification works will be carried out according to clear criteria, including research, creativity, technology, communication, and other aspects. Scientific advisors will provide written feedback on the students’ work in accordance with these criteria. All works will be checked for plagiarism and must adhere to the standards of academic integrity outlined in the WUNU Code of Ethics [8].

CONCLUSION

The study of modern education in the field of graphic design emphasizes the importance of innovation, interdisciplinary approaches, and ethical aspects in teaching. Contemporary educational programs should not only prepare specialists but also foster the development of creative abilities, critical thinking, and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing technological conditions and social challenges. Universities must actively engage students in scientific work

and support their creative pursuits within the context of a humanities-based education.

An important aspect is teaching the correct approaches to decision-making in design, especially in the context of rapid technological changes. The global context of education allows students to gain experience in different educational systems, which promotes the development of leadership and professional skills. The integration of research into the learning process enables students to better understand the complexity of modern design processes and interact with other disciplines.

Educational programs should prepare students for professional, ethical, and cultural changes, taking into account systemic, contextual, and global challenges, especially in the fields of sustainable development, culture, and technology integration. A deeper understanding of these aspects is essential for preparing the new generation of designers capable of solving complex social and economic problems.

Special attention should be given to interdisciplinary approaches, the integration of technologies and sustainable development in design education, as well as ensuring ethical standards and academic integrity. Flexible and evolutionary models of educational programs should meet the requirements of the innovation economy and cultural changes, providing systematic evaluation and improvement of the programs. Therefore, in order to find the most effective educational program model, an evolutionary, diverse, experimental, and iterative approach should be adopted.

The analysis of the educational-professional program «Graphic Design» at the Western Ukrainian National University shows that the process of its modernization aligns with the key issues observed in design education at the university level worldwide and responds to the main current challenges in the field of design.

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