Design Educators: Change Agents in RE-Designing Education

Robin Vande Zande

The primary aim of this workshop is to generate ideas on re-designing education, worldwide. The participants, working in small teams, will use the design process steps to define strategies, approaches and rationale for ways that design educators could be change agents in the future of education. A context will be provided from a 2019 international symposium entitled Re-Designing Education to Shape a Better World. The symposium, which took place in Florence, Italy, brought together thought leaders that represented 14 countries from diverse ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds. Reasons for why education is changing will be covered along with key concepts for improving education that emerged at the symposium. The overview will culminate with the relationship to those concepts and how they foreshadowed today's changing times as a result of the COVID pandemic disruption. After the conference, the workshop leader will synthesize the ideas into a report, which will be circulated to various design educators and organizations.

Keywords: design education; redesigning education

Design-Based Learning

Design-based learning (DBL) is a process to define local, regional, national and/or global challenges and how to work toward solutions, used to teach students in Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grades and in higher education design innovation courses. Many of the same issues that designers have encountered throughout the years are common to people in their everyday lives, making DBL relevant to students. Design Educators are big-picture thinkers. They use the design process of problem solving to guide students through steps to viable solutions. DBL is primarily about making meaningful change through a transdisciplinary approach and utilizing creative and analytical thinking.

In DBL students engage in learning and participate in finding resolutions. They define needs and empathize with user experiences, they research related topics, explore contexts within which a solution must fit, brainstorm possibilities, prototype, present their ideas, and reflect on audience feedback. All educators could incorporate the teaching of design in various fields of study. However, the ideal is a transdisciplinary approach with teachers team-teaching and a design educator facilitating as the central organizer. It also broadens the team to partner with community resource representatives and design professionals.

A context will be provided from the chair of a symposium held in 2019 entitled *Re-Designing Education to Shape a Better World.* The symposium, which took place in Florence, Italy, brought together international thought leaders that represented 14 countries from diverse ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds. Reasons for why education is changing will be covered along with key concepts that emerged at the symposium for improving education. The overview will culminate with the relationship to those concepts and how they foreshadowed today's changing times as a result of the COVID pandemic disruption.

The eight goals that emerged from the symposium are to:

- Empower students to *design their own learning* toward a method of meaning and purpose that connects content knowledge and technology with individual pace of learning, abilities and interests. *Individualize Instruction* is an approach that scaffolds learning and educational challenges through personal attributes, interests, abilities, skills, and expectations. Students need to create a sense of connection to something bigger than themselves, practice care and problem solving toward a balance that restores life to a physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

- Ensure that *Educational equity* exists to include an assurance of parity of resources and expertise, the promise that unique needs have been voiced, heard and provided for, and that there is cultural sensitivity.
- Broaden methods to enhance divergent *'ways of knowing'*. The *constructs of collectivism and individualism* pervade cultures and impact educational and other societal outcomes. All cultures differ in terms of values and motivation in the educational enterprise.
- Increase *collaboration* for students to become comfortable with the *diversity* of opinions and perspectives so they will be open to understanding others' ideas and broaden their perspective to a more global view.
- Teach students how to *think critically*, to include observation, analysis, interpretation, reflection, evaluation, inference, explanation, problem solving, and decision making.
- *Contextualize learning* by utilizing community resources and experts in education to promote cultural awareness, community involvement, and civic engagement.
- Use *Inter/transdisciplinary and intercultural instruction and curriculum* that encompasses overlapping theses, reinforcing one another toward providing authentic learning. An effective approach to use is *Design-Based Learning*, which involves design thinking toward problem solving, creative mindsets, empathy, working as a team, and coherent communication skills.
- Endorse *educational agency* that fosters highly effective teaching and supports teachers in their decisions on how to facilitate engaging teaching/learning strategies.

Format
This format may be used for in person attendance, working in small groups, or through a virtual meeting with online break-out sessions.

Activity	*Time*
The facilitator will give an overview of the symposium and ideas that surfaced	20 minutes
Participants will be put in teams of 4. Facilitator will provide instructions on how to proceed	5-10 minutes
Work time. The ideas that emerge will be documented in the small groups	45 minutes
Final overview reflection	15 minutes
Follow up by facilitator to synthesize ideas into a report that will be circulated to design educators and organizations	1 month

Outcomes
The teams will identify rationale, strategies and approaches that support design educators as change agents in the future of education. After the conference, the workshop leader will synthesize the ideas into a report, which will be circulated to various design educators and organizations. There will be opportunities for researchers to study the efficacy of the recommendations in classrooms and/or with student groups. It is hoped that design educators will use the ideas and strategies that emerged during this workshop to position themselves as change makers.

Participants
4-48 participants to work in teams of four.

Benefits

The participants will benefit by defining the role and characteristics of design educators, discussing the future of education, and identifying how design-based learning can be positioned as being centrally important in educating future citizens in a world that is rapidly changing. There will be research opportunities to study any of the ideas that emerge for efficacy in classroom use with individual or groups of students.

Relevance to track

The track chosen for this workshop is *Design Educators as Change Agents*. The focus for this track is primarily about higher education professional programs in training designers. This workshop proposal has a slightly different spin. It includes design innovation programs in higher education and Prekindergarten through twelfth grade programs. There are some design educators in K-12 schools who work with young students to teach them how to problem solve, use prototype materials and equipment, and bridge the STEM subjects with the arts. In higher education, design educators are training future designers to solve challenges, empathize with users, invite multiple perspectives across disciplines, and build understanding about the diversity of a global society. The purpose of this workshop fits with this track which states, "understand how design educators' roles, skills and their competencies are shaping and are shaped by signature pedagogies. In doing so might provide us with an insight how the design educators can take up active role as change agents". Design educators are needed in education to demonstrate an effective way to approach change.

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VandeZande, chair of LearnXDesign 2015, Chicago, IL, is professor/coordinator of art/design education. Her activism assisted in the inclusion of design in the US national art education standards (2014). VandeZande has received many awards, notably Distinguished Fellow (NAEA), National Art Education Higher Educator (NAEA), and President's Faculty Excellence (KSU). She was a featured speaker for 60 national/state events. Her books include Design Education: Creating Thinkers to Improve the World (2016) and co-authored Fashion Fundamentals (2020).