

Considering Graphic Designing Considerations as a full time Profession

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ABSTRACT: *Graphic designers have a lesser professional standing than other professions such as architects, physicians, engineers, and accountants. Some believe that this is due in large part to the fact that graphic designers have less obligations, such as dealing solely with "the creation of things and beautiful things" rather than their customers' "life and death" or "safety" concerns. Many design academics, on the other hand, see graphic design as a strategic instrument that can provide enormous value to global companies, markets, communities, and economies. Graphic designers must rethink how they may improve or raise their professional standing among the general public in light of this "perception gap." This article seeks to examine and evaluate the potential reasons that have prevented graphic designers from being acknowledged as professionals by performing a thorough literature review. It finds that the traditional meaning of the word "graphic design" no longer adequately reflects the present status of the profession, and that regulatory authorities should strive to establish a professional certification program for graphic designers.*

KEYWORDS: *Graphic designers, professional status, standards of practice, accreditation, design thinking, and communication design*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 19th century, graphic design has been regarded a career. In England, the Industrial Revolution drew a clear boundary between artistic and commercial art, giving rise to graphic design as a contemporary design profession. Graphic design is getting more prevalent and popular in the worldwide arena as time goes on. The fast development of digital technology, along with the expansion of the global consumer market, has created a plethora of possibilities for modern graphic designers to put their talents and experience to use. Graphic design may occur at any size and at any moment, from the design of a single business card to a whole brand identification system, or from a company's website to the print and digital ads of an integrated advertising campaign. Graphic designers have long been known for manipulating visual and verbal information in order to "persuade, inform, identify, motivate, enhance, organize, brand, rouse, find, engage, and carry or communicate multiple layers of meaning" to a particular audience[1].

However, many studies have shown that graphic designers have a lesser professional standing than other professions such as architects, physicians, attorneys, engineers, and accountants who may have to deal with their customers' "life and death" or "safety" problems. This is due in great part to the public's perception of graphic designers as 'decorators, "stylists," 'artisans,' or 'craftsmen,' who deal imparity with making things seem beautiful, and therefore have less obligations. As Short points out, this common view has stymied the development of graphic design as a legitimate career. It delves into the history of the word "graphic design," examines graphic design as a career, and looks at the reasons that have prevented graphic designers from being acknowledged as professionals. In the conclusion, recommendations are made on how to improve the standing of graphic design as a profession[2].

1.1 Graphic Design: Definition, History, and Analysis of the Term:

The word 'graphic' comes from the Greek word 'graphikos,' which refers to any kind of mark-making or drawing. As a result, design historians like have traced the origins of graphic design all the way back to the earliest forms of visual communication. Similarly, the beginnings of graphic design may be traced back to the Lascaux cave paintings, which date from c.15, 000 to 10,000 BC, and more particularly to The Book of Kells, an illuminated manuscript Gospel book in Latin, which dates from c.794 to 806 CE. It should come as no surprise, however, that graphic design is now regarded as a very wide design profession known as visual

communication, and as a field that is gaining growing prominence in design school across the globe, based on its roots. “of, related to, or including such reproducing techniques as engraving, etching, lithography, photography, serigraphy, and woodcut,” as well as the visual arts involved with the printing and reproduction of text and pictures to express sound or communicate meaning.

As a result, graphic design is constantly linked to activities involving the replication of visual text and pictures using a variety of tools and technology. to link the history of graphic design from print technologies to the computer graphics revolution in the twenty-first century. In 1922, an American book and type designer named William Addison Dwiggins created the phrase "graphic design." However, it was only after World War II that this phrase became widely used[3]. In today's world, graphic design is described in a variety of ways, and there is no universally accepted definition. “A pervasive, but mostly unseen, activity that contributes significantly to the make-up of our visual culture,” according to graphic design.

There are increasingly divergent viewpoints on how to define and demarcate the limits of ‘graphic design.’ There are ongoing discussions about renaming graphic design to anything like "communication design," "experience design," or even "information design," as some have suggested. Designers' self-perceptions in terms of "how they perceive of themselves" and "what constitutes valid design activity" may be influenced by such delineation. Despite this, the phrase "graphic design" is by far the most popular, particularly in developing nations like Malaysia[4]. Graphic design is a problem-solving multidisciplinary activity that blends aesthetic sensibility with ability and expertise in communications, technology, and business. Graphic designers are experts in organizing and structuring visual information to assist communication and direction.

1.2 Definitions of the Terms "Profession" and "Professional"

“Any kind of job that requires special training or a specific talent, typically one that is valued because it requires a high degree of education,” says the dictionary. A professional is someone who works full-time and expects to work for the rest of their lives. After a lengthy period of training, a professional possesses a specific body of knowledge and is thus responsible for serving and making decisions for customers in an impartial and transparent way. The professions, on the other hand, are a loosely defined collection of vocations. While the most prominent professions, such as law and medicine, are often regarded as the "ideal kind," few others even come close to matching their level of influence. Teachers and nurses in the public sector, for example, were labeled as "semi-professionals," but this merely added another ill-defined group to the mix[5].

1.3 Graphic Design as a Field of Study:

Due to the origins of graphic design, graphic designers are mainly educated to master technical production abilities in order to produce aesthetically attractive works for successful communication in terms of professional growth. However, because of the expansion of the information age and the rise of the knowledge economy, practitioners are being encouraged to create new features or criteria to represent the more current position of graphic design as a profession. Graphic designers, on the other hand, are yet to be acknowledged as professionals. She claimed that graphic designers have been misunderstood as ‘visual artists,’ akin to ‘fine artists,’ who are mainly concerned with the creation of well made things. Many people consider graphic design to be a "decorating hobby" rather than a "professional service." Graphic design has yet to progress from a "craft" to a "real profession," according to the report. He said that when graphic design is seen as a profession, it is based only on the application of methods and styles to meet the requirements of commercial customers. “...compared to the standardized and institutional requirements of, for example, architecture or medicine, a hierarchy from architecture, via design, down to art, may be understood as a system of ‘major’ to ‘minor’ professions.”

1.4 No one is interested in pursuing a career in graphic design. Seriously:

Several reasons may have contributed to the lack of respect and admiration for graphic design as a career. For starters, according to a number of academics, graphic design education has failed to prepare students to be professionals. In Hong Kong, for example, design education is still focused on the technical and stylistic elements of design, resulting in a ‘mismatch’ between what graphic designers study in school and what they are required to do in reality. In Hong Kong, beginner graphic designers get insufficient training in areas such as business, marketing, user behavior, and consumer psychology, which are all clearly essential in the field.

When it comes to creativity and design education in Singapore and Malaysia, most design schools in these two nations have failed to cultivate their students' ability to view design in a more strategic and wider light.

The curriculum do not place a strong emphasis on design thinking or entrepreneurial attitudes[6]. As a consequence, most students graduate unable to solve complicated issues or discover commercial possibilities that would fuel economic development. Instead, they are limited to sitting in front of a computer and clicking the mouse to do given design tasks. As a result, the current design industry is flooded with graphic design graduates, but only a small percentage of them are regarded true young professionals. The function of design schools in providing the essential knowledge and skills of future design professionals is thus questioned. Second, after graduating from university, no professional training is provided by appropriate authorities for graphic designers to further certify themselves as "professionals." To put it another way, graphic designers are not required to fulfill any professional requirements in order to work in the field.

On the one hand, this implies that the profession's entrance criteria are very low. Graphic designers, on the other hand, will have to take the effort to seek out further training in order to meet professional standards. On the contrary, certain professions, such as architecture, accounting, and engineering, have rigorous training or examinations mandated by professional organizations to ensure that their practitioners are of high quality[7]. In Malaysia, for example, one may only seek to become a professional architect after passing the Architectural Examination Council of Malaysia's professional exams and meeting other requirements. As a result, the number of true and competent professional architects continues to be limited. Unlike architects, graphic designers are not a 'legally protected' profession, which means that anyone can call themselves a graphic designer, including freelance designers working from their homes, practitioners employed by other establishments that require a graphic designer 'in-house,' or printing companies that are not required to register with associations, inventory sites, or directories. Graphic designers are omnipresent in this environment.

Because graphic designers are not recognized as professionals like architects, attorneys, or accountants, they are often seen as low-paid and low-status. Third, due to advances in digital technology, design software is now readily available and easy to use[8]. The accessibility of excellent design is made possible by the availability of do-it-yourself templates on a free internet platform. Anyone who knows how to utilize design tools and modify templates may call themselves a "graphic designer." As a result, the design profession is increasingly populated with 'self-taught' and 'informally educated' graphic designers who have never had any traditional design training. These graphic designers with no formal training make a significant influence on the design business. In Ghana, for example, 82 percent of the graphic design profession is self-taught. This group of graphic designers is well-known in the Ghanaian design business for their ability to fulfill customers' needs. More significantly, they provide customers reasonable rates.

Furthermore, his findings revealed that in Ghana, customers prefer to employ informally educated graphic designers since university graduates often take longer to adjust to industry needs[9]. In other words, anyone without a formal graphic design degree may now work as graphic designers, and "whether you are ready or not, this contemporary world has made everyone a designer." According to Cross (2001), everyone has the capacity to design. Without a doubt, this tendency has reduced the public's perception of graphic designers as professionals. Finally, as already said, many people believe that graphic designers have less obligations than other professions. Graphic designers have long been known for manipulating visual components like font, colors, and pictures in both print and digital media to convey ideas and translate ideas into visual solutions. This is in contrast to certain other professions who have to deal with their customers' "life and death" or "safety" problems[10].

2. DISCUSSION

However, there is a large body of literature indicates that designers are no longer pure decorators, artisans, or stylists, but instead, with the knowledge and skill sets in design, they can handle various roles and duties at different positions in the corporate environment. They can work as either functional specialists in the processes of new product development or strategic process leaders in organizations. Some studies also imply that organizations work with internal and external designers in varied ways and that the persons who the designers work with can determine their perceived contribution. Several studies investigated the professional

scope of work and knowledge of graphic designers. For example, in order to redefine the plural domains of graphic design, a contemporary way of looking at the field by emphasizing on the design processes rather than the outcomes.

As pointed out, “the traditional domains of typography, illustration, photography, and print, while contributing significantly to graphic design, are inadequate terms for describing what graphic design is, and what graphic designers do”. Having studied how graphic design has evolved to integrate other design areas and how it is used more broadly in many other non-design disciplines, consequently described graphic design as a “unified thinking and doing activity that involves idea generation, image creation, word interpretation, and media realization” for various essential dimensions: communication, commerce, industry, culture, and society. Graphic design should not be viewed only as “a craft for commerce”, but instead, it should be used as “a tool for social, cultural, and economic development”.

The professional knowledge in graphic design practice by using mixed method approach to collect data from graduate graphic designers, design firm employers, and design academics in Hong Kong. Respondents involved in the study shared a similar view that “A professional designer is knowledgeable and performs well in both internal and external environment”. In other words, not only that the professional graphic designers need to have knowledge of the design process in the business environment, they also need to be able to engage effectively with experts from different disciplines. On the other hand, various efforts have been made to promote the status of graphic design as a profession.

Many professional bodies for design are established around the world with the intention to “advance design as a professional craft, strategic advantage, and vital cultural force”. Among the famous associations are: American Institutes of Graphic Arts, International Council of Design (ico-D) (www.ico-d.org), Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) (www.agda.com.au), Graphic Artists Guild (www.graphicartistsguild.org), Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (DGC) (www.gdc.net), Malaysian Graphic Design Association (wREGA) (www.wrega.org), etc. These bodies have diverse visions, but generally, they hope to advocate a greater understanding of the value of design and designers in various sectors; heighten professional development through enriching learning opportunities at all levels; inspire designers and the public by sharing sensational work and engaging in thoughtful discussion on important issues; organize events to serve a wide range of special interest groups; and make powerful resources accessible to all.

In order to strengthen designers’ integrity, these international bodies have developed their respective standards for professional practice or so-called the Professional Code of Conduct (CoPC) for their members to follow. These standards cover several key aspects. They are: responsibilities to the association, responsibilities to clients, responsibilities to other designers, responsibilities to the public or community, and responsibilities to society and the environment. While much efforts have been made, however, several critical issues remain unresolved: What is the required competency level of a graphic designer to be called as a professional? How to measure effectively if a designer has successfully achieved the desired competency level as a professional? How to do that holistically? In other words, further investigation is needed to develop a set of competency standards for effective graphic design professionals and a valid tool for competency assessment.

CONCLUSION

It is not surprising that graphic design profession is not highly regarded or getting the respect it should deserve. Anyone with knowledge of design software claims to be graphic designers, including freelancers who work at home, desktop publishing artists who work in printing companies, and so forth. However, anyone can cook but that does not make him or her a chef. Likewise, there must be some specialties differentiate professionally-trained graphic designers from those who are informally-trained. Unfortunately, there are still many who are ‘unwilling’ to treat graphic designers the way they would give to their lawyers, accountants or architects. Is it true that most clients just want graphic designers to create some styles only rather than an effective design solution? Graphic designers are not make-up artists.

They are problem solvers. Thinking must come before style and good design is about solving problems but not about making problems look pretty. Therefore, graphic designers must acquire a holistic knowledge of professional practice when dealing with clients. The Code of Professional Conduct (CoPC) encourages good

standard and fair balance of the needs of graphic designers. It is an ethical standard, which covers designers' responsibilities to clients, to fellow designers, the public, and to society and environment. Graphic designers must also need to master a wide range of competencies in order to be able to conceptualize and develop design strategy for implementation of an idea. While professional knowledge and competencies are necessary, having the passion to enjoy what they do and having enthusiasm to design will ensure the success of the profession. The governing bodies must strive their best to establish a design accreditation, starting with assessment of the competency levels of the graduates to ensure the quality of all new entrants to the profession. For professional designers, accreditation criteria can be based on academic background, working experience, and passing the Accreditation Examination just like other professions.

It is believed that by doing so, the professional standards will be strengthened, and the status of graphic designers elevated. In addition, the president of ico-D, to make design more well-recognized, graphic design practitioners must not reject the idea of collaborating with the government. There is a critical need for the practitioners to work together to invent new policies and blueprint for holistic development of design profession. The concept of 'design thinking', a strategy or process used by designers to create innovative solutions are now widely adopted and used to solve social, environmental, cultural, and business issues around the world. Empathy, optimism, and integrative thinking are central to the 'design thinker's personality profile'. Empathy enables designers to investigate the issues from different perspectives. Integrative thinking refers to that designers are able to see all of the salient and potential solutions to a design situation, often improving on or providing unforeseen alternatives. Integrative thinking is tied to optimism, which assumes that no matter how challenging a design problem, there is the potential for a positive outcome.

Increasingly, design professionals are also found collaborating with experts from other disciplines to solve complex issues rather than merely focusing on traditional technical production. In such a context, it is anticipated that design will continue to play significant and critical role in the future, contributing meaningfully to the growth and success of various aspects of human life. The assumed responsibilities of designers are not as 'light' as what people perceive generally. Since it is no longer enough for graphic designers just to make problems look pretty, the term 'graphic design' must also be reconsidered because it can hardly represent what contemporary graphic designers are doing. Out of so many names that proposed by design scholars, such as 'visual communication design', 'experience design', and 'information design', 'communication design', perhaps, is the most appropriate term to be used to reflect the current state of the profession. This is because, communication design can be described as "an intellectual, creative strategic, managerial, and technical activity" that "essentially involves the production of visual solutions to communication problems".

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