ТЕОРІЯ ОСВІТИ Й НАВЧАННЯ

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REGARDING THE DEFINITION OF SOFT SKILLS AS A CONDITION FOR ENSURING THE QUALITY OF THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF FUTURE SPECIALISTS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN

The article addresses the pressing issue of developing "soft skills" in graphic design students, considering the growing demand for creative and communicatively adept professionals in this field. It emphasizes that cultivating such skills is a necessary component of their professional training. Drawing from the Icograda Design Education Manifesto, where design is characterized as an activity encompassing intellectual, creative, strategic, managerial, and technical aspects, the article underscores the importance of shaping personal skills. It delves into researchers' perspectives on material and immaterial, cognitive and non-cognitive, as well as "hard skills" and "soft skills" in the context of graphic design. The article notes the absence of a unified approach to defining the personal qualities necessary for a graphic design professional. It provides an analysis of industry standards, manifestos, educational standards, and national and international educational programs in China and the United Kingdom for training graphic design professionals regarding the specified skill requirements outlined in these documents. The results show that the skill requirements and personality traits of professionals are outlined in education standards and training programs. The article identifies specific "soft skills," such as communicativeness, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and time management, which contribute to successful work in the field of graphic design. It underscores the importance of cultivating these skills in the educational process. The specificity of the identified "soft skills" concerning graphic design is also examined. The article's conclusion emphasizes the importance of "soft skills" in the professional training of future graphic designers and the need for further developments in this direction.

Key words: soft skills, higher education, quality of higher education, education standard, education program, professional training of graphic designers.

Problem statement. In light of the increasing need for adept and communicatively skilled professionals within the design sector, it becomes imperative to cultivate soft skills throughout the educational process. This not only contributes to the development of capable individuals but also enhances their competitiveness in the field. Recognizing and honing soft skills among graphic design students are essential components of their professional development.

In the Design Education Manifesto published by the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (Icograda), it is noted that design is an activity that encompasses intellectual, creative, strategic, managerial, and technical aspects [Icograda Design Education Manifesto, 2011]. Design is an activity that significantly relies on creativity. The practice of graphic design includes a creative component, innovation, and unconventional thinking using manual or digital tools, where text and graphics are typically employed for visual communication.

Researchers resort to defining tangible and intangible (F. Hendarman, U. Cantner, and A. Hendarman) [Hendarman at al., 2017], cognitive and non-cognitive skills (C. Fan, Wei Xiangdong and Zhang Junsen) [Fan at al., 2005], which are also characterized as hard skills and soft skills (H. Hadiyanto, N. Nofer, and Moehaimin) [Hadiyanto at al., 2017], considering their formation in the process of training future design professionals (E. Rovida, A. Gianotti and G. Zafferri) [Rovida at al., 2022].

The issue of defining the qualities of a designer's personality is pointed out by H. Dubberly,

noting that with the development of technology, traditional design skills become insufficient, and a modern designer needs to be familiar with contemporary technologies [Dubberly, 2011]. K. Kunrath, P. Cash, and J. Li-Ying also emphasize that the formation of a designer's personality has two aspects: technical and human [Kunrath et al., 2016]. Currently, there is no single approach to determining the personal qualities that a graphic design professional should possess.

The article aims to highlight the theoretical aspects of defining soft skills of future graphic design professionals as a condition for ensuring the quality of their professional training. This is based on the analysis of educational and industry standards, documents on higher education issues, and scientific-pedagogical publications.

Results and discussion. The requirements for the skills and personality of a graphic design professional are outlined in state education standards, program documents of educational-professional programs, and design council manifestos.

In the national quality standards for professional bachelor's education issued by the Ministry of Education of China, concerning the field of Design, it is specified that graphic design professionals should demonstrate creative thinking, possess aesthetic judgment, apply scientific work methods, be capable of effective teamwork, have a broad international understanding, and a keen sense of time. The standards require proficiency in self-expression, communication, and collaboration, as well as the mastery of aesthetic abilities and basic skills in innovation and entrepreneurship. Professionals are also expected to have skills in document search, conducting design research, data analysis, and exhibit competence in planning [National standards for the quality of vocational training, 2018]

In the program document of the national educational-professional program of the College of Arts and Design at Wuhan University of Technology, specializing in "Visual Communication Design," it is specified that individuals should possess the fundamental characteristics of innovative design and communication. They should be organized, capable of planning design activities, solving design project tasks, using specific means of brand interaction, employing various forms

of self-expression, and possessing professional skills and methods for creating artistic design. Aesthetic abilities are also emphasized. Important aspects include the desire and ability for lifelong learning, adaptability to the development of design innovations, a strong sense of team community and collaboration, logical and dialectical thinking, critical awareness, and proficiency in practical methods of design thinking, along with creative consciousness [Bachelor's degree plan, 2017].

In the Subject benchmark statement for the history of art, architecture, and design developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of the United Kingdom (QAA), which serves as the basis for programs in the field of "Graphic Design," the following requirements are outlined and grouped as follows:

1. Open-mindedness – a heuristic approach to new concepts and the ability to critically evaluate various perspectives.

2. Autonomy – the ability to form independent arguments based on authoritative sources in the relevant field and articulate those arguments.

3. Information – the ability to effectively use various modern and innovative digital technologies and demonstrate digital literacy.

4. Time management and personal initiative – effective executive ability by instructions and deadlines, including managing multiple projects simultaneously [The Quality Assurance Agency, 2019].

In the program document of the international educational and professional program of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Wuhan University of Technology, the following goals are outlined: the ability to be creative, aesthetic sensitivity, intellectual exploration, teamwork skills, the ability to embrace diversity of ideas, and working on tasks to generate innovative solutions are important aspects. Students should demonstrate self-development, employ individual approaches, and effectively manage their organization. Students should utilize a high level of subject-specific skills and non-traditional thinking, as well as creative skills for synthesizing ideas and aesthetic concepts aimed at solving creative tasks [University of Wales Trinity St. David – Wuhan University of Technology, 2013].

In the Design Education Manifesto issued by the International Council of Design

(Icograda), it is noted that a designer is capable of identifying and clearly defining problems, and collaboratively solving them through the use of critical thinking, creative methods, experiments, and evaluation as fundamental skills. Additionally, the ease of adaptation to technological changes and the readiness to embrace the challenge of learning and mastering innovative methods of visualization and communication concepts in various media, using so-called "smart materials," are emphasized [Icograda Design Education Manifesto, 2011].

The strategy of the UK Design Council outlines the direction for the next four years, identifying key priorities for design activities. It emphasizes the significant importance of developing design skills. According to the definition provided by the UK Design Council, design skills involve the ability to take an idea and bring it to fruition. Design skills encompass a set of abilities and a particular way of thinking about problem-solving, combining materials to achieve function, and creating meaning that generates new ideas. The noteworthy aspect is that design skills enable an understanding of the complexity of tasks, the application of diverse solutions, the development of effective resolutions, the formulation of action plans, the generation of new ideas, collaboration, and a critical and creative understanding of the design process, combining various concepts and demonstrating originality [Design Council, 2020]. Among the skills applied by designers, notable qualities include creativity, originality, initiative, critical thinking, attention to detail, flexibility, the ability to solve complex problems, and developing emotional intelligence [Design Council, 2020].

It can be seen that acquiring skills is an important component of educational standards in many countries, including the United Kingdom and China [Vitchynkina, 2023].

Skills have become critically important for success in the job market and personal development. For example, the World Economic Forum's report "The Future of Jobs" emphasizes that skills related to technological development, creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration are key to a successful career in the future [World Economic Forum, 2018].

Soft skills are skills that are not directly related to the technical ability to perform a specific job but are important for success in any profession. In our research, we will rely on such soft skills as communicativeness, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and time management, as these skills can be highlighted when analyzing the educational standards of China and the United Kingdom, as well as educational and professional programs for the training of graphic design specialists at both national and international levels [Vitchynkina, 2023]. The combination of these skills is what helps designers solve design problems, as indicated in the Design Education Manifesto. The authors note that a designer identifies and formulates a range of problems, and resolves them by integrating critical thinking, creativity, experimentation, and evaluation [Icograda Design Education Manifesto, 2011].

Regarding graphic design, the significance of the investigated soft skills can be outlined as follows:

1. Communicativeness is a key soft skill for graphic designers as it influences the effectiveness of interacting with clients, the team, and other stakeholders. It encompasses the ability to express ideas clearly, actively listen, understand the requirements of clients and colleagues, as well as collaborate within a team. Research by scholars such as E. Rovida, A. Gianotti, and G. Zafferri [Rovida at al., 2022] indicates that communicativeness significantly impacts success in the field of graphic design.

2. Creativity serves as the foundation for developing unique and appealing designs. It involves the capacity to generate new ideas, think unconventionally, and embrace innovation. Research confirms that creativity is a key soft skill defining success in graphic design, as indicated by scholars such as D. Lopes, J. Correia, P. Machado [Lopes et al., 2022], M. Purbasari, and D. Carolina [Purbasari & Carollina, 2023].

3. Problem-solving, which entails the ability to analyze complex tasks, recognize issues, and seek effective solutions. In graphic design, this means understanding project requirements, identifying client needs, and finding creative ways to address design challenges. The importance of problem-solving skills for future graphic design professionals and their relevance to addressing challenges is emphasized by researchers such as Yang Liu [Yang Liu, 2020].

4. Critical thinking involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, and challenge ideas and design solutions. It includes the capacity to distinguish well-founded arguments from weak logic, question accepted standards, and seek innovative solutions. The importance of cultivating innovative thinking is highlighted by Yinli Ming [Yinli Ming, 2021].

5. Time management is a crucial flexible skill for the effective work of a graphic designer. It involves the ability to plan work time, prioritize tasks, meet deadlines, and efficiently manage resources. The importance of time management is emphasized by researchers such as D. Malouf [Malouf, 2011] and L. Zeegen, who note that real-world projects come with deadlines and constraints [Zeegen, 2009–2011].

Skills and personal qualities can interact and complement each other. Skills refer to specific knowledge and abilities that can be learned and developed through education and practice. On the other hand, personal qualities reflect characteristic traits that define an individual, such as character, values, morality, and approaches to life.

While skills and personal qualities can be considered separately, they are often interconnected and influence each other. The relationship between skills and personal qualities varies depending on the specific situation and context. Some skills may depend on certain personal qualities for their successful application, while other skills may contribute to the development of specific qualities.

Conclusions. Acquiring skills is a crucial component of educational standards and expected outcomes in educational and professional programs in many countries, including the United Kingdom and China. Skills play a pivotal role in competitiveness in the job market and personal development. Proficiency in skills provides an advantage in the contemporary market environment and influences employment opportunities and career advancement. This holds for the professional training of future graphic design specialists as well.

Soft skills, such as communication, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and time management, assist graphic designers in interacting with clients, understanding their needs and requirements, and effectively communicating with other members of the project team. Communication and collaboration skills are essential for comprehending client requirements and incorporating them into the design concept. Creativity and problem-solving enable the discovery of unique and innovative solutions in graphic design. Critical thinking aids in analyzing ideas and concepts, refining them with consideration for efficiency and project goals. Time management allows for planning and organizing the workflow to ensure timely and efficient project completion. The next research should involve comparing soft skills with indicators of the creative activity of future graphic design professionals.

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ВИЗНАЧЕННЯ «ГНУЧКИХ НАВИЧОК» (SOFT SKILLS) ЯК УМОВА ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ ЯКОСТІ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНІХ ФАХІВЦІВ У ГАЛУЗІ ГРАФІЧНОГО ДИЗАЙНУ

Стаття розглядає актуальне питання формування гнучких навичок (soft skills) у майбутніх фахівців із графічного дизайну, ураховуючи зростаючий попит на творчих та комунікативно здібних фахівців у цій галузі. Зазначається, що виховання таких навичок є необхідною складовою їхньої професійної підготовки. Виходячи із зазначеного у Маніфесті з дизайнерської освіти, де дизайн характеризується як діяльність, що охоплює інтелектуальний, творчий, стратегічний, управлінський та технічний аспекти, наголошується на важливості формування особистісних навичок. Стаття розкриває погляди дослідників на матеріальні та нематеріальні, когнітивні та некогнітивні, а також сталі навички (hard skills) та гнучкі навички (soft skills) у контексті графічного дизайну. У статті зауважується про відсутність єдиного підходу до визначення особистісних якостей, необхідних для фахівця із графічного дизайну. У статті подається аналіз галузевих стандартів та маніфестів, освітніх

стандартів та національних й міжнародних освітніх програм КНР та Великобританії з підготовки фахівців із графічного дизайну щодо зазначених у наданих документах вимог до формування навичок професійних графічних дизайнерів, на онові якого визначаються гнучкі навички (soft skills) майбутніх фахівців графічного дизайну. Результати показують, що вимоги до навичок і особистості фахівця зазначені у стандартах освіти та програмах підготовки. У статті визначаються конкретні гнучкі навички (soft skills), такі як комунікативність, креативність, проблемне та критичне мислення, тайм-менеджмент, які сприяють успішній роботі у галузі графічного дизайну та підкреслюється важливість формування цих навичок у навчальному процесі. Також розглядається специфіка визначених гнучких навичок (soft skills) щодо графічного дизайну. Заключення статті підкреслює важливість гнучких навичок (soft skills) у професійній підготовці майбутніх графічних дизайнерів та важливість подальших напрацювань у цьому напрямку.

Ключові слова: гнучкі навички, soft skills, вища освіта, якість вищої освіти, освітній стандарт, освітня програма, професійна підготовка графічних дизайнерів.