

## Designing a Sustainable Curriculum: Foundation Programme in Design Education for Hong Kong

LAM Yan Yan<sup>1</sup>, FUNG Shung Yu, Alex<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Design Foundation Studies, Hong Kong Design Institute

<sup>2</sup> Principal's Office, Hong Kong Design Institute

Professional training in design is required to provide a capable workforce for creative industries that face a host of challenges (e.g. employment opportunities, integration into the regional market of Mainland China or global markets etc.) related to its competitiveness and sustainability (Mok, 2011). All design colleges and universities should provide relevant, responsive and high quality education to develop students' skills, talents, artistic and scientific personality to embrace new ideas for future development (HKSAR, Policy Address 2007 and 2009; Lam, 2010; Mok, 2011). This paper presents research on a sustainable curriculum for design foundation studies in the first year of tertiary/higher education. It argues that there is often inadequate preparation for creative study in secondary education and design capacity can be developed belatedly as a remedial activity after students have matriculated around the age of 18 or 19. Also, it is unfortunate that many people in Hong Kong perceive Art or Design courses as 'soft options', devoid of academic rigour (Heskett, 2003). Lai believes that learning in secondary education should develop curiosities, add flavors of creativity and innovation (Lai, 2007). There is a need to explore new foundation studies in design education to better equip secondary school students with all necessary fundamental design-related knowledge and skills in their first year of study in design. Particular attention has been paid, firstly, on how a curriculum framework should be established for a foundation programme that can effectively respond to the new academic structure in Hong Kong and secondly, on how to develop an appropriate standard for this group of students to further their study in design education. Findings of this research will allow policy makers, programme providers and designers to identify strengths and weaknesses. Strengths can be acknowledged, while weaknesses can be remedied wherever possible, within the constraints of staffing, timetabling, facilities and other resources. The research findings also reflect that a curriculum framework with a broad-based curriculum containing learning modules and electives was

considered essential at the preparatory stage of design learning for secondary school graduates in Hong Kong. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus groups with internal and external stakeholders, and data analysis was conducted by grounded theory. Given its emphasis in Design education, research of this kind could create a new discussion platform to stimulate potential and inspiring findings, and recommendations on how Design education might be re-structured to dovetail with the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Hong Kong to become a creative and innovative society in the region.

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