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Education as the object of training/investment: Design current higher education courses and their transition

abstract

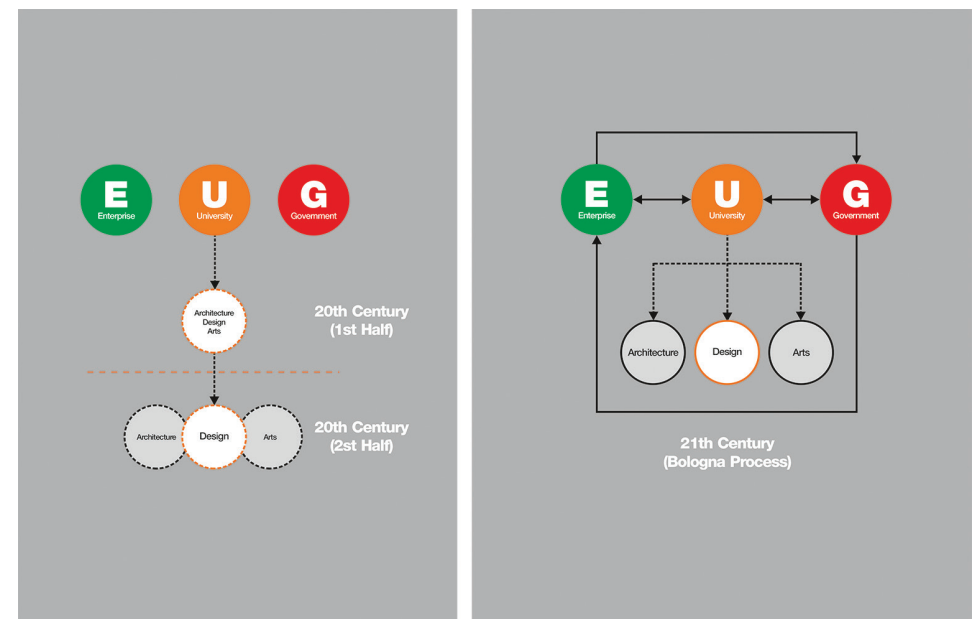
The following article focuses on the role higher education has assumed in Portugal as a part of a education/investment process.

Taking into account the strategies that have been adopted and current Design social, cultural and economical values, we intend to contextualize, analysing diverse contents and explaining the transformation that education/ training has undergone in Portugal, more specifically Design.

We will be questioning Design's responsibility in the country's both innovation and development.

keywords

education/training, design,
design in higher education.



1. Introduction

We are currently living in a globalized and extremely competitive society in which higher education institutions have become projects of global development (Guerreiro, 2012), which has brought scientific investigation, technological innovation and the corporate world closer, leading society to recognise higher education as a powerful instrument aiding in sustainable development and social cohesion. Those same institutions are now seen in a different light, as Jensen said (2014) “if we only look at higher education's outputs, if we consider University to be a business we are forgetting its true essence, a place for knowledge where society can grow.”

And just so, design has been conquering recognition and accomplishing social, cultural, technological and even political development, as one can tell from the Portuguese State Budget report for 2014, in which the government “invests in the internationalisation of portuguese culture and creators”, claiming that “Design will be the main international promotion area in 2014”.

To face these challenges, it is necessary for us to we stop and reconsider education/training's role in Design's Higher Education, in order that we understand if the existing one is propitious or not for investment, thus becoming one of the country's development targets.

2. Theoretical framework

Education/ Training. Higher Education.

The fact that education/training has become more relevant within european affairs began when several European Ministers of Education joined in an effort to define a group of reforms and strategies that allowed the creation of the European Higher Education Area – EHEA, originating the so called “Bologna Process” with the signing of the Bologna Declaration, in May 1999. In 2000, as a response to globalisation and the challenge to “make Europe, by 2010, the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world”, the Lisbon Strategy and later the Europe 2020 Strategy (in 2009), have been designed to improve education systems quality

“promoting employability, competitiveness and innovation” (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007). From then on, higher education “plays a crucial role in individual and societal advancement; and, with its impact on innovation and research, it provides the highly skilled human capital that knowledge-based economies need to generate growth and prosperity.” (COM,2013- 499). Consequently, each member has established its own norms, and in Portugal, in 2005, legislation on those norms was published seeking to “stimulate culture and the development of the reflective and scientific thinking as well as entrepreneurship.” (Law No. 49/2005 of August 30, no. 2, paragraph a). In the beginning not that many new courses were created, but most of the existing ones went through reorganization based on the new norms that promoted: structural changes; the reduction of the courses duration; increase in mobility/employability, interdisciplinary cooperation and degree recognition. All of this has facilitated the implementation of the ECTS - European Credit Transfer System; the emergence of new teaching methodologies, turning experimental and project work and learning of new transversal skills into more valuable objectives (Decree Law 74/2006); more options for students along their professional paths (Decree Law No. 107/108, article 46 A/B and C) and, lastly, higher education teachers have seen their career status restructured (Decree Law No 207/2009 and Decree Law No. 205/2009).

Design in Higher Education.

Design surfaced in Portugal during the first half of the twentieth century. From a poorly industrialized context in the 50's/ 60's we went through a massive development period in the 1990/2000's during which design became a “strategic resource for the future” (Mira Amaral (1994); Pina Moura (1998), “Direções de Design” Seminar). Nowadays, according to Amaral (2000), we see Design as a field that walks hand in hand with the country's economical, political, social and ethical evolution, and the designer as a constant observer and active element in the surrounding world adding to society's growth (Guerreiro, 2013). To

Guedes (2013) “... the relationship between design, competitiveness and companies' success is crucial. Not only for new companies, but also for those who are in need of innovation and restructuring” and Tom Kelley (2011) “design is a tool for innovation”. Following this development, between the 70's and the 90's, it became quite pertinent to create higher education degrees, mainly in IADE and in the Escolas de Belas Artes of Lisboa and Porto. Now there are several design courses and several hundreds of designers in Portugal.

Training wise, we went from a classical theoretical teaching to a more active one, based on a more practical and closer approach to the current employment reality, where multiple curricula, differentiated knowledge levels and syllabuses are more appealing to students, allowing them to develop skills within the areas of knowledge, know how, behaving and being.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion we can assume the following:

- _ Education/training can be seen as a bridge between both knowledge areas: education and work.
- _ We should train professionals/designers capable of learning how to learn, quickly adapting to new technological, scientific and professional circumstances.

4. References

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