

ASIA-LINK: SINO-EUROPEAN DESIGN MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

D. Hands and M. A. O'Brien

ABSTRACT

This paper will discuss a recently commenced 24 month [2003-05] collaborative project led by the University of Salford between European and Asian academic institutions that focuses on the reciprocal exchange of academic staff; the assessment of current design and management delivery methods concluding with the recommendation for effective strategies for developing design management education.

It concludes by how new programmes and modules will be developed by building on the best practice within partner institutions in order to create high quality, relevant programmes with highly developed international perspectives.

Keywords: Design Management, Curriculum, China, Internationalization.

1 INTRODUCTION

Design Management is the discipline of defining and managing the vision, tasks, and resources required to complete a design project, be it new product development or building construction. It is really the management acumen that oversees the conversion of "vision" into "reality". Design management, while traditionally applied to the management of projects, is now being deployed to help organisations manage change, implement new technologies, manage intellectual property, define market requirements, develop brand identity & stimulate business success.

Within the West, increased focus on managing innovation & value chain restructuring (the development of 'front end' activities such as design, lifestyle marketing, branding & service expansion) has become a prerequisite for success [1] [2] [3]. However, despite moves towards the globalisation of manufacturing, export markets increasingly require the coordination of design locally to satisfy indigenous markets. This is especially true in Asia, where a range of market access obstacles are in place, including restrictive licensing procedures, uncertain consumer culture, lack of IPR & onerous joint venture requirements. Conversely, within China, despite planned educational initiatives, the proportion of graduates with experience of business process innovation, product marketing or management remains extremely small.

2 PROJECT TRIGGER

2.1. Initiation of Asia-Link Project

The partners all met in differing design management related events (European Academy of Design, Aveiro, 2001; Tsinghua Design Management Forum, 2002) where a dialogue on international design management learning began. The Asian partner organisations are leaders in their respective countries, particularly in the field of technology and

engineering. Design Management provision across Asia is currently limited due to the newness of the field. The EU partners have moved to design management learning opportunities in response to globalisation and industry's demand for relevant qualified staff, and also as an innovative approach to technology, engineering and management learning and are therefore a little further down the line in DM teaching. The Asian partner organisations are appropriately placed to rapidly implement the newly developed curricula and maximise the impact of this curriculum development project. The prestigious status of the target group of Asian Universities, their staff and students will therefore provide leadership in the DM field and be able to influence other Asian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), their staff and students.

The EU partners each have specific relevant expertise in the DM field and have themselves implemented DM courses. With the many faces of globalisation and China entering into the WTO, the international skills needs of students is changing. The EU partners want to develop new curricula to take into account the changing external environment and will also be able to immediately implement new modules. This will benefit the EU target groups of the HEIs concerned, their staff and students, because their DM Masters programmes will provide a different competitive advantage by incorporating the knowledge and best practice of the Asian partners.

During the project proposal writing stages, the anticipated project cost was far higher than allowed; therefore the lead university had to significantly alter the proposal. The key amendment was that partner institutions from EU countries were only to visit the Asian institutions and vice versa. However, even with this significant reduction in visits, the richness and scope of the project remained intact.

3 THE PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

The specific objective of the project is to create sustainable links between EU, China/East Asian Higher Education (HE) institutions by jointly developing new, industry-focussed Design Management modules, which have an international perspective and; to equip HE institutions with the appropriate programme structures, curricula and background knowledge required to deliver the programme. The following institutions were selected on their relevant expertise and experience within design and design management discourse (table 1.)

Table 1. The Partner Institutions

Institution	Country
University of Salford	United Kingdom
Polytechnic of Milan	Italy
University of Stockholm	Sweden
Copenhagen Business School	Denmark
Tsinghua University	PR of China
Shanghai Jiao Tong University	PR of China
Harbin Institute of Technology	PR of China
King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang	Thailand

As such, the project builds on existing subsets of expertise within design management notably the University of Salford's track record in Design Management & Tsinghua University's recent hosting of an international Conference in the field. The partner institutions have been and are currently involved in design management activity in a variety of diverse ways, which include:

- The School of Art & Design at the University of Salford has received a number of EU & UK grants relating to the use of technology in design (Design Drivers), design prediction (Design for Future Needs), & has undertaken a number of network visits to the P.R.China
- Milan Polytechnic hosts a Masters in Product Design Strategy and is keen to i) broaden this emphasis on strategy into other design fields and ii) internationalise its programmes.
- Stockholm University School of Management hosted the European Academy of Design Conference in 2000 and the European Academy of Management conference (EURAM) in 2002.
- Copenhagen Business School is an active member of the European Academy of Design and currently provide training for Asian managers under its MBA Programme.
- Shanghai Jiao Tong is undertaking a series of funded studies into product development strategies within regional corporations, & changing consumer lifestyle & its links to brand identity & management.
- The Harbin Institute held a Design Management forum in December 2003, building on its recent designation as first-rank University; it recognises the need to invest in postgraduate education within the field & to engage in global debate.
- KMITL is actively engaged in the Royal Thai Government's campaign to support regional SME's develop entrepreneurial & management skills. As such, it is keen to develop a Design Management programme to complement its recent Design Centre initiative.
- Tsinghua University recently held an international conference [4] focusing on design management and its impact on both regional and corporate success; As such it is continuing to raise the profile of design management in China.

4 SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Each of the partners will undertake to exchange 1-2 members of staff per year, for a total period of up to 4 man weeks per annum, with 4 other partner institutions; EU partners are to exchange with Asian institutions, & vice versa.

Each work package is administered by at least one lead partner, all partners assuming responsibility for at least one package. However, partners are encouraged to participate in each of the six principal activities/work packages:

Work Package 1: ***Project Management (WP1)*** manages partner roles & coordinates the delivery of project.

Work Package 2: ***Curriculum Assessment (WP2)*** assesses the current state of the art in the delivery of taught design/management programmes within partner institutions.

Work Package 3: ***Module Development (WP3)***: Focuses on the development of up to 10 Masters level modules.

Work Package 4: *Exchange Coordination (WP4)* administers academic staff exchanges.

Work Package 5: *Dissemination (WP5)* dissemination of teaching & industry case study findings, exemplar strategies & practices to both HE institutions & industry.

Work Package 6: *Evaluation (WP6)* is an independent evaluation of the entire project, conducted by an independent auditor.

Figure 1 outlines the interrelationship of the six work packages:

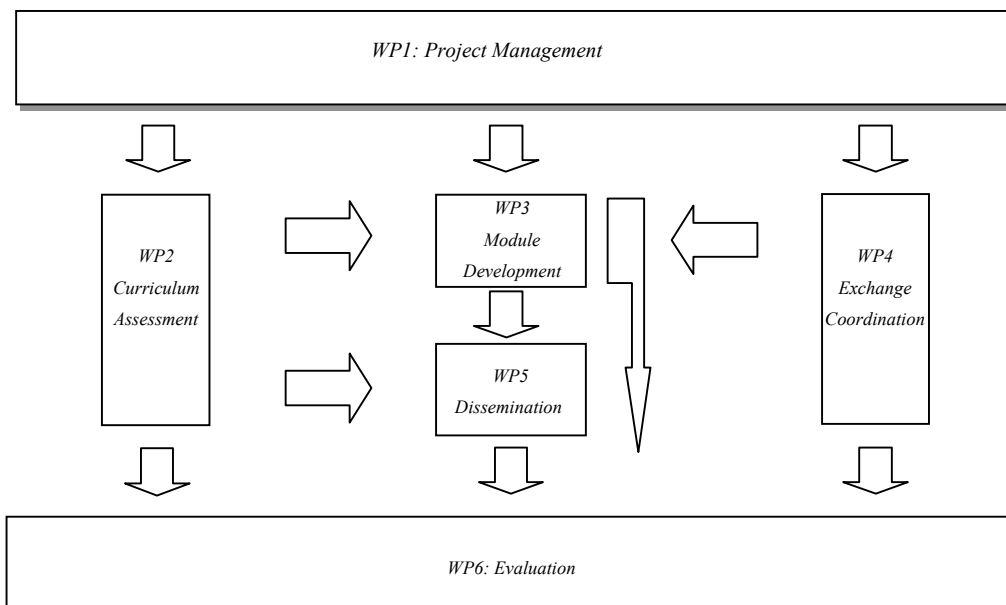


Figure 1: Integration of Work Packages

5 METHODOLOGY

Project Management (WP1) will adopt a Partnership Board committee structure & reporting structure where a lead academic from each partner will attend annual review & planning meetings, interspersed with regular virtual meetings, &(ii) each partner institution will provide local administrative support to collate & disseminate work package documents & organise appropriate travel arrangements, each administrator reporting to a Project Coordinator located at the lead institution The project final report will be compiled by the Project Coordinator, under the supervision of lead academics from each institution, & will be collated from individual work package & quarterly project reports.

Curriculum Assessment (WP2) will be undertaken by academic staff on exchange via (i) the review of student work at varying PG & UG levels, (ii) peer observation of teaching practice; (iii) informal interviews with staff and students attaining low; medium and high grades, & (iv) discussion fora. The latter are to include industry representation where possible, given the close links between industry, practice & course content & delivery.

Module Development (WP3) will be undertaken via development teams, comprising academics from interested partners. Preliminary & interim meetings, to agree structure & intended mode of delivery) will take place at the lead institution, following Partner Board meetings. Subsequent development of teaching material will take place via virtual/internet meetings, under the leadership of nominated partners. Modules are to be reviewed at the final meeting of the Board.

Staff exchanges under Exchange Coordination (WP4) will be conducted via the administrative chain identified under Project Management (WP1).

Dissemination (WP5) will be carried out via discussion fora & public/industry seminars. Beneficiary response forms will be circulated to gain feedback on the quality, relevance & benefit of the material presented. Papers submitted for the Conference will be peer refereed to an international level to establish a wider audience.

Project Evaluation (WP6) will be undertaken by an independent evaluator.

6 ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

This project is concerned with improving the managerial capabilities of the direct beneficiaries in China, Thailand & Europe. A developed understanding of how to manage design activity, coordinate new product development, undertake brand development, & liaise with consultancies, agencies & industry will be transferred from Europe to East Asia. Conversely, insight into management within private & state owned enterprises; the impact of IPR & government legislation; Asian market dynamics; & Chinese & Thai consumer behaviour will be transferred from China & East Asia to Europe.

All partners will improve their capacity to collaborate in both international & localised indigenous cultures, which is of crucial importance given the progression of globalisation, & will be better equipped to manage future international collaborative initiatives.

On completion of the project, the proposed Masters Module developments will become self sustaining course programmes. It is proposed that staff & student exchanges, & industry placements across the EU & NE Asia will be maintained via industry sponsorship, specifically those companies benefiting from design management input during the course of the project. Expressions of interest in such sponsorship have already been received from UK companies.

7 ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF ASIA-LINK PROGRAMME

Postgraduate students will benefit from curricula & teaching methods designed to cover specific cultural/regional requirements, & from exposure to emerging markets. All students will gain from cross-disciplinary interaction between Business/Management & Design Schools, & the development of new curricula & modules creating high quality, relevant programmes with highly developed international perspectives

The project will also benefit postgraduate design & management students, providing such students with the additional knowledge to assess design within commercial contexts & constraints.

Whilst Asia-Link funding will not be used to subsidise exchange expenses, the programme will enhance student mobility, enabling PhD & Masters student to undertake placements within overseas industries & develop specific experience in managing cross-cultural collaborations; and allowing greater potential for other bids based on exchanges.

Other anticipated benefits arising from the programme include diverse opportunities for further development that include:

- **Undergraduate students:** Whilst UG students will benefit from curricula, spun from PG developments, in similar ways to their PG counterparts, the number of beneficiaries will be greatly multiplied, given relative enrolments at each level.
- **Teaching & administrative staff:** Staff will benefit from exposure to cross-cultural teaching activities, especially in terms of curriculum & delivery modes. It will provide particular benefit for those staff teaching overseas students. This will impact on 20-40 exchange & host staff at each institution.
- **Researchers:** An estimated 100 researchers involved within design across the partner network will gain access to pedagogy & to regional design industry via host institutions.
- **HE institutions:** Whilst design management is a specialist field, other HE institutions are expected to benefit from exposure to design curriculum & design delivery issues raised under WP2. Staff will be invited to participate in seminars. Some 30 institutions are expected to attend the Conference.
- **Regional bureaus & government:** Regional & national government & cultural bodies will be encouraged to take part in workshops, seminars & the closing Conference. The audit of design-related HE education within each partner & final project report will be disseminated to representatives of such bodies to inform educational, cultural & economic policy.
- **Consultancy industry:** Consultancies will be invited to participate in all workshop & dissemination activities. This will help inform those companies (principally in the design, management, brand or advertising fields) seeking to work with overseas clients, to develop offshore markets or to source new product development, technology transfer or manufacturing overseas. Some 30-40 are expected to participate.
- **Impact of design management on industry e.g. creativity methods:** Two companies per institution per year are expected to benefit directly from case study input. Further 10-15 companies per partner per year will be invited to participate in design management workshops & seminars, to be run in conjunction with exchange staff, which will draw on practices in other cultures. This will help identify both best practice, & the potential for collaboration between companies involved in technology transfer, product or market development.

7 SUMMARY

The key aim of the project is to foster sustainable educational links between EU, Chinese and Thai HE institutions in the field of Design Management. It will do this by the joint specification & development delivery of new Masters taught modules in International Design Management. The target groups comprise teachers, undergraduate and postgraduate students of Design and/or Management subject areas (direct), researchers, other public sector organisations, design consultancies and industry (indirect). The project partners view Asia-Link as useful and indeed timely mechanism to establish links, share knowledge and develop long lasting and sustainable relationships where knowledge and understanding of design management is embraced

throughout the world. This paper has announced the intentions of the programme and ways in which key objectives will unfold; during the course of the next 2 years and onwards, the partners will disseminate findings and results as they arise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project partners would like to thank the European Commission for funding the collaboration programme.

REFERENCES

- [1] Cooper, R. and Press, M. *The Design Agenda*. John Wiley and Sons, Chichester 1995.
- [2] Bruce, M. and Bessant, J. *Design in Business: strategic innovation through design*. Financial Times / Prentice Hall, London 2002.
- [3] Walsh, V., Roy, R., Bruce, M. and Potter, S. *Winning by Design: technology, product design and international competitiveness*, Blackwell, Oxford 2002.
- [4] Tsinghua International Design Management Forum 2002/9/20-22. China-Beijing-Academy of Arts and Design, Tsinghua University.

Contact Information:

David Hands

School of Art and Design
Course Leader
BA [Hons] Design Management
For the Creative Industries
University of Salford
Salford
Greater Manchester
United Kingdom
M3 6EQ
Tel: +44 (0) 161 295 7167
d.hands@salford.ac.uk

Co-author Information

Mark O'Brien

School of Art and Design
Course Leader
MSc / PgDip Design Management
University of Salford
Salford
Greater Manchester
United Kingdom
M3 6EQ
Tel: +44 (0) 161 295 6177
m.a.obrien@salford.ac.uk

