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Freddy H. Istanto
Integrating Entrepreneurship into the Visual Communication Design Curriculum

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Abstract

Will there be enough job vacancy for Indonesia’s visual communication design graduates? Many people in the academic world believe that entrepreneurship is the answer. This idea has been expressed recent event was the “DKV Indonesia Ekreaprener”, which was organized by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture together with the Visual Communication Design School of Universitas Sebelas Maret Solo, held in Solo in 2012. The main topic was on “Revitalizing Visual Communication Design Curriculum based on Creative Economy and Entrepreneurship. Based on the research we’ve done in 2013 entitled, “The Development of an Entrepreneurship-based Visual Communication Design Course”, this article will try to address some fundamental issue regarding the integration of entrepreneurship into the design education, especially visual communication design curriculum.

Keywords: creativity; visual communication design; entrepreneurship; design thinking/ human-centered design; and design entrepreneur

1. Background

Many higher education institutions in the design area have tried to introduce the concept of entrepreneurship in various methods in hopes that visual communication design graduates would be entrepreneurs in the creative industry, to create jobs rather than solely depends on the availability of it, but some fundamental questions still need to be further explored and discussed. In 2013, a

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qualitative research combined with literature study led by Mr. Freddy H. Istanto, IAI, Ir., MT. Ars.; dean of Entrepreneurial Creative Industry of Universitas Ciputra, along with Christian Anggrianto, S.Sn. MM., and Michael Nathaniel Kurniawan, S.Sn. conducted a research entitled “The Development of an Entrepreneurship-based Visual Communication Design Course”. The research started with the following questions:

1) Do we really need to incorporate entrepreneurship into design education?
2) How should we teach entrepreneurship in design school?
3) Are there any other institutions that have done this?
4) How do they do it?

Thus, this article will try to offer some of the research findings of the university’s priority national grant on the concept of integrating entrepreneurship into the visual communication design curriculum.

2. Research Findings

2.1. The “Real world” Design Practitioners’ Perspective

Questions usually lead to other questions before the real answer appears. Throughout this journal, based on the questions listed before, the researchers will try to presents the perspective from the design professionals/practitioners, the government, and the design academicians. The answer to the first question on the need to incorporate entrepreneurship into the design education is over 90 % of the research respondents who are professional designers, senior academicians, and both practitioners and part-time lecturers, through in-depth interviews confirmed the need to integrate entrepreneurship into design school curriculum. However, there are several important concerns that need to be addressed, as Caroline F. Sunarko, the General Manager of Damn I love Indonesia and co-founder Kreavi said on an interview:

a) How to address the gap in terms of skill, mindset, and attitude between the academic-world and the “real-world” of design graduates?
b) For students and graduates who hasn’t develop the needed mentality and attitude as a professional designer, wouldn’t the urge to do business would ruin design value in the market by offering cheap or even free design services?
c) What is the goal of teaching entrepreneurship to design students?
d) What are the qualifications of a proper design and entrepreneurship lecturer? Since teaching entrepreneurship shouldn’t rely solely on individual experience as design entrepreneur.
e) What are the basic theories that can be used to teach entrepreneurship to design students?

Those concerns are very true, but before the researchers try to answer them and jump to any premature conclusions, this article would like to presents the government’s perspective along with the academicians’ perspective.

2.2. The Indonesian Government’s Perspective

To understand how design and entrepreneurship collides in the landscape of Indonesia’s creative industry, it’s best to understand the Indonesian government expectations and how they map out the creative industry related to visual communication design. In the national guidebook of “Developing the Creative Industry towards the Vision of Indonesia’s Creative Economy in 2025”, it is stated that there are no companies, either manufacturing or services companies, that don’t need graphic design. Every company at the very least should have a logo as its corporate identity in doing business. Visual communication design is a creative process that combines art and technology to communicate a message or an idea. Designer must be able to use a set of communication strategy to convey the
client’s message to the intended audience using visual language and typography. The followings are industrial sub-sectors and work fields that’s related to visual communication designs:

1) Consultant agency
2) Advertising industry
3) Printing company
4) Publishing company

The table below describes the value chain of visual communication design industrial sub-sectors and the related industries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CREATION</th>
<th>PRODUCTION</th>
<th>COMMERCIALIZATION</th>
<th>Publishing and Logistic company</th>
<th>Market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual communication design consultant agency</td>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>Multimedia Publishing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Freelance visual communication designer</td>
<td>Paper-based Publishing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audio-Visual Publishing</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1. Visual communication design value chain sub-sector

And these are the activities of a visual communication designer:

1) **Creation**
   The process of creation of a visual communication designer includes: problem identification; a process that requires creativity, innovation, and technical skills that leads to an understanding of the client’s desired goals, understanding the client’s competitor and its customers, and all of that will be transformed into a visual solution created using image, photo, and combination of shapes, color, space, and typography manipulation.

2) **Desktop publishing**
   Also called Digital to Print (DTP), is a process that involves the creation stage of graphic idea to the final stage of printing or publishing.

3) **Pre-press**
   It is a term commonly used in the printing and publishing industry to explain the processes and procedures applied in the creation of manuscript and artwork, printing plate production, image carrier, and all the needed preparations before the printing process using printing machines.

4) **Commercialization**
   Commercialization is inseparable from the value chain process of graphic design since it is now widely understood as a strategic value in creating a company’s image. It is applicable for both Design Company and freelance designer who produces and sell their own products.  

2.3. *The Academic Perspective*

Now that we have gain an understanding of the big picture of visual communication design in the

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1 Pengembangan Industri Kreatif Menuju Visi Ekonomi Kreatif Indonesia 2025 (2008), page 135-144
Indonesian creative industry, this article would like to share the opinions of design professors and academicians from some of the best design school in the world on how to integrate visual communication design with entrepreneurship. Further than what the government has said, that visual communication design is very much related to all business, Prof. Yusuf Affendi stated that nowadays technology, science, art, and humanities are moving towards a “chaos culture”, that is a cross-disciplinary of arts and sciences, where the world becomes borderless. And in these times, the visual communication design school should not focus solely on design skill based education but also on the mastery of various communication media and how to use them artistically. And the goal is the exploration of creativity to create new products (Prof. Yusuf Affendi, 2012)\(^2\). In addition, another Professor in design, Prof. Yongky Safanayong also share similar ideas with Prof. Yusuf Affendi. Prof. Yongky Safanayong during an interview said that design schools have to look more towards cross-cultural/ interdisciplinary studies. Designer should have an open-mindedness to understand that the creative industry and entrepreneurship influence one another (Prof. Yongky Safanayong, 2013).

The researchers also found a very influential book on design and entrepreneurship, published by Allworth Press, New York called “The Education of a Design Entrepreneur”, written by Steven Heller in 2002. Steven Heller is a senior graphic designer, writer and art director for the New York Times book review, and is one of the mastermind behind the graduate program in art & design that became one of the 10 best design school in the US; School of Visual Arts, New York.\(^3\) He stated that design students are mostly considered only as the owner of design skills which are expected to use their skills only to fulfill the client’s need in terms of printing, advertising, packaging design, branding, photography, etc. Here we can see that the function or role of a visual communication designer is actually focuses more as a “problem solver” and provide visual communication services. Creativity is actually a basic skill or the “soul” of every designer, and is actually goes hand in hand with entrepreneurship that perceive it as a necessary skill or mindset needed to create innovation. From this point of view, Steven Heller suggested that designer should be producer of creative contents and able to create their own business, hence gave birth to the term “design entrepreneur”. Design entrepreneur are designers who are involved from the first process of idea creation, production, and manufacturing different types of products, such as books, toys, movies, fashion, interior furniture, accessories, and other individual creative ideas (Steven Heller, 2002)\(^4\). According to a journal entitled “Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries”, Maria Aggestam suggested that such entrepreneurs in the creative industry can generally be conceived as holders of ‘tacit knowledge that is realized as part of human capital and includes individual skill, competence, commitment and creativity based mindsets’. Creative entrepreneurs have long been seen as part of a new and emerging social group (Fussel, 1983), representing valuable new knowledge workers (Drucker, 1993) and forming a new type of creative class (Florida, 2002). In addition to the obvious core characteristics of inspiration, creativity and innovation, other key attributes of creative entrepreneurs include risk-taking, locus of control, perseverance, self-reliance, flexibility, adaptability, autonomy and achievement motivation. (Colette Henry, 2007)\(^5\).

An emphasis on the importance of teaching entrepreneurship as a part of the student’s life skill development was coined by Asidigisianti Surya Patria on her article, presented and published in the DKV Ekreaprener journal in 2012. She explained that entrepreneurship education for design students

\(^3\) http://www.gdusa.com/issue_2014/march/schools.php
as part of the life skill learning development includes creativity as a problem-solving skill. She also quote the Department of National Education that defines soft skill or life skill is a set of different abilities that encourages positive behavior and adaptability in the ever changing environment, which allows individuals to effectively deal with everyday challenges (Department of National Education, 2002) and UNICEF that defines “life-skill” as a behavioral changes or behavioral development aimed towards the attempt to balance three aspects of life: knowledge, attitude, and skill. UNESCO, UNICEF, and WHO also listed 10 main strategies to teach life-skill:

a) Problem solving  
b) Critical thinking  
c) Effective communication skills  
d) Decision making  
e) Creative thinking  
f) Interpersonal relationship skills  
g) Self awareness building skills  
h) Empathy  
i) Coping with stress and emotions

Through comparing and analyzing the research findings, we have confidently answered the first question. However, now the design education faces the real challenge of how to do it. To do so, the researchers realize that the questions and the concerns described earlier in this article have now evolved to be more specific and even now have led to some answers and topics that inspire further innovations in design and entrepreneurship education:

1) The education of design entrepreneur should be interdisciplinary, and creativity and innovation is the common ground/ the "bridge" to integrate entrepreneurship into the Visual communication Design Curriculum. But, what are the basic theories that can be used to teach entrepreneurship to design students?

2) What are the goals of design entrepreneurship education?

3) Since visual communication design is related to all kinds of businesses, should design entrepreneur limit the student’s venture creation to those only in the creative industry sub-sectors?

4) Can Entrepreneurship be the answer to close the “gap” between the visual communication design curriculums that tends to be very general, but some are very specific, with the industry’s demand that is very dynamic and diverse, that some requires a very specific and skilled designers and others demand for a very flexible and versatile designer who are able to do a lot of different things?

3. The Education of Design Entrepreneur

In this section, the researchers will try to address the four final questions above and concerns in a more hands-on practical manner. First of all, creativity in design entrepreneur education. From all of the three perspectives mentioned above, we believe that creativity is fundamental in general education and specifically in both entrepreneurship and design education. Creativity in education now is as important as literacy, especially now that we understand that the future is unpredictable. Creativity should be considered as the process of having original ideas that have value. Contrary to what the majority of people believe about creativity belongs to artists and designers only, everyone

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is actually naturally creative from childhood but it seems to be decreasing as people grow old. It is mostly because a lot of social, cultural, and education system doesn’t tolerate mistakes. People cannot create something original if they are not prepared to be wrong or to make mistakes (Sir Ken Robinson, 2006). In the perspective of design entrepreneurship education, the researchers believe that creativity should be taught with a focus towards problem-solving skill. Creativity and innovation is the designers’ “soul” as a problem-solver and service provider; which previously only for their clients, are now needed to be entrepreneurs. Designers should be creative content creators and able to create their own business. Designer’s ability to package, organize, and aesthetically design an object through the manipulation of typography, image, and decorations is a powerful mean to gain a wider control of the whole creative process (Steven Heller, 2002).

To support the idea this article would like to suggest some basic theory that is commonly taught in the education of design entrepreneurship. A lot of design school, e.g. Stanford University D’ School teaches creativity and innovation in the context of entrepreneurship education using the design thinking process or human-centred design process. Design thinking is a discipline that uses the designer’s sensibility and methods to match people’s needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity. Teaching design thinking will help design students to develop the following characters:

1) **Empathy**
Is the quality exhibited by someone who can imagine the world from multiple perspectives—those of colleagues, clients, end users, and customers (current and prospective). By taking a “people first” approach, design thinkers can imagine solutions that are inherently desirable and meet explicit or latent needs. Great design thinkers observe the world in minute detail. They notice things that others do not and use their insights to inspire innovation.

2) **Integrative thinking**
A character that enable someone not only to rely on analytical processes (those that produce either/or choices) but also exhibit the ability to see all of the salient—and sometimes contradictory—aspects of a confounding problem and create novel solutions that go beyond and dramatically improve on existing alternatives.

3) **Optimism**
A character that will help someone to assume that no matter how challenging the constraints of a given problem, at least one potential solution is better than the existing alternatives.

4) **Experimentalism**
Significant innovations don’t come from incremental tweaks. Design thinkers pose questions and explore constraints in creative ways that proceed in entirely new directions.

5) **Collaboration/ ”T-Shaped People”**
The increasing complexity of products, services, and experiences has replaced the myth of the lone creative genius with the reality of the enthusiastic interdisciplinary collaborator. The best design thinkers don’t simply work alongside other disciplines; many of them have significant experience in more than one. IDEO employs people who are engineers and marketers, anthropologists and industrial designers, architects and psychologists.

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IDEO who is renowned with Design thinking together with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, published Human-Centred Design Toolkit in 2010 as a guidebook to learn and practice design thinking to create innovations and solve real world problems. Just like the Design Thinking process, the Human-Centred Design consists of three phases:

1) **Hear**
   During the Hear phase, design team will collect stories and inspiration from people. Design team will prepare for and conduct field research.

2) **Create**
   In the Create phase, the design team will work together in a workshop format to translate what you heard from people into frameworks, opportunities, solutions, and prototypes. During this phase the design team will move together from concrete to more abstract thinking in identifying themes and opportunities, and then back to the concrete with solutions and prototypes.

3) **Deliver**
   The Deliver phase will begin to realize design team’s solutions through rapid revenue and cost modeling, capability assessment, and implementation planning. This will help design team launch new solutions into the world.

Secondly, in order to create an integrated design entrepreneurship curriculum, the researcher categorized Visual Communication Design curriculum into three different types, each has its own emphasis:

1) **“Pure” Design curriculum**
   It is a curriculum that focuses on preparing its graduates to be visual communication designers who are able to provide professional design services.

2) **“Limited” Design & Entrepreneurship curriculum**

Fig. 1. The Three Lenses of Human Centered Design

Secondly, in order to create an integrated design entrepreneurship curriculum, the researcher categorized Visual Communication Design curriculum into three different types, each has its own emphasis:

1) **“Pure” Design curriculum**
   It is a curriculum that focuses on preparing its graduates to be visual communication designers who are able to provide professional design services.

2) **“Limited” Design & Entrepreneurship curriculum**

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It is a curriculum that focuses on preparing its graduates to be visual communication designers who are more than just professional designers but also creative content creators in the boundaries of creative industry sub-sectors.

To achieve the curriculum’s goal, one might create entrepreneurship course, extracurricular activities about entrepreneurship, and conduct its own or join a specific entrepreneurship program with other school or institutions.

3) “Fully integrated” Design & Entrepreneurship curriculum

This curriculum focuses on more than just being service provider and creative content creators, but also creator of their own business. It requires more than just a single course or extracurricular activities on entrepreneurship, it requires a set of integrated design courses that focuses on both design and entrepreneurship. In the span of 7 semesters, the design students are encourage to have a creative service or product and the proper business, while the final semester will focus more on branding or re-branding (strategic branding and its application as an integrated marketing communications) their business to ensure proper delivery of their product or services to the market.

The Integration of entrepreneurship into design curriculum can actually provide a “real-world” environment that will help close the gap between the academic world and the real world. An experiential, project-based learning where students learn to take on real design projects from real clients with real reward and consequences as an exercise before later on they are ready to create their own creative contents or services. Real interactions with the market serve while being rooted in the idealism of a formal education system can serve as the best learning environment to develop a designer’s skill, mindset, and attitude. It is truly an interdisciplinary study such as several of Universitas Ciputra’s Visual Communication Design graduates have demonstrated:

1) Evan Raditya Pratomo, created the Paper Captain illustration studio, which focuses on producing quality children books with “The Little Postman” as one of its product.

![Paper Captain Company Logo and Its Product “The Little Postman”](image)

2) Silviani Saputra, created Crunchy game developer studio which focuses on creating educative game applications for children with “Food Trip” as one of its products.
References


Pembangan Industri Kreatif Menuju Visi Ekonomi Kreatif Indonesia 2025 (2008), page 135-144


Fig. 3. Crunchy company logo and its product “Food Trip”