



EFFECIENCY OF DESIGN STUDIES IN ZAGREB

B. Lapaine and Z. Kapetanovic

Keywords: School of Design, Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, Results of Poll Among Design Students

1. Introduction

Results of research about social status, success in studying and value orientation among students of School of Design, Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb are here presented.

This type of research has been carried out for the first time at The School of Design and therefore has considerable significance for both students and their teachers.

Some of these results should also draw attention of design professionals, because it is giving information about new generations of future professional designers receiving their education at School of Design, and soon will carry on progress of design profession.

Operating personnel as well as concerned institutions should not neglect given information about material conditions, attitudes regarding values design students have accepted and their success in studies.

This paper presents various statistics, from student's previous educational experiences, to their opinion about School of Design. It would be necessary to take these statistics into consideration while making corrections in educational program.

The paper is giving an insight of state-of-the-art of School of Design in January 2002. Students of all four years of academic year 2001/2002 were included.

We are thankful to all the students who have responded to this research in serious manner.

2. Results and analysis of the research

2.1 General Structure of Design Students

This research has been carried out in academic year 2001/2002. The poll was conducted in January 2002. 80% of entire number of questionnaires were valid. According to Administration Office evidence, the total number of students is 171. All first, second, third and fourth year students who were regularly attending their classes, filled up questionnaires. It is interesting to conceive the educational process in first twelve years of Design School's existence, from 1989 until 2002, as well as dynamic relationship between number of enrolled students and number of students who have graduate. Total number of accepted students was sixty in period from 1989 to 1994. Since 1994 this number has declined to 25 state supported and 5 self-supported students. Statistics also show there were neither withdrawals from the school, nor usual reasons for, such as: enrollment in undesired school, high evaluation criteria or high demands in educational program, insufficient level of knowledge, methodology and studying habits acquired during secondary educational level, lower material situation, indifference towards studying, or lack in recognizing values of work. It is possible to illustrate this situation with data showing that average number of students ending their studies is thirty for the period of eight years.

2.1.1 Students Division According To Sex

Almost two thirds of design students are female, while a bit more than one third are male. Design Studies are clearly dominated by female students. Very similar situation refers to School of Architecture.

2.1.2 Social Background of Students

Almost as same as students at The School of Architecture, design students mostly come from urban areas. 65% of students grew up in very large, and rest of them in large towns. It may easily be concluded that studying is easier for students constantly living in Zagreb. Those coming from other cities usually have no difficulties regarding employment in their hometowns.

2.1.3 Students Educational Status

School of Design usually completes its number of applicants in first enrollment term, to the full. This means design is regarded as attractive profession to perspective students. Largest number, 65% of them are coming from general high schools (gymnasiums), and 36% from School of Applied Arts and Design. Other schools participate with less than 2%.

Classifying evaluation of applicants has very significant defectiveness, foremost in absence of evaluation of psychophysical characteristics and abilities of candidates for design profession. There is no test of intelligence, attention and concentration abilities test, and test of psychometric and other abilities important for successful studying, and later professional carrier.

Contemporary society requires capable, skillful professionals. Classifying examinations should result in reliable election of candidates capable to acquire such characteristics. Successfully passed tests of knowledge do not guarantee successful studying. High school grades are not reliable indicators.

2.1.4 Knowledge of Foreign Languages

96% of design students use and further study English. 24% use and further study German language. Among foreign languages not listed in the Design School's curriculum dominates Italian-48% of students. There is also interest in French and Spanish, but in smaller numbers.

2.1.5 Military Service

This question is added to the group of questions giving general information about students. Only 14% of students have fulfilled military service, while 86% would like to end their studies first.

2.1.6 Results In Studying

These results are collected from average success of each student, as they have stated it by themselves in this questionnaire. The first year students who did not yet enter any examinations were not taken in consideration. 8,3 % of students are sufficient, 22% are good, 34,3% is very good and 35% are excellent.

2.2 Social and Economic Status of Design Students

2.2.1 Structure of Student Body According To Available Means of Support

Social and economic status has very significant impact on successful studying. Therefore, design Students were asked to state available amount of monthly allowance left after obligatory payments. Almost half of students stated these amounts differ from month to month and they are mostly insufficient. 11, 5% of students have from 100 to 500 kuna; 13,5% from 500 to 1000 kuna, while 12% from 1000 to 2000 Kuna. Statistics show most of design students can be positioned in the middle.

2.2.2 Types of Financial Support

Answers to this question clearly show there are no full time employed students. 32% has part time employment. 18% of students are receiving scholarships. 6% of them receive their family's retiring allowance. The largest number, 80% of students are supported by their families. Observing relationship between type of support and success in studying brings the conclusion that family supported students are in better position than others.

2.2.3 Nourishment Problems

Half of design students eat regularly at their homes, and the other half has no permanent place to eat. 40% of students eat in Students Center's restaurant or in Faculty's cafeterias.

2.2.4 Number of Daily Meals

42% of students eat only twice per day. 30% of students eat three times per day, but 14% of students stated they eat only once per day, what is inadmissible. Statistics regarding this question show unfavorable quality of nourishment among design students.

2.2.5 Satisfaction With Quality of Meals

Students are dissatisfied with both quality and quantity of food they receive in their meals. They were asked to freely express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with food, in order to gain their subjective evaluation. Only 10% of students are fully dissatisfied with food. Most of them, 30% are averagely satisfied. 18% have no bigger objections and 20% are fully satisfied. It appears that students have strong desire for better meals, but they seem to be mostly satisfied, even if they eat only twice per day.

2.2.6 Housing

Analysis of answers design students gave to this question show existence of five different groups. Largest number of students live with their parents – 54%. 26% live in rented rooms and apartments. They are in most unprivileged position. 8% of students live in student's dormitories, while 10% live in their own apartment or house. Students living with their parents are in significantly better financial position than those living in rented facilities. This occurs even if we neglect the quality of housing. Statistics also show that design students are living with their parents in much larger percentage than students of other faculties at The University of Zagreb, or University of Split.

2.2.7 Subjective Evaluation of Economic Status

Student's subjective evaluation of their economic status was here analyzed. They were able to decide among five ranking groups according to their own economic status. Largest number, 40% of students answered their economic status is average. 26% think their rank, according to sociological terminology is slightly above average. 14% of students think their economic situation is bad, while 10% referred to this question as very bad. These last two groups make 24% of students evaluating their economic situation either bad or very bad. 14% of students ranked themselves highly, as very good. These statistics are important in further sociological surveys.

2.3 Health

In order to acquire information giving more complete picture about design students, statistics were collected about their health condition in general, smoking habit and use of drugs and other opiates. 58% of students are completely healthy. 22% think they are not sufficiently immune. 6% are often ill and 4% are chronically ill. 12% of students did not answer this question. It may be stated health condition among design students is favorable. 50% of students smoke, while rest of them are nonsmokers. 50% of students have also stated they did try some sort of drugs. Other 50% stated they have never used any drugs. This question was not analyzed in details, because this type of question is usually not answered in serious manner.

2.3.1 Relationship Among Students and Their parents

Relationship among students and their parents is also very important, especially to those students whose parents are divorced or separated.

Only 4 % of students stated their relationship with parents is extremely bad. 2 % have stated it is not to well. Together it means 4 %. Three positive groups include 86 % of students. It may be concluded relationship between students and their parents are accentuatly well.

2.3.2 Level of Independence

Human relationship in families is analyzed through evaluation of level of independence in thinking and acting. Students evaluated level of their own autonomy. Their personalities are already formed, and quite often they experience intensive parental influence as oppression. Personal degree of autonomy is ranked in five groups. Largest number of students, 58 %, stated their parents advise them occasionally. 26 % of students have parents who often try to influence their affairs. 14 % of students stated their parents have no influence on their affairs. According to these statistics, design students are not accentuatly oppressed by their parents. Level of their autonomy is therefore very high, and to some extent it may be observed as to high.

2.4 Relationship Towards Studying

This relationship is important for successful study. Several facts have decisive influence in this respect: who has chosen design, what was the motive and are students satisfied with what they have chosen to study.

2.4.1 Who Has Decided About What To Study

Analysis shows 100 % of students made this decision independently. This fact should have positive connotations for studying motivation.

2.4.2 When Was Decision Made

The time when the type of study has been decided is also important. According to these statistics, most of design students decided to enrol in School of Design while still in secondary school – 83 %. 5 % of students decided while still in primary school and also 5 % immediately before enrolment.

2.4.3 Motivation

Most of the students – 76%, did not precisely state what was their motivation to study design, and rest of them stated “other reasons”. However, it may be concluded design was their desire.

2.4.4 Level of Satisfactions With Study of Design

48 % of design students stated they are medium satisfied, and “are and are not satisfied”. 24 % of students stated they are satisfied, and same percentage is not satisfied. These statistics call for changes either at classification examinations or in educational program, or both.

2.4.5 Employment Expectations Evaluation

The level of satisfaction with the design study may be conditioned with uncertainty of employment, especially among senior students. Statistics show 52 % of design students hope to find employment within the reasonable period after they graduate. 15 % expect to have large difficulties. Students at the beginning of their study do not pay much attention to this problem.

2.4.6 Relationship of Satisfaction With the Chosen Study and Average Success

Although not very accentuate, this survey shows some differences in statistics. Namely, the more satisfied they are with the chosen school, the more successful they are in their study. Therefore there is

a causal interaction between these two categories.

2.5 Attitudes and Opinions About The School

2.5.1 Professional Qualification

Students were asked to state their opinion whether they can obtain sufficient qualification for professional carrier at The School of Design. They were able to answer this question as positive, negative or restrained. 50 % of students think their study will sufficiently qualify them. 25 % answered negative, and additional 25 % were restrained.

2.5.2 Public Reputation of Design Study

64 % of students rated School's reputation in public as medium. 28 % rated it as high, while 10 % think School's reputation in public is low. Conclusion is: the older the students, the more unfavourable opinion.

2.5.3 Ambitions Towards Post – Graduate Study

It is interesting to find out whether design students wish to receive only diploma, or they may have ambitions to continue their study on post – graduate schools. According to statistics, 70 % of design students have ambitions for post – graduate study. 20 % of them do not know. It comes out that two thirds of design students would like to continue their study on post – graduate schools.

2.5.4 Student – Teacher Relationship

Satisfying collaboration among students and their teachers is significantly important for successful study. 50 % of students think about this collaboration as been well. 24 % think it is week, while 10 % of students think it is markedly bad. These statistics are pointing out need to bring changes and innovations in this respect.

2.5.5 To Which Extent Are Students Informed

Answers to the question whether students are satisfied with extent of available information they get about their questions in general, were also markedly negative. 56 % answered negatively. Only 24 % of students are partly satisfied. It may be concluded that among design students is accentuated dissatisfaction with the extent of available information.

2.6 Organization of Time

How students organize their time also has significant importance for success in their study. Therefore, students were asked to state the amount of time they usually spend on their activities. According to statistics, 18 % of time is spent on listening music. Cafeterias, parties dance and reading magazines takes 27 % of time. 16 % of time is spent in Movie Theater, while 30 % of time goes to theater plays, concerts, reading newspapers, watching TV and other. 15 % of time is used for sport, literature and some sort of physical work. Although it would be unjust to conclude that design students spend their time in useless and irrational manner, it may be noted that amount of time spent on entertainment is larger then that spent on learning and study. It may also be noted there is certain lack of working habit and realizing fact that success in study requires active and studious work.

2.7 Value Orientation

Previous survey has shown understandable sets of values design students have accepted to larger and smaller extent. Now we shall examine their spiritual and material value orientations. Students were asked to mark one number in one to five intensity scale which they regard to be closest to their opinion in ten established points of carrier: importance of having excellent earnings, possibility to aquire various privileges, reputation in society, chances to advance in carrier, to be able to influence other people's thoughts and acts, clean working environment, ability to distinguish themselves, to be able to

bring independent decisions, significant contribution to society, ability to work on atypical assignments. We did not intend to conduct intensive sociological survey regarding value orientation among design students, but to learn about their hierarchy in values. The largest number of students gave priority to excellent earnings, followed by possibility to advance in carrier, to be able to distinguish oneself and to be in a position of bringing independent decisions. After these values comes possibility to significantly contribute to the society, possibility to have atypical assignments and clean working environment.

3. Conclusion

After reviewing all information received from design students in this poll, it may be concluded that certain corrections in attitudes and activities should take place. Recommendations coming from this survey are listed in chronological order rather than in order of importance:

- School of Applied Arts and Design should adapt it's educational program in a way which would give their students intending to study in School of Design at The Faculty of Architecture, better orientation towards subjects needed for the study;
- School of Design's classification procedure should include test which will discover applicant's real ability to study design;
- During the educational process students should have possibility to work on real projects from industry;
- "Year for year" type of study needs to be cancelled in order to increase quality of study;
- Educational programs should be brought according to European educational standards and contemporary professional needs;
- More time has to be devoted for students through consultations, seminars, practical exercises, and colloquiums.
- Students should have closer connections to school and also have better informations about all that may be of their importance and interest.
- Society needs to take better care about student standard and their economic situation, and stimulate knowledge and success through more scholarships, contracts, help, loans for educational expenses, and more student dormitories.

Božidar Lapaine
Faculty of Architecture, School of Design
University of Zagreb,
Frankopanska 12, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia