

EXPLORING RESOURCES FOR
CREATIVE SELF-CONFIDENCE
OF (VOCATIONAL)
MEDIA DESIGN STUDENTS

2 WORKSHOPS



DEMYSTIFYING CIRCUMSTANCE
—AFFIRM AND SHARE
PERSONAL STRATEGIES
AND VULNERABILITIES
WITHIN THE DESIGN PROCESS

The workshops in this document are revised versions of the ones that were part of the research project and subsequent research thesis *"Exploring resources for creative self-confidence of vocational media design students –How can students be encouraged to act towards feeling at ease with uncertainty?"*

This research was conducted during the Master of Education in Arts programme (MEiA) at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam, between September 2018 and July 2020.

The design process is inherently experimental and therefore it has in essence no predictable result. However, (vocational) students very much like precise goals to adhere their performance to. These are 'opposite' concerns and students experience tension. Students enthusiastically start this 'creative education', but under pressure they often find it difficult to engage in a fertile design process. The research was about exploring didactical and pedagogical approaches that contribute to vocational media design students feeling at ease with the uncertain outcome of the design process, and to encourage them to engage this uncertainty, to boost their self-confidence and self-direction. The uncertain nature of the design process actually induces many socio-psychological issues which are to be influenced by means of more pedagogical 'instruments', that assist and facilitate vocational design students to engage in a more diverse, flexible and fertile design process.

These workshops are designed to help in providing students with personal agency and control and to metacognitively summon and/or affirm creative confidence.

Although initially written for a vocational media design target group, these workshops may well be used at secondary school (art) class or higher art and/or design education. Please feel free to make adjustments if necessary, or please inform me if you want to have any requests or suggestions on this matter.

For these and other remarks, information or a copy of the thesis, please feel free to contact:

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—Rob Wieringa, MEiA, July 2020.

A Dutch translation of this free document may become available, if it turns out that there is enough demand for such a publication.

USER INSTRUCTION

This format is made to be both printed on A4 as well as to be projected on screen.

If desired, the introduction, instruction and preparation parts can be printed. For easy navigation and presentation purposes, the document has interactive PDF-functionality including an interactive table of contents. The presentation sheets have a green background colour.

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THE UNCERTAINTY OF DESIGNING?

INTRODUCTION AND PREPARATION

PRESENTATION (SCREEN)

AUXILIARY QUESTIONS

—AFFIRM AND DEMYSTIFYING CIRCUMSTANCE AND SHARE PERSONAL STRATEGIES AND VULNERABILITIES

Can metacognitively recognising personal creative methods, 'rituals', social preconditions and circumstances facilitate experimental effort and contribute to self-confidence?

The answer is yes. Students testify about being more aware of these strategies and circumstances and they feel empowered by telling their stories and recognising themselves in each other. Feeling at ease in the design process is stimulated by the act of sharing both (design) strategies and vulnerabilities.

When I first conceived these workshops during the first year of MEIA, I've 'used' them to research and map out which forces act on our students and how students engage in a design process. However, they've turned out to be not only

a research method, but *didactical method* themselves. Having actual conversations on these matters shows students that others may have the same opinions as themselves and may struggle with the same obstructions. It also provides them with alternative possibilities, tips, and opportunities. Students testified that they would like to have more of these reflective conversations. The workshops provide a possible starting point to have sustainable conversations which could have subsequent

effect on students' (creative) self confidence, emancipation and perhaps even the curriculum. They pose an opportunity to incorporate 'the informal'

"Communication is the foundation of education —not just factualities, but they way these factualities matter in social activities."
(Biesta, 2015, p. 52)

into 'the formal' —to include in the curriculum something essential that is normally out of sight. They help to unlock circumstances and strategies that 'normally' remain implicit —of pivotal importance in regard to my research thesis.

Both workshops have their somewhat own emphasis. The first workshop 'Creative rituals' is intended to share mostly hidden methods and methodologies surrounding design processes, attitude and workflow —the practical design effort. Collective knowledge is being made visible and subject of dialogue.

The second workshop is much more directed towards students mapping out social values and agency, motivational resources and self-confidence.

Biesta, G. (vert.) (2015). *Het prachtige risico van het onderwijs (The Beautiful Risk of Education)*. Culemborg: Phronese

GENERAL WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

DIDACTICAL APPROACH

The central didactic goal of both workshops is to let students self-educate and share. The following didactical approaches can be recognised:

- *Affirmative*; students inform others about their personal (design) strategies; inspire each other and provide new strategies.
- *Reproductive*; exploration through dialogue —the official curriculum very often does not include preconditional creative strategies or (social) circumstances. Students critically explore possibilities that 'fit' personal needs.
- *Deconstructive*; Students gain a metacognitive perspective on personal creative strategies; critically assessing classroom (versus home) environment and circumstances.
- *Transformative*; analysing commonalities and differences, and possibly incorporating tactics into personal creative effort.

BASIC PROCEDURE AND ACTIVITIES

Each workshop is built around a group conversation. A variation in methods is used to keep students involved for the whole duration of the workshop. There are several activities next to just 'talking' within these workshops such as thinking alone or in small groups, writing, and creating a collective 'visual wall' of reference. The group conversation is to be induced by this visual collection of written statements of students to react on.

This method is loosely and half-subconsciously inspired by a method named: 'Thinking-Doing-Sharing' (translated; 'DDU' —Denken-Doen-Uitwisselen), where group thinking and discussion is chopped up in reserving personal time for every student to think about a subject/issue/question first and write it down before sharing. This is to make sure every student is 'involved' and has their answer digested and formulated, instead of the students with the loudest voice and 'fastest' expression taking over and dominating the discussion. The teacher can now, by giving turns, involve all students without putting them on the spot in formulating and expressing their thoughts immediately.



WORKSHOP N^o 1: PERSONAL CREATIVE RITUALS

COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE ON ATTITUDE, MOTIVATION AND WORKFLOW

INTRODUCTION AND PREPARATION

School is certainly a place where you can discuss and reflect. However, school might very well not be the place where all creative magic happens. The central line of questioning for this particular workshop is: "How do you create circumstances in which you can be inventive or experimental? What methods work for you, where or in what situation? Can you deduce a

personal strategy?" Though quite important, these kinds of issues involving workflow, distraction, discipline and strategies aren't regularly discussed in creative courses. This collective knowledge is now being made visible and subject of dialogue.

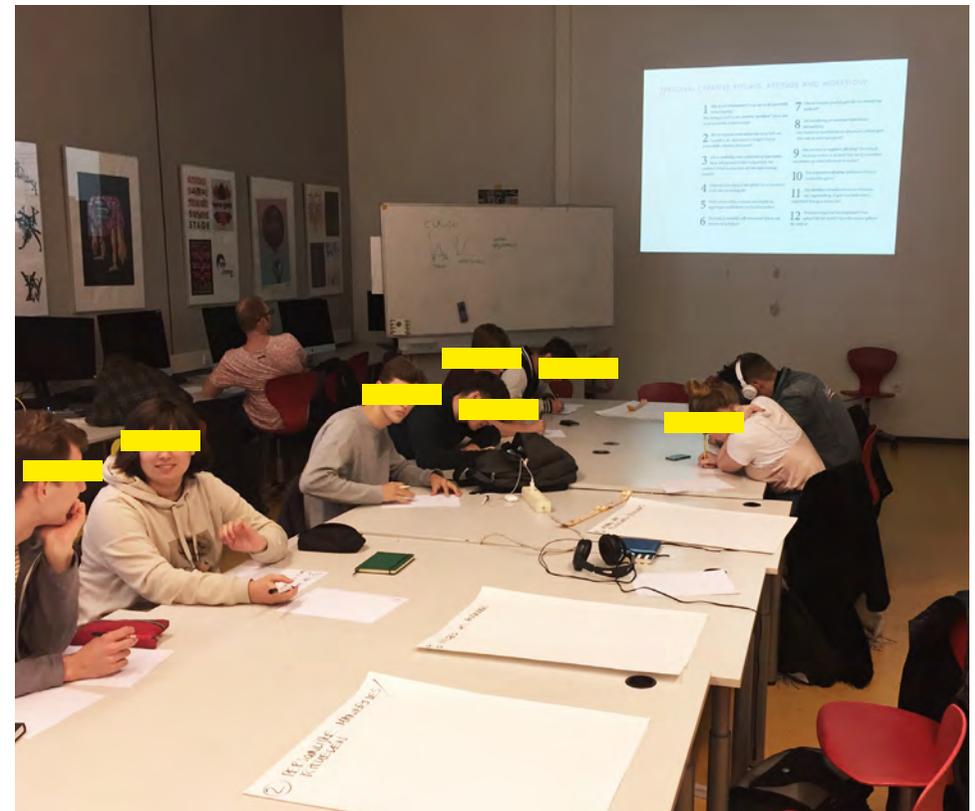
TIME LINE AND TASKS (60 - 90 MIN.)

1. Introducing (10-15 min.).
- 2a. Students' reflection on questions: writing (10-15 min.)
- 2b. Visual sharing (gathering the personal notes on large sheets (1 sheet per question/theme).
3. Selection: all participants indicate which notes are particularly surprising/important/contradictory (10-15 min.).
4. Conversation/discussion (20-45 min.),
5. Concluding and reflecting (5+ min.).

Introducing workshop (1), promoting and facilitating student 'involvement' (all), leading group discussion (4,5), assisting in summarising (2, 4, 5), promoting safe and open group atmosphere (all), assisting in organising group conclusions (5), recording/archiving (2b, 4? 5?), distributing materials (2, 3). Of course, depending on group size and experience of the participants, these tasks can be delegated or distributed throughout the group.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- ▶ Numbered questions are to be screened for easy answering and reference during discussion (see picture).
- ▶ Materials needed for the students:
 - paper or sticky notes for students to write on, markers/pencils/pens, tape for posting answers (if no sticky notes are used).
 - ▶ Large sheets (+/- A2) on the wall or on the table, prepared with the questions; students stick their personal notes onto the corresponding sheet.
 - ▶ *optional*: Red markers to indicate (for example with a dot) which notes are particularly surprising/important/contradictory.
 - ▶ *optional*: (White)board for noting (group) conclusions.



WORKSHOP: PERSONAL CREATIVE RITUALS

COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE ON ATTITUDE, MOTIVATION AND WORKFLOW

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SUBJECT AND GOAL

Important issues, not (regularly) discussed in creative courses:

- ▶ *How do you create circumstances in which you can be inventive or experimental?*
- ▶ *What methods work for you, where or in what situation?*
- ▶ *Can you deduce a personal strategy?*

Workshop goals:

- ▶ *Shared, collective knowledge made visible and subject of dialogue.*
- ▶ *Metacognition: knowing why you do things a certain way*

SEQUENCE

1. Reflect (individually)

- ▶ *Reflect on a minimum of two separate questions and write down*
- ▶ *Stick note onto corresponding sheet*

2. Preselect; walk around and look

- ▶ *What notes do you find surprising or are recognisable, important?*

3. Group discussion

4. Conclusion

QUESTIONS

- 1 Do you have a kind of creative or experimental '*thinking mode*' or '*workflow*'? If so, are you doing this deliberately, decisively?
- 2 Do you have certain *recurring ways* to get yourself in the right 'mode'? Can you detect any *personal 'rituals'*?
- 3 When do you get '*inspired*'? Where or how does this happen? Can you name other factors that are of *positive influence* on your creativity?
- 4 When or how do you find a sense of *discipline*? If so, (when) is this important to you?
- 5 Have you devised personal strategies to conquer *blockages*? Can you name any other factors of *negative influence* on your creativity? What holds you back?
- 6 How do you get (*creative*) *self-confidence*?
- 7 How and when do you make use of the influence of others?
- 8 How do you make sure you have *variation* or find different *alternatives* in your ideas or work? Met
- 9 How do you define '*negative*' *distraction* (f.e. in class)? How do you cope with this? Or what would you change?
- 10 Can you define '*positive*' *distraction*? Could you give any examples?

REFLECTION

What can we conclude?

What can we (the school, fellow students, teachers, yourself) do to assist you in your creative effort?

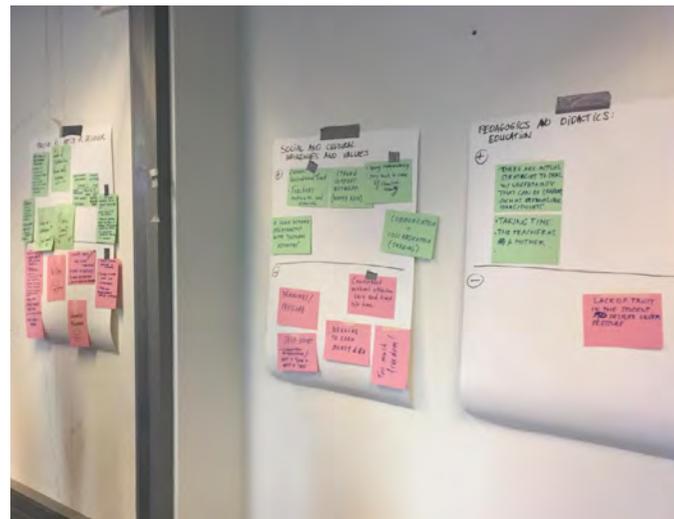
How do you feel about this workshop?

THANK YOU

TIME LINE AND TASKS (60 MIN.)

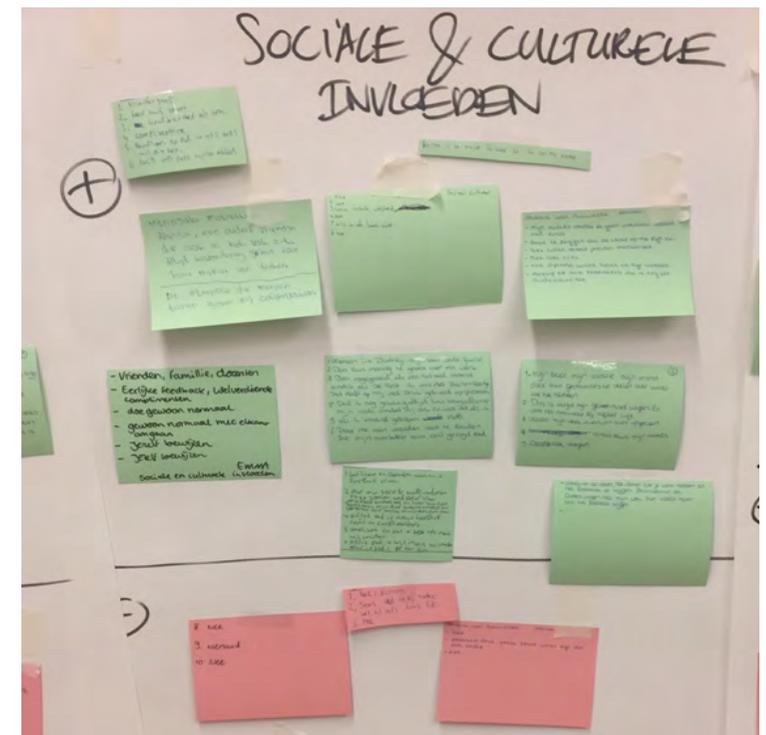
1. Introducing (10-15 min.).
- 2a. Students' reflection on questions in pairs (2a and b: 10-15 min.); the participants choose an area of interest —a point of view—, shortly discuss their personal opinions and reactions (positive and/or negative) and write them down on separate pieces of paper. If needed they can be aided by auxiliary questions. Note: they are to be printed up front!
- 2b. Visual sharing; gathering the personal notes on large sheets (1 sheet per viewpoint, every sheet is divided into a + and a - section).
3. Selection; participants indicate which notes are particularly surprising/important/contradictory (10-15 min.).
4. Conversation/discussion (20+ min.).
5. Concluding and reflecting (5+ min.).

Introducing workshop (1), promoting and facilitating student 'involvement' (all), leading group discussion (4,5), assisting in summarising (2, 4, 5), promoting safe and open group atmosphere (all), assisting in organising group conclusions (5), recording/archiving (2b, 4? 5?), distributing materials (2, 3). Of course, depending on group size and experience the participants these tasks can be delegated or distributed throughout the group.



RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

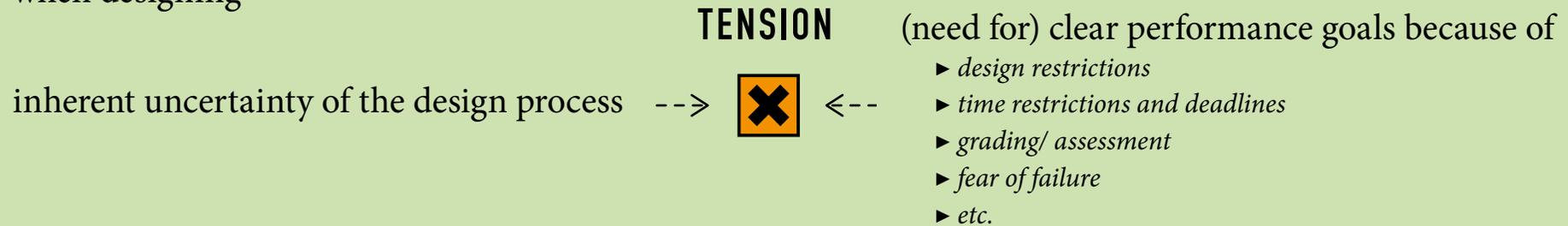
- ▶ Auxiliary questions to help the participants (Note: these are to be found after presentation slides).
- ▶ Materials needed for the students:
 - paper or sticky notes for students to write on —preferably two distinctive colours for positive and negative—, markers/pencils/pens, tape for posting answers (if no sticky notes are used).
 - ▶ Large sheets (+/- A2) on the wall or on the table, prepared with the viewpoints and each divided into a + and a - section; students stick their personal notes onto the corresponding sheet and 'sector'.
 - ▶ *optional*: Red markers to indicate (f.e. with a dot) which notes are particularly surprising/important/contradictory
 - ▶ *optional*: (White)board for noting (group) conclusions.



SUBJECT AND GOAL

Many students experience tension when designing

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student behaviour:

- ▶ *freezing up in the design process*
- ▶ *shallow experimentation or resisting experiment*
- ▶ *clinging to the first idea*
- ▶ *giving up*
- ▶ *constantly asking for approval of the teacher*
- ▶ *stop asking questions (fleeing)*
- ▶ *etc.*

WORKSHOP:
WHAT HELPS YOU TO FEEL AT EASE WITH
THE UNCERTAINTY OF DESIGNING?

SEQUENCE

1. Pick one of these three viewpoints to respond from

- ▶ *You as a design practitioner —what helps you cope with uncertainty or what works against you?*
- ▶ *Design didactics (education) —how do you think your education helps you or works against you?*
- ▶ *Social and cultural influences and values —how are people around you of influence?*

2. Discuss the most important positive or negative personal aspects

- ▶ *teams of two*
- ▶ *take about 15 minutes*
- ▶ *if needed, use the auxiliary questions*
- ▶ *work towards a few words or small sentences each and write them down*
- ▶ *stick them onto the large sheets in the corresponding area*

3. Preselect; walk around and look

- ▶ *What notes do you find surprising or are recognisable, important?*

4. Group discussion

5. Conclusion

*show next slide during
writing and discussing*

YOU AS A
DESIGN PRACTITIONER
-WHAT HELPS YOU COPE WITH
UNCERTAINTY OR
WHAT WORKS AGAINST YOU?

WHAT HELPS YOU
TO FEEL AT EASE WITH
THE UNCERTAINTY
OF DESIGNING?



**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
INFLUENCES AND VALUES**
-HOW ARE PEOPLE AROUND YOU
OF INFLUENCE?

**DESIGN DIDACTICS
(EDUCATION)**
-HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR
EDUCATION HELPS YOU OR WORKS AGAINST YOU?

REFLECTION

What can we conclude?

How do you feel about this workshop?

THANK YOU



► auxiliary questions

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND VALUES -HOW ARE PEOPLE AROUND YOU OF INFLUENCE?

Which people in your environment support your effort?
How do they do that?

What (sub)cultural environment did you grow up in? Can you detect values
that support your confidence or your creativity?

Are there any values in your upbringing or your peer-group that feed your
self-esteem?

Where does your intrinsic motivation originate?

What helped you develop persistence in face of difficulties?

Can you detect any values that have a negative impact on your confidence?

Which factors in your environment put you under pressure?

Are there any factors in your upbringing you had to resist or overcome?



► auxiliary questions

**YOU AS A
DESIGN PRACTITIONER**
-WHAT HELPS YOU COPE WITH
UNCERTAINTY OR
WHAT WORKS AGAINST YOU?

Have you developed certain methods to enhance your creativity?

How do you find your discipline?

Which circumstances do you create in order to be creative or experimental?

How do you cope with deadline-pressure?

How do you boost your confidence when you encounter difficulties in your experimental process?

Is there an artist or designer who's artistic or experimental approach you admire? What is it they do?

Are there any circumstances or approaches that threaten your confidence in your artistic or creative process?

Under which circumstances do you find it difficult to create ideas?

In what kind of environment is it difficult for you to work?



► auxiliary questions



DESIGN DIDACTICS (EDUCATION) -HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR EDUCATION HELPS YOU OR WORKS AGAINST YOU?



Are there any teachers/educators that really inspired you?

In what way did they inspire you (f.e. personality, methods, etc.)?

Are there any taught artistic or creative approaches you still endorse?

What inspiring influences did you encounter during your education?

Are there any didactical or pedagogical methods that work well, especially for you?

How can teachers/educators motivate you?

Are or were there any teacher/educators that had a negative effect on your achievement? How did this occur?

Are there any didactic or pedagogic approaches that you stopped using as an educator?