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Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

**Perceptions of visual communication design education in higher
education in Ireland: A multi-case study from the design industry,
institutes and graduates perspectives**

by

Fiona Dowling

Volume 1

Supervisor: Prof. Andrew Loxley

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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Name: **Fiona Dowling**

Date: **2nd May 2018**

SUMMARY

“Use your own vision and mentality in order to form design decisions + Don’t believe your professor” Annelys de Vet – (Kiosoglou & Frank, Ed. 2013., p 34).

The aim of the study was to evaluate and construct an explanation behind the currency that higher education degrees in design enjoy in Ireland. The Visual Communication (VC) design discipline at Bachelors (BA) level accounted for the greatest cohort of students leaving design HE in Ireland in the 1990s. This graphic design (GD/VC) domain, together with related programmes in design in digital media still account for the largest numbers of students in design at Higher Education (HE) in Ireland. The *Opportunities in Design; Strategies for Growth in the Irish Design Sector* report (1999, p.p.5.1.c-d) by PricewaterhouseCoopers/Bradley McGurk and more recently Harvey’s *Irish Design Footprint: Economic Value and Characteristics* report for the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI, 2016 pp. vi-vii), outline the strategic economic value that design provides for the Irish economy from the VC and creative digital media domain.

This study has adopted the VC discipline to explore the design HE experience from the perspective of graduates of one undergraduate (UG) VC programme. It considers their early design career and the transition that they make from leaving their UG HE to the design industry and, in some cases, to their decision to return to take up Masters and PhD level programmes. The emphasis of the research study has been from the graduates’ perspective. The academics and industry are referenced in two ways: the first by way of context setting, and the second providing a critical commentary on design education from their perspectives. The objective was to define the effect of these programmes on the students’ ‘creative’ experience and how relevant it was when applied to the design industry. There has been little research carried out on the Irish design postgraduate (PG), VC and creative digital design programmes and the design graduates’ early socialisation. This dissertation, therefore, is important as it considers the

Irish graphic design (GD/VC) industry, the Higher Education Institute (HEI) and the design graduate, i.e., the three stakeholders, from a number of perspectives.

The research questions are: 1. What type of employment does the graduate designer secure after undertaking an MA or PhD?; 2. What is the current employment status for graduates from xsUG and PG degrees in terms of, for example gender roles, work conditions, salary etc.?; 3. What is the relationship between the different stakeholders, and 4. Which of the stakeholders, e.g., HEI design, design industry or graduate designer benefits the most from an MA or PhD?

The methodology employed three case studies, which represented the three different stakeholders. This qualitative approach involved 20 semi-structured interviews with graduates. All of these had attended the same VC, UG four year programme and had graduated over a five year period between 2009-2014. The HEI site chosen for the study, Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), did not have a PG design programme pathway in place to evaluate. Hence, the cohort of graduates provided the insight into the Irish design student HE as they attended PG design programmes at Levels 9 and 10 in other Irish design HEIs, before they continued their progression into the workforce. Some 20 semi-structured case study interviews with design academics, and 20 semi-structured case study interviews with industry practitioners completed the sample for the research study. The 60 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three stakeholders from 2014-2015. The study therefore had a solid representation of participants in relevant categories that had validity and reliability for the research findings. Secondary issues such as: i) HEI and industry jointly provided assessment, and ii) graduates' continuing professional development (CDP) demands have been referenced. Learning attributes for design inclusive of digital, blended learning, placements/internships have been identified from the research findings for curriculum inclusion and development.

In conclusion, the research has highlighted the main characteristics and distinctive qualities of the individual stakeholders and their inter-relationships. It has been possible to construct a

profile of the Irish post UG student now armed with their VC design qualification, and to track their early progression into the design industry. The rationale for these qualified designers to further pursue PG degrees and how these enhance their opportunities and creative prospects, has been commented on from the three stakeholders' positions. The domain is in constant flux, with change in 'trends and technology' dictating a tension between the design industry and the HE education provision. The 'catch-up' situation in digital input has put pressure on training at HE causing it to be fluid in order to be in keeping with the design industry. The research study is timely as HE in all domains is in a process of transition in Ireland, with HE policy documentation (Hunt et al, 2011) and the proposed Technological University Bill (2015) indicating future mergers for some HEIs, together with a more central role for the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The position therefore, that design VC at present holds would suggest that there is a 'gap' between the stakeholders that requires more accountability, communication and transparency. The State intervention to support design practice with incentives like the '2015 Year of Design', has been prompted by economic considerations for trade and the growing social media and interactive platforms, i.e., user experience (UX) and design thinking. The personal financing for PG curriculum has suggested a slowdown in "take-up" by graduates until they consider their options in the workplace before committing to further degrees later in their careers. The question of how appropriate these design PG degrees are for the future graduates of tomorrow is dependent in the short term on the desirability of design graduates seeking creative, digital up-skilling and long-term graduates seeking marketing/ communication knowledge which will further their career longevity and leadership roles.

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DEDICATION

To both my parents, who always believed that education was the key to change.

Also for Sinead, Nicola, Ruaidhri and Joanne, my parents' greatest gift to me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Organisations and Associations

BERA	British Education Research Association
CAO	Central Applications Office
CHEAD	Council for Higher Education in Art and Design
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAE	Digital Agenda for Europe
DBI	Design Business Ireland
DCCOI	Design and Craft Council of Ireland
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DIAS	Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EADTU	European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning
EC	European Commission
ECF	Employment Control Framework
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ERC	European Research Council
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
FE	Further Education
GradCAM	Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media

HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council (England)
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IAPI	Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
IBM	International Business Machines
ICAD	Institute of Creative Advertising and Design
IDA	Irish Industrial Authority
ID15	Irish Design 2015 – (Year of)
IES	Institute for Employment Studies
IMI	Irish Marketing Institute
IoT	Institute of Technology
IOTI	Institutes of Technology Ireland
IRC	Irish Research Council
IRCHSS	Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Science
IUA	Irish Universities Association
IUQB	Irish University Quality Board
KDW	Kilkenny Design Workshops
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NCEA	National Council for Education Awards
NFDE	National Framework for Doctoral Education
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NUI	National University of Ireland
NRFP	National Research Funding Programmes
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRTL	Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions
QQI	Quality and Qualifications
QHNS	Quarterly Household National Survey
TSSG	Telecommunications Software and Systems Group
TU	Technological University
TUI	Teachers Union of Ireland
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Higher Education Funded Third Level Institutes In Ireland

Universities

NCAD	National Collage of Art and Design
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCD	University College Dublin
UL	University of Limerick
UU	Ulster University

Institutes of Technology

AIT	Athlone Institute of Technology
CIT	Cork Institute of Technology
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
IADT	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology
GMIT	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
ICT	Institute of Technology, Carlow
LIT	Limerick Institute of Technology
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology

Chapter 1 | Introduction, Rationale and Context of the Research

1.1 Introduction

This research explored design education 'Visual Communication' (VC) in Ireland and in particular the relationship that it has with industry and the VC professional designers educational requirements post UG degree. There has been an increase in postgraduate (PG) programmes at Masters (MA) level in Ireland with new opportunities at PhD and Doctoral level in Europe in a wide spectrum of disciplines (Cook et al, 2016, pp. 44-46). These include design in digital media, user experience (UX) and creative technologies inclusive of, but not limited to graphic design and 2D based applied discipline groups such as animation and gaming. With new developments for the design discipline the higher education (HE) sector has been provided by the State with policy documentation, which is currently affecting all discipline groups. These reports include the 'National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' (January 2011) chaired by Dr Colin Hunt and 'Towards A Future in Higher Education Landscapes' (February 2012); both produced by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). These policies concern curriculum development, teaching and learning strategies, e.g., blended learning together with content learning outcomes; all of which have become increasingly important in relation to the design student experience. The design professional in VC is undertaking PG study based on their experience in higher education (HE) at UG level and their early socialisation in the design field. Designers of VC continue after their UG degrees to practice armed with their qualifications where they discover the 'currency' of the education they have received in 'real world' or design industry situations. Those professional designers who embark on postgraduate study do so in order to enhance their creativity, knowledge and career path opportunities. In

Ireland the four-year UG design programmes are currently being reviewed to work in tandem with MA and Doctoral structured degrees. The aim of this study therefore, has been to evaluate and question the rationale behind Irish postgraduate VC education and training/research in Ireland from a number of stakeholder's perspectives, including the graphic design industry, VC educators and the VC graduate. By reviewing the interplay between these separate entities that belong to the VC domain, the objective is to define the effect this has on the students' 'creative' experience and how it is when it is applied to the profession.

The Irish HE background of the study has been examined from a mix of the historical, economic, cultural and creative contexts in particular. The creative context in this thesis is concerned with applied subjects such as typography, illustration, and digital media output inclusive of print and interaction design, gaming and 'app' development. To further contextualise the creative experience I have discussed the recent developments and changes in the economic and educational environment in Ireland. Additionally, current developments in Irish higher education (HE) at UG and PG levels include changing government policy and the growth of information design, i.e., digital technology. I have briefly touched on how commercial creativity can be taught and how 'Visual Literacy' (Elkins 2008) and visual creativity (Robinson 2009) are 'valued' in society (Glidden's 1971; 2000) as it embraces visual information in new formats for ever growing regional, national and global markets.

1.2. Factors Leading to the Research Study:

The western world experienced an economic downturn, which affected Ireland regionally and nationally with the Irish 'banking crisis' in particular from 2008. This period called for a

European Union (EU) financial support intervention, the European Financial Support Facility (EFSF), this in turn became the backdrop to radical financial measures across all sectors of Irish civic, cultural and economic activity. Extreme economic issues underpinning State decision-making for cutbacks in education (Hunt et al, 2011) have indicated the need for reforms at all levels:

Higher education reform is part of a wider education and training reform programme in Ireland which includes early childhood education, primary, secondary level and further education and training (HEA 2015, p.8).

The HEA, Collaborations for Talent and Growth quote above has coincided with design industry technology changes, together with HE policy for PG Art and Design - they included:

- a.) A shift in demand for marketing services, particularly across new digital platforms, i.e., social media.
- b.) There was a desire in Irish HE to offer postgraduate qualifications (Good Practice in the Quality Assurance of Arts Research Degree Programmes by Practice 2010, HEA) that would position a graduate at a higher entry level in Europe across all disciplines. This was promoted by the Bologna Declaration and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Review of Higher Education in Ireland (September, 2004) recommendations.
- c.) New curriculum delivery at all levels of attainment within the Bologna framework subject to the Standards and Guidelines for the Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005). All discipline areas inclusive of design required accountability, which resulted in teaching and learning strategies; learning outcomes and a focus on attaining a level of achievement that could be benchmarked. Inclusion of lifelong learning; quality assurance which encouraged even practice based degrees to be more transparent and thus have more

(perceived) value and recognition as a result. This will be explored in Chapter 3, of this thesis.

- d.) The introduction of various policy initiatives, i.e., Hunt et al and the HEA (2012) report encouraged the knowledge economy (KE) collaborations with industry at Masters; Doctoral and Postdoctoral level.

1.3 Background To The Study

The original research proposal was to develop a PG design qualification i.e. MA in Design for Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). New management structures and a new focus on the UG/VC required a more fluid approach to the study. The study switched to a focus on to the roots of what a PG degree is in design and an exploration of the VC discipline at both UG and PG design. The changing landscape of HE during the last five years, coupled with the economic downturn in the Irish/global economy, as previously stated, has seen significant state intervention in HE. This has affected all aspects of HE, including VC and other creative applied domains. It has been a very financially challenging period however, this has not prevented the development and implementation of practice-based level 9/10 degrees, as seen in at least one HEI in Ireland i.e. NCAD. However, unlike other social science disciplines there has been little or no research conducted in practice-based design degrees. How the graduates from UG degrees and the GD/VC industry benefit from PG design degrees is also not available in Ireland. The state-supported “ID15” (Irish Year of Design 2015) initiative, which I will elaborate on in more detail in Chapter 2, has proposed to capture the design situation in a number of Irish contexts i.e. creative and economic. My focus on the interplay between the individual stakeholders vis-à-vis design profession, design HEIs and the graduate designer is one that has relevance not only because of the 2015 Year of Design, but also state interest in professional connections for graduates [HEA, What do Graduates do? The class of 2014 (2016); DJEI, The ‘Irish Design Footprint’:

Economic Value and Characteristics (January, 2016); DJEI, Policy Framework for Design In Ireland In Enterprise in Ireland (January, 2016); A Study Design Services Sector on the Island of Ireland, InteTradelreland (2010)]. This GD/VC area of PG research would seem to be behind other disciplines that have considered PG degrees normal for decades. This study is therefore, timely, as design may not have reached a level of development that warranted an investigation in an Irish context before now. State investment and global connectivity in digital media has presented the creative industries at the centre of a debate that will see further economic and creative growth for Ireland (Harvey, 2016, Kennedy, 2015). This is for national and international entertainment, services and trade. Design is positioned to enable communication and with virtual platforms there is an instant global audience.

‘the race for talent’ and ‘the war for talent’ are common currency as economies compete in a global environment and there is a quest to secure the most highly-skilled people to drive innovation and growth. (HEA, 2015, p. 7)

The increasing number of HE design programmes around the country (UG 9, VC programmes and PG, Design related programmes directly following on from them are growing across the IoT and University sectors which would suggest that the demand for these creative commercial skills is high. The HEA Good Practice in the Quality Assurance of Arts Research Degree Programmes by Practice guidelines in 2011 were developed to cater for expansion at art and design PG level:

The relative newness of creative arts research, as well as the central position of creative arts research in the development of the creative economy, point to the need for these guidelines. So too does the contested nature of creative arts research typical of a field in the first phase of development, albeit a phase of development that began some decades ago with the award of the first postgraduate degrees in creative arts. (HEA, 2011, p. 4)

The research therefore, focuses on the post UG designer and their experience of early career in the design industry, will incorporate professional designer’s and design educator’s discussion in a variety of contexts in Chapters 5 and 6.

1.4 Research Questions

The research is an exploration of the UG experience and the rationale behind design PG qualifications. The 9 UG programmes in VC are centred in Dublin and Cork and around the country in Athlone, Carlow, Letterkenny, Limerick, and Waterford. Structured doctoral programmes and research practice PhDs in design are based in Dublin DIT, NCAD, Cork and Limerick exclusively, with other programmes still to be validated and under development. One of my objectives was to explore and investigate the 'value' or 'currency'¹ that PG qualifications enjoy, particularly at MA level in the design industry. This highlighted areas of enquiry such as: (i) would the UG designer change during the process of education?; (ii) how would their perception as a PG designer of the professional world of design be altered from that of an UG?; and (iii) in what way would their standing in the design community be enhanced by their PG degree e.g. their creative skills and their marketability for industry?

1.4.1 The Four Research Questions For The Study:

The four research questions for the study are:

- What type of employment does the professional designer secure after having undertaken an MA or PhD?
(What opportunities present themselves, for career advancement?)
- What is the current employment status for the PG designer in the (GD/VC) industry?

¹ The financial, market and cultural position etc.

(The arena that the design postgraduate is employed in e.g. gender status, work conditions, salary etc.).

- What is the relationship between the different stakeholders, i.e. graduate designer, HEI design and the design industry? *(A definition of the stakeholders identities/Characteristics)*
- To what extent does the stakeholders e.g. HEI design, design industry or PG designer benefit from postgraduate education of designers? *(The word 'benefit' includes better working conditions, increased profit margins and cultural and creative experience)*

The first question is concerned with the relationship between the design industry and graduates' exploration of their employment status. The second question concerns the interconnection, between industry and HE in relation to the alignment, or not, around course design and philosophy, and the respective 'needs' of each stakeholder. The third question explores the relationship between the different HEIs and it questions the importance or recognition PG design holds as a discipline at HE Institutions and Universities. The interplay between practice-led disciplines in a transdisciplinary²; interdisciplinary³ creative arts faculty (Department/School), which balances theoretical components will be commented on. The study therefore, recognises the wider context of a cross-disciplinary⁴ Humanities School and the future 'blend' of disciplines that are currently being offered and expanded on. The last question considers who benefits the most from PG design? Is the PG experience in practice-led design education 'fit for purpose'? That is in relation to changing creative domains e.g. print and virtual environments, digital and

2 Collaboration in which exchange of discipline specific approaches, shared resources and integrated activity is used to produce a common goal i.e. programme of study, research project or paper etc.

3 Knowledge based activity across disciplines, theory or applied subject matter which fosters a space where knowledge and skills can be exchanged. Thus encouraging researchers and investigators to transcend their own disciplines; to capture new knowledge and create new spaces of intellectual; artistic enquiry.

4 Also referred to as multidisciplinary programme and or research development activity. Different disciplines using a team dynamic work together answering separate aspects of a given project, programme of study or research question.

marketing requirements, UX delivery. What is the student experience, can we evaluate the current education on offer at structured taught MA/PhD level e.g. Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and National College of Art and Design (NCAD) in the Irish state?

1.4.2 The Research Design

The research design has used a multiple case study approach with a triangulating research methodology design (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014); Denzins (2011)). This has incorporated the design industry, design academia and the design graduate data generation (leading to 60 semi-structured interviews in total) with relevant theory and contextual material drawn from professional Irish design industry literature and HE policy documentation. Triangulation allowed for cross-checking of the data findings and encouraged 'corroborations from three different sources, which enhances the trustworthiness' of the analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014), p. 299). A survey aimed at both the UG and PG design students was part of the original design but due to various reasons it was not used in the findings this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. By closely examining the data generation and the findings 'using multiple sources and modes of evidence, the verification process will largely be built into the data collection...(Ibid, p.300) and research design. Triangulation gives greater validity when measuring the same thing (Lincoln & Denzin (2003); Creswell (2013); Stake (1995, 2010, 2014) Yin (2014)]. The research questions were investigated from a variety of perspectives providing repartition and further corroborations. This generated a pattern for themes and categories, which employed both open coding 'line by line analysis' and axial coding 'the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed "axial" because coding occurs around the axial of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions' (Strauss and

Corbin (1998), p.123). This will be elaborated on in more detail in Chapter 4 under Methodology.

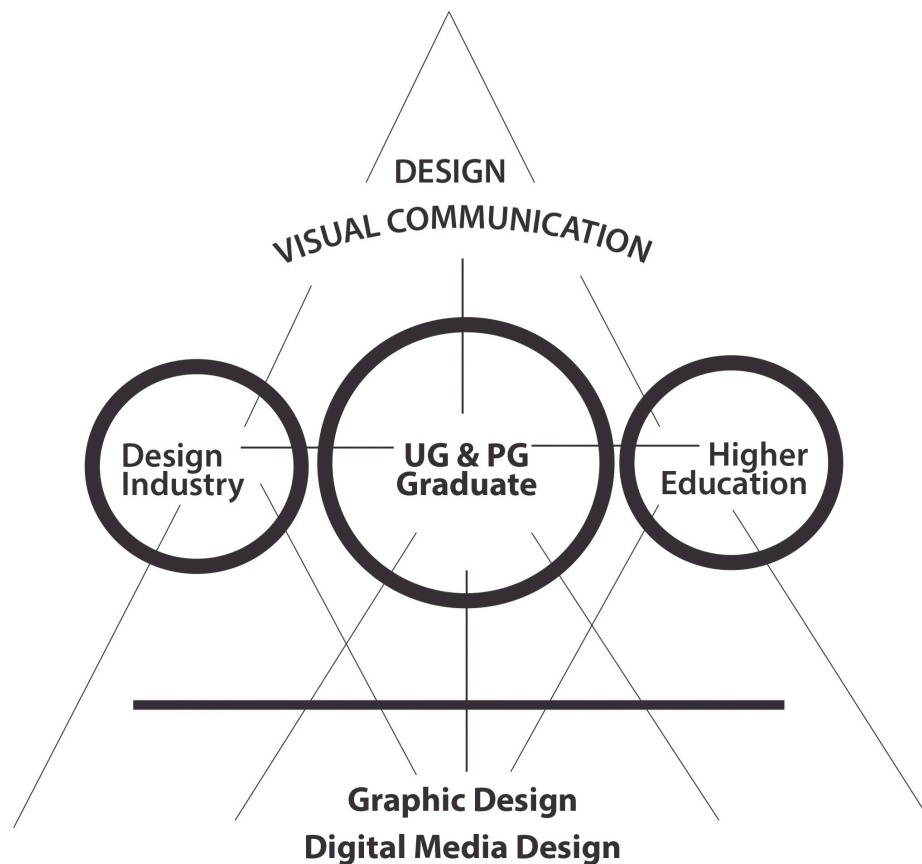


Figure 1.1 Research Study and Triangulation (F. Dowling, 2017).

– Inter-relationship between the Graduate Designer; Design Industry and Higher Education Institute

1.5. Personal Motivation For The Study

My motivation to take on this research has been based on my experience as a professional graphic designer in Dublin for sixteen years and on a dissertation study 'Irish Visual Design Education: An Evaluation For A Multi-Media World', which I submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) in 2001 as partial support for the award of Master in Design in Digital Media. This study of undergraduate programmes of VC in Ireland, evaluated how

digital technology could be integrated into traditional practice-based visual design programmes. My own transition into design education at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) in 2002 as a lecturer in graphic design, afforded me the opportunity to become involved with curriculum development of the then new BA (Level 8) in Design (Visual Communication) degree. This was initially as project leader and subsequently as programme co-coordinator from 2005-2010. During the process of surveying industry practitioners and students of design, a taught Masters programme along with ever changing technology platforms of design seemed to be of on-going importance.

The design industry was always difficult to define as it called itself a profession. However, as it did not have the attributes normally associated with a profession:

"regulatory bodies with powers to admit and discipline members, and some degree of [monopoly](#) rights." (Bullock and Trombley, (1999, p.689).

It therefore remained fragmented with little opportunities to encourage and promote a collective voice or ability to have a register of practitioners. This is changing slowly and will be briefly commented on in the study. The skills training and HE relationship with the design industry always seemed to be one of remote politeness and individual connections by HE design lecturers. Little collaborative focus and creative or financial support from the design industry did not present a positive approach to HE either; particularly with tensions around digital technology and the speed of change in design platforms that has left HE providers in a 'catch-up' situation. The graduates from UG degrees seemed to require further in-house training in their early socialisation years in industry, which left them vulnerable and open to long unpaid internships.

The transdisciplinary subject matter of the VC area (print, virtual, online, product, UX and gaming etc.) and the relationship between the student, design training/education and the design industry particularly interested me at PG level. Here there was only a short history

of research with only a few taught Masters in design in Ireland; the best known being the MA in Professional Design Practice at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). The main area for expansion on taught Masters in the 'creative' industry education was in multimedia, which became a very attractive option for creative students entering HE in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the millennium. The areas of Interaction design (IX) and design communication have largely replaced that with programmes now available at PG in NCAD and other sites for the 2016-2017 academic calendars.

One of the interesting aspects of this growth of digital media was that it brought in a cohort of 'new' designers. These new designers had in the main little or no formal education in art or design (Barfield, 2004, p. xiiiv; Heller & Vienne, 2015, p. iix).

Mobile phones, MP3 players and handheld personal computers are not only appearing, converging and transforming into new kinds of devices. Such areas of design are changing our lives not only physically but socially. Until recently we would have thought of software and system designers as lying outside [traditional design domains] (Lawson, 2005, p. 6).

They developed websites and CDs (the forerunner of DVDs) for everyday objects and services from music videos to documentaries and film, to branding and advertising services and it worked. While expanding design platforms these 'new designers' ignored the existing status quo, which had firmly developed from the printing sector over decades. In my opinion, design was largely a closed shop in Ireland and difficult to navigate for new design talent, so this period of expansion also gave it a fresh outlook. New platforms, which would later be called 'social media' and 'apps' now all presented new creative challenges for the GD/VC community. For the first time in commercial design practice, there was no need for formal training or apprenticeships such as 'City and Guilds' certification, let alone diplomas and degrees at UG or PG level. This new virtual creative practice presented something exciting, but was developing so fast that it was largely created by computer 'geeks.' It surprised the graphic, product, industrial designers both at industry and Institute level. By the late 1990s/early 2000 it had become apparent to me

that there was a need to gain a better understanding of digital implications on graphic design (GD). I questioned if practice-led design related programmes kept in line with other humanities and social science PG programme developments? One or all of the stakeholders e.g. 'the graduate, the design education Institute or design industry' are pushing for higher levels of entry for the design industry or continuing learning (CDP) as a professional enhancement to the creative or employability of a VC designer. It particularly interested me to establish if there was a benefit to a graduate who had a BA to gain a PG qualification other than to enter education as an academic. Allowing that it could be established that it has a positive effect, what particular areas of the curriculum enhance the experience or can be explored for future developments? Was it possible that all three stakeholders could be in a position to develop with new knowledge and greater understanding of the domain?

On reflecting on the different stakeholders and my own motivation for this study, the early socialisation of a GD/VC graduate at UG and PG has been a focus of the research from two perspectives 1) To capture their experience in the present, changing Irish HE landscape and to evaluate the GD/VC domain in a time of great digital, cultural, historical, creative and economic transition. 2) To present the formal and indeed informal practices that can enhance the experience of the PG student designer for the future.

1.6. Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 places this study in the Irish HE and Design/Visual Communication (VC) industry context. I review the Graphic Design (GD) and VC disciplines in the context of the notion of (i) definitions of VC, GD, and practice-led programmes at UG and PG level; (ii) Design applied to creative activities and, in particular, graphic design; (ii) design thinking ideas

and the digital 'revolution', the common language between art and design theory. As no previous research study had been conducted in the Irish HE PG design domain, the literature from both industry and HE has relied on historical, economic and state policy to provide evidence of the current (GD/VC) design domain.

Chapter 3 considers the student experience from (i) the teaching and learning experiences of practice-led design at UG and PG level with regard to curriculum development; (ii) the pedagogy considerations for practice-led disciplines, inclusive of the context of design and art programmes at Irish HE; and (iii) HE attributes (the Bologna Declaration 1999) - The 'Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education and the HEA PG policy documentation inclusive of the 'Good Practice in the Quality Assurance of Arts Research Degrees Programmes by Practice 2010'.

Chapter 4 discusses the research methodology and explains the research design. It explains the data generation and analysis that have been conducted with three case study stakeholders, (graphic design industry, VC educators and the VC graduate). The data collection, included sixty semi-structured interviews, of which twenty were with the design HEI academics, another twenty with the design industry and the remaining twenty were with design graduates who had attended the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) between 2009 and 2014. The study focuses on the graduates' experiences before, during and after they experience PG design degrees in design or related areas in other HEIs in Ireland.

Chapters 5 and 6 provides firstly the profile of each of the industry and academic case study participant; secondly, this is followed with the presentation of the analysis of the

semi-structured interviews under themes that are then mapped back to the research questions of the study.

Chapter 7 introduces the profile for each of the graduate participants, followed by the findings from the qualitative analysis of the broader themes and sub-questions in the research study. It reflects on the graduate research themes that are consistent with the main research questions. It summarises the graduate experiences and findings from the data generation.

Chapter 8 is a cross-case analysis and discussion of the findings from chapters 5, 6, and 7. It includes the literature and Irish HE in transition, as well as design industry implications and requirements.

Chapter 9 considers the research conclusions and makes recommendations. This is with a view to enhancing the design graduates, academia and industry practitioners experiences in the future.

1.7. Summary

This chapter explained the origins of the research study and briefly addressed the current status and situation for graduates entering PG HE in VC design and related disciplines. I highlighted the research questions and the three main stakeholders – the Irish PG graduate; the design academic/institute and the design industry. The academics and industry designers whilst being important to the study are there in two capacities. One, context setting and two, to provide a critical commentary on design education from their perspectives. The focus therefore, is on the design graduates' at UG and PG stages early career socialisation and how the design industry and academia interact with that experience. The chapter considers the background and the motivation for the author to pursue the research study. It indicates the importance of the research at this time where the value and currency of PG design qualifications are emerging against a backdrop of Irish HE in transition. It concludes with a thesis outline of the ten chapters, beginning with the literature research review in Chapters 2, and 3, which informs the research questions. The methodology and data generation are in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 while Chapter 8 provides a cross-case study analysis and discussion of the data findings. The concluding Chapter 9 considers the three stakeholders with the main emphasis on the graduate. It outlines the implications for future PG design graduates and the relationship that may be forged between Academia and Industry as they navigate their future.

Chapter 2 | Visual Communication and the Irish Graphic Design Industry

2.1 Introduction

The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place there is a language of images. What matters now is who uses that language and for what purpose (Berger, 1972, 2008, p.26).

In this chapter, I will critically examine how creativity and imagination through individual experiences is expressed in and throughout art and design, with a particular focus on Visual Communication (VC) and Graphic Design (GD). The term 'design' is applied to a wide spectrum of creative activities, including fashion, interior, product, industrial, landscape and film/theatre stage design, etc. The term 'design' will be used in the context of GD. I am not concerned with the ethical issues of commercial advertising and I do not provide a critique of what is considered to be good or bad design. This chapter will focus on what creativity is from a number of perspectives such as design thinking and the digital revolution. These areas are central to the experiences of the graduate both while attending PG design education and in their early working years in the GD industry. This chapter will present working definitions for GD and practice-led design activity, and will consider the visual language and theory existing between art and design. I also propose to consider the economic, cultural and historical dimensions associated with design and to explore various reports regarding the sector, including the influential *Design in Ireland: Report of the Scandinavian Design Group in Ireland* of 1962. This report established Irish State intervention for commercial design activity in the manufacturing and service industries for a contemporary economy. This chapter therefore considers the current experiences of design graduates by exploring the design contexts that provide the basis for a design industry. In doing so, it will look at the creative and social dimensions of the

early Irish print sector in a postcolonial Ireland. It explores the design community, which has evolved from the VC/GD professional practices, and its relationship with HE training. The relationship between industry, HE and the graduate designer is questioned in the context of the broader traditional and emerging independent Irish State. The way in which the design industry and Irish HE are currently collaborating is viewed in the context of the Irish International Year of Design 2015 and industry policy documentation up to and including 2018.

2.2 Graphic Design Visual Communication – Definition

Visual Communication is an inextricable part of human history. It has existed as long as there has been the need to make marks or leave traces, to communicate through signs and symbols rather than the spoken word. In the contemporary world the activity of organising signs and symbols, or words and images, for public exchange is recognised as graphic design – a specialist area of the broader field of design (Aynsley, 2004, p.4).

The opening lines of Jeremy Aynsley's (2004) book *Pioneers of Modern Graphic Design: A Complete History* attempt to outline the difference between VC and GD as illustrated in the above statement. Like many graphic designers who studied VC, it never occurred to me as something unusual that the discipline in which designers work in 'graphic design' is not the title of the UG four-year programme of study in the Irish State. The term 'visual communication' implies a wider horizon than just branding and advertising; the response of theory and practice is inclusive of the work of artists and filmmakers and now virtual platforms with a graphic commercial association. This is not just self-serving; this embraces and documents socio-cultural politics that broadly include the social relations of production and consumption.

Teal Triggs (2011), in her essay *Graphic Design History: Past, Present, and Future*, states that 'graphic design is still searching for its past, unlike other design disciplines such as fashion and industrial design, which have an established tradition of documenting, critical theory, and publishing history, as well as engaging with social, cultural, and political contexts'

(Ibid., p.3.) This is not to say that there are no design historians for GD. It merely suggests that the area is still behind other trans-disciplinary design practice domains. Robert Harland (2011) in his essay, *The Dimensions of Graphic Design and Its Spheres of Influence*, considers that GD 'must now be equally thought of as a tool for social as well as economic development' and therefore not just the study of practice-based graphic design students'. VC incorporates many humanities and social science areas in order to give the design practitioner a background by which they may communicate visually across many cross-disciplinary subjects such as marketing, law, ethnography, cultural studies etc., and trans-disciplinary subjects such as fashion, fine art, industrial design (Barnwell, 2011; Aynsley, 2004).

Shaughnessy (2009) reviews the identity of graphic designers in *Graphic Design: A User's Manual* and suggests that all designers have at their centre 'aesthetics'. Shaughnessy also adds that 'the question of aesthetics runs through graphic design like an open wound' (Ibid., p.15). There are two types of graphic designers according to Shaughnessy, the first being the 'pragmatists' who are happy to provide the business community with information, 'packaging' with messages. The second type is the designer who sees design aesthetic as being an 'expression driven by inner compulsion' (Ibid., p.15). This distinction is echoed by GD designers, including Massimo Vignelli, whom Shaughnessy quotes from an interview conducted by Steven Heller (American graphic designer and author) concerning designers:

There are two kinds of graphic designers: one is rooted in history and semiotics and problem solving. The other is more rooted in the liberal arts – painting, figurative arts, advertising, trends and fashions. These are really two different avenues ... one side is structured and the other is the emotional side (Shaughnessy, 2009, p.15).

Meggs, in *Meggs' History of Graphic Design* (1992), the first edition of which was published in 1983, gives an evolution of the work practices of GD and even links VC with the area, but

does not offer a definition. The closest that he comes to doing so is in indicating that the activity of commercial design practice was given a name as a discipline in 1922 when William Addison Dwiggins began to call himself a graphic designer because he brought 'structural order and visual form to printed communication', and that it was an 'emerging profession' that deserved an 'appropriate name' (Meggs, 1992, p.xiii). This new discipline has a very 'distinguished ancestry' according to Meggs. I will touch on this evolution here only to provide the context of the three stakeholder groups (Irish HE Design Institute, Design Industry and the HE Design graduate) in the study. As stated, the current GD profile can be perceived in many ways, but there are common attributes that give it an identity and a community in a general sense (see Table 2.1). As Samara (2007), Knight & Glaser (2010), Berryman (1990), and Shaughnessy & Bierut (2009) and Debner (2004) all describe:

Good graphic design is not simply a result of brilliant execution or technique. It is the strong expression of clever ideas. Research is often the key to successful projects (Dabner, 2004, p.6)

Table 2.1 The Graphic Design – Identity through texts

• A graphic designer assimilates verbal concepts and gives them form. A designer organises the resulting form into a tangible, navigable experience. The quality of the experience is dependent on the designer's skill and sensibility in creating or selecting forms with which to manifest concepts, or messages. A designer is responsible for the intellectual and emotional vitality of the experience he or she visits upon the audience for such messages. The designer's task is to elevate the experience of the message above the banality of literal transmission and the confusing self-indulgent egoism of mere eye-candy or self-fulfilment [Samara (2007, p.7)].
• Graphic designers love the excitement of an inspiring and creative challenge, with the quest to expand knowledge and skills often at the forefront of their minds. Many varied disciplines come together to give this unique profession great breadth, but it can be hard to gain experience in all areas....Specific graphic design genres: packaging, visual identity and branding, page layout, design for music, and design for screen [Knight & Glaser (2010, pp.6-7)].
• Graphic designers are ...concerned with information to be read. They are involved with affecting an audience. They try to get most people in a target group to respond positively to a visual message. - Graphic designers use typography, symbolism, illustration and photography to communicate visually. Often a combination of these techniques is effective. - Graphic designers work for corporations, institutions (hospitals, universities) and governments. They work either in-house for one organisation or as consultants for

a number of clients. This means that GD/VC designers require business and marketing theory to support their applied practice.

- Graphic designers attempt to achieve visual solutions that are functional, elegant, appropriate, simple and economical. They solve problems that range from the simplicity of a sales poster to the complexity of a sign system for an international airport [Berryman (1990, p.3)]'.

- '...there are many designers who have no desire to claim authorship of their work. As Ellen Lupton notes: "Typically, graphic designers provide the spit and the polish but not the shoe."⁵ Designers are often happy to be hired hands, ready to do the bidding of clients. And yet, show me a designer who doesn't feel the warm glow of authorship when he or she produces work created by a combination of imagination, skill and professional judgement; it's a glow that contemporary human beings crave as keenly as our prehistoric ancestors craved a fire and a full belly' [Shaughnessy & Bierut (2009, p.127)].

The core activity that is unique to GD is typography and this, combined with aesthetics and semiotics, is key to the nature of VC. The spectrum of both physical and virtual commercial activity is very broad, but when GD is included, the typographic messages and communication are considered to deliver a distinct voice that no other discipline enjoys. Undoubtedly, many design areas overlap, i.e., illustration with animation, photography with TV and Web/apps etc.; they collaborate to create a finished design solution. More often, in the context of virtual platforms, this is referred to as 'graphic content'.

2.2.1. The Visual Communication Educational Context

The relationship that VC enjoys with HE is an interesting one. Existing in the humanities and social sciences, it consists of a series of related subject disciplines as stated above that create a programme area, VC. The word 'innovation' for commercial service and product, or information output, is now commonly linked with design/graphic finished solutions. These graphic solutions are presented in the main two-dimensional visual interpretation (see Figure 2.1).

⁵ Ellen Lupton, 'The Producers', 2003. www.elupton.com/index.php?id=48

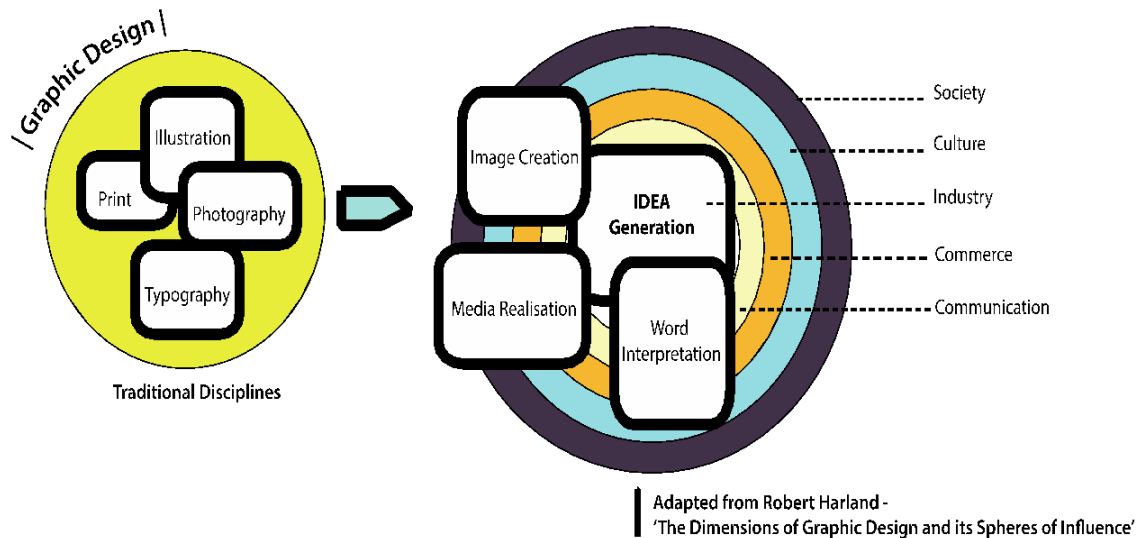


Figure 2.1: A diagrammatic representation of the traditional domains from which GD emerged and the wider model that incorporates four key elements that are all framed around an idea or concept. Diagram adapted from Robert Harland in his paper *The Dimensions of Graphic Design and its Spheres of Influence* 'thinking is doing process'.

Figure 2.1 demonstrates how Robert Harland (2011) in his paper *The Dimensions of Graphic Design and its Spheres of Influence* shows how GD operates as an area of study, although in 2018, there are even greater individual practice-based design areas inter-connecting under VC/GD, i.e., game development, mobile app utilities and virtual interactive media from Web to kiosks.

They all have at the centre of their existence an 'idea' which in turn generates a concept, which when realised in 'form' through different media, creates a finished practice-based solution. The process requires creative interactions with a number of areas such as, for example, culture and commerce.

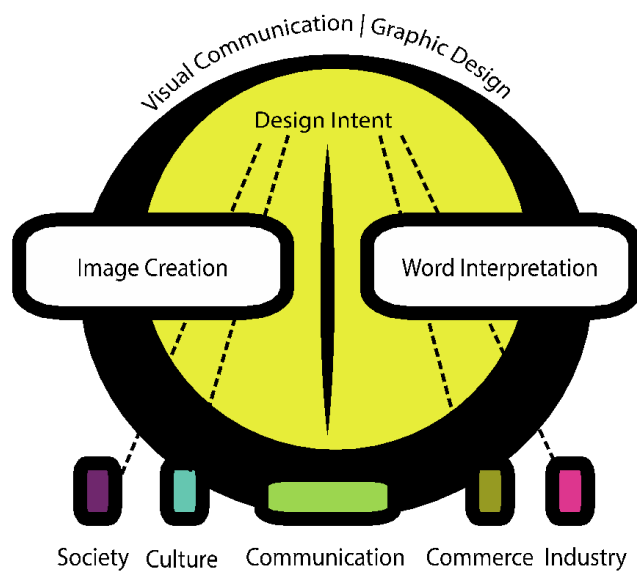


Figure 2.2: Image creation and word interpretation together with 'design intent' provide the basis for VC/GD creative finished solutions in given cultures and activities (F. Dowling, 2018).

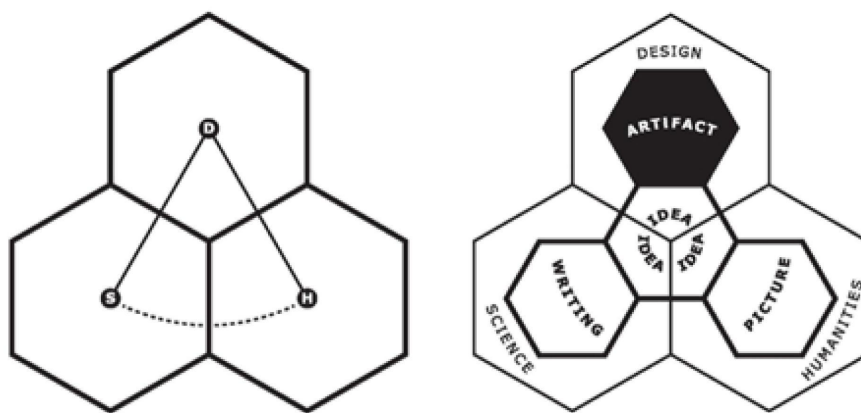


Figure 2.3: The diagram above by R. Harland (2011) shows design as a domain which incorporates the science and humanities areas. This inter-relationship has at its core an 'idea' with outputs of writing, pictures/images and artefacts. The weighting of the individual components in the diagram are equal in value. The design domain is positioned as a field of knowledge in the social sciences and humanities areas in Higher Education.

From 2009 onwards, a number of policy documents and annual reports have surfaced which highlight the growing interest in developing not only Irish UG programmes in design, but also practice-led research degrees at Level 9 (Masters) and Level 10 (Doctorate).

These include: the *Good Practice in the Quality Assurance of Arts Research Degree Programmes by Practice*, HEA (October 2010); Handerson & Whicher, *A Study of the Role and Importance of Design in Firms based in Ireland in Non Design-Intensive Sectors* for the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), December 2015; the *Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland* was also produced for the DJEI to coincide with their report *The 'Irish Design Footprint': Economic Value and Characteristics* (January 2016)). These reports all advocate investment in the area of design research.

The State's interest in practice-led or applied disciplines is growing because of a number of factors; the first is that there are tangible outcomes, both at creative and financial levels, with patents and commercial output such as DVDs, books and documentaries. The second is that it encourages new skills, which are 'harnessed' by industry for commercial or creative sector use according to *Collaborations for Talent and Growth, Strategy For Higher Education-Enterprise Engagement 2015-2020*, (HEA, June 2015). Various reports have already been alluded to in Chapter 1 expanding on the State's objectives, which will be further explored in this chapter and Chapter 3. This has been part of the government's strategic plan from 2010, with the National Plan for Recovery 2011-14 (2010, pp. 29-31) that states 'creativity and design' will be included as 'Next Generation Network enabled sectors' (Ibid p.31). It further adds that selected sectors such as 'creativity and design' will 'position Ireland's brand and reputation in new growth markets' while actively addressing and 'supporting broadly based export markets' for the smart economy. The proposed mergers of IoTs and the clustering of HE providers (Hunt et al., 2011; HEA, 2012) indicate that programmes that contain an applied/business component and are cross-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary will be funded at UG level:

One of the most fundamental questions in planning for the future is: what are the right skills for the graduates of 2015-2030 and what mix of skills of higher education?...The emphasis has switched from over-specialisation towards deeper and broader disciplinary foundations, with learning objectives that explicitly seek to nurture in students the creativity, enthusiasm and skills required for continual engagement with learning (Ibid., 2010, p.35).

In recent years, with the growth of social media, large international companies such as IBM are investing in and demanding new creative expertise, e.g. over 150 design jobs have been created in Dublin since 2012 (Appendix A). They are prepared to invest in Irish research in the future which looks very promising for practice-led/based research in design, where design thinking and the generation of ideas are central. Lastly, UX (design user experience) is becoming fundamental to VC and GD activity; it is of core importance both at UG and PG level.

2.2.2 The Elements of Graphic Design Theory

The elements of design for GD as visual outputs are underpinned by creativity and concepts. As previously stated, GD comprises design thinking, history and cultural expression. It is inclusive of design aesthetics, as the last section has elaborated on. From my own experience, the concept of 'aesthetics' denotes not just looking at something from a philosophical standpoint, which examines the world of beauty in the classical style described as the 'realm of the beautiful' (Hegel, 1835/1993, p.3). It is also applied to everyday objects and media that people interact with (Light & Smith, 2005), reflecting the entanglement of making and observing (Dewey, 1934); or as Wittgenstein (1958, p.77) elaborates, a person 'interacting with its environment'. It relates to how we approach the 'everyday and ordinary' things; even the ephemeral and transient 'packages and messages' have meaning. As argued by Shaughnessy:

'Is it possible to be a graphic designer without aesthetics?' ... Possibly; but it would be a bit like trying to climb Everest in ballet pumps. You might be able to do it, but not without difficulty. I've known one or two designers without aesthetic instincts, but they weren't very good designers (Shaughnessy & Bierut, 2009, p.16).

As much as typography is seen as the area that GD/VC embraces as its own, it nonetheless shares semiotics with all of the visual arts. Semiotics attributed to the general philosophical theory of art and design (Eves, 2012, p.150) is the interpretation of signs in the broadest sense such as language (typography) and their ability to produce meaning.

'Semiotics is embodied in every artefact or design created, be it deliberately or not' (Eves, 2012, p.144). Signs act as arbiters of social power, according to Eskilson (2012, p.436). The study of semiotics is incorporated as part of the HE GD/VC curriculum and is now linked as standard practice with typography as it underpins the visual output of GD. The design historian Meggs (1999, p.334) outlines the importance of semiotics to design theory in connection with Theo Ballmer (1902–1965) and Max Bill (1908–1994). Ballmer studied briefly at the Bauhaus Dessau under Paul Klee (1879-1940), Walter Gropius (1883-1969) and Hannes Meyer (1889-1954) in the late 1920s and is largely considered to be the main influence on the application of 'De Stijl' principles to GD. This involved the application of the 'golden rule', an 'arithmetic grid of horizontal and vertical alignments'. This early design thinking worked on the principle that all things in nature can be subdivided into equal parts. Ballmer applied this process to poster designs to create a visual harmony that worked off of a grid. The visual representation was one of structured visual forms that communicated a message. In his early poster work, he did not show the grid. However, in his poster 'norm' the grid becomes 'visible' and he makes a virtue of using a mathematical formula to 'construct' the typographic poster.

Max Bill studied at the Bauhaus Dessau (1927–1929) and, like Ballmer, was influenced by Gropius, Meyer, Moholy-Nagy, Albers and Kandinsky. Bill's main area of study was architecture. From 1931 onwards, he worked with the concepts of 'Art Concret' and adopted the 'Manifesto of Art Concret' in all of his work across all disciplines. Absolute clarity was to execute a structured design that had no meaning. As Meggs (1999, p.333) elaborates, this presents difficulty in GD work. Creating something that uses pure forms with no meaning is not GD. With GD, the purpose is always to convey meaning: 'Graphic design without symbolic or semantic meaning ceases to be a graphic communication and becomes fine art' (ibid.). However, the use of the grid, particularly in Swiss typography, is seen to be fundamental to the graphic design visual language (Hollis, 2006). During the

Second World War, Bill moved to Switzerland, evolving his purist approach to GD and semiotics. His contribution to the curriculum and building of the Hochschule für Gestaltung (Institute of Design) in Ulm, Germany came to pass in the 1950s. This school was a real attempt to establish a 'centre of research and training at higher level' to address the design problems of the era with educational goals similar to the Bauhaus Dessau (Meggs, 1999, p.334). This I will address later in Chapter 3. However, the teaching of scientific and mathematical problem-solving techniques coupled with semiotic theory at Ulm was to become a teaching paradigm, which is still referenced today in Irish Design HEIs. As Eskilson (2007, p.298) comments: 'The professors at Ulm attempted to establish a credible academic theory for their design practice' and, in doing so, based it on signifiers and type.

Semiotics has three branches: semantics, the study of the meaning of signs and symbols; syntactics, the study of how signs and symbols are connected and ordered into a structural whole; and pragmatics, the study of the relation of signs and symbols to their users. ...Principles of Greek rhetoric were re-examined for application to design (Meggs, 1999, p.334).

Hall (2007, p.5) elaborates 'semiotics, then, is about the tools, processes and contexts we have for creating, interpreting and understanding meaning in a variety of different ways.'

The definition of GD as given by Aynsley (2004) only allows for the action or the outcome, the aspect of 'graphic' as opposed to 'design'. If we look at the broader meaning of 'design', it allows for aesthetics and semiotics to be included in the wider debate of 'design thinking'. This term will be defined in more detail later in the chapter, but essentially, it refers to a series of processes that facilitate creative problem-solving (Koberg and Bagnall, 1972; Rowe, 1987).

To understand the meaning of design is...to understand the part form and content play...and to realize that design is also commentary, opinion, a point of view, and social responsibility. To design is more than simply to assemble, to order, or even to edit; it is to add value and meaning, to illuminate, to simplify, to clarify, to modify, to dignify, to dramatize, to persuade, and perhaps to amuse (Samara, 2007, p.6-7).

Interestingly, when this is applied to graphics, there are points of conflict or inconsistencies that are difficult to join together. As a mode of communication, graphics can be interpreted at different levels; some with a direct desire to sell to an audience rather than inform. I will comment on GD and how it is positioned in the workplace later in this chapter. It may be viewed as a 'cousin' of the advertising industry, according to Samara (2007):

'...both of which were born from the tumultuous period of the Industrial Revolution of the late 1700s and early 1800s...they share a goal and that is to inform the public about goods, services, events, or ideas that someone believes will be important to them' (ibid., 2007, p.6).

He adds that the purpose of advertising is fundamentally about getting a consumer/audience to part with money by creatively 'cajoling' the public. The role of the graphic designer is to seek to inform or clarify the message. Samara does identify that advertising uses GD as a tool to help sell products, goods and services, but at its core, graphic designers are 'designing messages'. The other aspect that the two 'first cousins' share is that they create artefacts with a purpose, which is 'defined by a client and manifested by a designer, rather than a purpose generated from within the designer' (ibid., 2007, p.6).

2.2.3 Visual (Language) Communication – A Working Definition

The interactions in the VC/GD world are communicated via a visual language, which uses subsets of semiotics, visual aesthetics and typography to engage and encourage responses and participation. These visual experiences are not unlike a verbal language that uses a visual set of elements or visual forms, as Katherine McCoy comments (Samara):

I am convinced that abstract form, imagery, colour, texture and material convey meaning equal to or greater than words (Samara, 2007, p.31).

The first of the human senses to interact with all of this design material is sight; as John Berger notes, 'Seeing comes before words' (1972/2008, p.1). The way we see things provides us with a collection of images, corresponding messages and a visual database. It

is this collection of visual information and other gathered knowledge that drives people to have opinions and ideas, encourages creativity in the arts and fosters design and innovation. Yet as Berger points out:

We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach – though not necessarily within arm's reach...We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are (Berger, 2008, p.1).

The way we see things is also a way of not seeing things because we select and place a personal value on things, which can range from monetary, to intellectual, to aesthetic. The very act of this selection and indeed the absence of things in this selection process are worth noting. But what value can people place on the visual world they see? It is an alignment of 'identity' with the real environment people inhabit, with lifestyle aspirations and materialistic structures that are continually changing.

Experiencing the environment is, of course, a process that continues throughout life; it's the very stuff of life. It is a process that is shaped by culture, influenced by language, impacted by beliefs, affected by values, and moderated by the distinctive features of that part of ourselves we sometimes describe as our individuality (Eisner, 2002, p.1).

Roland Barthes (1977, p.79) touches on this aspect of experience and change when he states that there are so many 'narratives' or states of existence that they are 'numberless' or infinite. These human experiences that are real or imagined can be carried by 'articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all of these substances' (Ibid., 1977, p.79). This ongoing narrative that individuals engage with is collectively housed and fostered in our society and, in particular, in the education system at all levels of learning. The universities and IoTs are responsible for HE at UG and PG stages, with students across a plethora of discipline areas. The humanities, social sciences and creative and performing arts areas have disciplines that range from tragedy to comedy; myth to drama; painting to film; gaming to law; politics to religion; social science to design.

Design and Imagination

The way in which creative people develop their imagination is governed by a number of considerations. They include the values and the importance that a given society and time period have for particular forms of visual output such as the arts. An MA study, 'Irish Visual Design Education: An evaluation for a multi-media world' (Dowling, 2001) found that the motivation to be creative and achieve 'problem--solving and decision-making' thinking was helped by a good support structure or learning environment. However, most people, whatever their social circumstances, are visually aware and communicate using all of their five senses. Each of these senses underpin the experience of the sense of sight resulting in visual literacy; all are responsible for knowledge of the world. As Norman (2013, p.75) states:

Knowledge is both in the head and the world. Technically, knowledge can be in the head, because knowledge requires interpretation and understanding, but once the world's structures has been interpreted and understood, it counts as knowledge.

Therefore, VC can be viewed as a visual language with its own visual narrative, which can also be viewed as different types of representations (Eysenck & Keane, 1999) with a set of cognitive responses that are made in the mind. These representations can be divided into two main perspectives that use symbols. Traditionally, they are characterised as symbolic representations, i.e. 'where a symbol is a pattern stored in long-term memory which denotes or refers to something outside itself' (Vera & Simon, 1994), or a 'distributed representation' (Eysenck & Keane, 1999, p.204) which is a more detailed set of patterns that denote connectivity. Symbolic, mental representations can be subdivided again into two areas of study: 'analogical' and 'propositional' representations (Figure 2.4):

Propositional representations are more abstract than image-based; they appear as more language-like representations; they are meant to capture the conceptual content of situations and things (Ibid., 1999, p.204).

On the other hand, analogical representations denote images which contain visual patterns of information (Eysenck & Keane, Ibid.).

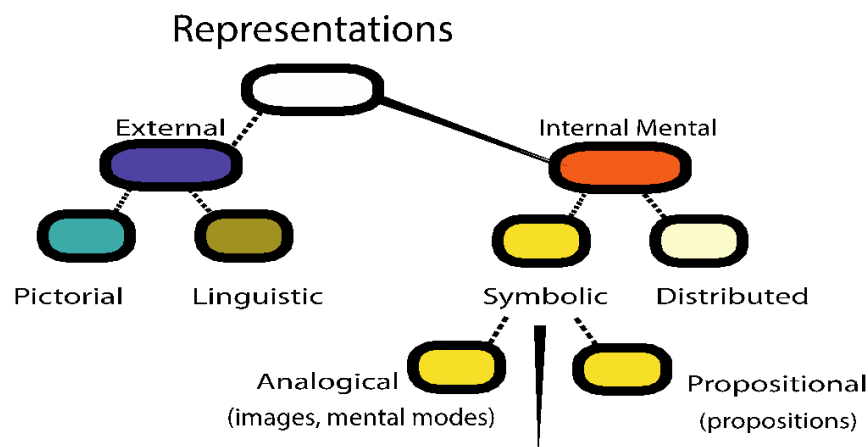


Figure 2.4: Representations of cognitive patterns of how the brain converts thoughts and thinking are depicted. The classic analogical representation is the visual image. The diagram framework is based on the outline from Eysenck & Keane (1999, p.204) (F. Dowling, 2016).

2.2.4 Design Thinking (Art and Design)

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the term ‘design thinking’ has become associated with interaction design/UX and graphic content for commercial design platforms. Design thinking presents a set of creative steps that can be used to develop an artefact or design a solution for a product or service.

The concept ‘design thinking’ commonly refers to the processes of ideation, research, prototyping and user interaction (Lupton, 2011, p.5).

The term became popular from the 1950s onwards with creative thinkers and authors like Alex F. Osborn (1888-1966) whose text *Applied Imagination* (1953/1979) and Edward de Bono (1933-) whose much acclaimed book *The Use of Lateral Thinking* (1967) both became popular in design/advertising circles. These books introduced a series of steps and exercises that helped ‘generate solutions, emphasizing design as a means for satisfying human needs’ (Lupton, 2011, p.5). ‘Design thinking’ can be defined as a ‘language’ of design (signifiers) and allows for the organisation of a series of stages and processes that

result in representations. In GD and VC, these are brought about through the interplay of concepts and ideas, which result in a progression of tangible outcomes. Kuhn (1970) considers the relationship between science and art that produces inventions as the 'cumulative discipline' (p.161). Historically, the goal of the artist was assumed to be one of representation, thus providing little difference between 'the sciences and the arts'.

According to Kuhn:

Leonardo was only one of many men who passed freely back and forth between fields that only later became categorically distinct...Furthermore, even after that steady exchange had ceased, the term 'art' continued to apply as much to technology and the crafts, which were also seen as progressive, as to painting and sculpture (Kuhn., 1970, pp.161-162).

This applied representation can be evaluated using scientific methodology. In 1926, a description of the stages of creativity via a definition was offered by Wallas (cited in Eysenck & Keane, p. 392). It is as follows:

- Identifying a problem and considering how best to solve it through a preliminary investigation;
- Being given a period of time or 'incubation' to work through the different tasks that would need to be employed to achieve a final solution;
- Developing an idea or concept from this preparation as a solution; and
- Reviewing the solution and verifying that it works.

An important distinction between art and design practice, which are often confused as being the same thing, is the motivation for the creative finished output. Design at its core provides a message that is client-driven with a set of requirements, which are based on a brief or a given set of deliverables:

...what differentiates graphic design from other disciplines in the visual arts is a purpose defined by a client and manifested by a designer, rather than a purpose generated from within the designer (Samara, 2007, pp.6- 7).

In the practice of art, the artist is self-motivated in their responses and in most cases not client driven. The current status of an artist participating in their art form is that it is

primarily subject to aesthetic criteria, however defined, as opposed to the goal of representation, and reliant on a patron:

The fine arts patron historically was often a client to the great painters, but, up until the nineteenth century, artistic creation was understood to be intrinsically a service industry. It wasn't until the 1830s that the mystique of the bohemian painter as "expresser of self" arose and, even more recently – since the mid-1970s – the idea of the graphic designer as "author" (Samara, 2007, pp.6-7).

This is not to say that there is no overlap in the theory and philosophy behind the main art movements of the twentieth century, but the responses and outcomes are very different.

The avant-garde movement had a major influence on GD after the First World War in Europe and North America. However, as Eskilson (2012, p.178) points out, the two 'major developments' after the First World War that would influence GD for decades to come were the Dutch De Stijl and the Russian Constructivism movement, the latter providing the revolutionary context, while De Stijl embraced modernism and a mixed relationship with 'the machine'. It is the Dutch De Stijl (a direct translation is 'the style' thinking) that the design industry is associated most with, as it embraces 'trends and culture' for representation purposes. Therefore, the national/global design industry is influenced by many conditions making the design industry one that is undergoing constant evolution. One that changes very quickly as it responds to clients, audiences and design trends, including ICT/digital platforms.

The application of 'design thinking' has taken over from the overuse of the word 'creativity' which is in general to a more specific set of design objectives for the VC/GD community. It has also given the design domain many more new participants and enlarged the design field because of these steps or guidelines. Design thinking therefore has become something of a 'buzzword' in a variety of occupations outside of the commercial design realm. Team building and collaborations and the use of problem-solving techniques beyond designers and graduates can be seen as a tool that helps non-designers to apply innovation and concept generation. The downside of this has been that 'design thinking'

can be overused and poorly understood. This is apparent in the case of marketing companies and the advertising world that present 'regular innovation' which has four stages 'ideate, define, design and develop' as the same as 'design thinking' which has five stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test to generate an application or solution (Plattner, 2010). There is a difference in understanding the 'end user' or 'target market' within the context of the design challenge. However, once design thinking is fully understood, problems become opportunities and the use of design thinking to create or invent a solution is the key to the activity. Carroll (Garner & Evans, 2012, p.28) suggests that the 'design thinking model' has been valued because one's failures are also seen as an indicator of success. The ability of a designer to have 'empathy' and consider the end user when presenting the artefact/prototype makes a good designer. Many of the social sciences have adopted 'problem-solving' to help explain phenomena in given disciplines and professional practices. However, McKay (2012) states that designers are not preoccupied with end solutions as they are, however, more concerned about:

...the dual process of understanding needs and responding through the creation of designs that use 'design thinking' because at the root of both is skilful thinking. The main objective therefore would appear to be about satisfying the 'need' behind the given situation or requirement (McKay, Garner & Evans, 2012, p.50).

The stages of design thinking (Berger, 2011) include: researching the problem, converting this need into the requirement, and then developing an idea or concept that will provide a finished solution. Therefore, there are a number of stages that in the end will produce a creative design representation in either a two-dimensional or a three-dimensional format. In the fine arts discipline, this is called an object or artefact. Design has also adopted this wording for research purposes.

Overview

The development of GD as a sector has evolved for commercial rather than artistic needs. It requires a labour force that has a particular set of creative attributes, thus demanding the designer to interact visually with imagination and innovation, while communicating with marketing and cultural references. There are given finished visual outputs which means that the end design solution is driven by intent and purpose. As a domain, it is fluid and difficult to navigate and it is inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary in nature. The GD/VC community is inclusive of clients and a wider support service network that informally support each other. It is an area that it is difficult to say has a united voice in Ireland and it is yet to be recognised as a profession like accountancy or engineering. There are no chartered designers or particular professional requirements to practice as a GD/VC designer in Ireland. The definitions of GD/VC, creativity, imagination and design thinking for visual representations have been provided to establish a basis for this study only. My early research indicated a lack of clarity around design identity as a field. This will be further commented on in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis in relation to data generation. The historical aspects of the design industry in Ireland will be briefly touched on in the next section. This is to establish the design sector in the context of Ireland as a growing commercial service sector. It elaborates on the early design relationships, the skills acquisition and current HE design providers.

2.3. Print Industry in Ireland

The commercial world of design in Ireland has a unique history in comparison to more developed industrial (and now post-industrial) centres such as the United Kingdom, Germany and France. Although with the advent of economic globalisation and technological changes, Ireland finds itself in the position of competing directly with much

larger economies. The GD/VC design industry has therefore responded with a young educated workforce. However, the journey to a modern digital sector has not happened overnight and it is one borne from a past that has dictated the role it plays in Irish society. This is in relation to operational activity and how it recruits and interacts with the training of new creative talent to the domain, e.g. design graduates. In order to evaluate the current literature in the field in an Irish context, it is important to consider the foundation of the sector, which is the print industry. The relationship between creative commercial design thinking, along with the training and education of new designers working in Irish design firms, is historically based on the Irish printing sector.

According to Vincent Kinane⁶ (1953-2000), who was considered to be the authority on the early print industry in Ireland, the printing industry arrived late to Ireland:

A century after Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the process in Mainz, it (the printing press) was introduced by the government for administrative and propaganda purposes...Until the 1640s there was never more than one press in operation in the country at any one time. The output was small – a handful of mostly official books and proclamations (Kinane, 2002, p.7).

In the world of GD/VC, early design for commercial practice was largely centered around printing and the printing press. The roots of GD are based in the print world but Ireland was not an entity in its own right but part of the UK, and much of its printing needs were therefore controlled and decided by the British government.

The biggest boost to the printing industry in Ireland happened in the nineteenth century with the growth of newspapers and magazines and periodicals. Books were still mainly being imported from the UK because of the controlling of publishing rights in the nineteenth century. Unlike the UK, Ireland had a limited industrial revolution with the north-east and parts of the south, particularly urban centres, experiencing expansion and

⁶ Vincent Kinane was educated at University College Dublin. On graduating in 1973, he joined the staff of Trinity College Library. He produced *Trinity Closet Press's* annual publications on an Alexandra hand press where he developed his interest in typography. In 1991, he succeeded W. E. Mackey as editor of the *Long Room* and with Anne Walsh, was instigator and joint editor of *Essays on the History of Trinity College Library, Dublin* published in 2000.

the resulting economic growth while the vast majority of the country relied on agriculture. However, by the 1820s, owing to railways and postage, better communication in Ireland also meant that people wanted to know about the world. According to Kinane, (2002, p.28) newspapers such as 'The Daily Express' in Dublin, the 'Munster News' in Limerick, the 'Waterford Mail' and the 'Ballina Herald' were established. The fact that Ireland was part of the UK also meant that new markets began to open up in the colonies. Irish printers now began to produce for the West Indies and South America. With more work and stability, the labour force increased and so did wages and indeed the newspapers began to form unions and demand more money and better working conditions. This expansion and confidence in the area meant that Ireland was doing well. Services needed to be advertised and while simple and not in any way what we now consider advertising to be, the development of advertisements for a local market and information design had begun. It was not a very glamorous area but one that was required and necessary. The struggle for independence and political freedom from the UK dominated the Irish political scene, particularly the 1916 Rising. A period of unrest was to continue up to and including the War of Independence (1919-21) and the Civil War (1922-23). Trade outside of Ireland was hampered by a tariff regime set up in the 1930s. Foster (1989, p.219) describes the period when 'economic stagnation and isolation fostered the cult of self-sufficiency without frills'. The tariff barriers were created to help build up the economy for a young Irish nation-state. However, in doing so, it also meant that 'modernity' was held back. The desire to kick-start a new nation and find a voice that was independent from the UK came at a price (Killeen, 2012; Foster, 1989). It brought about a self-imposed isolation, which already existed due to location and economic development and a population that had always looked outward to greener pastures. As Walker (2013, p.3) comments:

The Nordic countries were pioneers in adopting the welfare state model, while resistance to state intervention into many areas such as health and education continued in Ireland in the 1960s. The resistance was spearheaded by the Catholic Church which continued to hold a privileged position in the state. In contrast, the main religion in all Nordic countries

was Lutheran Protestantism, reflected perhaps in the minimalism and the functionality of their design.

The Catholic Church could not be held responsible for all things negative to modernity but it did hold a position on many aspects of Irish life, including literature and the creative arts. A country that did not have the advantages of other more independent and manufacturing orientated economies needed to quickly set up an infrastructure for a new nation-state out of a national necessity. In the need to have a visual identity, it embraced what was there and this explained the use of the national symbol, the harp, as a traditional instrument⁷. State interventions such as protectionism are far more difficult to explain in today's world. The Censorship of Publications Act (1929) meant that books and works from some of Ireland's literary giants, including James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, were on the 'black list' because their work was seen to be anti-Catholic or unsuitable for the moral and ethical welfare of Irish life. As Foster notes: 'The state's controls over cinema, reading, and contraception were not substantially relaxed until 1964, 1967, and 1979 respectively'. As Killeen further adds:

It was one of the great ironies of the new state that the one art form for which Ireland had a genuinely international reputation - literature in English - should have suffered so grievously at the hands of the new establishment. Ireland had a very sparse inheritance in fine art, in architecture whether public or domestic ...in public sculpture, in classical music (although rich in the folk tradition), in dance or in most of the higher arts. Its achievements in international scholarship were modest. But in literature, it had a world reputation and deserved it (2012, p.272).

The positive contribution that publishing in Ireland had around the time of the founding of the State therefore relied on the outpouring of the publications of the Irish language.

These included 'The Dundalgan Press' in Dundalk and An Gúm, the Irish State's imprint founded in 1926 [an insignia of the Department of Education](Kinane in Galavan, 2006, p.146).

⁷ An unknown priest in correspondence with Thomas Bodkin defended the harp as a national symbol for coinage in 1928 as having religious meaning. The harp representing the 'harp of David'; which in turn invoked psalms of 'Praise' for the earth and all living things (Caffrey, 2011, p.87).

Ó Conchubhair (2011) notes that Cumann na nGaedheal's initiation of Coiste na Leabhar (the Book Committee) – later to be known as 'An Gúm', was a landmark event and it would still be producing books *as Gaeilge* until the 1950s. In the early days, 'An Gúm' was viewed as a positive contribution to keeping the Irish language alive. Ó Conchubhair, notes that in the introduction to Rev. Mártan Ó Domhnaill's 1930s 'Oileáin Árann' (The Aran Islands), Tomás Bán Ó Concheanainn, Gaelic League *timire* (travelling teacher/organiser) wrote:

Níl agam acht aon fhocal amháin eile le rádh – agus sin é an focal is riachtanaighe: Teagann an leabhar breágh seo chugainn faoi sgáth agus faoi bhrat Aireachta an Oideachais, agus, toisg go dteagann, dearbhuigheann sin feabhas an leabhair dhúinn. [I have but one final word to say – and that is the most important word: This fine book comes to us with insignia of the Department of Education and that therefore ensures for us the book's excellence] (Ó Conchubhair in King & Sisson, 2011, p.95).

Unfortunately, the lack of quality Irish writers and contributors meant that translations of English books into Irish did nothing to contribute to the Irish culture or indeed design publishing in Ireland. As the authors of the *Design in Ireland* report observed some years later:

Irish printed books are generally of a low standard, which we found strange, as we have seen examples where the production was as good as anywhere else (1962, p.28).

Thus, the 'production' of Irish books was seen to be good, while the design aspect was deemed to be poor. Ó Conchubhair (2011) noted that between 1926-1964, 'An Gúm' produced 1,465 publications but that by the 1960s and 1970s, 'An Gúm' recognised that their publications were dated and more like textbooks than books that would be purchased for pleasure (p.98). The initiative by the State to foster a publishing industry was ironically advocated by the authors of the *Design in Ireland* report (1962) to raise the standard in design. However, they did view the requirement for employing trained designers with a more worldly approach and a more selective use of Irish traditional artwork. Ó Conchubhair (2011, pp.105-6) does add that there were some good examples of illustration and indeed typography of a traditional nature that allowed for a preservation of the Irish heritage. The craft and folk art, which had developed, from Irish traditions did

provide some of the inspiration for the advertisements and pamphlets that were produced for a local market. However, as the *Design in Ireland* report (1962) notes and Walker comments:

A 1924 article in the *Irish Statesman*, entitled 'Buying Irish Goods' complained that people had been urged to buy products for patriotic reasons 'not because they were good, but because they were Irish. All kinds of articles, which revolted us because of bad taste or inferior quality, were thrust upon us'. An unsigned article on 'The Arts and Industry' published in 1925 pointed out that the neglect of the visual arts in Ireland had had a deleterious effect on Irish industry, and that appeals to support native industries fell on deaf ears when the quality of design was poor (Walker, 2013, pp. 7-8).

Much of the creative printed mass production had no coherent voice let alone a design style. Design for the Irish market had come to the 1950s as a very inconsistent form of activity. It had not shared the expansion of the Victorian era as the other parts of the UK had, either in the 19th or indeed 20th century. It required time to develop a typographic and design journey in GD terms. This is not to say that everything from that era was not printed well nor had merit from the standpoint of a trade, but design was not taught as part of the training for an apprentice. The protective tariffs for the print industry did however encourage a very productive period for the printing sector in other ways:

Large printing houses were heavily dependent on government printing contracts. The imposition of import tariffs, increased to 75 percent on printed matter in 1933 during the Economic War with Britain, led to a boom in the printing industry. ...Unemployment lists were cleared and overtime was constantly being worked. There were large imports of printing machinery to cope with the demand (Kinane, 2002, p.34).

With the Second World War, the island had experienced a different sort of transformation as stated, the Free State had proactively remained isolated from the rest of Europe. Considering the post-war period Laffan and O'Mahony (2008) comment that the security question around neutrality which resulted in the isolation was not a 'security' policy:

...rather it was bound up with identity, values and the projection of a certain idea of Ireland's role in the world (Ibid, p.12).

Ireland did make some moves towards Europe as it emerged from the war as multilateral organisations formed. It became a founding member of the Organisation for European

Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the Council of Europe in the late 1940s. The OEEC was set up to distribute 'Marshall Aid'⁸ and according to Laffan and O'Mahony, it 'marked the first faint glimmer of economic cooperation among West European States' (2008, p. 12). The North, still part of Britain had enjoyed an economic revival, while the Republic had remained neutral with little contact with trade and expansion. Though as Murphy (2009) notes, economically Ireland emerged from the position of neutrality unscathed. It had not experienced the devastation in UK and Europe:

The extraordinary trading conditions engendered by the war meant that Ireland was exporting more than it imported, so by the time the conflict had ended, the country had built up large reserves of Sterling... Judged by its external assets and on the basis of population, Ireland was one of the wealthiest countries in the world (Murphy, 2009, p. 27).

The figures belied the reality of the Irish solution to economic difficulties, as in the past it relied on emigration which accounted for the population figures remaining low. It also did not account for the reliance on exports of agriculture to Britain. During the war years, Ireland had altered in a fundamental way. The numbers in agriculture had begun to fall. With isolation during the war years came the need for self-sufficiency with employment re-directed to more industrial and commercial activity, at least in the short term. The UK, as it re-established itself from the war, rapidly expanded accounting for the large numbers of Irish who left to take up positions building new roads and housing initiatives, together with nursing and medical staff required for the new National Health Service (Murphy, 2009, p.28). Ireland in the 1940s saw rising prices and an Irish population resenting the continuation of restrictions, including censorship, as stated, and more importantly rationing.⁹ The population had developed an appetite for change:

While escaping the devastation wrought in parts of Britain and continental Europe, Ireland after the war languished in stagnation, weariness and a yearning for the end to austerity. Emigration continued unabated and the high wages earned by the Irish emigrants in

⁸ Officially called the European Recovery Programme, (ERP) it was an American initiative to aid Western Europe in which the United States (US) gave \$13 billion in 1948 over a four year period to help with economic support to rebuild Western European economies after the Second World War (Murphy, 2009, pp. 50-51).

⁹ Bread rationing was introduced across Ireland and Britain in 1946-47 due to the terrible winter across both countries and the poor wheat harvest.

Britain fuelled not merely the state coffers but similar expectations among their compatriots at home (Chambers, 2015, p.70).

The economic fortunes of the Republic had to be addressed, together with a new approach to how it was perceived in a fast developing Europe. Under Sean Lemass¹⁰, the Taoiseach (1959-66) things did change with free trade:

The foundation of the economic miracle was the provision of inducements for foreign investors within a tightly balanced budget, as proposed by the orthodox secretary to the Department of Finance (T. K. Whitaker) (Foster, 1989, p.225).

The change was to reposition Ireland and present an outward looking perspective including trade, growth of economic markets and government policy. This strategy began to take shape between 1944-59 as Laffan and O'Mahony, state:

Ireland was an Ireland of urban and rural poverty, late marriage, high unemployment, emigration and high levels of disease¹¹... Ireland was classified as a less-developed country together with Greece, Iceland and Turkey in the 1957 OEEC negotiations on a European-wide free-trade area (2008, p.14).

In 1944 the *Beveridge Report*¹², a British white paper on employment policy, provided the two Irish civil servants Patrick Lynch¹³ and T. K. Whitaker¹⁴ with the inspiration for a change

¹⁰ Sean Lemass (1899-1971), was the Taoiseach (1959-66). Fought in the 1916 rising as a part-time volunteer. In the War of Independence that followed the civil war Lemass sided with the minority anti-Treaty side and entered politics. Lemass became Tánaiste and minister for industry and commerce in 1958 and presided over the economic policy 'First Programme for Economic Development'. Working closely with Dr. T.K. Whitaker, both men are credited with the development of the Modern Ireland, stimulating economic growth and a more outward-looking foreign policy, especially with regard to the then European Economic Community and also a normalising of relations with Northern Ireland' (Ferriter, (2004); Murtagh, (2013) Irish Times: Retrieved 30.10.17).

¹¹ A medical doctor educated in TCD, Dr Noël Browne (1915-1997), became Minister for Health in 1948-1951, in the Inter-Party Government and was credited with the eradication of tuberculosis (TB) in Ireland. The disease effected people from every social strata of Irish society during and after the Second World War. Brown, secured funding for the administering of drugs and vaccines (Mother and Child) together with education and building hospitals saving countless lives (Murphy, (2009) pp 505,520, 521,396,501-2 .

¹² A seminal document which identified the five evils in society; squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease which required reform. It provided the platform for the foundation of the welfare state adopted by the Irish state.

¹³ Patrick Lynch (1917-2001) Lecturer in economics in University College Dublin in 1953 later becoming professor of economics, directed attention to the quality of official advice and exhorted civil servants to 'recognise the necessity for revealing the quality of the thought that informs public policy. Worked closely as a civil servant to support Lemass and Whitaker to drive the Irish economy with a free trade ethos (Patrick Lynch, 'The economist and public policy; studies, vol.42, Autumn 1953, pp241-60; Murphy (2009) p.60).

¹⁴ Dr T. K. Whitaker (2016 – 2017), Economist and public servant, appointed Secretary of the Department of Finance in 1958 at the age of thirty-nine. Inspired the Programme for Economic Development, which together with Lemass, provided Ireland's regeneration in the 1960s. He played a hugely influential role in the economic, social, educational and cultural evolution of the state. In 1970 he became governor of the Central Bank and played a crucial role behind the scenes towards peace in Northern Ireland (Chambers, 2014).

in policy direction for Ireland. This economic expansion in Ireland was the key contributor to design requirements and to a 'value' being placed on a service that could enhance the manufacturing, agriculture or tourism sectors that Ireland had developed. The creative industries were a very important contributor to International trade, which was key for Ireland's economic success.

2.4. Irish State Intervention

The labour force in the print industry had fluctuated with economic highs and lows since the introduction of the printing press to Ireland in the 1640s¹⁵. The development of apprenticeships was well-established as Kinane notes that the printing trade could be traced back to the 1670s when the King's printer joined with 'cutlers and the painters-strainers to found the Guild of St. Luke the Evangelist Charter. The guilds and printing apprenticeships were considered to be well organised and highly regarded:

Boys started their seven-year apprenticeship in their early teens or even earlier. It was considered to be a very respectable trade and often the master charged a considerable premium, sometimes up to £100, before training began (Kinane, in Galavan, 2005, p.135).

The requirement for information, particularly as Ireland emerged from the Second World War with the Inter-party Government, allowed the print industry to hold its own with support from the State. The requirement for trained printers expanded even with the fall in population according to Killeen:

The population remained almost static from 1926 to 1951, showing only a small decrease. The 1950s, however, brought a demographic collapse. It is estimated that over 400,000 Irish people emigrated between 1951 and 1961, this from a population of less than three million! (2012, p. 273)

The exodus of such a large percentage of Irish people resulted in a very depressed time in Ireland. The importance of the economy and change in the Irish nation building came in the form of a pioneering document, which had been meticulously worked on by the Inter-

¹⁵ The first to appear was to the printer Thomas Bourke in Waterford in 1643. Much of the printing was for propaganda purposes for the warring factions of King, Parliament and Confederate Catholics (Kinane, in Galavan, 2006, p.129).

party government, with the vision of Lemass and the secretary of Finance and the Irish civil service. *Economic Development* came into being on the 22nd of November 1958 bearing an acknowledgement written by T. K. Whitaker, the appointed Secretary of Finance, and was considered to be the:

‘Magna Carta’ in the context of Irish official documents, over the decades following its publication *Economic Development* acquired an iconic status, both itself and for its principle scribe [T. K. Whitaker] (Chambers, 2014, p.143).

The blueprint for economic recovery was followed by the *Programme for Economic Expansion* in 1959 which, in essence was a redrafting of the first programme by Whitaker and Lemass. The greatest success of both of these documents was the participation of all departments and the government support at all levels to make the plan work.

Economic Development lowered the barriers that Ireland had erected around itself and allowed the Irish people to look at their country and themselves, not from some mystic, historically idealised vantage point, but from eye level (Chambers, 2014, p.146).

The seeds to success had been long sown with radical action which had seen an industrial relations framework take shape with the Industrial Relations Act of 1946, establishing the Irish Labour Court as a means to ‘co-ordinate the economy and its various interest groups’ (Murphy, 2009, p.43). The Trade Unions and their co-operation in bringing about a modern economy with a view to building a modern industrial future was all part of a well-considered approach to building a labour force. The biggest shake-up came in the form of trade and the desire for a bureau that would have the power to demand control over quality, price, methods of management, labour recruitment and training, materials used, marketing, overhead charges, capital structure and other matters’ (Murphy, 2009, p.44). On this it had to wait, but the founding of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) in 1949 was a step towards bringing a new vision which was outward looking. Promoting industry and developing the Irish manufacturing industry for the home and foreign markets was radical and had an uphill battle to contend with at the start:

While they accepted the need for a strong industrial arm for what was essentially an agricultural country, the main aim of such industrialists, it seems, was to provide employment and make a reasonable profit. Most businessmen of the time did not even know how to go about attempting to export. Few companies had staff able to communicate in a foreign language. The idea that Irish industry could compete with foreign companies was not even entertained and there was little sense of entrepreneurship. (Murphy, 1996, p.17)

The founding of Córas Tráchtála (Export Board) in 1952 marked a collaborative effort to really present Ireland as a nation state with an export board. The *Economic Development of 1958* was a five year plan that was supported by a detailed survey and analysis of the:

...principal constituent parts of the Irish economy, from agriculture to tourism, examining their deficiencies as well as their potential, and offering a proposal for the future remedial action. It assembled and laid bare before the political and public gaze the inadequacies endemic in the economic structure of the country (Chambers, 2014, p.138) .

The government documentation was noteworthy for:

jargon-free assessments, devoid of political trumpeting, its statement of priorities, not all of them popular, its setting of simple, modest, credible targets (T.K. Whitaker¹⁶, cited by Chambers, 2014, p.147).

Another report which would follow in April 1961, commissioned by Córas Tráchtála, offered equal measures of honesty and hope. The *Design in Ireland* report, (1962) popularly referred to as the Scandinavian Report, like the *Economic Development* Report (1958), was direct and to the point in terms of language. In October 1960, the Government passed the responsibility of standards for 'industrial design' to Córas Tráchtála. The term 'industrial design' was broad and involved all aspects of commercial design practice in industry, inclusive of craft and textiles of print; linen; woollen and woven cloth; poplin; Donegal tweeds; hand knitwear; handmade carpets; machine-made carpets and sisal carpets. Glassware; ceramics; metalwork and furniture were included alongside souvenirs and graphics. Packaging, stamps and coinage were all part of the export body's remit. The objective was to build confidence in 'brand Ireland' for the home market and, in particular, for export as the forward from the new report explained:

¹⁶ Speech by Whitaker: Capital Formation, Saving and Economic Progress' to Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, 25th May 1956, box 13, no.3 P.175, published in Administration, vol. 4, no. 2, Summer 1956.

Good design is an undeniable necessity to the growth of our export trade, but standards cannot be raised for export goods only...In confronting this many-headed assignment we felt that the first need for an audit of the existing situation,[was to seek] authorities and impartial assessment of where we now stand. Lacking such an assessment any measures we might attempt could be no better than random poultices applied with more hope than conviction (Design in Ireland, 1962, p. xi).

2.4.1 The Irish Design Miracle 1961-62

The radicalism of the new position the Irish state was taking with regard to exports and new economic markets cannot be understated. The *Design in Ireland* report, mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, provided a blueprint for design up to the present day. The influence it has had therefore warrants closer examination. The position that the Irish Export Board was starting from in 1960 and why they had decided it necessary to seek design expertise to best position Irish design as a commercial entity going forward was evident. At no stage had design been assessed as a commercial sector for Ireland. The framework of the *Economic Development* Report (1958), which had marked a change in Ireland's economic direction, was now applied in the State investment in design for services and goods. In much the same fashion the wording of a 'survey' was to be conducted on a national basis in 1961.

Our stay in Ireland was a brief one. Despite this, however, we were able to form quite specific impressions on the situation of design in Ireland, and the degree of importance which your society attaches to it. We were assisted in this by having received a most comprehensive briefing preparatory to our arrival, and also by the fact that we were working in our own fields and were able to bring our professional experience to bear on the problems we encountered (Design in Ireland, 1962, p.1).

The five architects and designers from Scandinavia came highly qualified for the task: Kaj Franck, was head of the design department of the Arabia ceramic factory and art director at the Finnish School of Industrial Design; Erik Herlow, architect and professor of Industrial Design, Royle Academy of Copenhagen; Äke Hultdt architect, designer and educationalist and manager of the Swedish design centre; Gunner Billmann Petersen, professor of industrial graphics and typography at the Royle Academy of Copenhagen and Erik Chr.

Sorensen, architect, department head of Royle Academy of Copenhagen and former teacher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). All provided representation of aspects of design when they came to Ireland. The two-week tour of Ireland was one that the five reviewers expected would result in a survey of the creative industries and support networks that existed in the Irish State. The foreword of the report provided by Córas Tráchtála stated:

No professional fees were accepted by the members of the Group on the grounds that they wished the assignment to be regarded as a contribution to the furtherance of improvement in design and as a gesture of goodwill towards our undertaking (Design in Ireland, 1962, p.xiii).

Providing their expertise and 'professionalism' free of charge to the Irish State also allowed the authors the opportunity to be brutally honest. Their findings were mixed but in the main not good as the 1962 *Design In Ireland* Report (hitherto to be referred by the authors names 'Franck et al') outlined from the outset:

We feel that the lack of creative and visual activity is paralleled by the fact that the Irish school child is exposed in a much lesser degree to drawing and the manipulation of materials than his[her] Scandinavian counterpart....In fact it would probably be true to say that without some reasonably developed form of art education in the various levels of school in Ireland, it will be impossible to produce the informed and appreciative public so necessary as a background to the creative artist. (Franck et al, 1962, p.1).

The importance placed on art and design education at an early stage of children's development, which encouraged creativity was a significant statement to make in 1961. It identified a gap in the primary and secondary school education to have a visual creative approach to underpinning imagination, craft and enterprise. The authors were careful not to promote the Scandinavian way of doing things as a way forward, but instead expressed the methods that could be used to establish the Irish design sector. Directly stating:

'We feel that the result of such an approach (imposing Scandinavian design principles) would be to kill what can be saved and what still exists of the original Irish values and culture' (Ibid p.2).

They also identified that design only for export would not work as it had to be 'established...on local demand rather than on export requirements' (Ibid p.2). The

traditional craft industry was deemed to interpret the best of Irish traditions. The Donegal tweeds and the handmade sweaters all used tradition in a way that was creative and skilled, providing a benchmark for outstanding quality. They did find 'many products which were badly designed and executed' of which they 'would not have the slightest chance of competing successfully on the world market' (Ibid p.3). In order to have a sustained design industry in the future, the education sector at HE would need to be addressed. The role of the designer in an Irish context was noted:

when [s]he existed, was regarded as a somewhat frivolous addition to the staff, rather than having the status of a key member of the management team (Ibid, 1961, p.3).

The question of the education of designers was discussed in terms of concern:

we encountered in Ireland the extraordinary situation of a multiplicity of art, architectural and craft schools, not one of which appeared to us capable of adequately satisfying the needs of the country in regard to design (Ibid, 1961, p.3).

Franck et al, admitted that the proposals would be dramatic, but 'isolated attacks on the problem will have little impact' indicating that a 'co-ordinated scheme for raising the standards in schools, buildings, factories, in education and in industry should be aimed at' (Ibid, 1961, p.4). The way forward was to identify 'valuable national characteristics' and from their visit that was what could be called tradition:

What has been handed down in Ireland and what has been accumulated from experience has today in Ireland two or three different manifestations. The most perceptible are the rural handicraft, the Georgian tradition, and the early Christian culture (Ibid, 1962, pp.5-6).

The group also considered the client that Irish designers would need to be catering for:

Ireland must of course pay attention to passing fashions, but as competition from countries with very big populations is too strong in the field of cheap goods, quality of craftsmanship and design becomes absolutely essential (Ibid, 1962, pp.9).

The study of original Irish culture was considered to be of great value so that the 'distinctively Irish Spirit' could be captured 'in the appraisal of forms which will be useful even when leaving the national traditions (Ibid, p.9).' Looking at textiles the recommendation was for 'experiment with new ideas and production methods' rather

than copying the production from other countries, which appeared to be happening widely. They expressed the desire to see furnishing fabrics developed so that the design industry:

Encourages young gifted designers who would have to be trained abroad. We should like to see the industry bringing in qualified consultant designers at board-room level and at the same time sending their young apprentice designers abroad for training (Ibid, 1962, P.13).

Everything from Donegal tweeds to hand and machine made carpets were commented on by the group and in most cases they suggested a review of the design work being promoted for commercial use. Waterford Crystal cut glass, a major success story on the luxury market since it had been re-launched in the 1950s, failed to impress:

Unfortunately the shapes are often not artistically satisfactory and even the copies are not true to the cultivated eye. The relationship between the shape and the decoration is sometimes an unhappy one (Ibid, 1962, p.18).

Ceramics did not fare much better, with the comments that where 'pattern of Irish origin have been employed they have been treated wrongly and do not fulfil their purpose of being expressions of Irish tradition' (Ibid, 1962, p.20). Whatever about these design sectors it was GD that presented the group with a broad sweep of existing printed material to evaluate.

2.4.2 Graphic Design Practice in Ireland

The positive feedback for the graphic design sector was a noteworthy exception in the report with:

The practicing graphic artist in Ireland is facilitated by the existence of a highly developed printing industry, which we learned is capable of producing technically good work... There are more artists employed in commercial art-work in Ireland than in any other field (Ibid, 1962, p.27).

The group expressed surprise at this and also the discovery that many of the designers they met were foreign and had been trained abroad. When they reviewed the art and design colleges they understood why 'we studied the educational facilities and found that an up-to-date education for graphic artists is not available' (Ibid, 1962, p.27). They went on to add that 'despite this, however, we saw some good work but generally speaking the standard was poor' (Ibid, 1962, p.27). The group evaluated the different branches of GD from graphic art [illustration], packaging, posters, advertisement, design, typography, etc., and the verdict was that GD 'suffered from the lack of trained designers' and 'perhaps also an unwillingness to utilize the talent available' (Ibid, 1962, p. 28). Packaging, stamps, Irish books and signage for shop-fronts all received attention from the group, with the observation that aspects of printing were to a high standard, as was signage outside Dublin, but on the whole there was a:

Lack of character and of a strong motif, bad lettering and ornamentation; these faults are to be found in profusion in Irish packaging...it was apparent that no research had been made into the design, deposition of colour or shape (Ibid, 1962, p. 29).

With the lack of adequate training for a designer in Ireland the best packaging was being done abroad and imported back to Ireland. The group did offer their vision for the Irish problem:

We would like to see Irish packages being produced free from unnecessary detail and with a balance between the different parts, colour, lettering and decoration, to make a whole and absolutely clean thing, in which elements foreign to the motif have not been introduced (Ibid, 1962, p.29).

According to the group, the Irish design industry required a focused approach to changing the Irish mind-set towards the discipline at all levels of perception. It meant raising standards of design inclusive of GD. Table 2.2 indicates the dialogue between the authors and the Irish State. Note Table 2.2 cites directly from the report (pp. 3-39) where possible.

Raising Standards of Design

Table 2.2. Developing The Design Sector Recommendations 1962		
	Suggestion	Recommendation
Irish State suggestion:	We heard talk when we were in Ireland of the desirability of establishing an Irish Design Centre...and Irish exhibition of design.	Scandinavian Response: Not to progress immediately. 'Both are good ideas, but must wait until the programme has begun to show results and a certain number of designers have been trained.'
Irish State suggestion:	Survey: General situation 1960	Scandinavian Response: This was considered and the invitation accepted with the group arriving in Ireland on the 1st April 1961 and touring Ireland for two weeks.
Scandinavian Group Suggestion:	The state should conduct a further survey on 'Man-made Ireland' – to carry out an audit of all products and services in design not unlike the Economic Development survey in 1956.	Scandinavian Recommendation: This should be done Immediately 'To trace the 'origin of what is good in Irish design and give a new meaning to the subject for those connected with it'.
Scandinavian Group Suggestion:	Department of Government play their part.	Scandinavian Recommendation: Immediately 'A percentage of the cost of public building projects might be devoted to the encouragement of Irish design and architecture'.
Scandinavian Group suggestion:	Documentation of design knowledge still connected with a survey for Ireland.	Scandinavian Recommendation: Immediately 'It would enable Irish men and women to gain a better understanding of their own traditions and form a point of contact for creative minds in Ireland'.
Scandinavian Group suggestion:	Activities, exhibitions, courses, competitions, etc., <i>should culminate in an Irish Design Year...</i> the best of the exhibits could ultimately form a travelling exhibition for America and Europe.	Scandinavian Recommendation: Not to progress immediately. 'future design activity' when the standard of design improves.

The solution from the authors would appear by today's standards to be standard practice, echoing the principles of good design practice. Table 2.2 indicates some of the aspects raised on both sides of the debate between the Irish State under the stewardship of Córas Tráchtála and the Scandinavian architects and designer specialists commissioned to

review the 'Irish design problem' in April 1961. One of the main suggestions that the Scandinavians made was that when design had improved and there were trained designers in Ireland, then it would be a fitting time to have a 'Year of Design.' This would mark the coming of age of the sector, however in 1961/62 this objective seemed to be one that would need to wait for a future time. The Year of Irish Design (ID15) came to pass in 2015 and will be discussed later in this chapter in the current context of design.

Table 2.2 The Report's Suggestions

The key areas that the authors advised were that the State take an active role in using Irish design and promoting design at all levels of education and, in doing so, support design knowledge and understanding in the media. In order to raise awareness in the general public, a number of steps would need to be taken to inspire and engage higher standards of creativity. Their observations and opinions as to how they might be addressed (as well as the direct language used) caused some upset when the report was made public. However, the main part of the remedy for the Irish design problem was that of the education of trained designers.

2.4.3 The Immediate Design Education Need in 1962

We think that it is impossible for Ireland to make progress in design without a radical change in the existing educational institutions and a new approach to the problems involved (Ibid, 1962, p. 40).

The two areas identified that needed to be addressed as a priority fall under education, at primary and secondary school levels with other long-term measures, and secondly the training of 'industrial designers' at HE.

Not very much has been done to train designers for industry but it might well be possible to train selected craftsmen, trades people and artists to be useful designers who could fill the gap for the next few years before any school activities could bear fruit (Ibid, 1962, p. 40).

The group added that this was not really ideal, that from their experience ‘painters and sculptors cannot easily adapt themselves to working with industry or industry with them’ (Ibid, 1962, p.41). In their opinion the answer was to look at architects and craftsmen as they would have the knowledge to apply ‘co-ordination and economic considerations’ with ‘form, colour and texture’ which was needed to apply to industry. This view was not based on talking to Irish architects and crafts people, rather it was ‘on general feelings for the problem at home than observations from our tour’ (Franck et al, 1962, p. 41). They predicted that Irish designers needed to be central to the production of the products they were designing for. The economics behind design was very explicit in tone:

Nobody from the group would argue for a moment over the role of the designer in industry in relation to the invested money; industry pays the piper and must have the selection of the tune, but it is plain bad business to let unguided commercialism take the leading role (Ibid, 1962 p.42).

The group hoped their suggestion of sending students to be trained in Scandinavian countries would result in trained designers in turn becoming crafts people and teachers. These now educated designers could work across a few factories rather than be placed in only one so more of industry would get the value of their skills. They also suggested that Irish HE be funded to broaden out the sector with summer schools of two to three weeks. This concept would seem to be more in keeping with Hunt et al (2011) than 1962 Ireland. The authors felt this would allow designers and crafts people to be exposed to lectures and discussions about design. Today designers would consider this to be design industry networking sessions or continued personal development (CPD). These seminars could also be available at weekends which ‘could be self-supporting through the entrance fees of the participants’ (Franck et al, 2016, p.44). A whole section was devoted to (Art) Schools and the design education at HE:

We feel that Ireland must be prepared to call in foreign teachers to the new design schools. The best teachers that can be found should be invited to come and plan the curricula and help organize the new institutions (Ibid, 1962, p.45) .

The methods of education, according to the Scandinavians, with regard to the National College of Art and Design (NCAD), were completely out of date. On the other hand Bolton Street (now part of DIT) was seen to have 'excellent technical equipment', but they also found that 'design ought not to be carried out there despite the fact that we found a well-run school' (Ibid, 1962, p.45). Allowing for the group's professional backgrounds in architecture, their interest in training was very specific and highly critical.

In Denmark and Sweden it is believed that the designer who is most able and who possesses the best foundation of knowledge is turned out in schools where [s]he is brought up with architects, or who has made a postgraduate study following his/[her] architectural course' (Franck et al, 1962, p. 46).

They strongly recommended that a new school was required 'free from unhelpful tradition' (Franck et al, 1962, p.47). Not unlike Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture in Finland, they recommended a 'one-stop-shop' that would cater for aspects of industrial design (the term 'industrial' meaning commercial design inclusive of graphics). This was based on the total population of the country, 'it appears reasonable to us that there should be only one school where all activities and research should be concentrated' (Ibid, 1962. p.47). These comments would seem remarkably close to the recommendations of the current State reports beginning with Hunt et al (2011) and the HEA (2012) that advocate a sharing of facilities at Irish HE due to the population size. The Technological University Bill, expected to become an Act in 2018, is proposed to address this very issue of IoTs merging in an effort to provide a more specialized range of disciplines across particular HEIs; with research centres of excellence only in disciplines that have a proven track record:

The National Strategy identified the need to move beyond a simplistic binary notion of a higher education system, towards a system of coherent, diverse, and well co-ordinated HEIs, capable of meeting the social and economic needs of the country. Such a system requires distinctiveness of missions at the institutional level, and diversity of mission at

system level. This means having a range of institutional types with clearly differentiated missions and clear strategic orientations (HEA, 2012, p.6).

This will be considered in more detail in relation to current issues in design in Chapter 3.

2.4.4 One Design School with Links to Industry

The reference to research from Franck et al in 1962 and the role of the design industry is also interesting in the current Irish HE climate, particularly from the University perspective. The University sector has a long history in the development of curricula that does not include industry as central to their teaching. The comment from the 1962 report 'we should also mention that any proposed school of this kind should work in close co-operation with industry' (Ibid, 1962. p.47) was radical for design teaching of the day. The Scandinavians went on to add that there was no quick foundation for design and that any attempt to speed up the training of a designer in Ireland would not work:

It is a very common phenomenon in architectural/design schools to find that the enlarged field of professional activity seems to tempt the school to cover as much ground as possible, with the unavoidable result of superficiality...Imagine the situation of having fourth-year students working in a few weeks on a complex problem like a civic centre or hospital (Ibid, 1962. p.47)

The reality of schools of architecture and, by extension, design losing touch with reality and the design industry that it was providing education for was uppermost in the group's mind. Table 2.3 provides a breakdown of the dilemma that presented in 1961/62 for the Irish Design School.

Table 2.3The Report's Findings – (Franck, et al 1962, pp .1-39).

Table 2.3 Design in Ireland Report 1962 Findings		
Irish Design Situation	Problem	Solution
Poor understanding and value of design with general public.	Feature of Irish life and culture has a distinct leaning towards literature.	Raise interest and begin to present design in the everyday experiences of the public.
Lack of creative and visual activity	Children not exposed to design experiences	Much less emphasis and importance placed on drawing and the manipulation of materials than Scandinavian counterparts. Address this in schools.
Early training for artists and designers in secondary schools.	General art education at an early age for the artist or artisan difficult to gauge.	Without some reasonably developed form of art education in the various levels of school in Ireland, it will be impossible to produce the informed appreciative public so necessary as a background to the creative artist.
Irish manufacturers while perhaps willing to experiment with new products are deterred from doing so by the existence of an unresponsive public.	Poor manufacturing standards which needs to be addressed by raising the public interest.	It is quite natural to use the ordinary channels of information: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, exhibitions in stores and museums, visiting exhibitions from abroad, etc. to inform society about design.
Poor design practice and design examples	Raise the standards by using all forms of media.	Specialists could be called in from other countries to give courses, make broadcasts, etc., and the newspapers could, in addition to featuring the various activities, publish weekly pages on different aspects of design.
The Irish design industry	Direct information and value of design not fully understood	A design library could be formed and the systematic translation of articles on design could be a service of great value to designers and the industry.
State support (1961)	No prior history of support for the sector.	We are suggesting the formation of a body, one of whose aims should be to promote public interest in matters of design.
No design associations/societies	Each Scandinavian country has a national Society for Arts, Crafts and Industrial Design, which exercises considerable influence. This does not exist in Ireland.	These organisations act as a sort of exchange for all the channels of communication in design, thus working for the benefit of all parties.
Public Irish museums	Different parts of the world hold instructive exhibitions periodically, or have permanent exhibitions concerning the problems of design and art.	We feel that as far as the Irish museums are concerned it would probably be better to wait for a couple of years before involving them in the responsibility of organising design exhibitions, etc.
Department stores	No organised design in stores	The department stores have a very important part to play in this work of arousing general design consciousness.
Competitions	No sponsorship of design competitions	Department stores sponsored design competitions.

The proposed 'Irish Design School' would expose the design students from the beginning to the value of ideas. The broad base from the start of their studies would:

- (i) give immediate nourishment to talent, (ii) discourage those without ability before valuable years are wasted and (iii) provide a core around which further study can have a natural growth (Franck, et al, 1962. p.48).

The clarity of the vision and the fresh approach in consolidating similar programmes of study in one place so that a critical mass can be provided to add to the stimulus of the 'knowledge' that is being nourished is good practice in any discipline. Developing links between HE and the design industry is also one that will be reviewed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. The Scandinavian report continually encouraged 'collaboration' so that 'all branches of the visual arts should have the opportunity to learn from each other' (Ibid, 1962 p. 49). The proposed Irish Design School if allowed to encourage free movement between the different departments of design such as crafts, industrial design, architecture and fine art would stimulate knowledge and create a space that would result in creative activity. The governing of this new design school would come under a collective authority which they suggested would be called the 'Institute of the Visual Arts'. This 'would ensure a fair representation of people and outlooks in Ireland' (p.55). The design societies would not function outside the Institute as they did in Scandinavia but within the Institute of Visual Arts as a committee. The numbers of students graduating from this new HEI was envisaged to be between five and ten students annually who would have a specialised knowledge of industrial design. The group concluded that this new body which would bring about the new Design School was necessary because:

- no existing organization or association in Ireland could cope with the problems involved in the development of design in Ireland (Ibid, 1962, p.55).

The new body never materialised in Ireland and consequently design societies developed in the same manner as the Scandinavian countries independently. Other factors such as the low numbers envisaged by the group attending this Design School/HEI across all the

industrial design areas particularly in the knowledge economy of today, does not have any bearing on present HEI design requirements. However, the current desire in 2018 to pass the Technological Universities Bill on the part of the Irish State to promote clusters and to encourage mergers and create new HEIs as 'centres of excellence' is very close (Hunt et al; HEA, 2012). The desire to develop these Technological Universities (TU) that address both local and national industry needs will be considered in more detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis from a HE perspective.

2.4.5 A New Beginning

During the summer of 1960 when the *Design in Ireland* report was being given the green light to be commissioned and the new *Economic Development* reports of 1956/7 had been received with a measure of Irish support, another factor was changing the Irish landscape. The special relationship between Ireland and the UK had introduced the prospect of Irish entry to the European Common Market, June 1961.

The British decision to apply for membership of the EEC in 1961 was hugely important in this regard: it both forced Ireland to apply but also made it very dependent on Britain, because without British goodwill, Ireland could not hope to gain any type of entry. More fundamentally, it oriented policy in a much more external way than had previously been the case, as Irish entry into the EEC became the overriding aim of the Government's economic policy (Murphy, 2007, p. 306).

The desire for new trading markets integrated Ireland into the wider world economically, but also politically. The commitment to trade and economic expansion driven by the post-war years as Murphy, (2009) comments led to 'the search for a promised land'. One of the main realizations to creating that new land was 'engaged citizenship' and leadership (p.308). Design was now required to set standards and present Ireland's new direction. The Scandinavian report from 1962 was a seminal document for design engagement and it provided that leadership and engagement strategy.

2.4.6 Design as an Industry in Ireland in the 1970s and 80s

In the Sixties and Seventies, the Irish State by way of leadership began marketing Ireland via tourism and the new Kilkenny Design Workshops (KDW) to a growing Continental and North American market (Clark, 2002; King and Sisson, 2011). By 1970 KDW, founded in April 1963, was according to Moran, in King and Sisson, (2011, p.191) seen to be important for 'economic advancement'. Moran (2011) adds that the then Minister for Industry and Commerce, J.P. Lalor proclaimed that:

design is inextricably linked with Ireland's welfare and her economic development, now and in the future. Already, over the past ten years, progress in the design field has played a significant role in the country's progress generally.

The speech also included a reference to a broader consideration in a national context:

But I do recognise, too, the influence design can exercise on the whole form and quality of Irish life. We, all of us, cherish high aspirations for our country. These cannot be realised without a substantial contribution from design and, in particular, from trained, professional Irish designers (Ibid, 2011, p. 191).

As Irish people travelled abroad for holidays, as well as for economic reasons, they brought with them a desire and appetite for quality design, from clothing to products. This was helped by the medium of TV with Teilifís Éireann (TÉ) going on air in January, 1961. The national airline, Aer Lingus, through its publication, *Cara* magazine, promoted 'brand Ireland' with 'traditional' well-designed products and services to an international clientele. Attitudes to design changed with crafts (e.g. weaving) which Ireland had excelled in, becoming even more high-end and seen to be products for a niche market. Much of this success was due to the role the State played in promoting a more united image of a more progressive Ireland. The most important single decision was to establish KDW. The craft and design workshops/studios were based in Kilkenny, with retail outlets both in the Kilkenny Castle stables and in Dublin. The various aspects of design and craft created a fusion of traditional yet contemporary design which was to mould the new creative image and Celtic/literary identity of Ireland. It addressed the *Design in Ireland* report which had as

stated recommended the desirability of developing a national design style:

all elements of Irish society will have a part to play – the Government, educationalists, manufacturers, architects and designers, department stores and the organs of publicity, the press, radio and television' (Franck et al, 1962, p.36).

As Walker, (2013) comments, the Irish Government was placed in a position of responsibility to provide leadership by 'raising design standards in areas within their remit' that government departments as 'an organ of the State, can influence all of Irish Society' (p. 4).

Irish Woman behind signage (1967)



Shop Window Sign (1967)



Train Timetable (1969)



Kilkenny Design Shop (1986)



Oisín Kelly (1966) Irish sculptor



Kilkenny Design Workshop (1966)



RTE Television Centre (2010)

Kilkenny Design Centre (1983)



Image 2.1: Images from the 1960s to the 1980s early advertising with Oisín Kelly and the Irish Harp as a national symbol and identity; Kilkenny Design and RTE .

It went further by developing a rural creative hub, which acted as a support for all of the design related disciplines. The vision that William H. Walsh had in its early evolution of selling crafts, furniture, homewear, fashion and of promoting all things Irish was radical but not new, as it was based on the Danish model that had proved to be very successful in the fifties. A new visual beginning for a new modern Irish State had been established. This went far beyond the national commercial aspirations of educating Irish people to be more aesthetically aware and to buy Irish. Its aim was to grow and educate people abroad and introduce the many quality crafts and design related products, which reflected a new quality in all things Irish. As Moran, in her essay *Tradition in the Service of Modernity: Kilkenny Design Workshops (KDW)*, selling Irish design at American department stores and promotions, between 1967-1976', informs:

In their mission to raise design awareness in Ireland, KDW used a variety of methods. Designers who worked in the area of graphic design, most notably Damien Harrington and Tony O'Hanlon, designed pamphlets, posters and signage for state-organised cultural events, many of which travelled abroad, including those for 'Sense of Ireland' festival (1980).' KDW also organized promotional exhibitions which were displayed in their shop in Kilkenny and in the specially allocated exhibition space in their shop on Nassau Street, Dublin (Moran, 2011; King and Sisson, p. 196,).

Córas Tráchtála had developed a method of bringing Ireland with its design to department stores in the US in general in the late sixties, but nothing like the display and 'pomp' that came to Dallas, Texas. Called simply 'Theatre in the Store' on display for a fortnight at the Neiman-Marcus department store, it was the last word in style at the time.

Having visited the Design Workshops and the shop at Kilkenny, Alexander and Colt (the sales team from Neiman-Marcus) decided that they would re-create the Kilkenny shop on the second floor of the Texas department store and the white shelving, red tiles and ambience of the Kilkenny shop was noted and reproduced as closely as possible....The level of attention paid to the reproduction of the Kilkenny shop was consistent throughout the entire store. Customers were invited to 'tour Ireland at Neiman-Marcus'. (Moran, 2011: King and Sisson, p. 203).

There were no 'pigs in the parlour', no red haired children, nor any of the former images of Ireland displayed; only a modern well-designed and crafted representation of the country.

2.4.7 The GD/VC Relationship with Design Education 1973

Ireland finally joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, which brought about new challenges and new markets again for 'brand Ireland'. It is important to make a distinction between an Irish national identity that a designer creates, and an emerging design industry that has commercial characteristics that offer financial value. However, as the Irish economy was growing and developing so too was the requirement for designers for marketing purposes. This occurred predominately in the agricultural sector, Ireland did not have a large manufacturing industry. There was a growing need to package products to a high standard beyond the home market. A sense of being 'Irish' and 'proud' was now gaining public support. The Irish had an identity for a nation state that could travel and that people could identify with, i.e., the harp as a national symbol borrowed from past traditions and the Guinness brewing family. At the same time there was a need for GD/VC to have high creative standards with strong design thinking principles aligned to it for national and international markets. However, not all things that the *Design in Ireland* report (1962) had suggested were coming to pass, e.g., primary and secondary education had still not integrated design practice as part of the art curriculum. It was not until the 1970s that reform in accordance with the education recommendations of the *Design in Ireland* report was really underway. The knock-on effect of this started to show in the economy from the 1980s onwards with HE programmes of design.

Through the KDW, the State ran competitions for students and offered placements as part of an ongoing practice for all of the design courses offered (Appendix I, 2). In GD/VC this was mainly limited to COMAD (College of Marketing and Design) now DIT; NCAD in Dublin; Crawford College of Art and Design in Cork and the National Institute of Higher Education Limerick (now LIT). This recognition of student design achievements made much 'headway'

in establishing a standard of design for entry to the GD industry, and raised the profile of design as standard practice. The RTÉ audio file from the 1980s presents a very real outcome of the standards of design education as recorded in the media:

Morning Ireland 17.7.1985:

the Minister of State at the Dept. of Industry, Commerce and Tourism as part of the **Kilkenny Design** Awards. David Hanly talks to 2 of the winners about their awards - KATRIONA BRESLIN and ANNE ROGERS and about their background in design. Reference is made to the need for better facilities in Ireland (RTE, Archives Appendix I (2.)

By 1988, the then government decided that they no longer needed to support the sector via KDW. The reality was that it was a drain on resources on a country that once again was experiencing high unemployment and economic difficulties. The exchequer bill needed to bankroll it and the State sold it as a going concern to the private sector. As an audio file from RTÉ elaborates ...

News at 6.30 3.6.1988:

The Government is to give Kilkenny Design Workshops an extra quarter of a million pounds to allow the company to continue trading until its shops in Dublin and Kilkenny are sold. The company's design function will continue. Fine Gael's Mr Kieran Crotty and Mr Seamus Patterson of Labour called on the sale of the Kilkenny Design shops not to go ahead at this stage. The Minister Albert Reynolds ruled out any extra money for the KDW (RTE, Archives, Appendix I, 2).

It was the end of an era; a growth period for design awareness from 1961-1988 had come to an end. Even if it was time to review how design in Ireland could best be served, and with the growing desire by the State for it to be self-sufficient, design as an industry still needed support. The decision to have a less visible statement about design and creativity in the country was a setback with serious consequences that came at a cost not only to the design and advertising Irish sector, but to the 'State coffers' in the long run. The development of design as a going concern was limited during the 1980s and early 1990s to the advertising agencies and the small 'bread and butter jobs' that Irish design consultancies created for Irish SMEs. When the UK and other countries put more capital into their State sponsored 'Design Councils', Ireland withdrew. The British Design Council,

set up in 1944, has remained a leading supporter of UK design industries to the present day evolving 'new approaches to design for the economy as a sector to perform as a profession' (British Design Council, retrieved, October 2017). The Danish Design Centre was established in 1977 - both state agencies support the design sector through direct state intervention. Lucrative and prestigious creative accounts in the main Irish State and Government contracts went to the UK. An example of this was Bord Fáilte (now Fáilte Ireland) and Allied Irish Bank (AIB) who employed the British designer 'Wally Olins' (1930-2014)¹⁷ in the late 1980s for corporate re-branding. Both of these entities enjoyed Irish State investment; this plus the lack of confidence in the design sector to generate branding of national importance was concerning. Bord Fáilte changed their design and worked with an Irish design firm in the short term. AIB held the logo unchanged for the next twenty-six years until the digital age required a new update and roll-out in 2017. However in 1988:

a corporate advertising campaign was launched... a corporate identity project then addressed the question of how the bank looked. The items were a change of name from Allied Irish Bank to AIB, an abbreviation that would prefix the group and its operating parts. The second area was visual identity and the introduction of a new corporate logo...that embraced a new name, a new corporate symbol and new colours (Derby and Oram, 2000, p.16)

By 1999, the *Opportunities in Design – Strategies for Growth in the Irish Design Sector* report, produced for Enterprise Ireland by PricewaterhouseCoopers & Bradley McGurk, provided a design management strategy – one of the design missing links echoed by the *Design In Ireland* (1962) Report. The 1999 report talked about 'design added value' and quoted Tony Blair, the then British Prime Minister, in the opening Introduction:

"good design is not simply about aesthetics or making a product easier to use. It is a central part of the business process, adding value to products, and creating new markets" (PricewaterhouseCoopers & Bradley McGurk, 1999, p.5).

The report added that the role of design was to:

¹⁷ Co-founded Wolff Ollins and Saffron Brand Consultants while building an international reputation for branding and writing on graphic design.

- Optimise differentiation according to corporate strategy;
- Identify and profitably satisfy, existing and emerging user needs and preferences and to maximize added-value, and
- Make the 'product position' visible, understandable and desirable.

It concluded with a statement:

The critical challenge facing designers and managers of innovative organisations is to develop the competence, capability and creativity to: intelligently question and challenge conventional practices and assumptions; amplify and incite signals of change; and conceptualise and embody information in innovation and appropriate forms. (Ibid, 1999, p.5)

Design was now positioned to take a leading role in a new Irish millennium. There were two factors that delayed this: 1) development of virtual platforms and new technology, particularly the internet which had seen unprecedented growth in the late 1990s, were followed by an economic slump in 2001 across the design sector with the dot.com crash. 2.) The economic slow-down globally in 2008 badly affected Ireland and delayed the design position until 2015. Then finally, yet another important recommendation from the *Design in Ireland* (1962) report came to pass some fifty-three years after it was written:

an exhibition of the best Irish-designed products, *[although we feel that such an exhibition, like the other proposals concerning the promotion of Irish design, should not be inaugurated until the programme is well under way]* and there is an appreciable improvement in Irish design standards... All these activities, exhibitions, courses, competitions, etc. should culminate in an Irish Design Year. (Ibid, 1962, p.38)

Irish Design 2015 (ID15) was convened, by DCCol, as a year to explore, promote and celebrate Irish design and designers. It was fully supported by the Irish State (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the DJEI and Enterprise Ireland). The design programme offered over the year included a Design Hub based in Dublin Castle with design workshops, exhibitions, seminars and school visits:

[...] our school programme is designed to build skills, develop competencies and support creative learning for teachers and their students, but most importantly, it gives students the chance to use their imagination. (ID15, DL, promotion 2015)

Addressing design education at primary, secondary and higher education was on the agenda and focused at the general public.

2.4.8 Present Day Status 2015-2018

The Design Council in the UK provides support for all aspects of design related industries. The figure of £71.7bn (Design Council UK, retrieved October, 2017) is estimated to be the figure that the design sector is presently contributing to the UK economy, up to and including 2015. The report *Design Economy – The value of design to the UK* (2015) indicates that 'approximately 580,000 people are directly employed in the UK's design industries, while a further 1 million designers work across the economy in non-design industries'. This makes the design economy equivalent to the 'ninth biggest employer in the UK'. The population and the manufacturing tradition in the UK could explain the figure. In 2015, the Irish State allocated funding of €5 million for ID15, (Irish Design 2015). An additional €500,000 was spent in 2014 on preparatory work (KildareStreet.com/Dáil Debates, retrieved November 5th, 2015 Appendix L) a small investment for the sector though welcome. Minister Richard Bruton's statement concerning the design sector offered very solid figures for the State investment, which was a very important contribution to the Irish State in 2015. The Global Irish Economic Forum's (Appendix J) proposal to designate a year to celebrate Irish Design was a recognition of the value of Irish design and a coming of age. It provided the design sector, with an opportunity to be a catalyst for economic development, with a contribution by the government's economic recovery plan from the banking crisis of 2008. The change of name of the Crafts Council of Ireland to include Design has had a mixed reception in the GD world, both in industry and HE. The Design Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol), newly named in 2013, (Appendix G) has the responsibility to promote design and liaison with the greater design sector.

The amendment of our trading name to the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) during 2013 has allowed us to more accurately reflect and formally acknowledge our existing remit which includes supporting and promoting Irish craft and product-related design enterprises. We believe that this strategic development will ultimately assist in growing domestic and international sales.(DCCol, 2013, p.2)

This change of name to include 'Design' in the former 'Craft Council of Ireland' could appear from the Chief Executive, Karen Hennessy's, comments to be one of convenience. However, the process of the name change has been one that has evolved over some years as documented in the 2013 DCCOI annual report in their strategic plan 2013-2015 (p.7). The contribution that professional practice across all design disciplines has been making, has been evaluated for ID 2015, in Harvey's (2016). A workshop for a very elite group of stakeholders from industry and HE was convened in November 2015 at the ID 2015 office, with a short paper ensuing entitled "An Overview of a Design Workshop on 'Design in Ireland'" by Con Kennedy for the DJEI and ID 2015. The three-part series *Designing Ireland*, also supported by ID 2015, and other sponsorship for RTÉ has provided a general viewing public with a historical and cultural backdrop across many design related disciplines. Airing in November 2015 for the first time, it has presented a more mature and respected creative domain that provides an economic contribution to the State, rather than the other way around.

It considers how centuries of migration, invasion and colonisation have resulted in a constant ebb and flow of design influence from abroad (RTE Player, Season 2, Episode 1 Retrieved November 12th 2015).

There has been strong resistance to the former 'Crafts Council' now 'Design and Crafts Council' being given the authority to represent the design industry, as the remit of craft and mass production do not sit side-by-side in other countries. The Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI) expressed concern that the then Craft Council of Ireland (CCOI) as it was in 2011 should not have the remit to represent all the design sector. The main function was to represent craft. The President of the IDI stated in an email to the membership in the same year that the then CCOI had 'confirmed that they do not have a broader long-term strategy in this regard' (Appendix 1). However, allowing for the unique history of Irish design beginning with Franck, et al in 1962 and the establishment of the design sector being based on the tradition of good standards of craft, the DCCOI is not without

foundation. This has provided a solid argument for the State decision to fuse craft and design sectors together. Placing design with craft was perceived not a weakness but a strength and allows for continuation and a traditional Irish identity with a contemporary twist. For a small Nation State, a unified and larger presence gives the design sector a history that is established over decades and that has never been fully realised. This position will be challenged in proceeding chapters of this thesis.

2.5. Design Industry and Client Relationship

The client and the design market that design work is aimed at is very fluid and would appear to be coinciding with the increased use of digital technology in GD/VC. Ireland has been embracing digital technology in design since the 1990s and early 2000s, with the use of MAC and PC as everyday tools in the GD domain. Irish commercial creativity and designing have adapted to a design sector, which had been revolutionized worldwide. The 1990s was a significant time with the growth of design consultancies and advertising, together with the multimedia and the internet. Where Ireland was seen to be late in coming to the world of 'good practices in design' Franck, et al (1962), it has caught up with the digital age. Irish designers are expected to be on a more equal footing with web and virtual platforms that present an international setting for design without the need to travel. That has presented some issues for HE and training.

The design world, has had to contend with new platforms of design such as web, gaming, mobile devices and the technological implications for design. Even the developing countries cannot ignore ICT developments as Browne, United Nations Development Programme Director elaborates:

The digital divide: Provide access to all global knowledge systems. Developed and developing worlds alike will use the tools, become empowered, and get connected to the global network. Browne, cited in Mau and Leonard, 2004, p.223)

This has included both software and hardware issues. Design has become invisible for the most part unless it fails to work or is not in tune with the culture, religion, politics or local needs. In Mau and Leonard (2004), the changes that are happening are building a global mind-set:

The most profound impact of information technology has been to transfer the potential of the scientific method - the ever-expanding accumulation of knowledge - to the cultural sphere. Internet protocols allowed us to link any two computers, enabling an explosive global network of networks. Emerging grid protocols for distributed computing allow us to link everything else - database, simulation and visualization tools, and the unused computing power of machines - generating a worldwide cultural accumulation beyond imagination, available to anyone, anywhere (Ibid, 2004, p 87).

The relationship that designers have with clients and GD/VC is one that is very hard to evaluate as no real study has been carried out as yet in the Republic. The most recent research carried out has been by Con Kennedy as stated above, who has reviewed the economic value that design has brought to the GD/VC areas in an Irish context via the Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI) survey and in the report 'Profile of Business in the Traditional Design Sectors' for the DJEI, and the workshop seminar for DJEI and ID 2015. Other design and advertising societies such as ICAD and IAPI have also carried out questionnaires with their membership. Marketing for design is included as part of many GD/VC programmes, and the development of social media is one that is very important to the advertising industry as it adapts to new audience demands. The target audience, for which the design sector once had a tried and trusted set of problem-solving creative tools to employ, has expanded to rethinking how the markets are developing, and to the inclusion of design thinking and interactive design (IX).

A shift in the way designers interact with clients, so that things are more fluid and responses are quicker, has come about through social media and the internet as VanderLans a graphic designer for Émigré explains:

I really like how PDF format has become the standard for transferring and sharing design files. It has made work flow so much more efficient. And of course, as a type foundry, I'm thrilled by the notion that the format allows people to send and share files without sending

and sharing the actual font files (cited in Plazm, 2005, p.145).

The fact that instead of fewer media outlets, there appears to be more with digital technology advancements, is perhaps something of a surprise; although areas such as editorial/newspapers would appear to have become more online, with blogs and portals, rather than print. Sustainability design issues have also changed the way in which the relationship with clients is being reinvented. As the target audiences have become members of a global society, which demands accountability for sustainable materials, so the designer and design studio are now expected to build intelligence into all media and matter so that it functions seamlessly with the world around it:

Material has traditionally been something to which design is applied. New methods in nanotechnology have rendered material as the object of design development. Instead of designing a thing, we design a designing thing. In the process, we have created superhero materials and collapsed the age-old boundary between the image and the object, rendering mutable the object itself (Mau and Leonard, 2004, p141).

The area of branding and information design would appear to be the most recognised areas of creativity for GD/VC. The use of platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, blogs such as Tumblr, Behance and Wordpress allow anyone to put up a digital identity. Perhaps the biggest design changes are that now more people can engage with this digital culture rather than face-to-face. This availability for images and content to be accessed in 'quicktime' or streamed to a global online market has meant that clients' expectations of GD/VC is adapting to the new platforms which seem to be exploding, particularly for a young app-driven market. A survey conducted by the Design Business Ireland association found:

Not all clients understand the design process or the value and depth of a good design solution that springs from a professional client-designer relationship. Good graphic design is not about style or fashion, it's about communication. Design has to achieve results and design effectiveness is what clients need and expect. The commercial value of design is based on the potential of design to act as a driver of competitive advantage. Such an important role should not be left to chance or based in a system of Design Practice selection, which is at best a lottery (Design Business Ireland.org retrieved, 28th November 2015).

The 2009 survey, which was responded to by 80% of their membership (120 members in total) are interesting as this particular design association has since been dissolved in April 2016. The membership in 2009 as cited from their website Design Business Ireland.org, on the 28th November 2015, highlighted a number of issues including that nearly all of the firms responding had as much as 35% of their business coming from government agencies in the Republic. It also commented on the Northern Ireland GD experience of the economic banking crisis as not having a negative effect and in fact noted a greater profit for the same period. It added that InterTradelreland¹⁸ had seen the design sector in Northern Ireland grow during a period which had seen many companies struggle in the Republic. The findings continued that, collecting fees for design work in the Republic was seen to be very difficult, thus providing cash flow difficulties. Suppliers also seemed to be more aggressive with a dramatic decrease in employment of staff in firms. This, coupled with losing staff, also indicated a profit loss so providing a knock on effect. One of the main issues for the 'Design Business' members in 2009 was around 'speculative pitching' for new clients. This practice which many design and advertising companies engage in, had been a divisive practice leading to undercutting and taking projects on at a loss in order to gain a client thus under-valuing the design input. Many of these outcomes from the survey could explain the structure and size of design firms small to medium (SMEs) in the Irish state and also the associations struggle to be support membership. According to Noel Derby, it is the service or product's branding or identity that determines the value:

Consumers alone however, finally determine the value of this equity and successful brands are in constant, passionate pursuit of uncovering new insights that lead to more intimate understanding of the key drivers of brand and consumer relationship and importantly, how these relationships may be enhanced and refreshed He adds that ...quantitatively, the premium is the difference between the price a consumer will pay for a superbrand versus a lesser brand or commodity with similar value. That premium is often as high as 30% (Derby and Oram, 2000, p. 7).

¹⁸ InterTradelreland is a Cross-Border Trade and Business Development Body funded by the Department of Jobs and Enterprise and Innovation in Ireland (DJEI, Ireland) with the Department for the Economy (UK). The body supports businesses in the main SMEs to take advantage of co-operative opportunities and encourage joint ventures for economic growth and jobs (<http://www.intertradeireland.com> Retrieved 28th November 2017).

So the value of GD/VC design depends on a number of factors and these in the main are due to interactions with clients and audiences or customers. The design firms' workforce and design output therefore, can be calculated to determine the Gross Value Added (GVA)¹⁹ of a country:

[...]the definition of design has expanded from a more limited view of styling and appearance associated with an end product to a perspective in which design can play an integral role in the innovation process: across all stages of goods/service development and/or in strategic management techniques and processes...design has a significant economic impact on the Irish economy: workers engage in design roles in Ireland are found to be employed right across the economy and exports from the Design Sectors contributed circa 20% of total Irish exports 2012 (DJEI, 2016).

'The Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland', (DJEI, 2016) and 'The Irish Footprint: Economic Value and Characteristics (Harvey, 2016) both provide hard evidence regarding the importance placed on 'design' across the sector. These will be reflected on later in this chapter.

2.5.1. Recent Developments in the Irish Design Sector

The IDI and Enterprise Ireland have both been responsible for attracting multi-nationals in science and pharmaceutical areas, but other big multi-nationals such as Google and IBM have also set up their European headquarters in Ireland, making the country a global platform for internet and virtual networking systems. The advantage of a young educated workforce and the proximity to Europe, as well as the Irish State intervention regarding tax breaks and other incentives has placed Ireland in a good position e.g. IT55: The Employment and Investment Incentive Relief for Investment in Corporate Trades (Revenue Irish Tax and Customs 2016); Enterprise Ireland: Start A Business In Ireland (2017). The virtual world allows for little or no overheads or operational costs, the only real downside is the requirement to be constantly updating.

¹⁹ Measurement of the financial value inclusive of workforce and services provided the sector generates to an economy.

ID2015 | Inaugural Programme

The investment of €5 million as part of the State investing in ID2015 (Appendix J) has raised the profile for the first time since the Kilkenny Design days, which came to a conclusion in the 1980s. The faith that this will build on economic growth by providing the general public with a greater awareness of design aesthetics and 'what it can do for the Irish economy' is not a new government strategy, as stated in the previous sections and according to Walker can be traced further back than the 1960s:

From the earliest days of the Irish Free State concern had been expressed about the quality of the design of many items manufactured in Ireland. Bodkin was at the forefront of proposing state intervention in the arts, in which he included art and industry. In early 1922, following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty which would establish the Irish Free State, he prepared a paper on the functions of a ministry of fine arts which was initially submitted it to the Ministry for Home Affairs, and then forwarded by them to the Minister for Education 1925. In it he suggested that 'the maintenance of public Art Galleries, Libraries, and Schools and Academies of Art and Music' would be the principal responsibilities of the Ministry of Fine Arts. He proposed that in conjunction with the Ministries for Trade, Commerce and Economic Affairs plans should be prepared for 'the education of craftsmen, through technical schools or schools of design' pointing out that in other countries similar institutions ensured their reputation for producing 'high-class goods' (2013, p.7).

The importance placed on good design linked with commercial art practice that Thomas Bodkin²⁰ wrote about and promoted from the founding of the State in 1922, is one that has been taken by successive governments and State bodies in Ireland. However, his recommendations for a Ministry of Fine Arts did not materialise. An interesting aspect worth noting is that the general public are still in need of being educated to see it as more than an optional extra that really does not have measurable accountability. A flyer for the ID2015 was aimed at the general public to invite them to a lunchtime seminar which incidentally also had an ID2015 schools programme that 'connects creativity and innovation at an early stage' (ID2015, 2015, In the Making: Design Hub Dublin Castle).

²⁰ Thomas Bodkin (1887-1961), was a trained solicitor and became the Director of the National Gallery of Ireland (1927-1935) he was a nephew of Sir Hugh Lane (1875-1915) the art collector/ Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin. Bodkin wrote extensively on the arts in Ireland. He became professor of fine arts at the University of Birmingham and director at the Barber Institute (1935 - 1952). Referenced from Walker (2013, p.7) Thomas Bodkin, Memorandum on the Functions of a Ministry of Fine Arts, 1922, TCD, MS 6965/10 2013. Papers also held in the national Archives of Ireland.

Given the success of the ID2015, the State has created an action plan for design growth and jobs which now features a number of specific actions relating to building on the ID2015 legacy as reflected on in the book *ID2015 Making Design Matter* by the CEO, Karen Hennessy (Milton et al, 2016, p.19):

- Enterprise Ireland and DCCol as two state agencies will provide supports such as Regional Collaboration Funds, Start-Up Funds, International Trade Promotion, Clustering and Incubator Initiatives together with regional and sectoral network advice for EU funding for design.
- Information and upskilling for better understanding of design thinking will be given to clients for strategic management.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) will look at design skills and scope out the future needs of the sector.
- Applications for Design EU funding will be explored.
- The 'Design4Growth' which was launched in 2015 as part of the ID2015 year will be continued by the Local Enterprise Offices and Dublin City Council.

The use of design with the soft sciences²¹ has been important since human computer interactions (HCI) and user experience design in the 1990s. The use of 'design thinking', and the broader problem-solving/opportunity for innovative prototyping is changing design to being a tool for business innovation (Ibid, (2016) p.158). For the graduate designer from Irish HEIs they will be expected to play a part in the inclusive interdisciplinary design teams working across ever widening platforms. Ireland has joined the 'creative value-added design' or gross added value (GAV) activity in the marketing of services and products. The same report indicated that the figures for 2013 valued the design sector at €38bn which placed the figures for employment in design occupations at 2.5%. Irish exports amounted to 21% for the Irish State. These figures will be considered in a later section of this chapter but they present employment impact as being comparable to the UK, with exports attributed to the design sector as slightly higher (Ibid, 2016, p.64).

²¹ Any of the specialised fields or disciplines, as psychology, sociology, anthropology, or political science that interpret human behaviour, institutions, society etc.

The computer hardware American giant, IBM, together with other multi-nationals such as Apple Inc., have positioned themselves in Ireland to take advantage of the expanding design-led activity (Appendix A) or as Bill Kearney from IBM adds:

Design at IBM has two roles. On a Practical level, design is used to conceive, develop and distribute user-centric products ...a set of processes and practices help IBM do that; IBM Design Thinking framework help team members align around the user 'pain points' and goals of each project, whilst the IBM Design Language is a set of tools that enable designers the use of visual components, animation, typography, colour and language (Milton, 2016, p.159).

The Irish owned SMEs are not far behind them, as all start-ups need an identity and global presence. One of the other important impacts made by the ID2015 programme has been to establish a Design Directory. This database is open to any designer working on the Island or who has been trained in Ireland and is working abroad. A collaboration between IBM Studios Dublin and the ID2015 team, it provides a valuable insight into designers working across a variety of design disciplines with no cost involved to the designer unless they choose to put up design work on the site (Ibid, 2016, pp. 72-73), This initiative will be referenced in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

2.6. Design Organisations and Societies

The design industry and GD/VC domain are supported by State agencies, e.g., Enterprise Ireland. The sector also has its own design and advertising associations and societies. These have emerged from the 1960s in an Irish context from a desire to be recognized as a domain, as other sectors are, in gaining professional recognition.

2.6.1 Professional Design Practice

What do we understand by design profession? According to Scott and Marshall, the term profession is a 'type of work orientation' (2011, p. 61). They go on to explain that:

[...] a profession includes some central regulatory body to ensure the standard of performance of individual members; a code of conduct; careful management of knowledge in relation to the expertise which constitutes the basis of the profession's activities and, lastly, control of number, selection, and training of new entrants (Ibid, 2011,p.61).

The philosopher Max Weber (1864-1920)²² reviewed professions as a 'paradigm form of collegiate authority' (Giddens, 1971, p.40).

While Anthony Giddens explains profession in the context of workforce:

It is only with the advent of capitalism, which depends upon the expropriation of a mass of labourers who have nothing save their labour-power to offer in exchange for the means of obtaining a livelihood, that naked market relationships appear as the determinant of human productive activity (1971, p. 41).

Weber contrasted professions with a 'form of bureaucracy' and had the idea that 'leaders in principle are first among equals' (Ibid, 1971, p 41). In the past the professions that had a status attached to them included medicine, education, law and of course religion with accountancy joining the higher ranks of business at a later stage.

In all the sectors above, the entry level to these professions has been by means of 'knowledge,' which by and large is controlled by education and the currency being to attend third level and gain qualifications. Navigating a career in design was not always seen to require particular qualifications for entry. The 1960s across Europe and North America saw a shift towards education credentialism as a measure of attainment and according to Baker:

The hallmark of educational change over the past one hundred years has been enrolment expansion to wider proportions of the population, accompanied by norms of increasing years of schooling and degree attainment across the lifespan (2011, p.25).

The normalising of these degrees in new disciplines inclusive of design with technology

²² Weber, had some cross over with the philosopher Karl Marx (1818-1883) as they both did agree on some of the models of organization and rationalization. Both socialism and capitalism are the rational forms of sciences and organizations.

association has evolved over a very short period of time and is based on what can be identified as a measure of 'true merit' (Barker, 2011, p.26). In the past there were other ways of evaluating ability and talent for social mobility and access to career opportunities. These included non-educational contexts, e.g., craftsmanship and artistic prowess. The traditional pathways of access to occupations included sponsored apprenticeship as stated in an earlier section and artisanal training and tutelage, together with family ties, age and gender. These all could be monitored by a particular membership of a union/guild or patronage from a firm, e.g., printing guilds later called trade unions. As society changed, the value of that form of credentialism presented a barrier for some to enter based on gender among other factors (Ibid, 2011, p.6). Attainment and merit have therefore seen education and Institutes take the position that earlier forms of credentialism held and go beyond that:

Both bachelors and graduate degrees yield significantly more access to prestigious occupations than only attending four years of higher education...Over the relatively short sociological period of a century and one half, education is fully accepted worldwide as the one appropriate, legitimate playing-field on which to compete for merit (Baker, 2011, pp. 26-27).

The pay-off for these degrees was seen in the opportunities they provided for mobility and career advancement (this will be discussed further in relation to design in Chapter 3 of this thesis). They are seen to be the entry requirement for many disciplines that are deemed to have social, ethical and prestigious connotations historically.

The justification for a profession is largely held around the concept that these areas demand not only knowledge but also, an aspect of confidentiality. They therefore, can be said to exercise power in civic society from an ethical standpoint, which needs to be monitored and regulated to be given due respect to those involved e.g. medicine.

It presents an interesting backdrop to new industries that call themselves professions like

design. A profession is seen to be a responsible and desirable form of labour, which adds more value and weight to its actions when the term 'profession' is attached. But can we say that design and the creative practices or actions that have any of these economic attributes are widely accepted as 'professional'? The economic history of labour and therefore the professions did not allow for new practices such as technology or media platforms requiring commercial design. As John Davis reflects:

the earlier pre-modern stage of history in which complex capability development was less widespread, slowly rising individual diversity was not widely apparent and was thus not seen as central to explaining the economic process ...the human division of labour was not very much extended by comparison with what it has become today and promises to become in the future (Ibid, 2011, p 189).

Beginning with industrialization, the workforce has become a market place of diversity and the digital age has brought about a greater set of economic interactions that may need policing and regulating but, as yet, are aspirations from the creative industries and are not enforced. So can we say that the design industry is a profession? The closest to the VC/GD domain that falls under the traditional heading of profession is architecture and both would have problem solving, clients and aspects of digital technology associated with them. Architecture however, is regulated but like design anyone can practice without a qualification but the regulatory bodies do not recognise practitioners without qualifications. Design is therefore, a sector and an industry that could be described as a profession and may well develop in Ireland in the future to be recognised as one.

2.6.2 The Role of the Design Societies

A desire to meet standards of quality with design awards, fostering new design graduate opportunities and for networking purposes for the more established designers are the benefits. The degree of success via membership has never been tested in Ireland and it would appear from the different stakeholders' perspectives to be one that has never been debated.

The three main associations and societies that are connected with the GD and advertising industry in Ireland are: Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD), Institute of Designers Ireland (IDI) and Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland (IAPI). A fourth Organisation, the Design Business Ireland (DBI) ²³ was dissolved in 2016. These organizations are all run with voluntary practitioners who give of their time for a limited period, mostly a year, to Chair or sit on a committee. Membership varies and there would appear to be some overlap between them. As a result, one of the most difficult aspects of design to harness is a cohesive voice for design in GD. See Table 2.4 for a breakdown of the associations/societies.

Table 2.4: The Design and Advertising Societies and Associations

Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD)	Founded in October 1959 by eight design and advertising creatives including Jan De Fouw, Frank Ryan, Bernard Share and Jarlath Hayes. The association grew in the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's to the present day. It aims to support creative excellence in Irish advertising and design. Its mission statement states that it fosters, promotes, and rewards excellence and it does this through the annual industry awards, and through exhibitions, publications and education talks/workshops. <i>'The Institute ... is aware that its greatest responsibility lies with the advertising men and women of tomorrow...It is aware also that a great deal needs to be done in the education of public taste so that both manufacturers and consumers will expect and demand work of the highest quality. Such changes of heart do not happen over night, and though we as an Institute are far from being starry-eyed idealists, we are idealists enough to believe that an improvement can be and is being made, however slowly.'</i> (Sourced from the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD) retrieved 11st December 2017).
Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland (IAPI)	The website for the IAPI is aimed at the membership, which is divided between creative and media. In the case of media this is generally concerned with the marketing end of the advertising agency. The 'creative' is inclusive of art directors, copywriters, creative directors and support staff. The website introduction consists of the

²³ Formally known as the Graphic Design Business Association and established in 1992 to represent, support and promote the Irish GD consultancy sector. The society represented areas outside of VC after 2008 and was founded by membership and grant sponsorship. A nationwide survey conducted in 2009 provided an insight in to the modern design discipline. This survey has provided a base for other more recent surveys conducted by the IDI, ICAD and IAPA. It was dissolved in 2016.

	opening lines...In 2017 it had 58 member agencies, 1,830 Full time Employees and this accounted for a 7.6% increase in employment among membership. <i>'IAP1 is the trade association and professional institute for Irish advertising agencies. Its primary role is to promote the highest professional and creative standards in the production of advertising, across all media (IAP1 website retrieved 19th November 2015).'</i> IAP1 - Priorities for 2018 are education and talent, commercial reality and diversity. Committees in Pitching; Digital; Advocacy for the domain has been developed by the Institute to target particular aspects of the sector. (Sourced from the Institute of Creative Advertising and Design (ICAD) website retrieved updated 11st December 2017).
Institute of Designers Ireland (IDI)	The IDI has position itself in the area of design practice across Visual Communication, interior, fashion, furniture, interactive and architecture. It has a long tradition from the 1970s in supporting students and education in design. Founded in the 1960s by Paul Hogan and Frank Ryan, it has a membership of 350. It launched the design journal 'Iterations' for the year ID 2015. (Sourced from the Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland (IAP1) website. Retrieved 19th of November 2015 updated 11st December 2017).

The different societies and associations attract membership across the design and advertising professionals. There would appear to be a great deal of overlap between them with engagement of advocacy and education. All provide support to their membership with seminars and workshops aimed at marketing and digital technology with other aspects of their remit including design awards recognition. Their biggest selling point is that creative industries do not have trade unions to represent them outside of the newspaper/publishing sector (e.g. Independent News and Media [IMN]), and these organizations provide a voice for some collective representation. Importantly, they also hold the design awards and exhibitions annually, which are peer reviewed and allow for client and studio networking. The membership is on a yearly basis and the fee allows for promotion and access to events and, in some cases, education CPD (Continued Professional Development) or CPP (Continues Professional Practice). The interest that the IDI has in student awards has been consistent from the 1970s. However, all of the

organisations now include student participation and some recognition of achievement, via awards for education funding and graduate competitions and exhibitions e.g. the graduate show design awards.

For nearly 60 years the ICAD Bell has remained a prestigious and coveted prize within Ireland's creative community and is an acknowledged symbol of excellence by our international peers.....Work is judged on its creative merit and whilst it is very important to maintain the high standards associated with winning an ICAD award, the Institute also feels a responsibility to encourage and support the industry. (ICAD website retrieved 4th December 2015) <http://www.icad.ie/awards/3137/about.html>

However, the importance placed on the design awards and the recognition that such awards enjoys outside the sector is very hard to measure. The amount of Irish companies that are linked to design, (inclusive of graphics, web and moving image, advertising, printing, TV and animation/film and gaming etc.) that call themselves award-winning would also be difficult to evaluate in terms of quality assurance. The ability to gain clients and network, while participating and raising the profile of the design business, is not something that has been tested. It does no harm to be able to call yourself an award-winning agency or designer. To have an award provides a 'peer review or seal of approval' and, on a personal and collective basis, it raises the bar and the standards for design on/at a national basis/level; if not for good design practice at least something that has 'value' and possibly economic return Gross Added Value (GAV). So from a graduate perspective, it is highly desirable to win a design award either while still at a HEI, or in the early part of your career and to be seen to be a cut above the competition that exists in the sector. The added advantage of being able to offer a future employer a peer reviewed 'seal of approval' by way of an award comes only second to having work experience.

2.7 Design Industry Collaborations

The IBEC Conference held in March 2015 in Dublin Castle, was an attempt to bring about collaboration between the ID2015 Design team and the employers' organization, the Irish

Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC). This was an important outcome of the ID2015 State intervention to raise design awareness and it provided a space that demonstrated how clients in the SMEs are considering design input even in the non-traditional business communities (Henderson and Whicher, December 2015). The conference utilized 'design thinking,' as a tool to promote all aspects of creativity and functionality formerly seen as GD/VC areas, but which is now seen as a blended design activity. The use of the design model, or building blocks to help design strategies for businesses/firms that would not normally consider design was the intended target audience for the conference. Design fully integrated as part of a company's strategy, was captured by the CEO, Karen Hennessy of the DCCol. The main feature of the conference was to focus on the advantages that can be achieved by design and innovation, however it was not as inclusive a debate across all sectors as it could have been. Each speaker provided their own angle on how design was working for them. The message that was central was that there was a need to work collectively with collaborations in design with clients and target audiences. This collaboration was to be supported by the HEIs and State bodies. However, there was no HE participation from any of the HEIs from Ireland or indeed anywhere else. The core message on the day was that design, if applied in a systematic way, will provide a better service and create a strong brand that is 'fit for purpose' and user-centered, e.g., the design ladder to success. 'Talking the talk' is of course not the same as 'walking the walk', but the intention of an inclusive design community supporting each other would appear to be desirable. Any new line of enquiry that promotes design has to be better than being isolated to a small selection of bespoke firms. To be of 'value', the design industry would appear to need a more cohesive voice that is balanced and approachable.

2.7.1 Industry Survey Studies

Two industry-related studies/surveys that were carried out in 2014 and 2015 are the *National Survey of the Employers' Views of Irish Higher Education Outcomes* by McGann and Anderson for IBEC, and the *IAPL survey* provided by the Advertising Association. These surveys show a commitment by the design and creative industries to examine their own practices and put some financial investment into reviewing their own practices. They provide a view from the general public and the SMEs of what design is and, more importantly, what the relationship is between the stakeholders, i.e., HEIs and industry.

The IAPL questionnaire key findings:

Institute of Creative and Design (IAPL) had 54 member agencies, which in turn represent 1,611 full time employees across all creative and media sectors (IAPL website retrieved 15th March 2015)²⁴. The advertising agencies were asked to participate in the survey of which 45 agencies provided data and responses which was an overall rate of 83%. For 2015, the advertising sector was starting to look at hiring staff again across all the areas including design. The overall picture presented was that of a positive growth in the next few years. It did however forecast:

More competition for skilled staff both within the industry and from other industries, unceasing pressure on rates from clients, globalization of the Irish market and the diminution of influence of Marketing Directors within client companies. IAPL, (2015 pp. 2-7).

The key findings:

More staff were hired than in 2013: the figure was 357 people compared to the previous year of 340. But it was noted that 162 of these were already in the industry and had experience for the position they had achieved, so they were 'moving' as against 'entering' the industry. The findings also found that the industry was a young person's industry with 77% of all staff under 40 years of age. The average age of people working in an agency in a

²⁴ These figures have since increased to 58 member agencies with 1,830 full time employees an increase of membership of 7.6% in December 2017 (IAPL website, retrieved 31st December 2017).

creative role was 36 years of age and 33 years of age in media (marketing and social media). Other data on gender showed that digital programmers and web designers were 78% men and 22% woman. The industry, when it includes all staff employed in the advertising membership, was completely balanced with 50% women and 50% men. The roles and functions dictate the level of importance or value that they have in the firm. In 2014 and 2015, women at CEO level (MD/Partner) rose from 13% in 2013 to 18% in 2015. On the Boards of design companies only 22% were females in comparison to their male counterparts at 78%. It was also noteworthy that the HR departments are predominantly female, with 80% women and only 20% men; which balanced the overall gender for the sector. Creative Roles are the reverse - around 70% males to 30% females; this is inclusive of art directors/VC designers. One of the key issues for gender balance is maternity leave which, unless paid by the State, is not offered by many firms. In 2015 this was seen to be improving, with a 'jump' from 53% to 73% of companies supplementing the statutory maternity provision.

Other issues of concern for the sector were the pressure to invest 'in new business pitches', which was alluded to earlier. Staff recruitment and an increase in the hourly rates to 'cover salary inflation, etc.; all of which have meant that clients were obliged to pay more. On the positive side, there seemed to be more platforms/outlets for designers to create with and social media etc., and the use of QuickTime has helped to keep costs down. These outcomes would appear to be in keeping with the participants' views in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

IBEC – Survey Employers Views On Higher Education Outcomes 2012

The survey was published in December 2012 just after the Hunt et al report *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*. The research study was compiled from responses of

402 companies, 'across various sectors, organization size, ownership and location and which represented 12.8% of total employment' (2012, p.7). The recruitment of graduates was recognized by the steering committee and the authors McGann and Anderson as a 'given that the public sector is traditionally a significant graduate recruiter' and this was not targeted for the study. The response from IBEC refers to HE in general terms and is focused on the graduate entering industry. The level of satisfaction from employers was good when considering graduates generally, but areas to focus on in all disciplines were seen to be written communication, business awareness and entrepreneurship skills; the area in which graduates were weak was that of having the 'right attitude' for the workplace while, in contrast their interpersonal skills was deemed to be very good with 75% of businesses remarking on confidence in their ability for the knowledge economy (KE) (sourced IAPI, 11st December 2017) .

The key findings of graduates employed by Institutes and discipline demonstrated that 851 were from IoTs, while 2,962 were from Universities in Ireland (Ibid, 2012, p.35).'

2.8. Employment and Career Pathways in VC Design

The following section is an attempt to sketch out in a broad way the size of the industry and employment patterns. Within the Irish context there are not many visual communicators employed in everyday creative design work; however there are a great many graphic designers (see table 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). In all of the programmes offered by HEIs in design, either at UG or PG level, it is normal in a prospectus to outline a variety of possible career paths. As the area is in a continual process of change, with ever increasing platforms to consider, the traditional career paths have altered. In the 1980s and 1990s a job from a GD or VC programme would have been in advertising or design consultancy. Some students would have found a niche area, which would have brought them into areas like TV graphics, packaging and in-house editorial design. This has now expanded into

digital media, animation, book and magazine design, TV & video streaming/captions., branding of all types and descriptions – social media. Type design and photography and illustration related work across all physical and online platforms. The list of information design in signage and multimedia is endless, but they include: signage for roads, web, kiosk, and mobile utilities inclusive of application (app) building.

There is growth in the range of career possibilities across all forms of media and the related areas of design support (Handerson and Whicher²⁵, December 2015, Harvey, January 2016, Kennedy, January 2016). In conjunction with this expansion, a shift in how the work is undertaken and changes in the occupational structures within the VC industry itself have also taken place. Digital media hardware and software have had a profound effect on making the graphic designer a 'one-person-shop'. The implications of technological innovations have meant that the number of traditional support workers (e.g. typesetters, film planners, printers etc.) has dramatically declined because the designers can do most things themselves. All of these areas can now be worked on and provided by the designers. Areas in GD that are considered to be specialisms such as branding, signage, packaging and photography may also go the same way in the future. Designers employed after completing their programme of study at UG and PG can be working across multiplicity of creative areas so, it makes it very difficult to evaluate for VC. The numbers of graduates leaving design programmes even at UG level only tell a little of the totality of the population of creative roles in the broader field. It should be noted that Harvey (2016) and Kennedy (2016) could not give definitive employment numbers for the Irish design sector in their studies. Therefore, employment numbers are based either on membership of design association feedback e.g. the IDI or IAPI as provided in the earlier sections of this chapter or due to the ongoing nature of the measurement, the Quarterly Household

²⁵ Whicher, in 2015 published her own research into the use of design across all design disciplines 'The value of design to business, Design for Europe Economic Impact of Design Briefing. Available at <http://designforeurope.eu/news-opinion/value-design-business>' Retrieved 12th of August 2016.

National Survey (QHNS).²⁶ The QHNS was used as the source for estimating the employment in the design occupations, by Harvey for the DJEI's report *The Irish Design Footprint - Economic Value and Characteristics* (2016) which provided the basis for the *Policy Framework for Design In Enterprise In Ireland* (2016) report also commissioned by DJEI.

Employment in design occupations in Ireland (Excluding those employed in design related occupations in Advertising) ranged between 45,000-48,000 over the years 2011-2014: in 2014, Digital- Design accounted for 48% of employment in design occupations (Harvey, 2016, pp. 14; 47).

Note that the VC/GD area falls into the specialised design domain but also under then banner of digital design²⁷. The numbers below do not include the advertising firm employees.

Table: 2.5. Annual average number of persons employed in Design in Ireland between 2011-2014.

	2011	2012	2013	2014
	Annual Average Number Employed	Annual Average Number Employed	Annual Average Number Employed	Annual Average Number Employed
Design- Specialised	5,841	5,528	6,259	6,045
Design-Digital	20,529	21,886	21,437	23,033

Figures sourced from Harvey, (2016, p. 15)

The figures would suggest that the total design employment numbers in Ireland account for 2.48% of the whole employed personnel for the country. This according to Harvey when reviewing the sector across the four years 2011-14 indicates a 6.5% growth in employment in the design overall occupations when the economy as a whole was growing at 7.25%. The research indicated that the growth in the Digital-Design Group was the greatest area for expansion (Harvey, 2016, pp. 15- 24).

²⁶ Quarterly Household National Survey is carried out by the CSO on a quarterly basis. The reference population is all individuals living in a private household in Ireland.

²⁷ **Specialized Design:** GD; Product and Clothing and Related Designers; Specialist Design Activities, **Digital Design:** Web Design and Development Professionals; Publishing and Computer Games; Computer Programming Activities; IT Business Analysts, Architecture and Systems Designers.

Note the figures do not include the roles of technical support or advertising.

Table 2.6 Characteristics of the Design Workforce compared to the total economy.

	Design Workforce	Total Workforce for Ireland
Employment Status	23% self employed	17% self employed
Age	91% under 55 years	83.6% under 55 years
Gender (Male:Female)	75:25	54:46
Part-Time	10%	23%
Nationality	21% born outside Ireland	14.8% non-nationals
Qualifications	66% with third level	54% with third level

Table based on 2014 employment figures provided by Figure 4 from DJEI, Policy Framework, 2016 pp.13-14 .

The figures would indicate that the design sector as a whole has more full-time staff employed than part-time (90%), more self-employed people than the national average, with many working alone or in firms with less than three people.

Outside of designers in the Digital Group, designers are more likely to be self-employed than workers in the total Irish workforce. Furthermore, these self-employed designers are more likely to work alone than workers in other occupations in Ireland (DJEI, 2016 p.14).

The domain has a young workforce to that of the general economy with few designers working over the age of 55 years - 8.7% to 16.4% the national average in 2014. A large proportion are non-nationals (21%), again when looking at the national average the norm would be 14.8 % in other sectors. The gender imbalance is particular to the design sector with a very large proportion of males to females employed in design firms. Workers across all the 'Design Groups' and not just the GD/VC area suggest a high proportion of male employees at approximately 75% in 2014 to that of 54.3% across other domains in other sectors. Design qualifications, would also appear to be a desired entry level for design employment with 66% holding third level qualifications compared to 54% as a national average (DJEI, 2016 p.14).

The statistics findings provide a profile of the Irish design industry currently and would suggest that there is growth in the creative industries in general. Mapping these figures and the implications they suggest back to my research questions and in particular the

three stakeholders will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 of this thesis. They would present interesting aspects of difference in the design sector to the national average employment figures. An interesting finding is that in 2016 the design area would appear to be more like the UK and European States than previously thought according to Harvey, when it comes to the use of design and innovation related practices:

Overall, the behaviour of Irish based innovation firms follow similar patterns, in terms of the utilisation levels and source of the design related skills considered (software development, web design, graphic arts/layout/advertising and design of objects or services), as for the general pattern demonstrated across the European States collectively (2016, p.50).

Added to this it the direct design sectors would also appear to perform in much the same way as the UK counterpart “the design workforce characteristics are found to be similar in the UK and Ireland, relative to the national workforce characteristics in each country” (Harvey, 2016, p.32). This will be commented on in Chapter 3 when considering the HE relationship to the design industry.

2.8.1 Earnings

The data around numbers of people employed directly in VC/GD design practice are difficult to obtain as the CEO figures other than for advertising sector provide only a snapshot of design under general headings. The same is also true for earnings for VC/GD designers. The data for starting wages or salaries for a graduate has only recently been collected. The data in Table 2.7 below is drawn from a survey undertaken by the IDI in 2015:²⁸

²⁸ This survey also explored a number of issues such as gender ratios 6:4 in favour of men It also found that the majority of the respondents had worked in the design industry for between 4 and 20 years.

Table 2.7. Career & Salary Survey For Creative Media/Advertising/Graphic Design

Earnings	€ 35K or less	37.5%
Earnings	€35K to 64K	43.75%
Earnings	€85K	18.80 %

Idi-designer.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/IDI_design_survey.pdf

The disadvantage of this survey is that the outcomes on wages and salary are based across all design disciplines including product, industry and some architects as well as VC. The survey does not include the total number of respondents²⁹, so it is difficult to be able to establish the significance of the figures as a representation of the design industry in Ireland. Prior to this survey, the only other available data came from the *Opportunities in Design* report commissioned by Enterprise Ireland in 1999. However, the report had as its focus the export and financial benefits that design offered industry as ‘added value’ (economic return) rather than a discussion on design as a career option. Similar to the IDI, the data offered is again across all design disciplines, with a proviso that VC inclusive of design consultancy and advertising had the largest cohort of employment in the State. This would appear to be consistent with my findings from the census figures in 2017. The numbers quoted in 1999 are 2,300 designers (Ibid. p.6) across product, environmental and VC, largely working in the greater Dublin area. As with the more recent IDI survey, the data provided is not reliable, as they do not provide an overall number of participants; this presents a difficulty in trying to present a total picture of the design industry in its entirety concerning earning for this study. The more current reports, Harvey (2016), Kennedy (2016) and the *Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland* (DJEI,) also in 2016, have similar issues, as the overall participants in the studies are based on percentages across the

²⁹ The figure given during the IDI industry interview for this thesis gave the responses to be approximately 150 designers. Half of the responses came from the IDI Facebook page both in 2014 and the 2015 polls. This would suggest non-members of the design society who follow the activities provided but do not pay membership fees. The figures however, do not account for multiple responses from the same sources, which the software used could not calculate for. However, based on experience in the design industry it would seem to be in keeping with general consensus of designers, according to the long-term member of the IDI interviewed in August 2015.

entirety of the design sector in Ireland:

Workers across all 'Design Groups' are mostly male at approximately 75% of the design workforce employed in 2014. This is higher than the proportion of males employed across the whole economy which is estimated at 54.3% of the 1.94 million persons employed in the Q4 2014³⁰.

The State intervention with the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) has targeted the area, offering advice on the future training/research needs for design (policy documentation and surveys inclusive of support for the ID 2015 year of design and Creative Ireland funding going forward from 2018).

In conclusion, there would appear to be very little in the way of numerical data concerning VC in the discipline, specifically with the aspects of salary and working conditions not being a real priority to the design industry in Ireland. This is however, changing with recent reports and State investment. How this impacts on the graduate and the various inter-relationships will be explored in the data generation chapters of the thesis.

The IDI survey does provide more insights into practicing designers, such as the fact that almost half of the designers who replied to their questionnaire were self-employed. The subject of industry and profession I will evaluate in more detail in Chapter 3. The size of companies and the importance of reports such as the *Opportunities in Design*, which reviewed the Irish State strategies for growth in the design sector in 1999, can be compared to the current wave of publications. The most current one for this study is the *Policy Framework for Design In Enterprise Ireland* (January 2016; DJEI) as it provides a 'snapshot' on the well-researched report supplied by Harvey, (2016) of design practices coming of age in creative commercial pathways of employment, trade, economic advantage and digital platforms which bring a global world to the Irish market place.

³⁰ Based on the Q4 2014 QHNS data as reported in the EGFSN National Skills Bulletin 2015.

2.9. Summary

This chapter set out to consider the present VC/GD sector in Ireland by:

- i) Establishing the identity and characteristics of the design field both in the Irish design industry and for training at HE for GD/VC. This was set within the context of an analysis of the *Design in Ireland* Report 1962.

The Irish design field has its roots in Irish culture and ideology inclusive of creative and literary outcomes. Fundamentally, these would appear to be quite different to Britain, Ireland's nearest neighbour, and even more so to other European countries. The Irish history and mind-set both in society and in the commercial business world has evolved from a post-colonial background.

- ii) Exploring the questions of what is the design relationship with society, the economy and the cultural cross-disciplinary; trans-disciplinary communication with the fine art practices, as well as the evolution of a design discipline for higher education?

The Irish State intervention in the 1950s/1960s for economic recovery (Loxley (2014); Walsh (2014); Murphy 2009) after the Second World War, required HE design education and training. The desire for new trade links and markets outside the UK led Ireland to join the EEC in 1973 which, in turn, required HE policy documentation that has informed the Irish design sector. The *Design in Ireland* Report in 1962, followed by the *Opportunities in Design* report (1999) and the current documentation by Handerson and Whicher, (December 2015), Harvey (January 2016), Kennedy, (January 2016,) and the *Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland* (January, 2016) for the DJEI share a common goal, i.e., to invest in design and to create a more cohesive sector:

The evidence reveals that business in more traditional Design Sectors related to: Architecture; Specialised design (Including graphic, industrial ... [and] craft. There are issues related to scale, size, fragmentation, talent and skills. Addressing these issues could lead to enhanced productivity and a strengthening of the Design Sectors (DJEI, 2015, p.2).

One of the consequences of economic globalisation has been to open up further HE incentives for the creative technologies in many new platforms. The digital technology areas such as GD/VC, have meant a shift in creative design work to be virtual and online, leading to a traditional design sector and a digital/UX sector. The education of designers in Ireland is somewhat challenged to keep up with social media, and other areas such as UX - this will be expanded on in Chapter 3.

The survey reports reviewed (and IAPI) indicate a desire for greater collaboration between industry and HE in general terms. Graduate opportunities would seem to be in demand, why that is for design is not clear but it is very much in keeping with the Hunt et al report; *National Strategies For Higher Education to 2030* (January 2011) and *Towards A Future Higher Education Landscape report* (February 2012) together with more recent reports; *Higher Education System Performance Framework 2014-2016* and the Cassells et al *Investing In National Ambition: A Strategy For Funding Higher Education* (March 2016) all published by HEA. These will be explored in the next chapter.



Image 2.2: Offset Conference – March 2015 aimed at HE Design Students and Design Industry Professionals |Seminar Series Dublin Institute of Technology, Grangegorman, March 2015 “ In The Making” ID 2015 Year of Design.



Image 2.3: ID 2015 Hub in Dublin Castle - Year of Design 2015 | State sponsored to encourage the knowledge economy and innovation. | Young Children's workshop held at the ID15 Hub at Dublin Castle as part of the 2015 Year of Design initiative to inspire innovation and creativity at a younger age.

Chapter 3 | *Design Education in Irish Higher Education: A Discipline in Transition*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the Irish design HE experience from a number of perspectives, including the HE design qualifications and the teaching and learning strategies for UG and PG design learning. The creative knowledge generation and characteristics of PG practice-based design in the Irish HE system is still unfolding and difficult to evaluate. This is against the backdrop of the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) attributes with the Bologna agreement, which has been implemented across all levels of learning in Ireland since 2005. I have therefore, briefly referenced the historical basis for the design research study at HE and will attempt to further provide a definition of PG design degrees in an Irish context. To achieve this I have considered the academic Institutes and the inter-relationships within the HEI sector in transition as it contemplates the proposed Technological Universities (TU) mergers and clustering in relation to funding resources for PG Design. This is inclusive of the HEA's role in future development of PG programmes across all disciplines to have collaboration with research and development (R&D) for industry (Hunt et al, [2011]; *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* HEA [2012]). The design HEI's position therefore, will be sketched out in light of the State's present policy on the desire for a labour force that is digitally connected for the Irish knowledge economy (KE). It concludes with a brief discussion on the design industry, training requirements, e.g., generic and transferable skills and student attributes, as well as continuing professional development (CPD) for the design industry for the future.

3.2 Introduction To Higher Education System

From the 1950s, Irish HE has been evolving from a position of isolation and catering for the domestic educational needs, to one that has become more globally situated with the EEC entry and interaction with to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Both have influenced all aspects of the country's political and economic positions and shaped education at all levels (Walsh (b), 2014, p.33). In the previous chapter I outlined the political scene and the HE development in the design industry from the early sixties to the present time. The shift is worth noting, from a small number of students undertaking design in the 1980s with a limited number of places available in NCAD and IoTs in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford, to GD students attending programmes around the country in Athlone, Carlow and Letterkenny. Some of these Institutes have rolled out design programmes for large cohorts of students with common entry in year one for NCAD and LIT, teaching a 100 plus students who progress through pathways into GD/VC or other creative disciplines by year two. The majority of GD programmes in Ireland are stand-alone professional four year honours BA degrees offering a diverse range of trans-disciplinary subjects (See Chapter 2).

The location of the design programmes in HEIs are divided between Universities and IoTs in Ireland. These HEIs differ historically with the Universities referenced by the term 'unitary system' that traditionally had a remit to educate the professions, e.g., medicine (Highman, 2014). The IoTs and Universities in the past had some crossover of disciplines, e.g., engineering and architecture, but IoTs provided more programmes with vocationally oriented leanings that linked with industry and the community at levels 5 to 7. The governance between the Universities and the IoTs also provides a differentiation with the term 'binary' referring exclusively to the IoT sector. There has been slippage or 'academic'

and 'institutional' drift by both the Universities and the IoTs in Ireland but not significantly to readdress the current terms and roles according to Highman who states:

'that originally' there was a tendency 'of the non-university HEIs to emulate established universities' ... This creates a tendency towards uniformity because HEIs attempt to behave in the same way that they perceive to be successful or has proven to be successful (2014, p.39).

Increasingly HE activity is focused on academic levels of achievement at Bachelors, Masters and, in some disciplines, Doctorates degrees. Greater programme development across vocational fields by universities in recent decades, e.g., multi-media/digital technology that work with industry has become popular also. The GD discipline is housed in both Universities (NCAD) and IoTs in Irish HE and this has been the case since the 1970s. The IoTs were established by State policy and legislation (See Table 3.6 in this chapter) to serve local industry and skills needs beginning with the vocational education and later becoming 'Regional Technical Colleges' in 1992 (RTCs). In 2006 these institutes became 'Institutes of Technology'. Both the Universities and the IoTs have a mutual focus on funding for all UG programmes from the Irish State, although the Universities have reduced their reliance of 83% considerably since 2014 as the figures provided by (Loxley, 2014 b) confirm:

HE expenditure accounts for 2.8% (€1.63 billion) of all Irish public spending, of which the education sector as a whole constitutes 14.2% (or €8 billion) (Government of Ireland, 2012). However, between 2008 (the peak year for funding) and 2010, the allocation to the IoTs and universities had fallen by 14% or €238 million and a further 5% between 2012 and 2013 (Loxley, 2014 b, p.124).

The Cassell's report in 2016, provided further evidence of this trend. With all of the Irish HEs struggling to be funded, the design disciplines have also seen a reduction in capital investment which has resulted in cost-effective savings being made across staffing and facilities. The pressure to justify expenditure has therefore relied on student numbers and critical mass. This reform for Irish HE does not appear to have a basis in the figures outlined above as Loxley quotes two studies the European Commission's Directorate General for

Economic and Financial Affairs, 2010 and St. Aubyn et al's, 2009 both studies of tertiary education considered Irish HE at the time to be financially well run with quality assurance procedures and institutional flexibility and autonomy provision (Loxley, 2014 b, p. 124). There of course will always be exceptions to this, but the position of HE in Ireland is one that is in transition for both the Universities and the IoTs.

3.2.1 Irish Higher Education Outlined

Irish awarding bodies include: The 7 Universities; DIT and the 13 other IoTs and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). In the case of the IoTs, they have over the last decade achieved full authority to make awards to level 9 (taught and by research) and many have achieved full authority to Level 10 (Doctorate). There are some 9 GD/VC programmes in the Republic to level 9. They are in DIT, CIT, LIT and NCAD. I will outline these in relation to the design HE in other sections of this chapter.

3.2.2 Credentialism and the Irish Design Student

The design student is one that is well educated with an UG four-year degree. If we consider the earnings for designers to be less than 35,000 per year for 37.5% of participants of the IDI survey in 2015 (See Chapter 2), the majority of the designer participants of the same questionnaire were earning between 35,000 to 64,000 a year, accounting for 43.75% of all participants in the study. The financial rewards for the education investment of time and paying a registration fee in an Irish context are small to other sectors. The value of qualifications at HE and the opportunities they attract for the individual is one that presents value for those who hold them as Baker, (2011) comments:

The logic stems from four core ideas that mass education as an institution has instilled into the culture of postindustrial society: educational opportunity as a central form of social justice; educational development as social progress; dominance of academic intelligence; and legitimating of educational degrees as recognized expertise. The idea that legitimated educational credentialing expands within a larger argument that the

education revolution has transformed occupations and the workplace in postindustrial society (Ibid, 2009, 2011, p 6).

The position of a degree in an Irish context is therefore, considered to be based on merit rather than privilege or status. However, Baker also adds, 'education rarely offers equal opportunity to succeed in school for everyone for a variety of non-educational reasons' (2009, 2011, p.7). Studies carried out by O'Connell et al (2004) would indicate that those attending HE are not all equal from their background. Students entering University in 2004 according to O'Connell et al, were children of parents from relatively advantaged backgrounds with occupations as 'employers and managers' (25.1%). The IoTs claiming (20.9%) of their students with the same parentage demographic (pp.50-51). There are exceptions to this depending on the location of the HEI. Data collection from the design programme at WIT in 2014 found 10% of parents of students attending the four-year design programme (unpublished data collection at WIT for this thesis) were unemployed or homeworkers. This thesis is not reviewing the socio-economic backgrounds of students attending art and design programmes, but the figures are indicative of the social status that many of the students come from. Michael Kelly's (Chair of the HEA) report on young people from the non-manual group accessing HE, remarked that students are significantly impacted 'on their objective chance of success when exacerbated by the lack of experience of higher education among their parents and peers (McCoy, 2007, p.ix). So merit and creative talent are only part of the picture when looking at entry and participation of design degrees. For those students that graduate and pursue design careers much of that is through the support networks they enjoy.

3.2.3 Design Academic

This study has focused on the experiences of the early career designer and the rationale behind returning to HE to pursue further education to gain CPD or PG qualifications. In

doing so, it has reflected on the relationship that the design industry and design academic has with the design graduate. The identity of the academic in the academy traditionally was to care domains of teaching and research:

While some academic staff retained a balanced teaching and research portfolio, others focus on one or the other (Whitechurch, 2008).

For a design lecturer there is a third role and that is one of design practitioner. Many academics attempt to juggle all roles in true binary fashion. Clark (2015) describes how:

new forms of blended professionals are emerging, with mixed backgrounds and portfolios, dedicated to progressing activity comprising elements of both professional and academic domains (Ibid, 2015 p.33).

These academics have been in the Irish art and design Institutes for over thirty years, with some HEIs expecting their staff to have a design practice to keep them relevant for the students. This activity was not considered in the past to be directly part of an academic's remit. However, with the Hunt report (2011) this aspect will be recognized by the academy and in doing so it is 'changing the work patterns of HE' (Clark, 2015,p.35). For data generation for this study the main role of the participant was defined as design academic rather than design practitioner.

3.3 Design Teaching Practices

It is not just gaining a teaching and research active community or critical mass that is important, the HEI must provide an overarching example of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary activity that has empathy at the core of the delivery (Biggs, 2002); this is together with 'performance, interpretation, sense making, experimentation, learning, reflexivity and alternative forms of learning, knowledge production and narrative reconstruction' (Eaves, 2014, p.147). Many of the academic design schools that are currently seen as the pioneers of the PG research study such as the Helsinki School of Art,

Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Jan van Eyck Academy and the Whitney Independent Study Programme across a number of modules and there is little in the way of joined-up thinking for the finished practice. Each aspect of the research study is graded, module by module and this is in isolation. This is currently the position in Ireland both with taught and research PG degrees. It does not bring cohesive design thinking to the end practice-led design being presented. In the traditional PG thesis, the work is reviewed in one piece or unit by the same examiners. In the case of a visual artifact or prototype, the PG design candidate can be faced with disappointment with the final creative research degree not reflecting an overall understanding of the research practice solution being presented to the HEI according to Mäkelä and Nimkulrut (2011), who suggest that there are 'overlapping trends' in practice-led PG projects of research:

The first trend suggests that art [design] can stand on its own in a university context. The second that a textual aspect is required and is to be presented alongside the artwork or artifact. The third is one that is popular with design academics – This requires the development of alternative notions of research within traditional universities. Currently, such developments seem to be arising from different quarters, examining the relationship between artistic research and scientific research. This change of rules includes a discussion related to the mode of writing. In the third trend writing is seen as an important component of a research report (or doctoral dissertation) but the conventions of academic writing may become a hindrance (Ibid, 2011, p.8).

The difficulty would appear that design research blurs the lines of enquiry at both level 9 and 10. As Butler–Kisber (2008, p. 268) remarks, practice-led studies 'moves beyond the confines of discursive communication and the "hegemony and linearity in written texts" to deliver new insights, meaning and values. According to Eaves (2014, p.149):

As an emergent field, there remains diversity in methodological scope, approach and techniques; ongoing debate regarding standards, legitimacy and publication and variance in application.

The area is still unfolding and for the present will remain, in an Irish context, to be a project and a dissertation or descriptive report that documents the artifact's existence and artistic meaning.

3.3.1 Student Attributes and the National Framework of Qualifications

All PG programmes, inclusive of research, fall under the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ). A HEI degree in design is therefore underpinned as a qualification with quality assurance. By way of a definition from the QQI's, *Report of the Export Panel on the Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes in Irish Higher Education Institutions (2016)*

it states that this framework which applies to all disciplines is:

...based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge. Also, research is used in an inclusive way to accommodate the range of activities that support original and innovative work in the whole range of academic, professional and technological fields, including the humanities and traditional, performing, and other creative arts. It is not used in any limited or restricted sense, or relating solely to a traditional 'scientific method,' but is understood to involve the integration of rigour, reflection and critique. (QQI, 2016, p.11).

In Table 3.1 the most popular PG awards at Level 9 are the Masters degrees (taught or by research) and at Level 10 Doctors of Philosophy; both are the subject of this thesis in relation to practice-led design.

Table 3.1 QQI Awards by levels of learning outcomes

AWARD	NFQ Level
Higher Certificate	6
Ordinary Bachelor Degree	7
Honours Bachelor Degree; Higher Diploma	8
Postgraduate Diploma; Masters Degree	9
PhD/Doctoral Degree Higher Doctoral ³¹	10

The corresponding qualifications with their aims and objectives dictate the practice-based content and (NFQ) learning outcomes for all disciplines. These Institute attributes have come about through the Bologna objectives:

³¹ Higher Doctoral Degrees including D Litt and LLD, are awarded to candidates in recognition of excellence and a body of work that has made a contribution to knowledge. They do not derive from a programme of education and are not relevant to this study.

In June 1999 in Bologna, Italy, ... Ministers of Education of 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration, thereby initiating a major reform process for higher education (HE) throughout Europe (McMahon, 2014, pp.172-173)

A series of education summits held across Europe in the 1990s achieved the adoption of the criteria of achievement that allowed for all degrees at HE to be recognized across Europe and encourage greater mobility for employment. The Bologna Agreement/Declaration also promoted quality assurance (QA) which supported collective curricular objectives across Universities and IoTs in Ireland.

In the Irish HE context it allowed a system of flexible, easily understood and transferable degrees that would enable students to compare and contrast their qualifications more widely.

The Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1999 required the Higher Education and Training Awards Council to determine standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners “before a higher education and training award may be made”. These standards are based on the level indicators and award-type descriptors of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). (QQI, Framework Explained, 2016)

The agreement introduced the Irish HE students to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement, which was rolled out across Irish HEIs by 2005³². These are at Levels 6 – 9, providing a broad reference point of standards of attributes behind each level of learning that can be adapted to individual disciplines. In 2014, the QQI (See appendix K:1&2) updated their standards to include specific attributes of learning for ‘Art and Design’ programmes, inclusive of Levels 8 to 10 taught and research degrees. When designing programmes for PG design all HEIs consult these and amend their content accordingly.

³² Throughout Europe, change has been accepted and promoted by the Salzburg Principles of 2005 and the Salzburg 11 recommendations of 2010. In Ireland, an extensive two-year process led to the IUQB Good Practice in Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities in late 2005. This was updated and extended to include IoTs in a second edition in 2009. The Good Practice in the Quality Assurance of Arts research Degree Programmes by Practice was produced by the HEA in October 2010.

3.3.2 Masters (Level 9)

The Masters in Design award can be offered at:

...taught Masters Degrees (advanced, professional or practical) and research degrees, where the integral research project is much more substantial and is the dominant component. Both are compatible with completion of the Bologna Second Cycle. Examples include MSc, MPhil, MA and MENG. Research Masters programmes are typically of two years (Full time) duration, during which students conduct a research project through independent study and often take some, independently assessed 'taught' elements (QQI, 2016, p.11).

These Level 9 awards are considered under specific headings provided by the QQI, 2014 standards of learning. The headings, which are standard, are then mapped across to particular attributes that are desirable for a design Masters qualification. In the example below, the taught and research Masters degrees, correspond with particular creative knowledge and skills requirements. The learning outcomes are then generated working across from these for given modules appropriate for the student and the award on offer. This procedure is followed across all programmes and HEIs in Ireland, which in turn have been aligned across Europe, therefore, providing a consistency and mobility in all Irish HE UG/PG programmes and awards of design and art at HE. This accountability even in areas of creativity has really been the first attempt to standardize areas like art and design in an Irish HE context. Previously, they had existed outside the academic frameworks that had been in place for more academic/theory based domains of learning. Each HEI provided their own interpretation of the programme delivery subject to the internal validation process. Until 2005, the awarding HEIs of art and design programmes did not have manuals and student handbooks readily available in the standard national or European format. They existed in a more 'ad hoc fashion,' which blended in to the school or department format that the design programme would have been located in.

Table 3.2 | Four of the Eight Level Indicators for Masters/Taught- Research Degrees

Knowledge - breadth	A systematic understanding of knowledge at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning.
Knowledge - kind	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning.
Know-how and skill - range	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry.
Know-how and skill - selectivity	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques.

QQI, National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Retrieved, December 2017.

The demonstration of ‘knowledge and learning’ attributes provided above and in Appendix K: 1 & 2, are the basis for the student attainment at all levels of learning and provide the academic benchmark assessment criteria for a creative domain in this example. When the Art and Design levels of learning are side by side as in Appendix K: 1 with the Humanities Liberal Arts degrees, there are significant differences (see Table 3.3):

Table 3.3. Example of Grid Level Indicators

Knowledge-Kind		Knowledge-Kind	
Liberal Arts Degree at Level 9 Masters	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning	Design GD/VC Degree at Level 9 Masters	Demonstrate the evaluation and appropriate use of different approaches to the particular sub-field of art/design/media. Advanced knowledge of the institutional structures and practices of the particular sub-field of art/design/media.

Sourced QQI, 2017.

The table 3.4 shows the programme structure for the DIT Master of Arts Professional Practice³³. This programme is considered to be one of the more recognised in the design industry. It runs over a one-year period full-time and two-years part-time. The programme

³³ WIT, VC/GD graduates, who have been the sample cohort for this study do not have the option to do a PG Design programme in the Institute (this may be subject to change in the future). Therefore, many attend the DIT, MA Professional Practice, Level 9.

has a lot of input from industry and changes the content regularly so that it is relevant to the new platforms and creative trends for the practice-led elements such as the project.

Table 3.4 | Masters Programme Structure (90 ECTS) – Level 9

Stage 1: Full Time – 1 Year	Core	Credits	Time
Dissertation	CORE	30	Single Semester
Human Resources & Finance	CORE	5	Full Year
Marketing, Branding & Service	CORE	5	Full Year
Project (RPL)	CORE	40	Single Semester
Strategic Mgmt & Leadership	CORE	5	Full Year
Team Dev, Comm & Coaching	CORE	5	Full Year

In both the Masters and PhD by research a Viva Voce or defense examination is required.

3.3.3 PhD Awards

The term Doctor of Philosophy degree evolved in Germany around 1861; it is also referred to as the DPhil at Oxford University and is recognized worldwide. The duration of a PhD full time varies between 3 to 4 years. In many Irish HEIs the PhD candidate will be registered for a Masters degree at the early stages of their degree and will progress after the first year, or in some cases their second year, to be a full PhD candidate. The Structured/Professional Doctorate has become more popular in most HEIs, they consist of:

...a combination of course work, examination, professional practice, research and a thesis and these are growing in number. They are awarded in areas such as psychology, education and music performance...(QQI, 2016, P12).

Both Masters and PhD degrees can be delivered on a part-time basis by research this extends the Masters to two years and the PhD between five and six years.

3.3.4 Learning Outcomes

The writing of the learning outcomes and the language used for them is generic to all disciplines and, in the case of all departments across all schools, it has required a period of reflection and adjustment by staff to write them up accordingly. The standard guidelines are contained in the staff handbook for this task. The 'how to' learning outcomes for PG 'Art and Design' by practice below have been informed by Bowe and Fitzmaurice (2005), from the DIT.

The Learning Outcomes and Credits

- A programme-learning outcome is a statement of what a learner is expected to know when successfully completing a module for an award on the NQAI assessment framework.
- The programme teaching is of particular importance at programme level.
- A module learning outcome is a statement of what a learner is expected to be able to do on completion of the module by way of a skill or level of competence.
- The module learning is of particular importance when it comes to a module as against the teaching (QQI, 2016, p.8).

All learning outcomes can be mapped back to credits that are weighted according to the programme aims and objectives, year and assessment criteria in the descriptor.

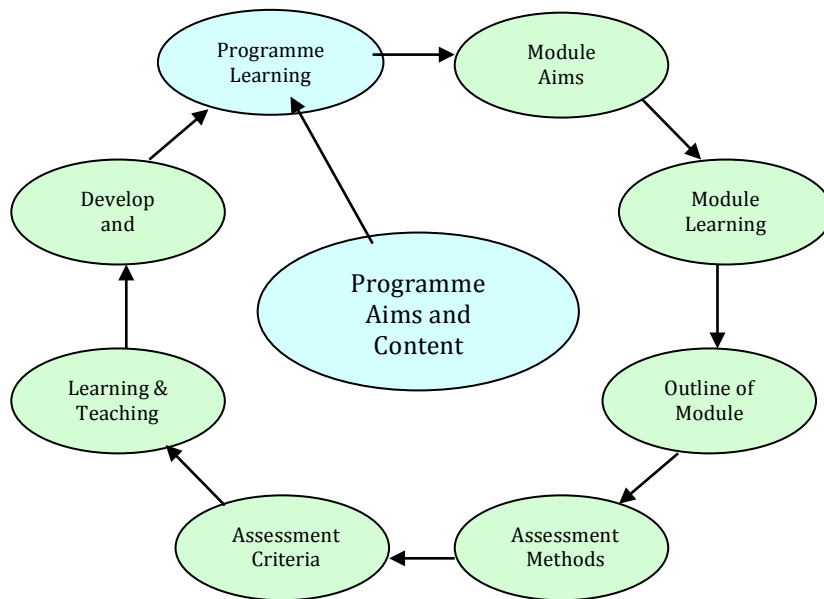


Figure 3.1 Module Descriptor Bowe and Fitzmaurice Version 2 Learning and Teaching Centre Lifelong Learning Dublin Institute of Technology, 2005, p.9).

In the DIT Module Design Process, the outcome-based module descriptors are focused on the learning outcomes rather than the *curriculum content*. The framework in principle has not changed in eleven years. The figure 3.1 shows the interdependence on the learning outcomes and how they work to create a uniform ‘fit all’ to disciplines as they avoid the individual curriculum behind them. There is a strong argument that this measure of curriculum delivery is not suitable for ‘creativity and innovation’. As the framework is too prescribed and rigid, with ‘little wriggle room’ to explore and reflect on the pedagogy behind the making/grading, and in 2005 there was much debate from design academics as to its suitability for art and design domains. This will be touched on in the data generation for academics in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

3.3.5 Semesterisation and Modularisation

With levels of learning come programme structures all of which since 2005 at HE have been both modularized and semesterised. This dictates the structure of all taught or

structured UG/PG programmes. The table below shows the breakdown of how the semesters, modules, credits and assessment works for Cork Institute of Technology (CIT); the assessment indicates the semesters for the various stages that correspond to credits expressed as ECTS in the example below.

Table 3.5 Quality Attributes for Higher Education CIT GD/VC Level 8 (retrieved 12th November, 2016)

Semester:	
Each year of a full-time course is divided into two equal parts called semesters. Each semester is of 15 weeks duration, including the assessments. Semester I typically starts in September and ends in January while Semester II starts in February and ends in May.	
Modules:	
A module is a stand-alone unit of learning and assessment and is completed within one semester. A full time student will normally study 6 modules in each semester.	
Credits:	
Credits are awarded to learners who successfully complete the assessments in a module. A module will normally carry 5 credits. Each Semester is worth 30 credits and a full-time year of study is worth 60 credits. This is in line with an international system called the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).	
Assessment:	
Assessment can consist of examinations, projects, essays, practical's etc. The new system means that the student will be assessed on a more regular basis than before, thus spreading the workload and giving the student better information as to the progress he/she is making. There will be much more continuous assessment (coursework) built into term- time, with less marks than previously going on terminal exams.	
Advancement from Semester I to Semester II is automatic. At the end of Semester II, if a student has not achieved the credits needed to progress to the next year, repeat exams will be held in August.	
3 - 4 Year UG BA (Honours) Degree has :	6 - 8 semesters
1 Year PG MA Taught Degree :	2 semesters
3 - 4 Year PhD - Doctorate:	6 - 8 semesters
5 – 6 Year PhD – Doctorate Part-time:	10-12 semesters

3.4 Practice-Led Curriculum Design

The only structured PhD programme offered in design in 2016 was NCAD. It has been rolled out from 2013 from a 3+ 2+ 3 year cycle. At level 10 the difficulty is getting qualified supervisors for students which has required new training for staff, which is currently ongoing and presenting another issue for design. This funding and mapping creative aims

and objectives to involve the design industry is still at an early stage in an Irish context. For this study, it is not possible to evaluate how successful or indeed appropriate a Level 10 design award is for an Irish graduate in comparison to that of other disciplines. The example below would appear to be for a dissertation or thesis as against a practice-led solution. From a European context, a dissertation would still seem to be more recognized than the practice-led end outcome from art and design HEIs. NCAD is expected to amend the structured example below to accommodate practice. This has still to be validated at the time of writing. It would appear that individual student /supervisor PhDs are still the norm in the practice-led areas; design in the written format only being catered for in the structured programme in NCAD to-date.

Table 3.6 Structured PhD – NCAD (2015-2016)

NCAD| – Structured PhD (3 Stages| Years Full Time)

Stage 1 Semester 1:

Induction (90 credits -15 credits| Dissertation)

- Research Methods for Creative and Critical Practice 1 (Theory)
- Thematic Seminar 1/Presentation Student work in progress
- Individual Supervised research/Supervised writing tasks

5 Credits | Semester 2: Postgraduate Symposium

- Scholarship and the studio/ field proposal writing and research design (Theory)
- Individual Supervision
- Progress Review end of Year 1

Stage 2 Semester 1:

(90 credits -15 credits| Methodologies balance Dissertation work)

10 Credits

- Research Methods 11: Conducting and reporting filed work (Theory)
- Subject Seminar/Presentation Student work in progress
- Individual Supervised research
- Postgraduate Symposium

5 Credits | Semester 2: Postgraduate Symposium

- Professional Development/ Pedagogy Workshop (Theory)

- Thematic Seminar 2: Presentation Student work in progress
- Individual Supervised research
- Progress Review end of Year 2

Stage 3: Supervised research and writing up

The PhD is awarded with a minimum of 270 credits in effort.

As the practice-led programme at Level 10 is still to be validated and the two-year Masters degrees inclusive of practice are still only being taken by students, the future of PG Level 9 and 10 awards in NCAD design are very much in a pilot mode of delivery. The other Irish HEIs, all in the IoT sector, have not changed their UG 4 year stand-alone degrees in GD/VC and would appear not to be following the NCAD model to date. The University level NCAD has been part of UCD since the strategic Academic Alliance was established in 2010 and has taken on many of their academic practices across their programme delivery. This aspect of the Institute and organization I will review later in the chapter.

3.4.1 Practice–Led Curriculum Content Definitions (Explored)

One could claim that the artistic field comprises the hermeneutic question of the humanities, the experimental method of the sciences and the societal commitment of the social sciences. Will that knowledge influence the domain, the methodology, and the outcomes of artistic research? (Balkema and Slager, 2004, p.9).

According to Gray and Malins (2004) research in art and design by definition is 'experiential'. They go on to elaborate:

We learn most effectively by doing – by active experience, and reflection on that experience. We learn through practice, through research, and through reflection on both. This active and reflective learning makes a dynamic relationship between practice and research. (Ibid, p.1)

Design and art practice raises questions that require exploration and therefore an academic framework has developed for PG degrees as touched on in Chapter 2. These PG courses now reside with theory-based degrees in many HEIs in Ireland. They are described as practice-led or practice-based research, in an attempt to give them a standard definition that fits comfortably into the theory-dominated research qualifications. These practice-led degrees have provided a platform in academia, which has allowed for funding via the HEA for art and design PG to develop visual methodology at HE level.

3.4.2 Creative Arts Methodology

Design and Art methodology was at a very basic level in the 1990s, when PG qualifications in the UK and Europe began to be seen as leaders in the field. The question of what practice-led design and art research is or can be has provided researchers with a starting point (Frayling, 1993; Gray, 1998; Biggs, 2000; 2002; Hannula, 2005; Barrett, 2007; Mäkelä, 2007; Elkins, 2009; Mäkelä & Nimkulrut, 2011; Slager, 2012). What can be discovered in doing research in design that cannot be found in other disciplines has allowed design students to ask 'what is 'knowable' in a discipline like design. According to Schön, (1983), 'a practitioner's stance toward inquiry is his[her] attitude toward the reality with which s/he deals' (ibid, p.163). The researcher in the 'doing' and 'making' of their practice presents by way of justification and motivation, a documentation process. This action establishes the methodology approach for the research study and it is this aspect that has caused much debate in HE design and art academic circles for some time :

Following the integration of artistic disciplines within the university, artists have been challenged to review their practice in academic terms. This has become a vigorous epicenter of debates concerning the nature of research in artistic disciplines (Mäkelä et al 2011, p.1)

A definition of design practice has a number of interpretations already alluded to in Chapter 2 when the HEA in 2008/09 set about requiring a definition for Level 9 and 10 academic learning for Irish Art and Design research and programmes. This resulted in the report *Good Practice in the Quality Assurance of Arts Research Degree Programmes by Practice* (October, 2010) which now provides the set of quality standards for the domain. A concise explanation for students by Gray & Malins has not altered since 2004 when they provided it:

Practice as individuals, creative activity, perhaps the most obvious interpretation- 'making' in its broadest sense; Practice as facilitation and dissemination – activities related to visual arts/design/craft/new media, for example education, administration, and activities such as curating, commissioning, critical writing, and so on; Practice as a collective activity, involving other practitioners, participants and professionals from other disciplines, and/or external bodies, for example industry, commerce, voluntary sector, and so on. (Gray & Malins, 2004 p.104)

The first two interpretations indicate 'making and dissemination' as being important and would be seen by most to be standard when it comes to describing practice. The concept of administration and education can be added as the standard forms of documentation of research. Practice as a 'collective activity' is not widely seen in research in other disciplines but is not exclusive to the design or art practice either, for example engineering and architecture. The creative design field is always in a process of change or flux so the methodology that is required demands flexibility as Hannula (2004) suggests:

...a common ground not implying strict rules, but basic guidelines for continuously shifting methodology of artistic research. Methodology is the semi-solid base and the framework enabling outreach and experimentation. It is there to guide and help, not to restrict or limit. I believe that design as an interdisciplinary field could be lost (Ibid, 204, p.70).

He adds that there are a number of recommendations that he would suggest for a Level 9 and 10 creative PG candidate. They include that:

- (a) The researcher explains the motive, creative platform, medium, and premise for the research project. He continues to remark that 'artistic research is both a risk and

an opportunity, since the field has no tradition or codes of its own ... The discipline's profile and tradition will only emerge, – if ever, after the work of a few generations ' (Ibid, 2004, p.72).

- (b) The project would be better with an 'exposition of inherent premises in research subject and approach' (Ibid, 2004, p. 72)
- (c) Evidence be given of appropriate research tools and subject
- (d) Artistic research must follow the classical modes of presentation of written research, so there are no shortcuts as ones research should have consistency, honesty, and precision (Ibid, 2004, p.73).
- (e) When the final artifact or prototype is nearing completion, a methodology should be evident that allows the practice to have reflective thinking. It should also summarise the experience of making and doing during the process so that new knowledge with open questions and answers can come forth, thus providing a novel viewpoint with various themes.
- (f) Evidence of flexibility and the application of this to present new criteria of evaluation. This last point would appear to be the essence of what practice-led research is according to Hannula, as he elaborates about theory and practice:

How does artistic research affect theoretical approaches and conceptualisation? How does a theoretical approach participate in the process of the production of artistic meaning? What happens in the interstitial space³⁴ of the encounter between practice and theory? (Ibid, 2004, p.76).

So in providing a definition for practice-led design, the domain expands to incorporate a written conclusion that provides the rationale behind the creative experience. It is

³⁴ The tissue space that surrounds cells and living organisms.

something that perhaps also provides a common link with other PG academic work and therefore allows for a base that is recognised widely as a research study at PG level.

3.5 The Higher Education Institutes in Transformation

The HE transition from UG to PG and the MA/M.Phils to structured Doctorates is still being rolled-out at NCAD in 2016. DIT has also developed a structured Doctorate programme which is in the process of including art and design practice. The stand-alone taught Masters and MA/PhD by research degrees have been operating since the mid-1990s at DIT. Other disciplines have had PG degrees established as a normal progression, particularly in the Arts in Humanities and the Science domains going back decades, however, design areas that have a creative practice element to them are still at a very early stage not just in Ireland but globally.

The creative practice areas in Humanities and in Creative and Performing Arts do not always correspond with recognised career paths such as teaching, accountancy etc. Design GD, as stated in Chapter 2, is an exception to this as it has a clear pathway for traditional designers (VC/GD) to work in design consultancies or advertising agencies. The virtual platforms, which include the IT skills for coding, i.e., animation, gaming etc. are much in demand so there is State interest in developing these types of HE programmes, as seen in the projections and future planning by the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA including: *Towards A Performance Evaluation framework: Profiling Irish Higher Education* (December, 2013); *Report of the Expert Panel on the Quality Assurance of research Degree Programmes in Higher Education Institutions* chaired by Charles Cook (QQI, April 2016) already alluded to; and *Collaborations for Talent and Growth, Strategy For Higher Education- Enterprise Engagement 2015-2020* (HEA, June, 2015).

3.6 The Irish Design Graduate as Articulated by HE Academics

Three distinct areas of exploration in the design HE sector could be traced to current issues arising under Institute and student attributes. In the first instance, the question of quality assurance and learning outcomes, aims and objectives of design programmes indicate the Institutes commitment to legislation and Irish HE policy. This includes the delivery systems, i.e., modularization and semesterisation which are mapped back to operational HE activity and contribute to the HEI experience for staff and students alike.

Student attributes and the relevance of design programmes for an Irish design or global industry provide ongoing debates concerning the content both at UG and PG level. The issues around industry and work experience and internships during the HE degree also feature currently, with the value or currency of degrees as a means of measurement of creativity and relevance to the design labour force included in the debate.

The main areas of consideration for the student are: employment opportunities, shifting academic/design content, degree currency and value (historical background), student exchange/mobility and funding etc. The following headings provide a brief reference to these areas and how they correspond with the design student in general terms:

3.6.1. Employment Opportunities after Graduation

The design graduate profile on leaving the HE, UG VC/GD programmes are that many graduates do not get employment in Ireland. As Eamonn Spellman³⁵ and Branda Dermody³⁶ commented on in the Offset Conference handbook in 2015:

³⁵ Programme Leader, GD/VC School of Art and Design, Limerick Institute of Technology

³⁶ VC/GD Lecturer, School of Art, Design and Print, Dublin Institute of Technology

We are a small Island on the edge of Europe with a long tradition of emigration. It's also true to say the design industry in Ireland is relatively young. We are still in the process of writing our own history perhaps because of this, Irish designers and design students have always been outward looking (Bowman and Edger, 2005, Offset)

This thinking that students and graduates of design leave the Irish Republic rather than stay was echoed again with Spellman reflecting on the fact that Limerick is considered to be a regional HEI with students not necessarily based in the location.

From the 30 or so students (UG/ VC) who graduate each year, about 70 % go either to Dublin, London, Europe, The US or Australia. This, in a lot of respects, is very understandable, given that the majority of people who study in Limerick aren't from the region and wish to move home or elsewhere....This is a very different picture from 20 years ago when a much larger percentage of graduates would have found work in the region...the decline of the print industry has had a direct effect.

Spellman added:

...it would be wonderful to see graduates careers flourish in Ireland but being realistic, you have to take the view that, when and if they return home they are designers who can bring their knowledge and expertise acquired elsewhere to the benefit of the Irish design Industry (Bowman and Edger, 2005, Offset).

This raises not only the reality of emigration of design graduates but also the inevitability of it. Even to the point of it being something that might still be of benefit to the Irish design industry that graduates do leave after they finish their UG degree and seek out other career paths. A small nation state such as Ireland needs to be outward thinking and the pressure to develop HE Design Education for a global market so it is relevant to the student would appear to be of concern to design academics in DIT and LIT.

3.6.2. Shifting GD/VC Design Content

A shift from print design to the virtual platforms has changed the teaching focus on the output of aims and objectives of programmes. As articulated by Pam Bowman,³⁷ to respond to new platforms and client demands 'education...needs to be in an almost continuous state of flux...

37 VC/GD Principal and subject group leader in VC at Sheffield Institute of the Arts, (Sheffield Hallam University).

Education now teaches flexibility and fleetness of foot as well as craft and the skills we traditionally value. The terms we use are also in flux. It is difficult to find terms that are as understandable at recruitment point as they are at graduation, three or four years on...we know that the degree title is almost irrelevant and the portfolio is everything. Is graphic design still relevant? Is something around communication more appropriate? (Bowman and Edger, 2005, Offset)

The comments made by Bowman concern the UG position inclusive of the title of the programme GD/VC. The whole creative design area and VC discipline is changing and the speed at which it is happening, together with digital implications which include social media, are worth noting. This aspect of design means that it is expensive to provide training and up-skilling both for Masters and Doctorates. It is however possible at the CPD level to co-ordinate programme provision and offset the principal financial outlay.

3.6.3. The UG/PG Design Creative Content Debate

The importance of the portfolio as a mark of a graduate's success is also very different to other social sciences. The title and the degree itself is not the main reason a graduate will have a career path in design, but the work that they can deliver will dictate the final decision for an employer to hire one graduate over another. The question of what the final year portfolio should contain and what makes the programme of design VC relevant particularly at a PG level would appear to be still at a crossroads. As David Smith, the Head of School of Design, IADT explains:

The relationship between education and the real-world design practice is an interesting one. There are a vast array of opinions and viewpoints on how the relationship should work, and high expectations from both industry and academia. Students also have a different take on how their degree will position them following their formal education.
It's complicated...(Bowman and Edger, 2015, Offset)

This insight from Smith, seemed to be a common observation as Spellman elaborated on the industry relationship between HEIs and students:

The design industry often has a high expectation of degree graduates which can put a lot of pressure on courses to ensure that students attain skills and knowledge expected of them. It can leave little opportunity for experimentation, innovation or investigation

and that's where a Masters can be invaluable. If the postgraduate student has a clear and strategic understanding of what they want from it, and can balance the financial investment with the opportunities that can be gained from attaining the Masters, then it's certainly worthwhile (Bowman and Edgar, 2015, offset).

This concept that the UG VC/GD programmes are very pressurized on students to gain skills and knowledge that will help to get a job in the Irish design industry has been the situation in Ireland since the 1980s and 1990s. As Walsh (2014b) in the broader HE sense comments:

Social demand was never the main driving force behind government policies. Yet the official emphasis on the economic function of higher education in achieving up skilling of the labour force and knowledge transfer intensified in the 1990s, particularly with the adoption of the knowledge-based economy' as an overarching policy objective...A number of policy initiatives beginning in the late 1980s reflected more systematic state intervention in higher education, as governments sought to influence not only the system structure and institutional relationships but also the type of programmes offered (Ibid, p. 37).

As Smith and Spellman (2015) highlight, a degree for a graduate means different things. There is an onus on HE to develop a graduate who has a more reflective attitude to their creativity as a designer not just becoming a 'Mac monkey' (skilled digitally). HE only 'training' students to use digital software and hardware over a number of design platforms is not the desired student experience from any Irish HEI. According to Walsh (2014), HE programme development being offered was aimed at qualifications for employability from the 1980s. However, it is important to add that it is not necessarily the overall orientation of the policy. The importance of gaining a degree for design would appear at least for some students to be the primary reason to go to college as a benchmark of attainment to other disciplines. Though as Figure 3.5 states, art and design colleges are not a business! HE only about catering for skills to gain a job and to service industry is a limited interpretation of HE. The *Collaborations for Talent and Growth - Strategy for Higher Education Enterprise Engagement 2015-2020* (HEA, June, 2015) would beg to differ as it quotes:

With regard to skills development, the key message of 'Better skills, better jobs, better

lives', a 2012 OECD report on skills policies around the world, is that skills have become the global currency of the twenty-first century (Ibid, p.7).

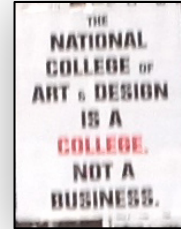


Image 3.1: NCAD is a college not a business – (photograph taken outside the students Union, 2015).

The design student from the current debate among design academics is to be preparing for industry as Marc Ó'Rian (Past President of the IDI, Lecturer - CIT-Designer) in Milton et al (2016) comments:

Design Consultancy remains the largest employer in the sector and is growing fast as the recovery strengthens. UX/UI is the one area where we have seen a massive resource migration, specifically from the areas of product design, graphic design, architecture and web design. There appears to be a constant shortage of UX talent to meet the demand for jobs. The colleges have been slow in responding to this demand and that may be because of the lack of experience in this relatively new field along with public sector hiring embargos (p.152.)

The MA would therefore be concerned about particular design content and a less intense view of the skills requirement. This view is only part of the reason to do design PG study as Bowman (2015) comments:

It is only of value for those individuals who want to expand their individual practices in a nurturing and critique-based environment. It's an environment with lots of peer-learning and lots of different, and often conflicting tutorial voices. I'd never recommend anyone to do a MA unless they wanted to reinvent themselves. If you just want to be a better designer, get a job (Bowman and Edgar, 2015, offset).

This remark would not be shared by all of Irish design academia but it is one that possibly defines what the structure of many MAs are in the UK and Irish context. It is noteworthy that the debate about Irish design Doctorates and PhDs is one that has not been discussed

outside State policy documentation and HEI programme documents. It has presented a gap in the literature as there has been no public forums either online, officially or unofficially, like the 'Offset 2015 conference handbook' that allows for any public commentary by design academics to reference their opinion. Therefore, it raises the question about design being benchmarked to other HE Humanities and social science discipline fields and the relevance that it holds for graduates other than in Education.

3.6.4 Institutional Organisation and Guidelines for Practice-Led Design

The HEA 2010, *Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education* offers a number of best practices guidelines for both Masters and Doctorates/PhDs, with particular emphasis on:

- (i) research interacting with domains of practice beyond the institution;
- (ii) organization enabling of multi-disciplinary approaches; and
- (iii) institutional planning and strategies for inter-institutional collaboration and international networking. (HEA, 2010, p14)

These areas of research activity are broad and touch on professional domains as well as HEIs; they also would now be seen to be standard aspirations across Irish HE policy. The design domain would not have the HEI as a main source of its existence. GD by its nature is involved with reproduction, creativity and innovation which are accessed across a wide and diverse organizational set of structures inclusive of the HEI, but not primary to the discipline. Domains such as 'mathematics, sociology, anthropology, comparative literature and philosophy' would be considered to 'primary, if not sole, institutional locus and legitimation process within academic institutes' (HEA, 2010, p. 14).

The location of the HEI and the relationship on an organizational perspective need to be considered when designing for practice-led design at both Level 9 and 10. Allowing for the cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary nature of design, other supports and

supervisory expertise would also need to be put in place that might be outside the department or school of creative arts domain. Planning for any creative and relevant academic input will also be necessary.

3.7 Overview of Higher Education in Ireland (Value and Currency of Degrees)

Elements of the 'disappearing phase' of university life were already taking hold in the United States from the early part of the 20th century with the expansion of professional training courses in universities, particularly at the postgraduate level. This was accompanied later in the century by the view of higher education institute as having multiple, often competing, goals (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, Spotlight, No 5, 2014).

In the Irish context, as stated in Chapter 2, the Irish HE sector radically changed with economic trade and expansion from the late 1950s through to the 1960s. Disciplines like design that linked with marketing became an integral part of the new training that was being offered at HE. According to Clarke, Kenny and Loxley (2015, p. 40) and outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

Historically, the Universities provided degree and postgraduate education. Since the late 1960s, Regional Technical colleges (now IoTs) were established to provide sub-degree programmes. The focus on skills-based vocational and technical training in areas such as business, engineering, electronics, science and food technology (but also containing from an early time elements of music, art (design), Languages, social science and child care).

The lines between the two providers of HE became blurred from the 1990s onwards with Highman (2014) articulating an 'isomorphism' condition surfacing in the Irish HE sector. This condition set against 'globalization, the knowledge economy paradigm and the European 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (p.46) encouraged the Irish Universities and IoTs to emulate each other's more successful strategies in programme expansion at UG and PG level. This arguably, has happened because of State pressure to conform to new EU policy, legislation and cultural trends in society to provide a knowledge economy for national growth. The competitive environment with IT central

to all disciplines has also encouraged some loss of identity for individual disciplines that have become an add-on, i.e., languages in the arts. However, all of the Irish HE sector at an organizational level is responding to being flexible and open to current professional economic considerations. This in turn creates a greater intensification at both regulation and workload. As Walsh, (2014) comments:

A more systematic focus on economic contribution of HE institutions was apparent in official preparation for wide-ranging educational legislation, which was promoted by successive ministers during the 1990's (Ibid, 2014, p.38).

Table: 3.7 Irish HE Legislation from 1992 -2016

The Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992	Separated the RTCs from the control of the educational vocational committee
The Regional Technical Colleges Act 1999	Renamed the colleges as Institutes of Technology.
The Universities Act 1997	Encouraged modernization of governance, accountability and strategic planning for each of the seven Universities.
The Universities Act 1997	The HEA was granted greater powers; the Controller and Auditor given more autonomy to investigate approve funding.
The Institute of Technology Act 2006	This brought the IoTs under the HEA and allowed for academic freedom for staff as in the case of Universities. The IoT sector still comply with policy directed by the Minister for Education and Skills.
Technological Universities Bill 2015	This Bill proposes to review aspects of the IOTs inclusive of financing of the system, learning outcomes, academic contracts and greater specialization and national/international networking/collaboration (Hunt, et al 2011). It provides for the dissolution and transfer of certain IOTs inclusive of mergers and the DITs, functions, assets, liabilities, staff to new Institutes called Technological Universities.
Universities (Amendment) Bill 2015	A review of funding and aims and objectives.
Higher Education Authority Bill 2015	Greater powers of central administration by the HEA for Irish HEIs.

Table informed by Oireachtas Library & Research Service, No 5, 2014; Houses of the Oireachtas, Oireachtas Business, 2016 and Hunt at el (2011, p106). Note the last tow not implemented in 2018.

Table 3.7 indicates the State's intervention regarding legislation of the Irish HE sector includes the more recent proposed Bills that are still undergoing current government and HEI debate. These bills have met with some resistance by the HEIs, staff and trade unions, i.e., the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI). These proposed Bills further blend the academic remit with the Universities and IoTs and could mark the end of the Irish binary system in some IoTs as they merge to gain the new title of Technological University (TU). The HE Irish TUs however, have no legal basis as yet and are only at an early stage and will not be included in this research. As most design UG and PG programmes fall under teaching/vocational practice in Departments of Creative Arts, the financial considerations and critical mass requirements that HEIs will require for funding may have a direct impact on the future of 'who and where,' design PG practice-led delivery in the future. The implications are that only some 'centers of excellence' will be developed for PG design activity, while others will be able to provide to a Level 8. (Hunt at el (2011,pp. 70- 73-; pp. 88-89). At design and art PG level, the race for excellence has already taken place in the capital, Dublin, with collaboration between UU, DIT and IADT as part of the GradCAM initiative. NCAD, an associated College of UCD, has already developed the structured doctorate programme 3+2+3 delivery, which is rolling out since 2013. Though none of these are in the regions, they do echo the proposal from the 1962, *Design in Ireland* (Scandinavian report) commissioned by Córas Tráchtála and discussed in detail in Chapter 2, which advocated that only one School of Design in Ireland be developed due to the population and size of the country:

'The Irish Institute of Visual Arts':

Considering the total population of the country, it appears reasonable to us that there should be only one school where all activities and research should be concentrated. We think that the provincial colleges at Cork, Waterford and Limerick are up against too many odds. Concentration on architects, painters, designers and sculptors into one school is, apart from being highly desirable, a logical step for a country of Ireland's size and resources (Ibid, 1962, p. 47).

3.7.1. Funding

The Creative Arts and Design in particular are not supported by funding external to the State's UG level and it is limited at PG particularly with regard to the Humanities and Social Sciences. However, as Loxley (2014, p. 126) flags:

‘that key performance indicators with its emphasis on outcomes based funding or more simply payment by results’ may become the norm as the HEA consider the New Zealand model which allocates at ‘least 5% of the funding via a student retention and/or completion factor and the suggested 5% via research performance ...this would account for approximately €160 million of HE expenditure (Ibid, 2014, pp.126-128)’.

Loxley, adds that though this overall amount may be small by the DES funding standards, it is nevertheless a loss of funding on top of a smaller allocation to individual HEIs which has been systematic since 2009. This is making the future planning for mission strategies for HEIs one that has to prioritise areas for future development that will yield funding either through the State, by private investment or the EU.

Art and design domains that have seen falling numbers (entry numbers have fallen in a number of IoTs since 2015, including WIT UG VC programme that have lost almost 25% of their numbers between 2015 and 2016, may well be under pressure to perform at a more economical level or not run at all.

Future strategic planning for individual disciplines at PG level is going to be complicated for HEIs in the future. The Visual Arts receive, at a UG level, a higher funding per student (unit) than other disciplines in the Arts such as History, English etc., which receive a score of 1 unit of allocation funding from the State per student. For most Humanities applied disciplines which Design falls into the core unit funding is 1.3 units/student thus adding a value of kinds to the design student (HEA, 2014, Recurrent Grant Funding Model - RGFM). Both the Universities and the IoTs receive the same allocation for the subject group student attendance. The University sector has more professional disciplines that are

academic in nature. These include Medicine (2.3 units); Dentistry (4 units) and Veterinary (4 units) per student funding (HEA 2014, RGFM) which, fall at the higher end of the scale. However, the numbers doing the programmes need to be kept high for a subject area like Design to be seen to have a critical mass, even though they do receive a slightly higher grant to other Humanities disciplines (1.7 units). The materials and digital implications for a Design student over other Arts students warrant the slightly higher weighting. At a PG Art and Design practice level, critical mass in the HEI regions and even in Dublin can become challenging to advocate for either, even at a taught MA (HEA, 2014, RGFM).

EU funding for research degrees at IoT level would appear to be small, with individual PhD bursaries made available in some IoTs to encourage Level 10 graduates. It is very important to note that funding by the State for HE in all disciplines has been falling since 2009. During the period of the recent recession in Ireland, all disciplines found their capital budgets cut which has had a profound effect on all Irish HE, this has not been restored at all to levels that can provide planning and strategy for the future. The 2015 *Interim Strategy Report of the Irish Humanities Alliance* has produced a series of PG graduate key points inclusive of:

- The need to build critical mass through inter-institutional collaborations in the Humanities which will involve having a 'humanities strategy and long-term strategic planning for the 'humanities' funding.
- To combine mutual taught modules at PG Masters and PhD level. So that research plays a central role in all teaching and learning.
- To include professional career paths for non-academic graduates; including internships for students in research or taught MA delivery. Doctoral education design needs to consider more fully the issues of employability skills and training at the Level 10.

- Developing closer links with HEIs for the ‘prioritization of open’ access to research materials and facilities. Embedding the latest Horizon 2020 work programmes, 2016/2017 under the Societal Challenges and Industrial Leadership pillars (cultural economic and society infrastructure).

(Dec, 2015, pp. 3- 8)

The importance of the student experience to include conferences and networking inclusive of greater mobility of study periods abroad was also considered by this report (this will be briefly referenced in this chapter under ‘Funding’). The other main priority in terms of doctoral education is building student numbers *through institutional arrangements for structured PhD education; inter institutional collaborations; regional cluster building and access to national research infrastructure funding* (IHA, 2015, P. 7). The growth strategy for the future of the social sciences and Humanities may well also include offerings of joint degrees (McMahon, HEA 2014 b, p. 4). This concept has been already happening internationally and provides the graduate with better facilities and is more marketable with a joint award. Another important consideration for Design in the IoTs are that the structured or professional Level 10 degrees may well provide an opportunity to offer: (i) A broad generic set of modules that can be derived across a wide range of disciplines including practice-based Design; and (ii) that they will encourage a critical mass, which is considered necessary for a research environment to be fostered.

In the case of larger HEIs that may not have a student base in a specialisation like ‘Art and Design,’ the structured degree may well provide a support system to allow Level 10 even in a discipline with low numbers like Design – VC/GD to provide Level 10 awards.

According to Hunt et al (2011):

The way in which Ireland is transforming the PhD programme by a more structured approach and incorporating generic as well as discipline-specific courses is regarded by Europe as leading the way. (Ibid, 2011, p. 65)

However, the same report also recommend that the HEIs ‘focus’ and have a ‘priority’ on resourcing a smaller number of discipline groups in order that ‘priority’ be given to areas of strength that a particular HEI has already developed.

Priority should be given to research areas with the greatest potential for national economic and social returns and which will be characterised by partnerships across disciplines, across the sciences and humanities, across institutions, with industry and other relevant agencies nationally and internationally (Hunt et al, 2011, p.p. 66-67).

3.7.2. Discipline ‘Priority’ for the Arts and Humanities

State policy has brought about a shift in the ‘priority’ of Irish HE disciplines and the value placed on them, and this has been particularly felt in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Design and other creative areas in the arts fall firmly into the Humanities School and Creative Industries Departments in the HEIs. According to Hayes in his article *The beast in the jungle: the humanities in the future higher education landscape*:

Today’s higher education machinery is an uncomfortable place for those embedded in disciplines in Arts and Humanities, disciplines whose seeming utilitarian value and contribution to the ‘smart economy’ is close to if not actually zero...Valiant efforts to ensure the inclusion of Humanities traditionally understood within higher education institutions suggest a community of disciplines and scholars under siege, fervently resisting the turning of the cogs and sometimes, like the Little Tramp in Chaplin’s film masterpiece *Modern Times*, being ground between the machine’s teeth (Hayes, 2015, p.88).

In this way Design is no longer seen as a discipline in its own right, but one that can service the more lucrative Science and Business degrees, with Design being broken up into components of ‘design thinking’, ‘presentation skills’ and web/desk top publishing (DTP) as Hayes continues:

Humanities has retreated behind the ‘generic skills’ barrier, proposing, as a last-ditch effort at self-justification, that Humanities subjects teach students such skills as critical thinking, independence, team work and the like, all valuable of course within the knowledge economy (Hayes, 2015, p. 88).

This remark reflects the concerns of the academic Humanities disciplines in general and though some disciplines are not as vulnerable as others, i.e., Social Care and Psychology, there are worries over areas like the Creative Arts. Design can provide generic presentation and interpersonal skills that are in demand across all disciplines. An example of this is Design Thinking and UX Design, which provide an offering of innovation and creative problem-solving techniques. Both of these could well be seen to be desirable in a the knowledge economy (KE) in the general sense, if the HEI cannot fund the PG specific Level 9 and 10 degrees due to low numbers. How this undermines the Design discipline and the creative philosophy behind Design Thinking is a debate that has started late in the current Irish HE environment. Business subjects began embracing Design Thinking as a solution-based methodology some years ago both at UG and PG levels across all platforms, including teaching design software. The underlying philosophy that problem-solving is isolated to particular commercial activity only and is not connected to the core principles of design is worth further investigation and one that can only be briefly expressed here. The Danish design ladder model for entrepreneurship has been referenced in the year of design and by DCCol and at conferences and seminars as best practice (DCCol 2013, p.18, Milton et al 2016, p. 21). It does place a 'value added' dimension to design and firmly connects it to the Design discipline which helps re-address the importance based on design as a discipline in its own right if not the philosophy behind it (DCCol 2013, p.18, Milton et al 2016, p. 21).

3.7.3. Funding Organisations for the Humanities and Social Sciences

The research degree programmes are growing and this is inclusive of Design with the University sector historically more experienced and with greater numbers of students. The *National Doctoral Framework* (2014) is considered to be the most important step by the State in a commitment to foster '*a strategic commitment to the long-term maintenance and*

development of the quality and reputational standing, both nationally and internationally, of Irish research degrees.' (QQI, 2016, p.43)

The Higher Education Funding Pathways For Staff and Students at UG and PG level:

- Department of Education and Skills (DES), and Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) - Directory of Innovation, Research and Technology
- Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- Irish Research Council (IRC)
- Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies (DIAS) (Small amount of funding for Celtic Studies in the Arts)
- Royal Irish Academy (RIA) (Some funding for national research projects)
- Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTL) – (Attracting MA and PhD students in design and art practice.
- EU - Horizon 2020 programme [The IoTs have not been as successful in gaining funding as the Irish University sector from this source. However, Ireland is fifth in winning funds ahead of many EU countries with much greater populations (QQI, 2016 p. 42)].
- Erasmus scheme (inclusive of Erasmus Plus-provide mobility and shared resources)

(Informed by McMahon, 2014b)

The list of State and EU funding for Design and Communications is growing, with the interdisciplinary nature of design allowing for collaborations with national clusters leading to an approach to funding in a systematic way, i.e., GradCAM. Horizon 2020 provides funding across all HE discipline sectors. New funding schemes such as the PRTL4/5 provide more funding for the Humanities via the Humanities in the European Research

Area (HERA) scheme. However, this is subject to conditions and aims of a given research project/degree. The Erasmus+ scheme offers greater mobility for staff and students and it is at a more advanced stage in some Irish HEIs than others. This is something that needs to be addressed at an individual Institute level to the benefit of the student and academic who engages with it. From an employer point of view, it would seem highly desirable to have a graduate that have shown confidence and ambition to try new creative avenues and participated in networking before leaving the Irish HEI for industry. The difficulties for Design and Digital Media is that for many students and even academics it is relatively new to research practice in Ireland. This leaves it still fighting to find both a creative and academic voice when it comes to PG funding.

3.8. Supervision

The role of the HEI and the supervisor needs particular attention to ensure that the support systems are in place to cater for a student with broad requirements that may expenses outside of the normal budgets. Outside the research areas of study offered by HEIs are the structured programmes. The main difficulty faced by Creative and Performing Arts Departments, inclusive of the greater Dublin area and particularly relevant to the regions, is the concern around a critical mass. The role of the supervisor or supervisors depending on the proposal is also key to the organization. The relationship between the supervisor and student is very important and gaining a qualified supervisor who has the expertise to create research groupings and institutional collaborations is pivotal to the experience (QQI, 2015, p.42).

With graduate schools operating in many locations in the Republic that will include Design, the questions in the future is:

What are we doing in the way of equipping ..graduate students.. for their chosen work?
Have the departments of the various graduate schools kept the teaching career sufficiently

in mind in the organization of their programmes of study? ... And finally comes the question: What sort of college teachers do our Doctors of Philosophy make? (Boyer, 1991, p.12)

These questions about Design Teaching for lecturers and the requirement for PhDs and Doctorates have been around for decades, but in the Irish design HEIs not many staff will have a Level 10. The Design domain is something that is 'industry based' and it therefore presents a real challenge to get the balance right for the graduate student. There is a need to have staff who are firmly based in teaching while being able to have research practice and offer this to a student up to and including Level 10. The concern that the student experience might be poor as a reflection of having only one supervisor and the recommendation that there be more than one person responsible for the student has not been seen in the Irish context to be mandatory. The QQI, (2015) report argues for collaborative supervision as best practice:

As is common internationally, in large, well-organised research groups in Irish HEIs, the detailed guidance of individual students may be delegated to many others with specific expertise and experience, thereby simplifying the technical roles of specific supervisors...Therefore, research supervision in itself (Including shared supervision with distinct roles) should always be seen as a professional competence, requiring training and on-going sharing of experience with peers. (p. 42)

3.8.1. Collaborations at HE - Key Points

Collaborations across Irish HE, and indeed International HEIs, have very key performance strengths. As noted by the working group for Irish practice-based research in the Arts:

It seems very probable that inter-institutional collaborations through shared programmes or collaborative graduate schools will prove important strategies for developing a critical mass of researchers and a rich research environment. ... Taking full advantage of new opportunities in this arena will require specific strategic vision and planning at programme and institutional level (HEA, 2009, p15).

The points below provide the future graduate school for the arts:

- A collaborative graduate school so that collective strategies can be developed for a diverse range of disciplines that have common methodologies.
- To achieve opportunities that allow for training and international networking for staff to enhance the student experience.
- To have a mission or vision that is inclusive of flexible structures, clusters and work practices so that a set of criteria and values will foster and nurture creative outcomes with design innovation.
- That staff/student mobility can provide joint degrees and usage of facilities and expertise.

(Informed by HEA, 2009, p.16)

According to the *Good Practice in Quality Assurance of Arts Research Degree Programmes* (2010, p.16) 'It indicates provision by way of Supplementary Guidelines – Organisational Measures for Institutional Graduate Schools between partner Institutes forming a consortium'. Though the report is six years old, the more current Irish policy documentation is reflective of its goals. In 2010, when the *Good Practice* policy document was produced around the collective of GradCAM, which includes NCAD, DIT, IADT and Ulster University (UU) – research cluster. This HE initiative supports practice-led MAs and

PhDs with EU funding that, together with supervision and networking for collaboration, provides workshops and seminars for the PG creative arts community. To date it would appear to be more focused on Visual Art rather than Design and has shifted from NCAD, which facilitated a physical campus in Thomas Street, to the DIT, Grangegorman campus. This was due to NCAD developing its own structured PhD programme of studies in 2013. In the wider scheme of HE, the clustering of disciplines that have a common core or research direction would appear to be following State policy as in Hunt et al (2011). This has encouraged disciplines to find areas of mutual benefit/interest for research activity. *The Towards A Future in Higher Education Landscape* (2012) report particularly encouraged professional collaboration across research clustering. This engagement in many cases was local or regional but not in all cases as it went beyond the geographical location of a HEI:

In addition to geographic regional clusters, collaborations that are not constrained by geography are also important. These include mission-based clusters to guarantee the continuing provision of labour-market oriented and practice-led specialist areas (Ibid, p19).

The broader Irish HE policy would see the 'cluster' as a means to bring about a diversity of mission particularly at regional level. There are arguments for and against discipline research clusters. However, it would appear to have a level of support from most academics across all disciplines including Design who see it in a more convincing light for 'best practice. The VC/GD Design discipline answers the desired criteria by all of the State policy documents from 2011 to-date that request that HEIs:

Maintain an active research policy primarily focused on applied, problem oriented research and discovery, with effective knowledge transfer alongside the provision of consulting/ problem solving services that are particularly relevant to the region (Ibid, 2011, p.19).

At present the networking, collaborations and applications for national and EU funding for specific practice-led design projects would appear to be happening in ad hoc fashion regionally, as participation of strategic HE partnership for Level 9 and 10 is essentially limited to the geographic located HEIs in the greater Dublin area. Though there is no

evidence to support the relevance or need for practice-led delivery at UG, PG Level Masters and Doctorate qualifications in design the creative industries has expanded rapidly and contain a high proportion of UG and PG graduates:

Designers demonstrate a higher level of third level qualifications than the national average in employment. Overall 66% of the design workforce in employment in 2014 had third level education. This compares to 54% to those in employment in the total economy having a third level qualification (DJEI.2016, p.14, Harvey, 2016, p.28)

There is no evidence to suggest that these awards and qualifications are having an impact on economic growth but as Baker remarks:

Not only has formal educational credentialing become widely interjected into the occupational process, the nature of educational credentialing itself continues to intensify. Expanding beyond just participation in schooling, there is an emerging normative assumption in the labor market and society that an individual's educational training should be solely chartered through the attainment of formal academic degrees (2011 p.6),

It is possible to consider the UK study by Blackwell and Harvey, who conducted some longitudinal research in the area in 1999 (*Destinations and Reflections*) and again between 2008-2010 by Ball, Pollard and Stanley: *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* (2010). These research studies are interesting as they both indicate that the design HE provides a value in terms of employability.

3.8.2. UK Higher Education Design Career Paths

In an Irish context there has been no documentation of a career path for Art and Design graduates to-date. The pioneering research study in the UK *Destinations and Reflections* (1999) followed some 1,800 graduates from Art and Design disciplines into their early career choices and is the first of its kind. The findings indicated some correlation between HE studies to actual growth in the creative industries. The research, though not conclusive, that Design HE programmes influenced growth in design firms did appear to provide correlation between HE Design programmes and the Design sector expansion.

Other key indicators for change are increases in part-time working, business start-up, self-employment and fixed-term or temporary work, together with a slight fall in full-time employment and a drift away from working in medium-sized enterprises to micro-businesses (Bell et al, 2010, p.3)

Recent major longitudinal research was carried out between 2008 and 2010 and it has reviewed the career paths of graduates *'in art, design, crafts and media subjects qualifying in 2002, 2003 and 2004 from UK higher education institutions'* (Ibid, 2010, p.12.) The study was commissioned by 26 UK HEIs, together with the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD). The principal investigators were from the University of the Arts London. The survey distributed by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) included 3,500 practice-based Art, Design Craft, and Media graduates who had attended a cross-section of Creative Arts departments in HEIs. Some of the findings included the following:

Table 3.8: Findings from the Survey 'Creative Graduates Creative Futures' (2010)

3 out of 4 graduates had worked in the creative industries and in their field of expertise since graduating. At the time of the survey, 4 out of 5 graduates were in paid work, the majority in creative jobs and achieving their career goals.	33 per cent of graduates had experience of teaching in their early careers and 18 per cent were teaching at the time of the survey. Unpaid work is a common strategy for job-seeking or learning new skills, with 42 per cent undertaking voluntary experience since graduating.
Portfolio careers are well established, with 48 per cent of graduates in multiple jobs at the time of the survey, typically combining employment with self-employment, study or developing their creative practice.	Creative graduates had developed skills required for their careers on their undergraduate courses, rating most highly creativity and innovation, visual skills and presentation, but they had less well-developed IT, networking and client-facing skills.
45 per cent of graduates had worked freelance since graduating, and at the time of the survey 23 per cent were self-employed and 18 per cent were running a business.	After graduation, 72 per cent had undertaken further study or informal learning of some kind, with more than one-quarter of graduates returning to HE to study at a higher level.
77 per cent of working graduates were positive about their current work, enjoying the ability to be creative, having autonomy and potential for future opportunities, with 79 per cent in work they felt related significantly to art, craft, design or media.	Graduates aspire to creative careers and achieving a good life/work balance, their career goals aligning with their subject disciplines and their career plans most influenced by a strong desire for new learning and the pursuit of creative practice above high earnings.
Creative graduates in art, design, craft and media subjects are well-equipped to deal with the challenges of creative working, which they keep firmly in their sights as they navigate their way through the complexities of work, underpinned by their desire to continue with their creative practice.	Creative graduates are at the forefront in initiating changes in the creative sector, and their tolerance of uncertainty and ability to adapt and to continue to learn fits them for contemporary life and work.

The survey findings are unique for HE disciplines. The most interesting outcomes were that the HEIs and their graduates were responsible for creating growth in the economy or society beyond the creative practice on the programmes of study they had undertaken. The responses indicated that the creative graduates had developed a micro-business mentality.

One of the most significant features of the last decade is the growth of the creative and cultural industries, as traditional industries have declined and micro-businesses have come to a new prominence in a sector, characterised by a contract economy.

The Creative industries are unlike virtually any other sector, being heavily reliant on highly qualified graduate and postgraduate workers. The findings from the *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* indicate that objectives of the designers UG education (across all the Creative Design disciplines), includes motivating students to be flexible and deal with change. Design graduates value working in their creative fields for less earnings in order to be involved in something they like. Though their working conditions are not perfect, as many as 77% said that they liked their job. Many of the graduates were self-employed and working for themselves. So this had required going back to HEI to further complete other short courses (CPD training) in order to up-skill for a business management position. The graduates leaving college, accepted that they needed to get work experience or an internship before being offered a permanent position in a creative firm. This meant at any given time there are high numbers of graduates not in paid employment, as Table 3.8 indicates: 1 out of 5 graduates are in unpaid employment. The ability to adapt and to keep relevant in the Creative Arts was not something seen as a negative but more an opportunity to be independent and in some cases self-employed. Design having digital input would be an area that would have a great deal of change with new trends. This did not seem to have a negative impact on graduate numbers or level of interest.

The implications of the two UK survey findings on Creative graduates, are that the Design and Art HEIs have a lot of influence not just on the graduates leaving but the future economic and cultural aspects of an economy. With digital implications, Design graduates' experience would fit with the National Forum's recommendations from the *Teaching and Learning in Irish Higher Education: a roadmap for enhancement in a digital world 2015-2017*, (2014, p. 24-31). This policy documentation supports collaboration and changing teaching practice towards impact and transformation in students. Disciplines that have a strategy that is evidence-based like Design fall naturally into this bracket (Ibid, p.25). The priorities are: that the Irish HE PG across all disciplines needs to be flexible with a contextualized outcome orientated approach (Ibid, 2015. p.25); that a strategic plan for digital policy will be put forward by all Irish HEIs that includes a quality framework for innovation; and that clusters of collaboration be developed as a support network. It also advocates that staff and students engage with HE by up-skilling and expanding their own knowledge and, finally, that all HEIs develop 'evidence base for enhanced pedagogy' (Ibid, 2014, p.25). The HEA *Collaborations for Talent and Growth – Strategy for higher education-enterprise engagement 2015-2020* (June, 2015) would seem to endorse the graduate UK career path findings:

The fast-paced world we now live in is a recurring theme, and the need for education to prepare people throughout their lives to adapt and master new knowledge, new skills, to having several changes in career during a lifetime (HEA, June, 2015, p.7).

The nature of the creative arts is that they have been always flexible to survive and if the UK survey outcomes are in keeping with the Irish stakeholders' positions, this is a positive aspect of the sector.

3.9. Summary

This chapter outlined the Irish Higher Education taught and research PG qualifications (Appendix K (2)) and explored the Irish GD student position from a number of perspectives. It addressed what the definition of practice-led Design PG degrees are in an Irish context. The chapter also considered what is the relationship of VC with other more traditional disciplines in the HEI sector. The Creative Arts and Design are only developing new methodology that considers new creative knowledge and digital and innovation learning. There would appear to be a reliance on the written word to justify and locate design research at Level 9 and 10 degrees. In the UK and other European countries, the career paths of graduates from the creative arts would appear to be more advanced. The practice-led PG degrees share a very similar domain with many other fields from Mathematics to Engineering when it comes to PG teaching and research. It was established that PG Design sits firmly in the HE Social Sciences and Humanities Faculties. The value and status of the discipline GD/VC in context of HE transitions, inclusive of mergers, clusters and collaborations has been linked to the recent State policy literature and commented on. The HEA and other European HE policy documentation that have a bearing on design practice have also been referenced.

Aspects of design teaching and learning at both UG and PG levels in HEIs in Ireland have found to provide different outcomes at Levels 9 and 10. The interplay between HEA and the HEIs has also been touched on and the nature of what Irish practice-led Design is at HE Levels 8, 9 and 10 explored. The assessment attributes and quality framework in relation to Design programmes has been presented.

This chapter also considered career paths for the student during and immediately after HE learning in the UK. The future importance of part-time and blended learning for

vocational or professional qualifications at UG and PG has also been raised. This will be expanded on in more detail with the data generation analysis.

Chapter 4 | *Methodological Framework*

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I critically discussed the methodology and the theoretical framework for the thesis. The design was constructed to evaluate the relationships of the three stakeholders (the design industry, the design HEI academic and the design graduate) which utilised a qualitative embedded multi-case study approach. Each of the three stakeholders were explored through participant semi-structured interviews. The original research design also included a questionnaire for both UG and PG participants, however it was put aside due to poor participation from HEIs. The research design aim has been to provide the study with both the formal (main role) and informal (influences on the role) perspectives of the three distinct voices. The data generation adopted a case study approach informed by a triangulation methodology, which influenced the research questions and sub-questions. The characteristics of the individual stakeholders were then compared and contrasted in order to generate new information and insights. This chapter reviews the research design and approach under a number of headings; this includes the case study, sampling, the development and administration of the research tools, ethics, data analysis strategy and the use of triangulation. I will go on to discuss the concerns around transferability in the design research and consider issues of validity and reliability and the limitations of the study. Finally, I will discuss my own role as a design lecturer/researcher, VC/GD designer and PG student (reflexivity) in the research.

4.2 The Research Design

In the process of constructing the research design, the issues around developing a study based on people's life experiences, was fundamental to the thesis. To this end, Denzin and

Lincoln (2013, p.44) have highlighted that there are five questions that should be considered when developing a research project:

1. How will the design connect to the paradigm or perspective being used?
2. How will these materials allow the researcher to speak to the problems of praxis and change?
3. Who or what will be studied?
4. What strategies of inquiry will be used?
5. What methods or research tools for collecting and analyzing empirical materials will be utilised?

The framework needed to connect with a philosophic standpoint or paradigm that allowed for a fluid set of procedures. I considered this under the heading of 'my role' in the study and it involved defining reflexivity in the research context. I therefore, take a *Critical Realist* (CR)³⁸ perspective, which is framed against the research questions. According to Janesick (2000, 2010), the essence of good qualitative research design requires the use of a set of procedures that are at once open-ended and rigorous. The research questions presented the inquiry or problem for the study. In turn, this presented the phenomena that needed to be solved through various research tools of administration. For this study, the phenomena are the inter-relationships between the three stakeholders (the design industry, the design academic and the design graduate). The study focused on all three stakeholders and how they interact with the Irish HE sector. The research questions for the thesis, outlined in Chapter 1, explored the early socialization and career options and experiences for graduate designers. These are inclusive of the early career in the design world and opportunities of graduate designers inclusive of further training at HE in an Irish context for PG Level 9 or 10 degrees:

The nature of human responses create conditions that impact upon, restrict, limit, and contribute towards restructuring the variety of actions/interactions that can be noted in societies. In turn, humans also shape their institutions; they create and change the world around them through actions/interactions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.6).

³⁸ Critical Realism (CR) is a philosophical system developed by the Indo-British philosopher, Roy Bhaskar, in collaboration with a number of British social theorists, including Margaret Archer, Mervyn Hartwig, Tony Lawson, Alan Norrie.

The design academic and industry practitioners were examined via their inter-relationships inclusive of the design requirements regarding skills and technology.

In the course of the investigation, the data generation strategies altered from a mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative research study to one that draws the data generation from a qualitative embedded multi-case study only. The requirement for the design to alter came about after the piloting of the quantitative surveys had been explored and prepared for distribution. However, without access to one of the UG sites and a limited sample from a PG site, it was necessary to reconsider the research design. This will be elaborated on later in this chapter. As Blaikie (2010) comments:

It is necessary to recognize that research designs differ in the extent to which it is possible to finalize all the design decisions before the major stages of a project commence....Some research projects may require exploratory and developmental work in order to be able to make important research design decisions. In fact, to fail to do this may jeopardize the project (Blaikie, 2010, p.15).

As part of the research study 'the realities of a particular project must be taken into consideration' (Ibid., p.15). As the data generation had not been exclusively quantitative, the research design involved looking at the sample again and shifting emphasis of the design to being a qualitative generation study. The decision, though not part of the original design, presented interesting possibilities. These included a broader PG experience, both before, during and after the PG degree and also across multiple HEIs, as opposed to being limited to one HEI, e.g., Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT).

4.3. The Research Approach

The data generation involved three embedded case studies which represented a broad sample of the three stakeholders, e.g., twenty representatives from each case unit (stakeholder). This will be reviewed under a separate heading later in this chapter entitled 'Sample'; presenting the three stakeholders using a triangulation framework. This was something that was not easy to carry out in the study, as the participants often had more

than one role in the design field, e.g., a GD/VC designer working in a design firm who also lectured in a HEI, or a design lecturer might also be a key board member of a design/advertising society, which for the purpose of this study was categorised as design industry. These different roles required making decisions early on in the study as to only looking at the main role in which the participant functioned in the Irish design context. Therefore, for this study, the participants will only represent one stakeholder in the design domain. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 outline the main themes and categories that are mapped back to the research questions in Chapter 1.

The research question in a qualitative study is a statement that identifies the topic area to be studied and tells the reader what there is about this particular topic that is of interest to the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.25).

These topics/themes are debated and disseminated in Chapters 5 to 7 of this thesis according to the premise that 'content analysis is based on examination of the data for recurrent instances of some kind' (Wilkinson, 2011; Silverman, p.170). The research has used a mix of open coding with axial coding based on a grounded theory paradigm (Appendix H).

Grounded theory coding consists of at least two sequential types: an initial coding, in which researchers attempt to be open to defining whatever they see happening in fragments of data, and a focused coding that uses the most frequent and significant initial codes (Charmaz & Bryant, 2011, p.303).

This has allowed me to seek a perspective or a set of questions to be applied to the data, which draw out common patterns and 'identify relationships between context and process' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.89).

4.3.1. Data Coding

The use of open coding for the study helped define the main themes and categories from the semi-structured interviews. The data generation from the three stakeholders was then

sub-divided into relevant topics that had influenced the individual participants' responses and these formed the subcategories. Strauss & Corbin (1998, p.118) inform:

When an analyst groups data into patterns according to certain defined characteristics, it should be understood that not every object, event, happening, or person fits a pattern completely.

I found this to be the case in all three stakeholders' responses; however, by listening carefully and going through the transcripts line-by-line, it was possible to see patterns emerging. Miles & Huberman (1994) maintain that this process of working through the interviews in this way is very slow and involved interpreting the data; this process of exploratory investigation is the first step in the coding analysis. The transcripts were numbered line-by-line and then re-read for understanding. My own labeling system of assigning sections of the text with a date and relevance to the study was then applied directly to the scripts. Grouping similar themes together and reflecting back on the existing literature influenced the data labeling/coding (see Appendix H). I followed this process through each of the transcripts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Working across the three stakeholders in the same manner allowed for a set of provisional themes/codes to develop which provided the basis for the analysis to gain depth and refinement:

through specification and dimensionalization, we begin to see patterns such as a patterns of flight..... Thus we have the foundation and beginning structure for theory building (Corbin & Strauss, 1998, p.121).

I followed the procedure recommended by Bryman, (2008) to begin coding in a timely and ordered fashion after the transcription had been completed. During 2015, when I conducted the semi-structured interviews (see Table 4.1) across the stakeholders it required the use of software (voice recognition); this allowed for the transcription to be produced, progressed and finalized. The use of software and hardware for the study will be reviewed later in the chapter.

4.3.2 Axial Coding

After the initial process of open coding, I began to work through the data relating concepts and themes to categories with my main focus on the similar phenomenon that was being produced from the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) provide a definition for axial coding as:

The process of related categories to their subcategories, termed 'axial' because coding occurs around the axil of category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions (Ibid, 1998, p.123).

Axial coding is the analysis of the main categories to the subcategories, reviewing their properties and their dimensions. The data was considered through the prism of the participants' responses and how their issues and problems presented to them. Once the category has been defined for the study then it needs to be resolved and this is why the subcategory was provided. The subcategories support the 'when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences, thus giving the concept greater explanatory power (Ibid, 1998, p.125). The notes and labeling in the open coding were reviewed against the research questions for the study and resulting coding provided a matrix, or as Miles & Huberman describe, a pattern of codes that are not unlike a 'meta-code' that refine the initial coding to a tighter set of themes and conditions.

4.3.3 Coding and Qualitative Data Analysis

Bryman (2008) warns that coding is not analysis; he maintains that coding is only part 'albeit an important part' of the process (p.552). Coding functions as a system for considering and reflecting on the meaning of the data. He adds:

You must still interpret your findings, which means attending to issues like the significance of your coded material for the lives of the people you are studying, forging interconnections between codes and reflecting on the overall importance of your findings for the research questions (Ibid, 2008, pp.552-553).

The three stakeholders in the study all had particular attributes that provided some cross-over and other more particular aspects of their experience that provided the main themes that could mapped back to the research questions.

4.3.4 The Researcher's Role in the Data Collection

The researcher's role in the data generation as a design practitioner and design lecturer in a regional IoT has encouraged taking a 'critical realism' (CR) approach or standpoint to the study. In social research, there are a number of approaches (Creswell, 2007, pp.6-13) that can be employed by the researcher, as well as the stance that they take when considering their role in the research study. As Walliman (2005) explains, there are vast amounts of research problems in the social sciences and arts disciplines, and they are 'extraordinarily varied':

They extend from the analysis of precise problems, amenable to investigation using 'traditional' scientific method within a well-established paradigm, to explorative situations where the variables are unknown and theoretical bases are yet to be formulated, to highly value- and meaning-laden sociological studies for which the latest interpretive and literary analytical methods are appropriate (Walliman, 2005, p.282).

When reviewing the various methodologies, grounded theory afforded me the opportunity to include both the 'positivist' and 'interpretivist' approaches, with the interpretivist thinking allowing me to position myself within the study. As argued by Creswell (2007, p.46) and Walliman (2005, p.202), it is a big challenge for the researcher who is part of the society and culture in the social sciences to be a 'neutral observer'.

The study reflects the history, culture, and personal experiences of the researcher...It focuses on how individuals' culture, gender, history, and experiences shape all aspects of the qualitative project (Creswell, 2007, p.47).

My intentions might well be above (no bias intended) a design culture, but they are also within it while conducting the research. As Creswell, (2007); Lincoln & Guba, (2000); Walliman, (2005) all endorse:

Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they 'position themselves' in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences. Thus the researcher makes an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by their own experiences and background. The researcher's intent, then, is to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world (Creswell, 2007, p.21).

The role of the researcher can be positive and also enhanced by the experience of the researcher engaging with the participants. The research takes on a collaborative format, while at all times the participant adds to the research and makes a distinct contribution to it (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, p.83). This happens outside of the investigator's knowledge of the field.

The knower and the known thus participate in the process of knowing, in which what they bring to the encounter merges together...Interpretive knowledge is synthetic and integrative, rather than analytic and reductive'...Furthermore, interpretive knowledge has transformative capacity, since, in the act of understanding, the knower attributes new meaning to the known (be it a text, a person, or a relationship) and thus changes it (ibid., 2009, p.36).

Therefore, approaches which incorporate the desired verification of findings desirable for the study were utilised. Multiple layers of information and knowledge gathering, allowed for the comparison of different phenomena, and interactions among individuals provided facts, or at least distinct behavioural responses, that could be interpreted.

Man (woman) can 'understand' or attempt to 'understand' his/her own intentions through introspection, and s/he may interpret the motives of other men's conduct in terms of their professed or ascribed intentions (Gerth & Wright Mills, 2009, p.59).

Upon considering a number of the approaches as stated, I decided that my role was one of a critical realist. This afforded me the opportunity to study interactions between culture and organisations, and to then interpret or re-interpret these observations in light of the research questions. A graphic designer and design academic works with change due to creative trends in the design world itself and in the HE organisation structure. My role is one that interacts with all aspects of society on a number of levels, therefore the 'realist position' with a 'constructivist epistemology' fitted with the research design:

...integration of a realist ontology (there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories, and constructions) with a constructivist epistemology (our *understanding* of this world is inevitably a construction from our own perspectives and standpoint, and there is no possibility of attaining a “God’s eye point of view” that is independent of any particular viewpoint). In addition, these versions of realism acknowledge the reality of mental phenomena and the value of an “interpretive” perspective for studying these (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010, pp.1-2).

The CR stance has therefore been taken for this study. As issues have arisen, they have presented new perspectives on the design culture being investigated, and this has been incorporated into the research. This allows the investigation to explore processes and the values that participants consider important to them. At the same time, the CR stance does not give the researcher the opportunity to be judgmental or be biased (*Verstehen*). Two methodologies that are practiced via constructivism and are described by Creswell (2013) in his *Five Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* are ‘phenomenological’ studies, which is the study of an individual’s worldviews that are concerned with particular situations; and ‘grounded theory’ which presents the research through the views and situations the participants experience. I found elements of the grounded theory, e.g., Appendix H and Thomas (1993) postmodernist³⁹ theory outcomes compatible from a grounded theory methodology standpoint but the CR adoption for the study allowed for a more balanced approach in the research study.

In Chapter 1, I outlined my motivation for the study. This is where the research questions have their roots, in my own design background and design culture and in the HE design and design industry I inhabit. These are the social activities and organisations I have personal experience of and have been informed by. It is with this background that the scope and shape of the research has been informed to date – they are the ‘givens’. The realism stance allows my role to be reciprocal with the participants, which allows for their values to be heard while I can determine the facts. My role, therefore, has been to be aware

³⁹The postmodernist theory, is the philosophical proposal that reality is ultimately inaccessible by human investigation, that knowledge is a social construction which is an interplay of political power plays and truth-claims determined by the reader not the author. Postmodernist- theory sees reality as what individuals or social groups make it to be.

of my own position and of the responsibility of being non-judgmental (detached) of the individual participating in the study, and to recognise that the organisations, i.e., the Irish HE design and the design community, have a distinct position that can and does shape the responses of individuals (Walliman, 2005, p.207; Bryman, 2008, p.411).

One of the warnings stated by Bryman (2008) is the aspect of 'going native'. This occurs when a researcher forgets their role in the research. They cannot separate themselves from the study and become 'wrapped up in it' (Ibid., 2008, p.412). While interviewing one or two participants, I found it very difficult to hold back my own experience of conducting a PhD while carrying out a semi-structured interview on a PhD with a graduate designer. The difficulty to be objective about something that was so close to my topic did pose a challenge.

According to Blaikie (2007):

Just what 'objectivity' is has been a matter of considerable dispute. There are two senses in which the word is used. The first is concerned with the desire to produce true descriptions of the world as it is. The second has to do with modes of enquiry, with the use of non-arbitrary and non-subjective criteria for developing, accepting and rejecting hypotheses and theories...It is commonly assumed that if objectivity is achieved in the second sense, it will also be achieved in the first sense (Ibid, p. 42).

I therefore, followed a number of steps that allowed me to take a more detached approach, when asking the semi-structured questions to that particular participant (Appendix C). I made a point of saying very little about my own PhD research other than that supplied in the letter of introduction/invitation to take part in the study (e.g., see Appendices: C). Alternatively, I focused on my teaching and design practice as common points of interest. I also used a technique of reflecting back the answers the participant provided so that they would elaborate or give further information. Lastly, by listening and leaving silences in the conversation it provided a mechanism for the respondent to self-reflect rather than offering my own experience. When I analysed the data using the grounded theory

approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 25) I was fully able to review the interviews with a detached approach and the themes and categories appeared in keeping with other interviewees for the study. This I will consider further under validity, reliability and ethical considerations later in this chapter.

These same issues also prove to be very difficult for practitioners when they are reflecting on their role as a researcher (art and design practice) by making an artefact and, at the same time, trying to document the action. According to Robson:

...a major disadvantage is that of 'insider' problems - the difficulty in adopting an open-minded approach and not allowing preconceptions to cloud the issues. Given that absolute objectivity is impossible, this is a challenge for all researchers-! It can be addressed to some extent by always exposing ideas and practices to other professionals for feedback, support and advice. In seeking the views of others, which will inevitably be subjective, we can develop inter-subjective views, which are less likely to be one-sided (Ibid., 1993, p.446).

The insider knowledge, I believe, is to the advantage of this research, as I have the background experience and track record in all aspects of the research design; therefore, there is a mutual understanding and empathy from my perspective. A peer respect is also present, and whatever disadvantages this presents are outweighed by the ability to navigate the different design elements or domains; this same respect also fosters trust and gains access to the different stakeholders. Reflexivity as a rule 'implies rendering explicit hidden agendas and half-informed intentions...this should be a continuous endeavour' as asserted by Finlay and Gough (2003, p.25). As Gray and Malins (2004) add, '... you are inquiring as a reflective practitioner, acknowledging the complexity, dynamism and unpredictability of the real world' (Ibid., 2004, p.23). However, as Easton (2010, pp.118-128) argues, it is this philosophical position that 'substantiates case research as a research method as it provides helpful implications for both theoretical development and research process.'

4.3.5. The Case Study Approach

The case study approach has been used for this study as this was deemed to be particularly advantageous when answering the '*how* and *why*' research questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.131). This qualitative method allows for 'the space that evidence-based research enter/s/ed' (Denzin & Lincoln 2013, p.3). According to Yin, there are three reasons why case studies are used: (1) it helps define the research and frames the questions; (2) it determines the relevant data to be collected; and (3) it informs the researcher on what is to be done with the data once collected (Yin, 2003, p.2). There are many different types of strategies that can be used and as Yin adds:

Case study evidence may come from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts (Yin, 2009, p.98).

The study evaluated the perspectives of the different stakeholders through employing an embedded case study. In addition to the definition for the evidence of the sources that a case study uses, some overriding principles also define what a single or multiple case study approach design can be:

...(a) multiple sources of evidence (evidence from two or more sources, converging on the same facts or findings), (b) a case study database (a formal assembly of evidence distinct from the final case study report), and (c) a chain of evidence (explicit links among the questions asked, the data collected, and the conclusions drawn) (Yin, 2009., p.98).

According to Yin, (2003), the research questions rely on the '*who*' and '*where*' type of questions (p.6). For a research study such as this, he recommends a qualitative form of research. Hence, the case study approach is a very practical way of acquiring information. He also highlights that it is the '*how many*' and '*how much*' types of questions which are more suited to the quantitative research approach (Ibid, 2003, p.6-7). The main advantage of using case studies for my research was that it allowed me the opportunity to ask in-depth questions of the three identified stakeholders: the design industry, the HE Institute/academia and the graduate. Flyvbjerg (2013) asserts that 'depth, high conceptual

validity, understanding of context and process and the understanding of what causes a phenomenon, linking causes and outcomes allows for a fostering of new hypotheses and new research questions'. He also adds that there are disadvantages to the case study approach and these include 'bias and overstate or understate in relationships'. In some research, designs can be 'a weak understanding of occurrence in population of phenomena' and in other situations, 'statistical population unknown or unclear' (Flyvbjerg, 2013, p.198). As there had been no research conducted in the area of PG design in Ireland, though this research specifically targeted twenty individuals representing the three stakeholders, their voices provided a 'toe in the water' for serious debate and consideration. The evaluation of the three distinct areas allowed for the study to provide a representative sample of the whole domain.

4.4. Data Generation

Interview Schedule

The data collection began in September 2014 through to July 2015. The table below indicates the different stakeholders and the data generation period for them.

Table 4.1: Data Generation Schedule

Student / Graduate	Data Generation
June 2014 (Appendix H)	- Ethical Approval from TCD and WIT applied for and granted.
1 st September - December 31 st 2014	- Data generation for WIT UG survey participated in and responded to by 86% of the students attending the VC/GD UG programmes over the four years.
1 st January – July 31 st 2015	- 20 Interviews face-to-face, by phone or by email Participated in and concluded.

HE Design / Academic 1 st September - 31 st October 2014 1 st January – 25 th June 2015 Industry Practitioner 1 st July – 31 st December 2014 2 nd January - 31 st March 2015	- 6 Interviews were conducted - 14 interviews with design academics were concluded. - 20 Interviews face-to-face participated and concluded. - 12 interviews with industry were conducted. - 8 interviews completed. - 20 Interviews face to face participated and concluded. .

Although the UG survey for WIT was not used in this research study, the data generation provided a basis for the graduate semi-structured interviews that were collected between May and July of 2015. Some of the questions in the survey to the WIT students undertaking the degree also were later directed at the early career graduates from the same WIT VC programme. The semi-structured interview and survey responses corresponded with each other, which was an interesting find. This was not important for this study but will be used in a further study in 2018.

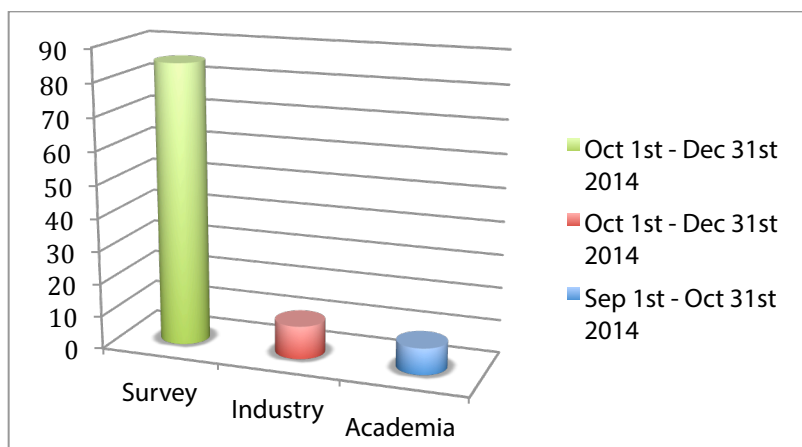


Figure: 4.1 Diagram showing the data generation for the stakeholders in the study.

The UG student survey had 86% participation by the WIT design students over all four years of the programme. The numbers for the design industry and academia were consistent with half of the intended sample of 20 for each stakeholders in 2014. The proposed surveys for the UG and PG design students in the Dublin HEI sites took place between March and May 2015. The main numbers for the graduate response were from May and June 2015.

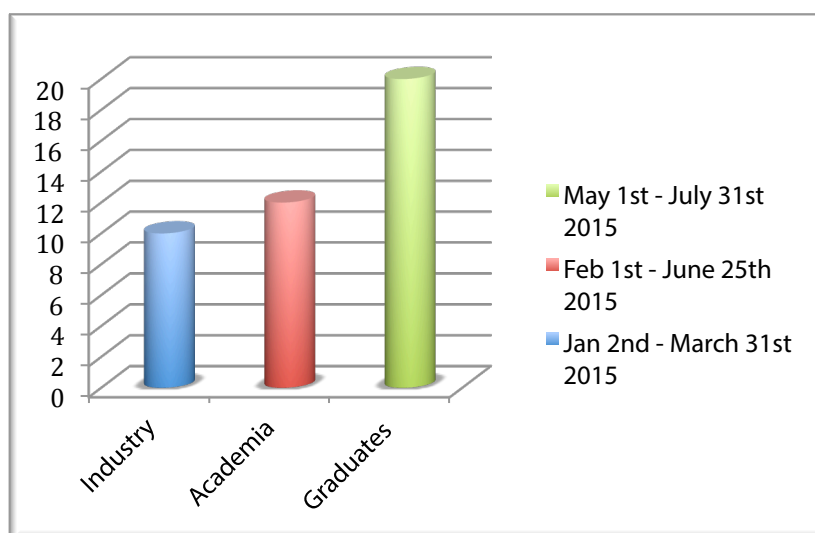


Figure: 4.2 Diagram showing the data generation for 2015 for the three semi-structured interviews.

4.4.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview allows for the researcher to have an objective in mind behind the questions, however, the format of the enquiry is more that of a conversation. This type of interview enquiry therefore has fluidity about it and encourages a more in-depth line of enquiry. When designing the research questions for the three stakeholders comprising the design industry, the HE Institute/academia, and the design graduates, I wanted the interviewees to feel comfortable and able to participate, affording 'a joint

product of the participants, researcher and their relationship' (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p.5). Thus certain facts could be established, while other lines of enquiry that I had not considered could be pursued. Therefore, the active involvement of the interviewee to be able to contribute freely when answering the questions was of importance from the outset of the research design. The '*three very distinct voices*' of the stakeholders allowed me as a researcher to cross-check the findings that each offered in their answers.

Yin (2003) argues that interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or behavioural events as stated. Well-informed interviews can provide important insights into these affairs and events. The interviewees can almost provide shortcuts to the prior history of such situations, helping to identify other relevant sources of evidence (Yin, 2009, p.108). Another aspect of the interview process as a research tool is that during the process of data collection, some of the case studies have required travelling to people's places of work, meeting people in design situations and, on occasion, being involved in the international events that they are discussing in their interviews. Consequently, the location of the interview itself becomes an observational data collection point.

Many interview studies are not designed once and for all, prior to the actual interviews, for example, as often researchers become wiser along the way, leading to a partial redesign of the projects....reporting is not a discrete stage at the end, for writing is a method of inquiry preferably undertaken throughout the project (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.341)

This has been the case while talking to design practitioners and very definitely in the area of associations and design institutes that support the design industry. It also applied to attending end-of-year design shows in both IADT and NCAD. Meeting academics in their institutions and organisations provided both an interesting and helpful cultural setting. Such insights into where phenomena take place, as well as the conversation around the action that is taking place in these workplaces, paints a visual image to match the semi-

structured interviewees' descriptions, thoughts, and understanding of issues that they experience every day in the world of design. This can occur in an educational environment, or in the design or advertising industry situations. Writing these observations as my research progressed and then adding to them by way of the transcripts provided an understanding that was grounded in everyday reality.

One of the major advantages of talking to one staff member in an educational setting was that it led to me being introduced to other staff members. This introduced me to the very core of where the student graduates are educated and experience their very first taste of working on real-life projects. Upon experiencing the day-to-day activities, which the students in some institutes are participating in, a real empathy from a researcher's standpoint can ensue, according to Yin (2003, p.10; 2012, p.11). This can cause a difficulty for a researcher if they become too involved with what they are supposed to be objectively researching and, consequently, the role of the researcher becomes one of 'going native' or transference to participants' responses ensues. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2011), 'the challenge lies in extracting information as directly as possible, without contaminating it' (Silverman, 2011; p.153). Other concerns are that the researcher becomes so involved with the research and the observational aspect that there is not enough time to take effective notes. However, as Yin also comments:

These trade-offs between the opportunities and the problems have to be considered seriously in undertaking any participant-observation study. Under some circumstances, this approach to case study evidence may be just the right approach; under other circumstances, the credibility of a whole case study project can be threatened (Yin, 2009, p.113).

While I undertook the fieldwork, e.g., actually going out to HEIs and design companies and design institutes/societies, I felt that this actually enhanced my understanding of the differences between the stakeholders. There are very distinct differences between HEIs and design firms. It was not just the fact that they perform very different operations, i.e.,

one educates people to be creative and the other is involved with creativity connected to clients and marketing, but they also have very distinct habitats or locations. Some HEIs have attempted to try to bridge the gap, particularly at postgraduate level, but in terms of the physical format in which I conducted interviews, none had successfully converted to a real industry environment. This observation, though quite insignificant, in fact says a great deal about the problem of PG design and the relationship it has with the design industry. The physical buildings and locations where some of the HEIs are located differ significantly to the small to medium businesses that the design industry inhabits.

Another advantage the semi-structured interviews afforded me by way of the embedded multi-case study approach consisted of the different narratives that each stakeholder provided. An embedded multi-case study for this research was concerned about design UG and PG HE. The stakeholders involved gave several perspectives including the inside experiences of considering, attending or working in a design HE environment in an Irish context. Each stakeholder consisted of twenty participants. In the case of the academic participants, the inclusion of high-ranking managers with design lecturers allowed a greater range of experiences to be heard from the design HEI. Participants from the graduate cohort included candidates considering PG design education as well as those that had completed Level 9 and 10 degrees, again giving a broader perspective to that group. The design industry voice allowed for an evaluation of the current effectiveness of design HE in Ireland. Indeed, Industry inclusion also allowed for design HE at all levels of learning, particularly Levels 9 and 10 together with CPD, to be benchmarked.

The Irish design industry is not a very large one when compared to other activities such as engineering, or indeed other service industries and areas of commerce such as law. As a result, it was possible for the research study to include the generation of data and

experiences between the design industry HEIs and the socialisation experiences of the graduates. Although each had very different design orientations, it was still possible to observe very distinct characteristics.

As stated in Chapter 1, there are seven IoTs and one university level HE Institute that provide VC programmes at UG level in Ireland. The PG structured PhD is still to be rolled out in all HE providers. However, NCAD is the most advanced in doing this. It is currently the only HE Institute that is offering a three-year UG programme in Design. The embedded multi-case study was used in order to provide greater flexibility and to afford the ability for the research study to change. I was aware from the outset that all three stakeholders were undergoing change in the area of technology and social media; however, these changes have taken place across all forms of activity in different ways for the different stakeholders, i.e., a requirement for CPD education. The embedded multi-case study approach gave me access to different hierarchical positions in the broader areas of HEIs and the design industry. The interviews gave me time to explore different avenues to those I had actually considered previously.

With regard to HE design, the semi-structured interviews also allowed for a broader context of change in relation to the new mergers and clusters and the new proposals of a TU. The PG design education and the state-initiated mergers and clusters that are being proposed nationally are worth mentioning here because of the ramifications they will have for design in the future. With the HEA taking a more intensive regulatory role towards funding particularly at UG degree level, all Irish HEIs are under greater pressure for performance results. The resourcing of GD/VC programmes at Level 8 is based on numbers attending which may lead to greater competition for student numbers in the future.

Two of the sites where I had planned to conduct the data generation on presented challenges: one declining to participate in 2015 at UG level and the other at PG level only, offering a limited sample group. I was compelled to reflect and reconsider the data collection in both cases. Any participant involved in the data generation for the thesis could withdraw at any time either before, during, or after the data was collected (see Appendix C). Due to confidentiality, the participants did not need to offer any explanation for their withdrawal. The participation was entirely voluntary and therefore, I could not probe further into the relation with the UG programme when no explanation was offered for their withdrawal, but simply had to respect their position.

Other factors in the case of the PG limited sample may have been the stage of implementation the HEIs are at with regards to the PG practice-based programmes and structured PhDs. Selecting students undertaking the PG degrees that would be willing to talk about their experience of PG design might not have been good timing or present issues unrelated to my study. The PG area is still very much new ground in Ireland, and the thinking around it is still at the development stage, particularly around methodology. The graduates of these programmes and research qualifications have not been evaluated and, as yet, there exists a gap in knowledge. The pressure of new digital implications in an ever-changing world is important to add because of the design practice-based element and skills acquisition, which goes hand in hand with technology.

4.4.2 The Data Generation Process

As stated above, the original research design was to utilise a mixed-methods approach, with the use of questionnaires (Appendix K [3]) aimed at targeting the UG design students from two sites (one urban and one regional location), and one PG site (urban). This data collection was to be supplemented by a number of graduate case studies only. The

scheduled hardcopy surveys could not be distributed as one UG site withdrew, as stated above and the other PG site could only provide six participants that the HEI wanted to select. As these two sites did not provide a broad enough sample, a change in direction focusing on case studies was utilised.

4.4.3. The Graduate Sample

Reconsidering the data collection for the graduate cohort at a late stage in the thesis initially provided me with an unforeseen challenge as a researcher. There was real merit in having a mixed methods study with current students undertaking degrees both at UG and PG level providing their experience in specific HEIs. However, being faced with this problem unexpectedly allowed for an interesting development that I had not fully investigated as being significant. Returning to the *Design in Ireland* report (1962) the members of the design group had undertaken an evaluation of the HEIs of the day:

Visits were made and discussions took place with Principals, members of staff and students at the National College of Art, School of Architecture in U.C.D., the Colleges of Technology in Bolton Street and Rathmines, and the Schools of Art in Cork and Waterford (Franck et al, 1962, p. xii)

Waterford is one of the sites from the report that had a relatively low profile to other HEIs in more urban settings such as Dublin and Cork. In 2009, the WIT programme team had fully rolled out a new four year BA Design in Visual Communication degree. Only two HEIs, the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and WIT, were fully modularized and semesterized from 2005. Many of the other Irish Institutes were not fully convinced that this new mode of delivery was compatible to creative design objectives (See Chapter 6 of this thesis). The graduates from the WIT degree therefore had never experienced any other form of delivery and had embraced it without question. The same group of graduates that began in 2005 had also been offered internships by way of prizes at the end-of-year degree show (4 paid positions) held in 2009. This was a new concept by the programme team and one

that will be referenced by graduates in Chapter 7 of this thesis. The programme never went through any structural changes from the original programme design in 2005, with the staff remaining unchanged from 2009-2014. This same period saw over 165 students graduate from the degree (an average of 33 students a year). The graduates from this programme had undertaken PG qualifications in Ireland and in other Irish HEIs, together with the UK, and the prospect of tracking their experiences not in one site but a broader selection based on a solid foundation at UG level presented as a very plausible sample group for the research. The most interesting aspect of the WIT site was that of the location and student demographic. The 2014 questionnaire findings, conducted for this thesis but disregarded, (see rationale for this direction in other sections of this chapter) over four years provided evidence of 56% first time attendance at HE. There was an 86% response rate from the 120 students invited to take part in the study. This, together with a higher than average mature student ratio of 8% response, indicating this cohort of design students had challenges that might not present at another HEI, particularly in the greater Dublin area. Tracking their opportunities after they had left HE with a UG degree and how they navigated the design industry while they considered their future career moves and qualifications was a better option than the original design could have afforded me.

The decision to invite former students from the degree that I had taught on did pose a concern for me around transference, and this I will elaborate on later in the chapter. However, a general invitation was sent out in 2015 with twenty-two participants volunteering to take part later, due to availability and time constraints, resulting in twenty graduates participation in the study.

4.4.4. Piloting the Research Sample

The Pilot Focus Group (see Appendix B [1])

During the early stages of the research and whilst exploring different types of methodology approaches, I reviewed the possibility of working with focus groups by piloting one for the design academic experience. The objective of this was to refine my research questions and test the research design. This helped enormously in defining the research approach that has been used, e.g., the multi-case study approach. The focus group, which comprised three women and three men, had a mixture of academic staff and practitioners, and included one graduate student. Please see Appendix B [2], for a summary of the focus group.

Outcomes:

- 1 That there was a level of competition between the participants that formed part of the group dynamics. This presented as one stakeholder being more vocal and dominating than the two other groups. The mix of industry, graduate and design lecturer responses seemed reflective of their design role, or the work that they did; with the academics bouncing back questions and the graduate in a more observational position.
- 2 That there seems to be a gender imbalance with regards to responses. The male participants were more vocal and confident in their area. One of the women attending asked to speak to me afterwards and expressed an interest in an individual interview as opposed to a group/collective interview. She cited that she felt uncomfortable that her views might not be as important as or relevant to other members attending the focus group. Oddly, she came from both a lecturing and design industry background.

- 3 Another female lecturer attending felt that she was somewhat stressed. The graduate student who attended did not contribute anything at all. This was possibly because of similar issues, but could also have been influenced by being surrounded by staff members who had taught her, making her position unfamiliar and uncomfortable. However, she was invited as she had very recently finished an MA and could provide a valuable insight to the research.

This focus group helped me decide to carry out multi-case study, semi-structured interviews in particular, after I had interviewed one of the attendees and found that there was a marked difference in what I was actually receiving from her contribution on a one-to-one basis. Even though the focus group was not used in the study, it provided a number of insights into the differences between academia/institutes and industry. In industry, there is a level of competition between the different design stakeholders and in the design industry there is a level of self-promotion. Both groups have design as a core to their working lives but they represent two very different ways of interacting with graduates. This confidence by design practitioners that is learnt or natural in the industry environment is therefore necessary when in design practice, but is not in fact used in teaching in the same way. There is a significant gap when it comes to the day-to-day transactions and requirements that the different design actors perform in their working lives. For the graduate, the silence was possibly indicative of somebody in an observational role-play rather than being an interactive participant.

Other aspects of this pilot focus group (Appendix B [2]) that I later applied to the semi-structured interviews was a self-awareness of how I can influence the outcome of the findings with regard to my role and participation. Remaining objective is very difficult. Clear questions, which are not open-ended will achieve better responses and will refine

rather than expand the questions and thus avoid 'waffling'. I needed to be able to stop one participant from being too dominating and to make sure that each participant could answer questions. This could have been achieved by being more assertive from the outset and setting a timeframe for each question. Keeping a group together and listening to each person can be difficult, with the desired outcomes not being achieved. The conditions to allow for self-reflection from the participant need to be one of calm between the interviewer and the interviewee. This experience helped me to decide on a case study approach for the research and use of semi-structured interviews.

The Piloting of the Quantitative Questionnaire at PG and UG HEI

After much negotiation with both academics and practitioners alike from the focus group held in 2011, I was granted access to pilot a Survey Monkey virtual questionnaire for both UG and PG students in 2013. This was with the help of the course leader/coordinator of design who sent them out on my behalf.. Both questionnaires went to the different cohorts of students (Appendix L: [1] and [2]). The response rate was poor from the UG CV programme, with only 12 responses received over three years. The PG response rate was reflective of the numbers involved and, yet again was, quite poor with only one out of the three research students in design responding. One of the reasons for this could have been the fact that it was at the end of the academic year and many of the students were involved in putting on the degree show. However, the fourth year group had deliberately not been invited to take part because of the pressure they were under to put on the end of year degree show. So this did not fully explain the response rate. It was possibly due to little interaction between the medium of delivery, i.e., the Internet, plus the survey design failing to encourage personal investment of time to participate in the questionnaire. When design staff members handed out the hard copy pilot questionnaire in one IoT before the virtual pilot survey was supplied to HE design students, the difference was evident with a

very good response rate. It would appear that explaining the research and allowing the UG students to take a questionnaire from a box left in the studio or laboratory seemed to be a very significant factor in gaining interest and trust in participation in the study.

These methods comprising a focus group, a hardcopy pilot questionnaire at UG level and an online questionnaire would in all three situations be highly regarded for data generation. Surprisingly, however, in the context of this design research, which I was using them for, only the hardcopy response was effective. The other two appeared not to attract the desired responses. Carrying out these early pilot investigations with the UG and PG design students helped to shape the scope of the methodology that I put in place between 2014 and 2015. It also gave me an insight into the nature of the design field and the level of maturity of design practice in the general arena and in the digital design VC domain in particular. This helped me to approach the different aspects of the research design with sensitivity and empathy for the individual participants (see Figure 4.2: Value Of Design).

4.5. The Study Sample: Industry

The interviews carried out in industry were predominantly drawn from selected sites at both urban and rural locations, which provided an overarching view of design consultancies, advertising agencies and RTÉ, in addition to web and interactive design studios. The small to medium businesses are predominant in the design industry in Ireland. Although in recent years, due to the interest in design thinking and interactive design, the larger American multinationals and IT providers have, as is stated in Chapter 2 (IBM Ireland), employed more designers from the various different disciplines inclusive of GD and VC. A factor in this particular interviewee representation was that the greater Dublin population of just over one and half million people, which is the largest population employed in

design, had to be taken into consideration when reviewing the sampling. The capital also would be the design industry target market or audience though it is irrelevant when the Internet is considered. Therefore, the other participants representing the State interest in design were Enterprise Ireland (EI), ID2015 Year of Design, and the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol), all of which promote design both at home and internationally with a remit to provide support with funding and expertise for trade and commerce. Together with the design societies and associations of the IDI and ICAD and the small businesses association, a good sweep of the different voices was provided for analysis.

The design industry sample included six in-house practitioners, three freelance graphic designers and two illustrators, together with four directors of medium to large design companies. Representatives from the Design Council ID2015 and EI also informed the study. Participants from the Institute of Design in Ireland, ICAD, RTE and one member of the small business association, ISME, allowed for a range of differing opinions and perspectives. This brought the number of participants from industry to 20 interviewees. Difficulties encountered in collecting data in this area were the lack of one cohesive voice and the fragmented nature of the profession. There was a lack of a report, other than the *Opportunities in Design* from 1999, which attempted to give a vision and an evaluation of industry and education at that time, and which has not since been replicated. This may indeed be an outcome from the ID2015 Year of Design, but as yet there is nothing in place that brings the design industry into focus.

4.6. The Study Sample: Academia

The HE Institute and University design academic sampling, were primarily drawn from three urban HE providers and one regional HE, of which I had access to over a full semester in 2015. Other design academics working in HEIs across Ireland supported these and

provided the study with a broader perspective. As a result, it provided the research with a cross-section of design activity at both UG and PG levels. The representatives of these HEIs were mainly from the design lecturing staff in all aspects of the wider discipline domain. The other important contribution was that of the participants who were at middle management level, i.e., the Head of Department of either Design or Creative and Performing Arts. Their knowledge of the operational issues and funding issues had a very large bearing on the day-to-day experiences that staff and students of VC and digital media experience. Another layer of interviews included two Presidents of IoTs and other senior academic staff, inclusive of Heads of School of Humanities and Design and Print. This meant that the sampling of interviews provided a very realistic worldview of the day-to-day design in the HE environment.

The two Presidents who took part in the interviews included one from a regional IoT and the other from an urban IoT. The latter was exclusively involved with creative arts and not administering in a cross-disciplinary institute. Three senior academics (Heads of School) were from urban HE providers, whilst one was from a regional HE. Two senior managers (Heads of Department) who were responsible for design-related programmes at both UG and PG levels were both from an urban HEI. The three design programme leaders or coordinators, together with the nine academic design staff who taught on both UG and PG programmes in the VC or interactive/UX design programmes were also present. One HEA official also informed the study in connection with the QQI. A broad sweep of UG and PG design lecturer interviewees at IoT and University levels provided the study with a perspective of the proposed State initiatives for Irish HE. This included possible clustering and mergers that would produce a third HE provider, e.g., the Technological University. The research sampling therefore attempted to maintain a balanced and broad participation, while still remaining within the design context.

4.7. The Study Sample: Graduate Designers

Design graduate sampling was taken from one site, i.e., WIT at both UG and PG levels. The desirability of drawing from the UG population was in order to provide the study with a very firm platform. In the absence of any existing data about the UG programmes in Ireland, it was very difficult to try to provide a picture of PG design without really looking at the foundation or root programmes that the discipline were derived from. The initial sampling was intended to include another UG VC programme, but due to a lack of access to the site, this was not possible. However, the numbers that were provided at UG level from WIT VC programmes (86 students) were robust enough to be able to provide a good sampling for the qualitative study if it had been used in the study.

This data collection was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires in hard copy format to the WIT UG cohort in 2014. The graduates from this programme had attended other HE Institutes in the Irish State or were considering options including PG study within the next year. This programme, which had been rolled out in 2009 and had run without change up to 2014, was considered to be a good representation of recent graduates that had experienced sufficient socialisation in both industry and PG education, and who would be able to inform the study.

The interviews for the study were carried out between September 2014 and July 2015, for all three stakeholders in the study See Table 4.4.

Design Industry	The industry participant case studies included twelve interviews that were conducted between July and December 2014, with a further eight semi-structured interviews taking place from 2 nd January to 31 st March 2015. The participants' sample criteria is provided in this chapter with Table 5.1 in Chapter 5, providing the pseudonyms and details of all 20 participants.
Design Academia	The schedule for design academia was restricted to the academic calendar year with eight interviews taking place between the 1 st of September and the 31 st December 2014, with some 14 interviews taking place between January and the end of June 2015. The participants' sample criteria is provided in this chapter with Table 6.1 in Chapter 6 providing the pseudonyms and details of all 20 participants.
Design Graduate	The graduate cohort was taken from January 1 st to July 2015 with one additional interview conducted by phone in July 2015. The interviews comprised a mixture of self-completed questionnaires, face-to-face in-person interviews and Skype calls. This sample was the most difficult to arrange access to in the study, which was very much limited by the schedules of individual participants. The participants' sample criteria is provided in this chapter with Table 7.1 in Chapter 7 the pseudonyms and details of all 20 participants

Table 4.2. Data Generation Explained

4.8. Triangulation

Bryman (2008) provides a robust argument for triangulation as a reliable method of capturing the research data when using an embedded case study design framework. Triangulation or 'greater validity' refers to the traditional view that quantitative and qualitative research might be combined to triangulate findings so that they are mutually corroborated (Ibid., 2008, p.608) (see Figure 4.1). Although this research has not used

quantitative data generation, it was considered in the early part of the research. Accordingly, Yin (2012, p.13) comments that the most desired convergence occurs when three (or more) independent sources all point to the same events, facts, or interpretations. In this study, the data generation has been collected from three different sample groups. The stakeholders, although all very different, do share a central space which is that they are all answerable to clients and market audiences.

The triangulation allows for information gathering that can be corroborating, but it also can expose areas of mutual interest that are at odds with each other, e.g., industry expectations that are not met by HEIs, which still provide new knowledge. In some cases where there are mutual corroborations, this could be due to all of the participants listening to the same information via in-house emails in their HEI, and consequently all the different individual responses have been collectively contaminated, as this is more like a company policy or mantra which bears little resemblance to reality. However, even despite this, Yin, (2003) firmly supports the multiple layering of people's stories creating information and knowledge rather than anything else... 'The analysis is likely to be easier and the findings likely to be more robust than having only a single case' (Ibid, p133).

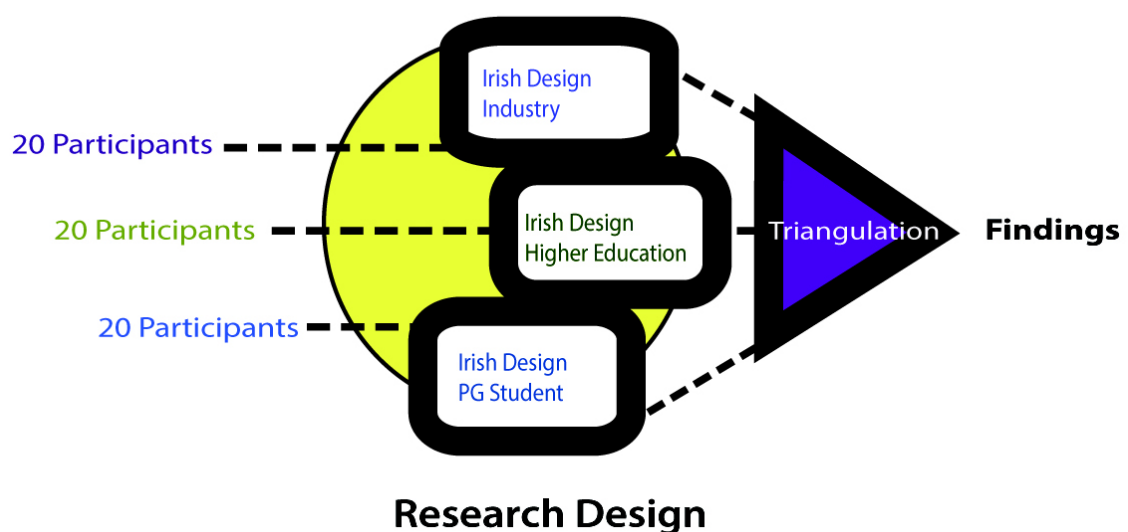


Figure 4.3: Triangulation shows the interplay between the different stakeholders in the research design (F. Dowling, 2016).

The layering of different voices in the GD/VC domain, which the triangulation approach afforded me, allowed for the auditing of the generated data. It also provided me with a very clear methodology so that each stakeholder had a platform that was of equal merit and importance, even from the perspective of the graduate. At all times throughout the data analysis, I returned to the research questions as a guide to be objective and to remind me to review an alternative perspective.

There are disadvantages to this method with regard to time constraints. The generated data requires close examination and layering of perspectives in the data collection. It is quite often limited to a single-method case study:

A semistructured life world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects' own perspectives. This kind of interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena...but as a professional interview it has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.31).

This was the case in the data generated for the design academics that had a limited timeframe in the teaching semester to be interviewed. The single case study approach allowed me to have clear boundaries with the different stakeholders.

By developing a matrix for the study based on conditions, interactions and consequences, the main topics and themes mapped to the research questions have formed the basis of the research design.

4.9 Transference

The decision to invite former students from the UG degree that I had taught on did pose a concern for me around transference. As a general invitation was sent out in 2015 with twenty-two participants volunteering to take part later due to availability and time constraints, resulting in twenty graduates participation in the study. The distance from the

HE environment and their maturity as a practicing GD/VC designer therefore, had seen a shift in the relationship to one of peer-to-peer. The participants' past experience while attending the WIT site was brief and a starting point only with the main focus on what their current position was informing the study. The level of transference while conducting the semi-structured interviews was difficult to evaluate this only was possible to consider after the analysis of the data generation. While analysing the transcripts transference was not evident as an issue as the direct responses and level of engagement was authentic. In addition, any bias was minimised by the adoption of triangulation through different sources of data.

4.10 Validity, Reliability, Transferability

As stated by Yin (2003), Blaikie (2010), and Creswell (2007), the importance of recruiting suitable participants that reflect the study and allow for the generalisation of the conclusions in the research is vital if the study is to stand up in terms of reliability and validity:

In case-centered research – practiced in oral history, auto/biographical studies and narrative inquiry – the investigator preserves and interrogates particular instances, sequences of action, the way participants negotiate language and narrative genres in conversations, and other unique aspects of a 'case'...(Kohler Riessman, 2010, p.311).

This sampling of the research design, as stated, required revisiting and altering due to the external activities impacting on the different stakeholders, particularly at Irish HE level. The main difficulty is that the Institute/Academia has not yet responded to the State proposals on mergers and the question of the TU and, therefore, is not currently in a place that can see the future. However, when reviewing the aims and objectives of the study, all three stakeholders required careful consideration.

The flexibility of the triangulation was very important to the research when the generation of the data had to change quickly, e.g., the UG questionnaire sites withdrawing from the study and the PG programme only being able to offer a selected sampling from one of the urban HEIs. The research design had the ability to be flexible and to review the graduate sample and alter accordingly to become an embedded case study with twenty graduate respondents as opposed to a qualitative questionnaire. The shift in the study allowed the graduate participants to be interviewed at different stages of their PG study, thus allowing for a strong reflective sample. The original concept would have only provided the sample of PG students, whilst actually undertaking the study and not before or after, thus not providing the opportunity for reliable generalisation or for reflexivity in the study.

4.10.1. Reflexivity

A number of factors influenced the data collection and the analysis for each of the stakeholders:

Design Industry

1. The area is very fragmented with many different associations and institutes representing different aspects of the profession.
2. Although attempts have been made, particularly in 2015, to present a more united and cohesive voice within the design industry, it became apparent through the data collection that some designers are working in isolation. They were not a member of a design society or association, nor did they participate with the Chambers of Commerce, etc.
3. This may in fact be self-imposed, with the reluctance of small businesses and freelancers to become involved with associations and institutes that they perceive as having no relevance to them. However, this made it difficult to track the scope

of the profession and to gauge how many designers are presently employed in the area.

4. When collecting the data, there seemed to be a two-tiered system for those that are underneath the radar of practising design, and those that are actively trying to raise the profile of design in Ireland.
5. The concern with regard to collecting the data was that it was not an actual reflection of the design industry.
6. This meant revisiting the sample interviewees before deciding on the final sample and making small adjustments so that it was inclusive of all the different voices in the industry unit.

Design Academia

1. There was a marked difference between the HEA provider's aspirations for design and where it stood with regard to its level of importance in the school or HEI itself. For one of the IoTs and one of the universities, the area of design was held as being very central to the HEI's mission statement. For nearly all of the IoTs, it was not at all central. This meant reviewing the questions so that they were applicable to the different sites.
2. The changing landscape of the PG VC area meant that some of the participants were more guarded in what they said in the interviews, and in many cases I was asked to edit out, or was asked to put certain comments off the record.
3. There was concern around student numbers at UG and PG levels, which was commented on by all participants as being below the normal enrolment for design.

This could have contributed to the inaccessibility of the cohort of PG and UG students/graduates in the HEIs.

4. The time constraints involved in collecting the data, which was largely limited to the academic calendar, was difficult to work around for the data collection. My employer therefore provided me with study leave in the second semester of the academic year 2014/15, which afforded me the opportunity to finish the data collection process between January and June 2015.
5. One participant stated that he was talking on behalf of himself and not the institute he represented and that he would try to be honest in his responses. He therefore was setting the scene for where he stood with regard to answering questions.
6. Being a lecturer in at least one site made it difficult to interview staff that appeared to be quite reluctant to get involved in any aspect of the research. This could have been due to professional reasons; however, it did make it difficult for the researcher and again necessitated restructuring the original design framework.

The Design Graduate

1. The selection process and sampling was reliant on volunteers for the study and, therefore, dependent on those graduates that were available and interested in the research. This meant that the researcher had very little control over the participation of the interviewee and the overall background of the graduate.
2. On a number of occasions, the graduates had difficulty in attending the interview and this meant postponing the interview. In some cases, even though the

invitation to participate had been accepted, it became too difficult or inconvenient to be able to make arrangements for the semi-structured interview.

3. The same difficulty presented itself with regard to the timeframe for data collection. Even though the students had left their UG programme, many were already taking up places at PG level and therefore were in the same situation as the staff members who were working primarily around two semesters.
4. There was a concern on the investigator's part that the fact of being a lecturer who had taught them might prove to be uncomfortable for some of the participants. There was also a concern around transference; however this concern did not affect the interview processes to any great degree, nor did it cause problems with the evaluation process. A good deal of honesty was evident in the responses given.
5. As the investigator had no control over who accepted the invitation to participate in the graduate interviews, it meant that aspects of gender, age and design career were out of the control of the investigator. Fortunately, it would appear that a relatively balanced cohort made themselves available and although slightly more men than women participated, this proved to be marginal to the study.
6. At UG level, it was not possible to hand out or to be seen to be involved in the research, as this would have compromised the investigator's position with students and therefore potentially have a negative impact on the data collection for the questionnaire research aspect of the study. This meant relying on colleagues and other staff members to facilitate this part of the data collection.

The requirements for the design research framework to be reviewed in light of some of the issues above was ongoing throughout the data collection process and therefore tested the

methods that have been chosen for the research. The semi-structured interviews did appear to be the most effective in gaining the trust and confidence of the interviewees. This was true across all the stakeholders. The face-to-face interactions provided input which might not have been possible if a different form or method had instead been chosen. It also enabled the investigator to have a greater understanding of the reasons behind some of the statements that were being made by the interviewees. Thus, as the investigator, I think that an empathetic and sensitive approach to the data collection in all cases was desirable. A considerable number of the participants had never taken part nor previously been asked their opinion and views about design, and many expressed uncertainty and pressure with regard to being able to respond in the correct way to the research.

One of the important aspects of the HE data collection was that there seemed to be some disconnection between the senior academics and the programme board and lecturing staff design staff members. This definitely occurred in the two sites that had initially been approved at a senior level, but a negotiation with the programme revised the decision to allow access. Issues pertaining to ethics did not seem to arise in either site as a rationale behind this decision; however, timing and communication would appear to have been an issue in at least one of the site situations.

4.11. Generation Data Tools and Transcription

During the research generation a Sony MP4 Dictaphone was employed for the interview recording. The analysis process was conducted on an Apple Mac Pro with a Dell PC used for the voice recognition software 'Nuance Dragon.' This software was particularly effective after I had transcribed six of the interviews directly and found it to be too time consuming. The voice recognition software also allowed for a period for the researcher to be able to

reflect on the participants' words without the added difficulty of typing. The only disadvantage to this process was consistency and recognition of your voice at all times had to be uniform. When there was a lot of transcription to conduct I used an on-line transcription service based in North America. The advantage to doing this in 9 of the case study interviews was the speed of the returned transcription was within a 24 hour period. When on location an Apple iPad was used to photograph the site by way of visual note taking. Microsoft Office 2011 (word, excel and power point) together with IBM –Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was not used for the final thesis. The Adobe Master collection was used for all diagrams and visual support for the main body of the thesis.

4.12. Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations and guidelines were followed according to the Trinity College Dublin School of Education Handbook. The research design and information provided to the participants inclusive of the questions and consent letter/form were all approved by the School's Director of Research. The WIT Ethics Committee made recommendations regarding WIT student questionnaires which I applied before they were distributed by other staff members (see Appendix K [5]). Although the other surveys aimed at UG and PG were not distributed, they had been approved by internal directors of research in the institutes mentioned.

4.13. Voluntary Participation and Confidentiality

In both the design industry and the HEI design discipline, the participant was provided with the questions in advance of the interview meeting and had the opportunity to ask questions and look for further information on the study. They were assured that the

research was confidential and anonymous and that their identity would not be revealed in the course of the study.

I began each interview by welcoming the participant, while assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. Each participant was reassured that there was no pressure on them and that if they wished to stop or discontinue the interview, that would be respected. Many of the one-to-one case studies involved meetings onsite in industry and/or at TCD or WIT. In all cases, I asked permission to record the semi-structured interviews using an audio Dictaphone, (Sony MP4) which were later transcribed and reviewed for thematic and pattern analysis. These interviews were in the main conducted in a quiet office space, with particular care taken to encourage an objective stance and to maintain a position that was both empathetic and sensitive for the interviewee on my part (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.43).

I did, however, seek approval for the research study to have access to both UG and PG students currently attending Irish HEIs who were undertaking design programmes. This was obtained from the TCD School of Education's Director of Research. Following an interview process, some suggestions were made regarding the questionnaires for the UG and PG cohort, and as a result, they were amended accordingly. The questions for the case studies underwent a number of changes as the research design altered. An important aspect of the ethical considerations was the piloting of both the UG and PG questionnaires. The Survey Monkey questionnaires had already been given a hardcopy piloting in an IoT site with a rather good uptake (see Appendix L 1 and 2). When it was not possible to pursue the PG IoT site, a review of the research design was required. The case study semi-structured questions for graduates became the only tool to inform that identity in the completed thesis. I undertook this under a number of themes, which had come from the

UG questionnaire and the pilot PG questionnaire. This was resubmitted to the TCD School of Education Committee, and another set of suggestions made a very positive contribution to the overall study.

I also provided the WIT Ethics Committee with a summary of the research in 2014, and provided the invitation and UG questionnaire (see Appendix K [3]). In keeping with TCD, the WIT Ethics Committee interviewed me and also provided some suggestions and considerations for the research. I found this very helpful and agreed with these minor alterations and, once again, was granted approval (see Appendix K [6]). All the questionnaires/data gathered on the WIT site was carried out by other staff members who handed out the hardcopy surveys to the students, thereby removing any possibility of pressure on my part for students to comply with the request, or any possible transference. When the responses were returned via my WIT colleagues, I then reviewed the surveys to ensure that everything was in order before locking them in my desk locker in my office.

This data and the semi-structured transcripts will be kept for two years after the research has been completed before being destroyed. In keeping with confidentiality promised to all of the participants, none of the completed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews will be provided in their entirety in the thesis. As was agreed with the TCD Research Committee, only *quotes* from the data have been used in the writing up of the study, with particular care taken to safeguard anonymity.

4.14. Limitations of the Study

My position as a design lecturer in a HE IoT could have been an issue regarding gaining access to UG and PG students in other HE Institutes that provided design programmes at both UG and PG levels. In two of the proposed institutes, I had pre-approval at senior management level to circulate questionnaires, which would have provided samples from

the UG and PG participants. However, in both HEI cases, this did not come to fruition, with no reason forthcoming from one of the HEIs. The issue of access to students was not something I had envisioned as being a difficulty at the outset of the investigation. However, there was a very different climate in the HE sector when this research was started, and this changed during the process of undertaking the research, particularly after 2012.

Due to the current pressures on numbers at both UG and PG, the aspect of confidentiality could have been an issue together with possible competition and/or professional reasons. In one of the HEIs, one senior academic did offer to select the PG students that he had personal access to as a possible solution. However, on reflection, this did not provide a broad selection of PG students but rather only captured a limited view of the reality for a graduate designer in that HEI. After consideration, I decided not to provide a PG questionnaire, but instead continued the study with an empirical embedded multi-case study approach that focused on 20 graduates from WIT who had passed the UG VC programme with a broad sweep of marks and grades between the years 2009 and 2014.

Other aspects to be taken into consideration were the timing and access to the data collection. This affected the UG and PG, as well as members of the Design Faculty because the academic calendar meant that the availability of students and staff members was limited to certain times of the year, when I also was teaching. This difficulty was overcome through the support from my own institute to afford me a semester off in order to finish the data collection and to commence the writing-up phase of the study. The timeframe for this was during the academic year of 2014-2015.

4.15. Participant Availability

Another issue, which could be viewed as a limitation to the study was the availability of the participating graduates themselves to partake in the interviews for the case studies. I was very aware of the possibility of transference on my part (as stated earlier in this chapter) and/or an unequal balance in power, as I had taught some of the participants. The invitation to participate was very successful; however, coordinating interview availability and times proved to be challenging in some cases. Some of the graduates were abroad and others were working and could not attend a face-to-face interview. After careful consideration, the graduate sample needed to be revised once again. This revision allowed graduates to provide their responses as self-completed questionnaires, while in other cases Skype and the phone were utilised. Therefore there was a requirement for the study to be flexible and to reconsider the ramifications of the availability of a stakeholder, and also to reconsider alternative methods of data collection at a late stage of the process.

In spite of these setbacks, the multi-case study approach provided very particular *themes* of importance which all graduates shared, and there was a lot of duplication in the responses. The self-completed questions correlated with the more traditional face-to-face case studies. However, I had concerns surrounding my position as a design lecturer – while it served to be to my advantage in having general access to graduates of this site, conversely it could also have a negative effect on the honesty in their responses, i.e., transference. This was difficult to gauge during the process of the data collection and therefore provided a limitation to the possible scope of the interview enquiry at the time.

Only after the data collection was completed, was it possible to see if this had an impact on the participants, and it would appear that such an impact was very minimal if at all. I was fortunate to be able to evaluate the graduate responses as they were collected. This would be in keeping with recommendations from the grounded theory methodology

standpoint (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After re-reading the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews, some commonality of themes could be linked across the participants. These were then coded and labelled with the individual participant responses until a pattern of themes emerged, thereby providing the research with a consistent and systematic approach to the data collection.

4.16. Summary

In this chapter, the research design approach and research decisions for the study have been provided. The methodology and social theory in the humanities and social sciences have been applied to the research design, and the rationale behind the research questions has been provided. A qualitative embedded case study approach with semi-structured interviews for the three stakeholders, i.e., the design industry, the HEI/design academic and the graduate designer, has been outlined. The sampling considerations of the different stakeholders and the proposed analysis have been debated, with a thematic analysis applied (grounded theory, axial coding). Through crosschecking responses of participants via a triangulation methodology, transferability, validity and reliability have been considered. The findings and subsequent recommendations of the thesis provided in Chapters 9 and 10 have been underpinned by the research design. The role of the researcher, the limitations of the study and the ethical decision-making undertaken have also been debated in the context of the study.

In the following Chapters, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the various analyses of the case studies will be provided for the different stakeholders.

Chapter 5 | *The Graphic Design Industry Analysis*

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the data generation from the industry semi-structured interviews. It is primarily concerned with the interrelationships between the design sector and HE, which I shall discuss in the context of a number of themes, including: i) design industry identity, ii) regulatory procedures for a design practitioner, iii) qualifications for the design industry when hiring a VC/GD designer and iv) the design training and skills that are reflected by the HEIs PG programmes. Lastly, (v) the value of HE for the design graduate in the design sector is considered from an industry perspective. It will reflect on how the stakeholders, comprising the design industry, the design HEI inclusive of academics and the design graduate, benefit from design HE at PG. It will also interpret the interest of the State from a design industry perspective.

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5.2 Background to the Design Graduate Sample

The sample for the data generation was selected from a broad representative of design practitioners working in Ireland. This included UX designers, freelance illustrators, graphic designers, animators, advertising executives, web developers, art directors and studio managers who are directly involved with the day-to-day design working experiences of a studio environment. A real effort was also made to include State and semi-state agencies such as the DCCoI, Year of Design ID2015 and Enterprise Ireland who have the remit to support the design sector. Associations and design societies have also been included in the sample to allow a broader design voice position from the industry perspective. A total of 20 participants from urban and rural locations volunteered to take part in the semi-structured interviews. All were at the time of interview employed full-time in some aspect

of the design industry sector; however, the freelance GD and illustrator contributors did express that they could be described as part-time, given that they worked to commission only. The heading of 'Design Studio' in Table 5.1 covers freelance, in-house designer and developer roles. For further clarification, the youngest and oldest participants ranged in age between 23 and 56 years of age.

Table 5.1: Design Industry

Participants 20

Gender: 7 [Female] 13 [Male]

Design Industry						
Nationality	Irish	UK	Resident in Ireland	Rural	Dublin City/ Surrounding	
	13	7	20	6	14	

Industry Demographic	Age 23-56	Design Studio	Design Society	State Bodies	Qualifications Level 7/8 Design - Lower	Qualifications Level 9
Indus 1: IBM Developer	1	1			1	1
Indus 2: RTE Creative	1	1			1	
Indus 3: DC MD	1	1				
Indus 4: Illustrator	1	1			1	1
Indus 5: ID15 Team 1	1			1	1	
Indus 6: G. Designer 2	1	1			1	
Indus 7: G. Studio Manager	1	1				
Indus 8: GD Director	1	1			1	1
Indus 9: GD Art Director	1	1				1
Indus 10: G. Designer 3	1	1			1	
Indus 11: DCCol Manager	1			1	1	
Indus 12: ID 15 Exec	1	1			1	1
Indus 13: EI Exec 2	1			1		
Indus 14: IDI S Member	1		1		1	
Indus 15: President IDI	1	1	1		1	1
Indus 16: ICAD Exec	1		1			
Indus 17: Web Designer	1	1			1	
Indus 18: IBEC Exec (Indus)	1	1			1	1
Indus 19: Freelance GDes 1	1	1			1	
Indus 20: UX Designer	1	1			1	

5.2.1. Identity

The profile or identity of design in an Irish context with the general public has been of concern going back to the 1920s even with the establishment of the Irish State (Walker, 2013). All state agencies in 2015/2016 (DCCol, DES) would see it as within their remit to better educate people around design activities as a key factor for economic growth, i.e. innovation and creativity. A better understanding by Irish SMEs of the role of design and how it can add value for economic gain was highlighted during the recent Year of Design ID2015 and the resulting policy documentation in 2016. Since that time, a number of reports have highlighted the need to incorporate design at all levels of production as a means to promote trade and encourage innovation and creativity. Much of the policy documentation currently being promoted as a result of ID2015 as previously stated is reflective of Irish HE through the prism of the Hunt Report (2011) recommendations. Both the research and teaching work undertaken by HE should have a remit to collaborate more transparently with the design industry, and the community via greater public engagement. This aspiration, however, was seen as being problematic, as was remarked on by one of the industry participants who felt the general public did not relate to the design industry:

I think there are probably a couple of different levels of perception. There would be the commercial clients who have a good insight into what the requirement is in the industry. I think in a general audience sense of the market, other people probably have less of a perception of how much they can get out of graphic design, or what they can do. I think that's a broad-brush statement as well, in a sense that's probably the same for interior architects, interior designers, UX designers. Anyone in professional services, I don't think the general public has a good insight into what designers do. (Indus 12: 15-21)

The design industry identity that design has in an Irish context is very subjective according to the position or standpoint of the general public, the client, or within the design industry itself. The following very direct feedback was shared by a GD studio manager, who provided other insights into the way GD/VC is viewed from an insider's perspective, and in particular concerning the knock-on effect of gaining clients:

The general public, it's difficult to know who your general public is. We believe that the general public is anybody who is purchasing or is a potential purchaser of design skills. I think there is a very wide range of the general public. I think there are some people who have previously been clients, who are informed somewhat in the design sphere and would look for a designer if they wanted to design something, in the way that you would look for a plumber (Indus 7: 9 -14).

More of a reflection on the need to showcase design and inform the general public was commented on by another industry participant. Again, the role of design awareness and providing a service is still seen as being very important, with a remit to inform the general public about design's cultural and economic role:

Design does not really feature or figure significantly enough, in any shape or form, like a number of other things that might be studied in Institutes. I do think that its identity is hidden. I think it's under a mushroom, and there is a lot that can be done, and I'm optimistic that the time is right for improving its identity, raising its role, and its profile within Ireland (Indus 13: 31-35).

One senior GD and creative designer who participated in the study and looked at design in a different way echoed a similar position in that:

In terms of the identity and the profile of designing, I think the timing is right for it to come out from being hidden ... I work in design, and I have colleagues that work in design, so it's paramount in our minds and eyes, but I spent a lot of time with people who are not in the profession, who are in other areas altogether that do not understand it (Indus 9: 24-28).

The concern that GD is still not given the recognition by the public and indeed by the HEIs of being important in the community was shared by a number of managers in design-related practices, including IBEC members and design associations. As a design manager (Indus 1: 21-26) commented, there is very little knowledge about the area, be that in relation to GD, or industrial or product design. Another participant maintained that people take everyday design in GD/VC for granted:

I think in a general audience sense of the market, other people probably have less of a perception of how much they can get out of graphic design, or what they can do. I think that's a broad-brush statement as well, in a sense that's probably the same for interior architects, interior designers, UX designers. Anyone in professional services, I don't think the general public have a good insight into what designers do (Indus 15: 16-21).

The timing issue with regard to raising the agenda of design and the contribution it makes to society being important at this economic junction was highlighted by other participants. This was in relation to the design industry and the public's general understanding of what it provides, he commented:

There is a lot that can be done, and we need to be optimistic this is a good time for improving design identity. There is a lot happening with the ID15 and the events around the country, still it is a drop in the ocean' (Indus 12: 15-21).

However, a self-employed graphic designer/illustrator provocatively added about the role of the state agencies and support networks:

I don't think Enterprise Ireland though, Enterprise Ireland to be honest has supported design, in the past ...You know, that's the place you go to. At the same time, they know very little about design, it seems incredibly little about actual design and what it's about. They really do. If you ask for anything, they really don't know. They're just there as a service, and if you could go for funding, that's great (Indus 10: 927-933).

The participants' comments that the general public have difficulty in navigating how to access design services was unexpected. When it comes to design and looking at interacting with the area, other than a 'pronto print' or 'on-street service', it is largely invisible, and it comes down to who you know on a personal level when trying to purchase it as a service. The lack of understanding of what it does, and indeed how to gain access to a company or a designer for a particular requirement is not easy for people and may be off-putting, according to the agencies and design/advertising societies. The general public need advice and help, as a long-standing member of the IDI explained:

There is the yellow pages, golden pages, the problem of just ringing somebody up. I don't know if people do it on recommendations or if they Google it or if they go to a directory, which directory do they go to? We see part of our role as helping people, helping both designers and clients, because we see ourselves as a broker in the spectrum. Not a broker for profit, like in fact ninety-nine percent of brokers in some way are. There are huge amounts of Google-related directories, not owned by Google, but who work through Google and a lot of this is for profit. We don't (Indus 14: 15-22).

This aspect of the role and function of the external societies and State bodies such as the IDI, ICAD, Enterprise Ireland, ID2015 and the DCCol in relation to the design industry was one that also provided an insight into the identity of the domain for design practitioners

right across the various areas of design, not only VC and GD. As was argued by one of the participants:

What are professional designers? They do their best given the constraints of finances, etc. I think the ID2015 is very important. The Design and Crafts Council has lots of money for doing this. Our links have maybe seen it. How relevant are they to the graduates? That depends. The Design and Crafts Council, they would have almost less than five percent of their members who would be professional designers or would have a degree in design, if that's what professional designers are. I don't know, what are professional designers? (Indus 1: 506-512).

The discussion in relation to the role of the State support such as the DCCol and the participation in the ID2015 Year of Design was very heated as is indicated by the following extracts:

No, it used to be the Crafts Council of Ireland. They represent crafts people. They represent makers, people who make jewellery, people who make hats, people who make baskets, people who make stuff out of metal. They represent a very wide spectrum of people. I've been posting stuff related to our rewards with them. They are in the four corners of Ireland. They're mainly outside of Dublin from the feedback. I posted hundreds of stuff there last week too for Design and Crafts Council members. They're in rural Ireland. They're in places like Carlow and Donegal and Mayo, in rural areas mainly, with workshops. That's the profile of the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland. Some of them may be designers, but most of them are not really designers (Indus 14: 520-530).

A GD designer and member of ICAD also made the following comments about ID15, the new name for the Crafts Council, and the state intervention in terms of funding for the area:

And there will be something else in two years' time. In 2019 they will come up with some theme. They know that there's a need because a lot of lobbying went on about the need to promote design employment. It was all about employment, and the metrics that they've been looking for have all been to do with people employing more people? Has this employment come about because of ID2015, or has this employment come about because of the upturn etc., etc. That will be argued forever. Keep your ears to the ground on that one. That's one I'm hearing all of the time. Has that come around? Has ID2015 meant a difference? Of course ID2015 has made a difference. Has it employed ten thousand more people? (Indus 16: 575-584).

Raising the profile of design and the State's interest in design, such as the name change for the Crafts Council, was considered by some participants as a political manoeuvre to create quick employment in the media industries, all of which would give a favourable image of the Government of the time behind it. The work experience for designers has required

many to be cautious. The sector is made up in the main by SMEs with less than 30 employees, many are self-employed or freelance. However, one participant's remarks had a underlying tone of insecurity. This studio manager commented on the design industry and employment in the area outside of the creative satisfaction that graduates might hope to have:

The global move is for self-employment, people working on short contracts ... It's not so much to do with design people now, the amount of self-employed people who do not have pensions, who do not have employment rights, who are not really part of the system but are now no longer unemployed people. Everything has been pushed out of arm to individuals to look after their own pensions, etc. They don't have holiday pay. They don't have ... If anything goes belly up, you're on your own (Indus 7: 601-608).

The comments made by design industry practitioners that the State intervention via a name change in 2015 was just a 'quick fix' for the ID2015 year was reflected on by a DCCol manager/executive who was very aware of the resentment felt by different design industry actors:

I have to say this. I understand that there is what I consider is a far more pure track record of design people in Ireland, of which the Craft Council was not one of those. I do think that when suddenly overnight the CCOI, (Craft Council) just through name change to the Design Craft Council of Ireland, I fully understood a high degree of resentment and cynicism that exists in people because of it just suddenly changing. There was an irony that the way to get the money, there was a certain amount of millions offered to Craft Council, and after that was the change in their name. It was a bit of a chicken and an egg scenario there. Again, I'm confident and optimistic that the people that the Craft Council have brought into the Design Council have got the track record and a pedigree, and they're making the links. I think a lot of that earlier angst is possibly disappearing, but it is critical what happens this year (Indus 11: 868-881).

The IDI have also become more involved as a design advocacy for their members by being very open about their difficulties with the DCCol change of name. This action of providing a platform for design advocacy was underlined by the senior member of the IDI participant (Indus 14) who states: 'We see ourselves as a broker'. It is not a role which many members would associate as a remit for their fee.

In fact, the designer who joins a society would also have a profile within the design industry itself. As a number of participants including the GD/VC designers and IDI design society members (Indus 4; Indus 6; Indus 11; Indus 14 and Indus 16) stated:

The anecdotal stuff is if you're older, you're more likely to join an organisation in Europe, you're less likely to join as young designers ... This is the theme. Young designers aren't joiners. That's what they say, because they can be part of LinkedIn. They can be part of Instagram and they can be part of anything. They can put up their CVs on line and they don't really have an interest in boring old guys, you know, grey hair, and it's cool. They don't rate them. They have those guys in their office, and guys have told me this. "I've employed hundreds of designers, and none of them have ever asked me to become a member of IDI or would I sponsor them or would I advise them to join the IDI or would I pay for their membership (Indus 14: 412-423).

As Indus 2 commented, 'I'm a member because I see the value in the awards and I see the value in networking with people, but young people, they don't need it.' The same participant went on to say that there is a big difference in the profile of designers based on age and gender in their opinion:

They're clicking on their phone or they're clicking with other designers and they're reading stuff and blogs that other guys have written about design. They're not interested. It's like boring stuff, so they're not interested (Indus 2: 412-423).

Students have no interest in being in societies or design organisations mainly because they do not see the benefit of networking face-to-face when it can all be done over the Internet. Technology is not just the medium through which the design industry works in creating design, but it is also about communication amongst designers and how young designers build their community base and support networks. Another ICAD society member (Indus 12) and a long-standing IDI member (Indus 15), both of whom organise events particularly aimed at the design industry, further agreed:

We run social events and the majority of people who turn up for those are not members. That's a fact ... We have ten times more Facebook followers than we have members. Most of the people who call us on Facebook or who interact with us on Facebook are not members, but they engage with us on Facebook ... So if we put something about whatever, because we put all different stuff on Facebook usually to help get the whole thing moving – job vacancies, Griffith College or whatever, we get a lot of interesting feedback. The metrics is there. 927 people saw this post. So that's good or whatever, you know (Indus 15: 230-350).

The use of social media was also seen as being very important to the IDI who concurred with an ICAD member with regard to how important it is as a tool to forming design communities:

We have about 3,000 people on Twitter and we have maybe 1,200 ... So they're interested in what we're saying or what we're doing or where we're at. So that's three and a half thousand people. That's about ten times the amount of people who pay to be a part of IDI (Indus 14: 360-365).

When it comes to membership and community for the student body, the IDI commented that the aim for the organisation was to link the graduates from IoTs and private colleges so that some guidelines for the Irish design sector could be encouraged.

We give free membership to students if their college pays for membership. So if a college pays a thousand euros, all of the design lecturers, all of the admin people, all of the students get free membership. We ran the Graduate Student Awards. We asked people. We got nearly 300 entries. It was fantastic. From 180 students, they could enter multiple times for different projects, different concepts (Indus 15: 477-482).

However, the graduate designers seemed to be only interested in membership when it was linked to awards:

'Twenty-five (students) didn't bother to register as a member, even though they had free membership. It would have taken them two minutes ... They've done four years of the degree. They've spent four years in the college. Their final-year project, they enter it into competition ... It's mental' (Indus 14: 492-494).

It is difficult to assess how much this 'mentality' is based on the student's age and their familiarity with technology, but there is a very big divide between younger designers entering the business and those who are older and more established. It is difficult to assess if that is due to the individual graduates in question, as opposed to it being a youth culture issue in general. However, the culture of digital technology is very much a globalised culture, which is how a younger generation participate in while engaging and designing new platforms; as Indus 1, Indus 17 and Indus 20 concurred in their responses:

Disciplines blending, the importance of digital technology and things that worked before now work in a different way. I think it's an area that seems to be changing all of the time (Indus 1: 46-48).

This comment from an IBM developer about change in the design domain as a state of 'evolution' was linked to technology. The digital input in the design sector was not seen as a negative factor; it was more viewed as a factor that has changed the direction of how the design industry works not only in Ireland but worldwide.

5.2.2. Gender and Age Profile of the Sector

The gender and age profile for the design sector tends to be young and in the main male, based on the responses received in this study; this also reflects the literature available, particularly in the advertising sector (IAPI). The data available from the IDI and ICAD also supports the data gathered via the census and media platforms for this study – (see Chapter 2). All of these indicate that the numbers gaining employment in the area are weighted towards males. As a DCCol manager reflected:

It's in different levels for it because the designers that I meet ... Again, we're working with designers on a number of projects, on a number of exhibitions, and on a number of, let's say, discussion pieces. There is a tendency for meeting people that are in what I would think is their 30s and early 40s. There's a high energy of people that get involved in lots of different things that link into my area, in terms of academia and craft design, that are in their 30s and early 40s. After that, I think that designers become much more established. They're probably more focused on the pure side of design work for their customers than getting involved in other organisations in a development type of way (Indus 11: 677-687).

The relationships between designers and the State bodies would appear to be more at a management level, so that the State bodies are not working with the younger graduates leaving the HEIs:

Yeah. Again, I'm just surmising. I think people in their 30s and early 40s are those most proliferate in terms of the design sector. Then at the very latter part, I've seen more, but my focus here is talking about those that would be younger (Indus 13: 706-710).

When matching the age and gender profile to the design societies and associations, they did appear to have a realistic profile of the design arena. It was stated in the *Opportunities in Design Report* in 1999 and again in the 2015 *Review* report that the GD/VC domain was the largest cohort in the greater design sector, e.g. industrial/product/fashion, etc. As I

stated in Chapter 2, it is difficult to find a definitive number practicing in design, and the gender balance would also appear to be skewed towards men:

We've looked, going back two or three years, on questionnaires. We always ask "Are you a male or female?" I think it's about 60/40. More males Yes, and the gap seems so slightly changed, slightly closed. I'll double check on things. I was asked that recently. Again, it might be different in some disciplines, it might be predominantly women, I don't know. If it's product design, it's mainly men. I don't know. I actually don't know. (Indus15: 401-407)

The design and communications field is male dominated, and quite a number of the participants' responses indicated uneasiness in the face of that reality:

Categorically, and again I'm slightly embarrassed or egg-on-face to say that myself and my colleagues in all of the Irish design team, we are working with far more men than with women (Indus 11: 725-729).

The same participant went on to add:

Yeah. There's a case of a discussion I'm having at the moment. I had a bit of it last week, some this week. A youngish, but again it falls within my category, maybe very late 20s or just early 30s, a female designer of some note, but is having a difficult time in terms of maybe getting enough work in Ireland to sustain staying in Ireland, and potentially moving abroad. Again, it's a sad sort of fact. It's a designer who is a female ... I think that I'm used to some ages, late 20s or early 30s, who's got a track record ... I've seen some of the good stuff that she's done, but in terms of sustainability of employment for design, is there enough for her in Ireland? Potentially not. I would say, hand on heart, that that might not be the case if she was a male (Indus 11: 724-745).

The design opportunities in the sector would not to reflect the current numbers of design graduates leaving HEIs armed with design degrees at UG and PG levels. These gender and age profile numbers from the industry do not filter back as feedback to HE design programmes; programmes which have more females than males leaving at both UG and PG levels according to the individual HEIs' statistics. However, there is little that can be done from a HE perspective to change this fact. The IAPI are looking at this with regard to maternity leave (See Chapter 2). As a senior design manager from a State body commented:

I bet there is data and statistics that could really show this is the case and what could be done potentially in education to try and counter that, or to build into that. There once was a magazine called WOW Coordinator, which was Wider Opportunities for Women Coordinator. Now this sort of thing ... I'm talking about 1984, it was. So in 1984,

the reason I was this WOW Coordinator is because I gained the money. I got a £20,000 contract to set up a Wider Opportunities for Women contract. Obviously, after me doing it for a year, and that post is still there in this institution, there is a Wider Opportunities room and that is obviously run by women and things. But I think that there's an emphasis that could take place in developing design education that might look at this and add some sort of entrepreneur aspect for females on design courses. Now there would be a good counter argument to say that, no, that shouldn't be the case, that it should be equality throughout. But I think if the statistics are showing that females are not doing as well, and yet the numbers coming out are balanced, or indeed more or are just as high, that's definitely not good (Indus 12: 794-811).

The same participant, who had worked in the HE photography/design area in the UK, also noted that this phenomenon of higher ratios of men to women at management level would also appear to be happening in HE design. As they considered: 'Is there an institutional discrimination that potentially is there as well?' (Indus 12: 890-900). The implication being that the training of designers does not see woman designers/lecturers in positions of power or higher level employment at all stages of the design learning/training process; therefore, not providing a model or blueprint for the industry to follow. In recent years, many more women (according to IAPI surveys for the last two years 2014-2015) are becoming self-employed and holding MD positions in their own businesses across social media and marketing and design.

5.2.3. Relationship between Industry and the HEIs

The relationship between design practitioners in GD/VC inclusive of the State bodies (Enterprise Ireland, DCCol and the ID2015 Team) and HE was inconsistent and varied from participant to participant. An ID2015 manager/designer remarked:

I'm a firm believer in higher education, and although it may not assist somebody today, I do believe ... I do think that it's still right to get underpinning degrees, undergraduate degrees, get that broader level focused, that theoretical, that academic, that underpinning theory. I do think we've got a job to do more while they're still there, but I will still hand on heart say that anyone that's joining a college course, a University course, getting an undergraduate post, it is good (Indus 12: 499-506).

Another participant, a design company MD added:

It's literally years later. In a much broader, intellectual type of way, I think a life is far more fulfilling, and again, that fulfilling means a higher intellect, which can lead to more issues of depression. It's not all a bed of roses, but it's working towards someone getting a more full and wholesome person. I'm a strong believer on that (Indus 3: 512-516).

At least 50% of the participants in the study supported the non-HE trained designer who had perhaps, as one participant commented, a 'raw talent' (Indus 4: 549). In fact, the creative designer and the need for qualifications such as degrees was commented on as not being the main issue to practice, particularly after a period of time in industry:

There will be many cases of highlighted successes of people that are really doing well in the design industry, who have no design academic qualifications at all ... They're rare, I think (Indus 5: 521-523).

The relationship between the design industry and the HEIs is somewhat 'ad hoc', a view expressed by one participant who remarked, 'This relationship business between the different colleges, and how it ... I had worked so long in industry, and I knew there was no relationship between most of the colleges' (Indus 12: 253-256). This situation was also commented on by an ID2015 Design executive/designer who later added, 'The interesting thing about that for me is this, because part of my role is to encourage as many people to get as fulfilling a life out of the creative arts area ... as possible ... there is a way to go' (Indus 12: 291-293).

However, another participant (Indus 11) had a very different viewpoint with regard to the role that their state body had with HEIs:

In terms of my organisation, which is the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, we're very strongly linked with each of the colleges in Ireland. I suppose we've got things called 'Memorandums of Understanding', and we've got a very strong link with one in particular, and their right to be named, NUIM. The interesting thing is some people will not regard Maynooth University as a particular leading light in the field of design (Indus 11).

The participant continued:

They have got a little, small pocket in there, and it's quite erudite, but they're quite strong and powerful. Now, Maynooth helped me out a number of years ago ... What was Maynooth's take on this? They do, as you say, they've got a design element in there, and they want to increase their share of the market in that. It was a good business sense for them, Maynooth particularly, and even today I had an assessment issue with something, and I rang up the Maynooth people, and they were able to help me within an hour. Maynooth, we find, is a really good institution (Indus 11: 330-344).

The day-to-day interactions and interplay between the various stakeholders is interesting as most IoTs (which are not yet at University level) and NCAD (which is deemed to be at a University level) are not included. The language used by the DCCol executive is that of industry or business, which is a typical networking environment, and is very different to the world of academia. The same participant continued:

The second strongest institutional link that we have, and I will name it again, is Waterford Institute of Technology. We developed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with a particular interest in an area of design, glass design ... Our links ... The strongest links that we would have with Maynooth first, with WIT second, third, and they do warrant this, they're the largest in what they ... they would consider themselves as the most important, is the National College of Art and Design. It's interesting because we have very strong links with them, but we have to be careful that our links to NCAD are not really any greater than with Crawford, with Limerick School of Art and Design (Indus 11: 360-397).

From the above, it is possible to infer that the world of marketing and business edges closer to each other, rather than the creative and art world which is perhaps pushed more into the world of academia. The issue of the State agency and their interplay between the HEIs never includes the output of what is being taught. Rather, it always appears to be a networking and business process, and not student and/or graduate focused. This relationship is captured in the following quote:

Yeah, but we've got strong links with all of the institutions. On some occasions, when ... for example Crawford Institute of Technology, and Limerick School of Art and Design, just in terms of relating to the question. When some of the institutions are going about reassessing their curriculum in these areas, and maybe putting forward a new programme, what they will do is, they're really good, they talk to us about it, and then they would want ourselves as an employer input, or a design representative input, to look at what they're doing and provide a design input. We don't get specialist treatment, so when we do that, we're doing that with a number of other bodies (Indus 13: 399-408).

The GD designer Indus 6, and the Enterprise Ireland manager Indus 13, along with the DCCol senior executive Indus 11, all would have had input via programme development with Institutes in Ireland. They would have been nominated for this by a HEI, and would have accepted an invitation to be part of a panel to review a new programme. In all cases their expenses would have been paid for, with a small gratuity provided in due course. In the cases above, the general feedback was that they were giving of their time as a contribution to HE. Financially it was not worth their while to attend, except in the State Body situation. There is an expectation that they will take part in supporting all aspects of the design industry including the HEIs.

A comment from one industry participant, who also taught on a BA Design programme, indicated that the IoTs were better than the older model of the NCAD for design training. The newer IoT system was created for business purposes and was vocational in its mindset. The binary system was deemed to be more in keeping with design practice:

[...] which is a natural progression from where the regional technical colleges came from, because they were vocational (Indus 7: 394-396).

The aspect of the relationship between theory and vocational HE was important for a number of participants. The housing of the design programme, as well as what it was producing, was therefore considered to be very important in order for the right kind of graduate to be available for industry.

I actually think that the better graduates coming out of the colleges and getting jobs are coming from the Institutes of Technology and IADT, and I think NCAD is falling way behind ... Yes, so GMIT, and on an interiors and graphics side, IADT, illustration and digital and UX, they're brilliant, IADT, on graphics, animation, great. I would be struggling, in my opinion, I would be struggling to find people who would go to their alma mater looking to hire graduates first, and I mean NCAD (Indus 7: 399-408).

The participant, a graduate from NCAD themselves, was highly critical of the HE Institutes and the level of understanding of design. They commented that design was not practiced

or studied by the senior management of many HEIs and this was a major flaw in the University level HEI that they had attended themselves:

I think that NCAD should be looking at general design for undergraduate degrees ... NCAD's got a problem. Their courses are ancient. They date to 1972 (Indus 7: 424-428).

S/He went on to add:

The issue is there's a few good people who've come in from industry, and that's great. The people who should have retired out of there a long time ago should be gone. If they don't do it, they're going to die. NCAD is going to die. One of the problems is that it's been led as an art college, and there hasn't been a President of NCAD from design discipline, ever (Indus 7: 455-459).

This observation would appear to be based on quite a common practice for IoTs and the NCAD to have Presidents from a more theory-focused arts and scientific background of academia rather than the practice-led art and design. It is therefore unusual to have Presidents and other senior academics at HOS and HOD level who have many years in industry, coupled with academic qualifications. The length of time spent in one area of expertise, in addition to the financial remuneration in the public sector, are cited as the main barriers to this happening.

In 2013, NCAD adopted the 3-1-4 programme of delivery (UG degree, three years; a one-year taught MA programme with a four-year PhD), becoming the first Irish HEI to do so. They also accommodated all design practices, e.g. GD/VC, industrial, fashion interactive/UX, with a common Year 1 across all design disciplines. This was not something the participant (Indus 7) was aware of. This fact demonstrates that there is a big gap in the relationship between the former graduate of the design HEI who works in industry and that of their alma mater. Except for the few graduates who keep in contact with individual faculty members, many lose contact once they graduate. This point was stated by 35% of participants concerning their former HEI.

5.3. Design Industry Collaborations with HE

The value of student internships and placements was considered as being a very important development across the two stakeholders which both could benefit from:

There is a big thing now with, like the UX, companies coming in and working in tandem with say, a place like a design HE and having input in it with regards to some of the learning outcomes. It would actually provide some students with possibly an internship, etc ... I thought that if I were hiring somebody and if I had a particular need, a very specific need, someone who would really know and understand and have some kind of track record and have some particular specific knowledge that we may not have to that level in the organisation. I would want to speak to someone in the college saying, "Who are you interested in investing in in that particular area? Is any of them graduating soon? Would they like to come and intern with us for a year?" And when they're there for six months to a year, offer them a job, yes, I think that's a very ... (Indus 3: 734-748).

The comment above made by a senior designer/MD expresses a desire to work with HE. It also presents the idea of being more flexible as organisations and businesses accommodate better relationships and consider design graduates with particular skillsets that could be mutually beneficial to the HE Institute and the employer. This would be in keeping with Hunt et al., 2011 and the Landscape Reports, 2012/13 and other current government policy documentation. It also reflects the UK system which has been in vogue since the 1990s.

In the coming decades, Irish higher education institutions will engage with the communities they serve in a more connected manner-identifying community, regional and enterprise needs and proactively responding to them. At institutional and regional level there is much to be done to articulate the most appropriate and most practical means by which meaningful engagement might take place (Hunt et al, 2011, p.75).

The internship and placement concept has been in place as a formal practice in NCAD for many years, but not in many of the newer IoTs who encourage students to find them outside their academic semesters/terms. The consistency of student design work experience and the availability of design industry collaborations have been cited as the main reasons behind it not being incorporated by Irish HEIs in their GD/VC programmes. The socialisation of graduates after they leave their UG/PG programmes has also presented

issues around exploitation, although in the main, this has not featured in this research study. As one participant elaborated:

There is an element towards that, and it would be interesting to know how many of those that do the internship and the JobBridge as another sort of government related scheme are out there... We at the Design and Crafts Council use the JobBridge thing, but I was pushing to try and find out how many actually get jobs as a result of it. It's hard to get those figures (Indus 11: 318-323).

The gap in knowledge would appear to be due to the lack of basic facts about collaborations on formal footings. The design industry rarely ever collaborates with design HEIs, and those that do, do so on a limited basis. As an IBEC executive added:

... I can think of are Crawford, that was about two years ago, and last year, and then before that, Limerick School of Art and Design were both developing a new degree-related program, and what they wanted us to do was be on employer-related forums to give views on that, and we did that on both of those (Indus 18: 415-419).

One ID design team participant considered the relationship between industry and academia as a gift or a personal contribution when industry practitioners collaborate with HE:

An element of that also would be design ego, if I could use the phrase. That would be that people that know they have done some very important things, and really what they want to do is link with education, link with others, as a way of putting that as a marker on a map and legacy. Do you know what I mean? (Indus 11: 701-705).

Another participant remarked:

When we were drawing up the target audiences for the year, academia and the public sector were as important as the design sector. To some extent, the legacy felt more important because the design sector will function and it works and it does what it does ... Design can't rely on exceptionalism and it can't just rely on us being different. We, in the same way that we want them to speak our language, we have to learn to speak their language and build a bridge between the two, and if designers can't do that, and in particular, visual communication can't do that, there's a real issue (Indus 5: 954-965).

This is a very direct concern that would show that the two stakeholders, *academia* and *industry*, are quite distant and do not share a common language, or even values of what the graduate should have when leaving Irish design HE. Industry would seem to be on the outside trying to reach in to use HE as a resource which, in the Irish HE context at both UG

and PG levels, would currently appear not to be established on a formal footing for any of the stakeholders involved.

5.4. State Intervention

State intervention, as one freelance designer shared about the design industry and the State support for design:

Yes. I think there's been a very big emphasis, on economic activity and employment by multinationals and all that sort of stuff to the higher education authorities versus the higher education system, you could say that certainly science graduates and stuff like that, you could see some connection. I think this present government has certainly worked very hard in keeping people in education, and promoting people to their Masters degrees and staying in education. They cut the door for people who are over 25 and that sort of stuff. So they were very anxious to keep people in the education system because that keeps the number of unemployed down (Indus 19: 225-233).

For the purpose of this study, I have combined the state agencies e.g. Enterprise Ireland, DCCol and ID2015 and the direct design consultancy/web and advertising companies as one stakeholder. However, there are very different motivations for the success of design as a service between the different entities. For example, Indus 19 presents a sceptical view of the State intervention into design as a quick fix to sort out the present unemployment and economic situation on a medium to short-term basis. Therefore, there is a political agenda attached to the investment in design, to be seen in the media as doing something. It would appear that this may well be the case but it has also been good for the sector. Therefore, the ID2015 investment is in keeping with other strategies by previous governments, e.g. Kilkenny Design Workshops, invested in services that will promote the Irish State and the economy. It has worked in the past and the small investment of 5 million euros in 2015 should prove to be a trigger for more investment and knowledge in the future.

5.5 Curriculum

When industry practitioners were asked about GD/VC, many participants could not agree on the design curriculum, which presented inconsistencies and contradictions.

It's a touchy subject, and the reason why this is a touchy subject, I was with some students last week, and they had a bit of a complaint, an issue ... A lot of the undergraduate design programmes are very broad in nature (Indus 11: 380-392).

The term 'umbrella degrees' was mentioned by some of the participants, while 'umbrella programmes' was referred to by others (Indus 1: 432-434; Indus 6: 436 and Indus 20: 441).

The DCCol, as part of their investment in design, provide training at certificate and diploma levels:

The programmes that we run, ironically, then, we think there's a really good place for them. Ours are not 'umbrella,' they're very focused specific skills, and they've been successful for a number of years because of that. However, here's an interesting dilemma. As a result of us accrediting our programmes with Maynooth, we started to introduce specific design training ... If you need to take that, take that (Indus 11: 443-448).

The same participant added that, adapting training was vital for design; however, in the case of the DCCol, they had no involvement in PG design. The DCCol also seem to be very craft-based, as was commented on by some of the participants in this study:

We do that frequently. Then what we do, we adapt. As a result of other students in the past, and as a result of the movement towards raising the profile of design, we have, during this last year of the jewellery programme, introduced a greater focus on design... (Indus 11: 470-473)

A UK designer who has worked across a number of industry areas was more direct when s/he explained that since coming to Ireland s/he had experienced designer graduates from a number of HEIs including IADT, DIT and NCAD as being very traditional in their training:

For me, it's bandwidth... I think they're very traditional. I think the projects often have incredibly stagnant pace. You know, it's like every project is five weeks long. Every project is exactly the same. Every project is launched with a brief.... The feedback takes too long. The students don't actually respond to the feedback. I don't think a lot of research methodology is embedded into courses, and I think that should be done from

day one.... That doesn't mean the odd workshop where you put little Post-It notes on the wall, there's genuinely understanding what of the process is. (Indus 8: 246-256)

Another designer working with a State Body continued:

I think there's a real issue and a real gap, in terms of the research perspective and the theoretical underpinning, because I think I am terrified when I have conversations with students and they don't have a historical context, so you're talking to somebody and they don't know who Paul Rand is, or they don't know who David Carson is, or they don't know who Neville Brody is and you're like, "Oh, my goodness. Come on." Students need to be engaged with that and understand that there has to be a depth to what they're doing. It does need to be a focus on process; it needs to be a focus on teamwork. I've seen very little teamwork activities from Vis-Com programs. I see very little interdisciplinary activities.. They very rarely tackle projects beyond that, and if they do they just service people. I think one of the key issues is that Vis-Com moved from being a service department into actually being a design department. (Indus 12: 259-272)

This participant went on to add that this occurred right across the IoTs and NCAD, and was inclusive of PG at research and structured PhD levels:

Including IADT, who I do think have a better thinking maybe than most places, but at the same time, I still think it's there, still active (Indus 12: 276-287).

There were some positive remarks made by one ID2015 participant (Indus 5) who could see the curriculum at HE UG/PG as an opportunity between the design HEIs and the design industry as a growing collaboration for the good of the student:

...My view of design education, it's going the right way. There is ... The big buzz, the big focus is about being more... Two things really, about more business-related options to it, and collaborations. The answer is yeah, I do think I could [work with a design programme], given my background of quite a long time now. (Indus 5: 554-558)

The issues of technology and the digital requirements for industry would mean 'inserting digital media into old programmes' (Indus 5: 563). However, considerations for the future from an industry perspective seemed to be about a 'blended learning'⁴⁰ environment, with more interdisciplinary activity at all levels of learning and particularly in the PG curriculum.

I think that's where the value ... You see, I would have a very strong view on where a blended mode of design education is going in this next century (Indus 7: 134-135).

⁴⁰ A combination of on-line and face-to-face delivery.

A designer and HE educator who owned a design consultancy did not fully agree with that comment, as they favoured the 'old school' or traditional programmes which had a general curriculum, such as the old diploma three-year Design Communication courses run before semesterisation and modularisation:

I actually think that the generalist model of design education that we actually did 20 years ago is more applicable today, where we actually have 2 levels of degrees, a primary honours degree and a secondary postgraduate degree, which can become if you want the specialisation (Indus 15: 130-135).

The same participant further added:

No, I am for a blended situation where somebody, if they want, can go do a four-year honours degree in interior architecture or graphic design, but has a choice to do a generalist design degree and specialise later in a Masters or in interior architecture or graphic design. I think that actually responds better ... I was just having a discussion with another designer, and if we had educated a lot of design generalists up to degree levels, and we then had a glut of jobs in UX which we cannot fill, we simply have a Springboard Masters that will teach them the UX end (Indus 15: 144-151).

This idea of having two different types of degrees in design at UG level might be something that HEIs in Ireland will look at in the future. The challenge of such an approach concerns whether it would be practical for the Irish design industry to have a degree that is so general that the graduate leaves HE with a transdisciplinary qualification in GD/interactive design/industrial design and fashion etc. Much of the feedback from this study would suggest that this concept would be an even greater '*umbrella degree*' but the argument that at PG level, a graduate would specialise at MA level, would seem to be in keeping with both the graduate and academic stakeholder participants.

5.6 Full- or Part-time Degrees

A long-standing member of the IDI, when recommending undertaking degrees in design to career guidance professionals and secondary level students, stated that they always recommended full-time as opposed to part-time UG/PG degrees:

We would always recommend that full-time courses are better than part-time courses. A course that you have to attend and have tutors in an established college is probably better than online courses, but it depends on people's circumstances. It doesn't suit everybody to do that (Indus 14: 93-98).

Another participant added:

I think if I was recommending somebody to go back to do something, I would recommend them to do something related to, you know, in whatever sphere, it would be related to whatever it was, the coming or the future. It wouldn't be looking at the history of design or looking at something very traditional. That would be just my own view. It would be whatever is cutting edge at the moment (Indus 19: 105-110).

The delivery of a design degree at both UG/PG levels, as well as its length of time, seemed to still require a full-time presence as opposed to a part-time degree, or a blended learning environment from an industry perspective. However, participant Indus 19 echoed that this did depend on the circumstances of the individual student, such as financial and family circumstances.

5.7 The Value of PG Degrees

The value of having a degree at PG level, and the current importance placed on PG qualifications was seen by at least some participants as being based on an individual graduate level.

Degrees are seen to be important but what they mean is based on the individual designer. For some designers it is a means to get on in the industry but nothing more, nothing about the work they do (Indus 2: 342-345).

However, as one participant shared:

In the perfect world, you would have some kind of number, some kind of factor of educated people in technical vocational skills. You would have a smaller number in academic life, and you would have another large group in some kind of educated tool, maybe not the degree level, in some kind of technical system, engineers or engineering, non-degree engineering, guys who can fix computers....That's the ideal thing. You don't want everybody to have PhDs. You don't want everybody doing Masters Degrees. You don't need a hundred thousand people with a digital marketing MA. You need to have mechanics and you need to have bricklayers and you need to have carpenters and you need to spread ... I've never seen any kind of policy that could deliver that. I've never seen anybody state any kind of policy that could deliver that. (Indus 19: 635-645)

The inflation of degrees across all disciplines and the pressure to go to HE and gain a degree at UG level in Ireland is seen as being important. Ireland has a reputation for a well-educated workforce. The State has supported HE education at UG level across all disciplines, however as Indus 19 stated, there is an over-inflation of degrees particularly at MA and PhD level (occupational credentialing). Industry does not need it and if it does the numbers should be quite small. A broader view of training would appear to be recommended. The comment about policy around the view of education in the trades having equal importance as degrees in professions being promoted by the State is unlikely according to this participant. However, some industry-based creative practitioners, from a personal interest perspective, did indicate a different standpoint. As Indus 11, remarked:

I'd run back....I would love, and this is genuine, I would love to do a PhD. I would love to go back to college and do a PhD in straight photography (Indus 11:198-199).

The joy of learning something new or the value of gaining a Level 10 qualification was not something that was clear from the statement. S/he went on to say:

At the moment I can't afford to give up a full-time job. Having said that, I am thinking about it, but ... It would be full-time if I could, part-time and/or online, so both of those ways would be ... A combination of those, but I would ... Full-time would be ideal (Indus 11, 241- 244).

Most design industry participants in this study held full-time positions and it was interesting that all of them saw the idea of a full-time programme as being ideal, but the growing number of blended HE programmes at PG level, even for design which was viewed traditionally as vocational or applied in delivery, was interesting. Taking part in a Level 9/10 degree programme is not seen as something that many in the past would have completed directly after leaving their UG/GD/VC degree. Most participants who hold an MA degree had worked in design for many years prior to considering the research strand offered in either NCAD or DIT. This has changed in recent years, but there are still many graduates that do not immediately go from a UG degree to a PG degree.

Most industry practitioners found the difference between a UG and a PG degree in design very hard to measure; neither degree equated to a better standard of living or a more prestigious design job outside education and academia:

Obviously, postgraduate degree is better. Again, it all depends. If someone has an undergraduate degree in something useful and a postgraduate degree is not in something very useful, could that come against them? I don't know. The person with the degree in design has spent three years in college and tutors and lecturers have believed that this person is competent enough and someone in NCAD or DIT has given them some kind of stamp of approval. There's something in it, if you get a diploma, you might not even know how to turn off the electricity. You might know nothing or anything. You might say if someone has an MA degree, there's certainly been inflation in the whole degree thing. It's not that easy to get an MA degree, but it's easy enough to get a degree, to be honest with you. There are a lot of people getting degrees. They're not really deserving of them, really. I'm in my mid-fifties. Most of the people who went to school with me didn't get a degree (Indus 7: 809-819).

This studio manager, who belonged to IDI and held a degree themselves, reflected on the thinking behind design degrees and on the inflation of qualifications in general. The time element of HE is an issue expressed by many designers. This could explain why a four-year UG traditional degree which allows for students to choose areas of specialisation is still considered as the industry standard in Ireland, as opposed to an MA PG degree.

5.8 Institute Differentiation

The importance of location and the attendance at a particular HEI as an important aspect was not really seen by the design industry to be a matter of concern:

I don't know definitively. I have a perception that some colleges are better than others for certain things, and I think that's fair because that's normal. That's as far as I really know. Again, I can only go on reading a recommendation. I ask people for recommendations in relation to colleges when people ask, "Could you recommend a college?" The general recommendation is that a degree is better than a diploma, that full-time is better than part-time, but these are normal things.... Of course, if somebody picks up a CV and you see somebody has a degree as opposed to somebody who has a diploma, and I know you ask that question later on, it's certain that the person who has the degree has spent more time in college learning that design, so even by osmosis more stuff comes in (Indus 14: 157-174).

The question, 'Should there be differentiation between Institutes?' was put to a number of design industry participants, and the consensus was that there was not much in the way of

difference, and that the programmes seemed very traditional. 'Should they change? I think they should,' Indus 17: (203) responded. The difficulty is that it takes a much longer time to change programmes and to obtain the necessary funding to keep up with industry regarding technology. As a senior studio manager commented:

Of course it does, but a lot of what it's based on is historic. Yes, it's the principles. I didn't mean historically. Certainly I presume colleges take that into account.... It's a much slower cycle. That's the thing I've noticed from being in working environments. It takes about four or five years to get into the cycle. Yes, but I think that's a weakness in the system (Indus 7: 245-260).

A member of the IDI considered the more traditional theory-based domains that have been established to be somewhat elitist in nature and not a good benchmark for newer areas of study to be grouped with (like design). This did not mean that it should be left out of PG developments, just that it should be considered in a new way when it came to funding. The design business is difficult and it does not get easier when you leave the HE confines, therefore, it is important before entering it to know that it is an area that you really want to be in:

Design degrees are important for designers, if you're going to be a designer. If you're doing a degree and it's not working out for you, it's difficult, but you should jump ship. (Indus 7: 274-276)

This HE process of adapting to change and to industry standards was echoed by another participant:

I think they should be continually assessing while it's relevant and they should be continually updating. Courses should never stay the same, unless they're on topography or something like that (Indus 11: 205-207).

The general consensus in an Irish context was that all HEIs needed to be updated, and the differentiation between HEIs was not really something that either mattered or was given much thought. In other countries, this would appear to be very important.

If you want to grow and expand how to do that. It's one thing to merge with a former polytechnic, it's another thing to merge with an institution that's in the top 20 global universities in the world (Indus 15: 503-507).

Participants considered that there was quite a lot of specialisation in Ireland but that has been flattened out; therefore all HEIs had the same issues to contend with, be it in a regional or urban location. The same participant reflected on the difference between an UG degree and a PG qualification:

Obviously, a postgraduate degree is better. Again, it all depends. If someone has an undergraduate degree in something useful and a postgraduate degree is not in something very useful, that could come against them? I don't know. The person with the degree in design has spent three years in college and tutors and lecturers have believed that this person is competent enough and someone in NCAD or DIT has given them some kind of stamp of approval. There's something in it, if you get a diploma, you might not even know how to turn off the electricity. You might know nothing or anything. You might say if someone has an MA degree, there's certainly been inflation in the whole degree thing. It's not that easy to get an MA degree, but it's easy enough to get a degree, to be honest with you. There are a lot of people getting degrees. They're not really deserving of them, really. I'm in my mid-fifties. Most of the people who went to school with me didn't get a degree (Indus 7: 809-819).

The MA taught degree was considered to be a mark of approval and specialisation because the graduate had been selected and given the award based on the standard of creative work they had produced. Therefore, it was based on merit and deemed by the participant (Indus 7) to be more difficult to obtain than an UG degree; the degree being accepted in the design sector to be entry level.

5.9. Employment Figures

The number of designers working in the different aspects of design, inclusive of GD/VC and interactive design, has been difficult to pin down. Studies have recently been undertaken by the IDI, ICAD and IAPI as was outlined in previous chapters. However, even research by Con Kennedy from DIT and my own investigations for this study have not been able to provide definitive figures of graduates from design programmes working in design in Ireland:

We've been asked that question regularly, and sometimes by people doing research, "I need designers that are in Ireland." Nobody has a clue. Nobody has an idea. I've looked at directories of student members and I'm thinking, "Are any of these members currently members?" Very few, very few. I'm guessing some of them are probably not working in design anymore (Indus 14: 312-317).

Concerns that the HE design programmes are generating too many graduates at UG and now PG level for the sector were met with pragmatism at least from some participants:

I think we're in a continuous wave of cycles and if you notice, if you listen to the reports about the CAO applications, it is more difficult to get into design courses. A couple of years ago, I didn't think about design courses. I know there was very little demand to become an architect or to become an engineer a couple of years ago. I know people who are coming out of college with their degree and are walking into jobs because there are great demands for architects now (Indus 7: 185-191).

This manager has looked at the economy that ebbs and flows and feels that education needs to move with it and that students should continue to pursue areas of study that interest them rather than trying to second guess what the next big thing is.

5.10. Funding; Design HE from an Industry Perspective

Design was viewed as an area that is given more funding at all stages of education in the UK, according to another participant:

I'm definitely not knocking our art college institutions. I think that they've had a very hard time in terms of resources. I think that the creativity that would be required in teacher skills, and teacher knowledge, is there within our teaching service and lecturers, whether that's in colleges or the Universities, Institutes of Technology. I think the creativity to do interdisciplinary work is there, but what isn't there is perhaps some of the time and the morale (Indus 11: 125-133).

The status of the area and the level of importance that it has in the HEIs at both IoTs and Universities were repeatedly commented on by participants:

Because of educational funding resource cuts ... I could give you an amazing ... I was in a meeting last week and a figure came to me, and I was with a Department of Education and Skills colleague. We were talking about design in secondary schools ...

Let me tell you that the most fascinating figure that I've heard for a while, and that was the schools of 900 pupils having a budget of, wait for it, 500 euro per annum, for the art design area. I was in that meeting, and I quizzed that. I said that 500 quid that you're talking about, that's an addition to say a core budget that the art department would have. It was underlined ... No. That is at the start of the year, say

August/September. That is the budget for the art department for a 900 pupil school here in Ireland, and that's literally it. That figure for me, and I think that's interesting because our students then are following ... that are going into the third level sector, they've had experiences in their secondary school that have been so resource-restricted ... (Indus 12: 1135-1155).

The second level school art and design curriculum was identified as being very under-resourced with the link between design and innovation not associated with design and therefore not worth investing in. This first engagement with design and art is in an environment where it is viewed as an optional extra and not one that is considered important for investment, as more of a hobby than a career option. This was considered to be both out dated and not in keeping with the digital advancements that use design and function as an important tool for many aspects of development, inclusive of UX, by the industry participants.

The funding of HE design compared to the secondary school system at UG level and how it should continue in keeping with other areas of study was considered:

I was going to say both. No, I think education is good. Sometimes it's very difficult to see the benefit of spending four years maybe ... You know, when you're halfway through something, or two years into something and it seems to be going pretty well and college is nice and college is good and you've good friends, you're not going to walk away to do a law degree, you know (Indus 7: 231-235).

For students considering PG study, concerns over how the student could afford to undertake it were considered by one participant:

No, you can't really because it's difficult as well as financially because I'm not sure if you're getting some kind of support or grant that you can actually leave college ... You can leave NCAD to do something else somewhere else. I think that's a big problem and I was actually listening to someone on the radio the other day and they were doing something and they had spent a year and a half doing it, and they walked away and did something completely different. Others are devoted to doing what they're doing (Indus 14: 237-243).

This participant went on to add:

If you do a degree in medicine, you pay huge fees,. It would have cost,[your family or you] I mean, a huge effort. They're [medical doctors] they are reasonably rewarded. [However] they work very long hours. It's very uncertain. So I don't know that there's any degree [that is guaranteed] that offers security]... (Indus 14: 254-260).

This aspect of funding degrees and the concern that the general public have about putting money into areas like the arts because the graduate will not directly profit for it came up in different ways for the participants. The HEIs and how they benefited from teaching design was considered by some participants:

The teaching is strong. The unions are quite strong. They have taken cuts, the pension levies, different levies and things. What that means is that the wherewithal, the willingness to develop more creative interdisciplinary type curriculum is not there. It's going to take a while to get that back.

Hopefully, the shoots of things getting better really do significantly need to kick off and be seen within resource ... Resources aren't everything, by any means, but certainly to raise the morale of staff and to get staff involved in more creative things themselves, its groups of teachers/lecturers ... (Indus 11: 178-187).

If the lecturers are not motivated, it is difficult to see how the students are going to be when they get into the HEI system where they will spend years attending their programmes of study. The need for design in particular to embrace change as well as interdisciplinary approaches to learning with design thinking as a leader in the area also needs to be pursued. In the absence of incentives for staff to strive for funding and for self-development, there is a concern for the future. There will be very little advancements while the same delivery constraints remain with no structures for long-term funding in place for UG programmes:

If you've got funding coming again for next year, and it'll be for your courses, you're unlikely to have the time to change because so much takes place in just your courses, your students, the issues, and everything. So you're doing your best to survive on a day-by-day basis. If someone's going to keep funding those courses in that way, you will. It's only when it really gets push against shove, I think, that the places look to change (Indus 12: 100-107).

Design HEIs should consider their staff as a means of helping the graduates of tomorrow by ensuring that there is a diversity of students:

You know what I would say, it is important to have different age groups and be visible in education because if everybody was the same age, it's not the way the world is and it's not normal. So you do need to actually have a variety of ages and nationalities, if possible. To give it a much broader kind of ... I think it's not the stuff that maybe you get a degree from, but it gives you an attitude about the world, and it gives you a broader picture of the world in general. (Indus 11: 145-155).

The same participant identified a characteristic of staff in design at HEIs as a demographic that needs to change, particularly the length of time staff seem to be in one institute or more importantly the same position:

There is that institutionalisation. The longest I was in one college was 13 years, and I actually thought I was going to stay there for life. I nearly would have. While I was in there, I thought that my place was the best place in the world. I thought we ran the best courses in the world. Everything about it had led me to ... And the only reason I say is then when I left and moved into other places and other related jobs that I had become complacent in my own thinking. I just think it happens so easily that as the years pluck up ... Now, it's not to say that institutions do thrive on having ... You can't beat having people in institutions that have been there for a long, long time, many years. You need some of those strong characters to keep the ship afloat and things, but at the same time, you do need a much, much better graduate (Indus 11: 157-175).

The business approach in the main SMEs is very different to the design HEIs. The HEIs are comprised of older individuals, while in the case of design firms, only managers and the owners were over the age of 40. As maintained by Harvey (2016):

Designers are represented by a larger proportion of younger workers than the national average. Overall, the proportion of design workforce employed in 2014 that were aged -55 years was 8.7%. In comparison, those aged - 55 years accounted for 16.4% of the total employment in the country (Ibid, 2016, p.48).

The divide between the two would appear to be very concerning from a student perspective.

5.11. Registration and Design Profession

The requirement for advocacy in the area for it to be profiled as a profession has been debated by designers across all design trans-disciplines, e.g. GD/VC, fashion, interior, interactive etc. The most active voice in the debate has been IDI which has been requesting the introduction of a panel or register of designers in Ireland since 2013. As a former IDI President suggested, without a standard of quality being presented to the public, there is no 'value added' dimension to being a designer. There are no guidelines or

unions that offer a united voice; design remains an ad hoc industry with no agreed standards. For recognition:

I think it's probably difficult to do it, but I think, like anything that involves lots of people and business and standards, it needs some kind of standardisation. The education of design is regulated. You've got to go through HEA, turning out people good, bad and indifferent ... Yes, and so following from that, almost every other profession has, you know, if you come out in tax, you become a tax whatever. If you come up in law, you can become a solicitor or a barrister. If you come out in various other things ... If you become an engineer, you can become an architect or engineer, again, an accountant degree, you can do accounting things. So these things are possible ... and if you do your architecture exams, you do your Part 3 and you become accredited and you become an architect, but before that you can't. When you come out of medicine, you have to do an internship. These things are important (Indus 14: 113-138).

But design is not accountable or accredited and therefore it needs to be in order to be considered as a profession with recognized standards. Other members of IDI and GD/VC practitioners added:

I think it is useful to have some recognition of progression, because if somebody sets themselves up as a website designer tomorrow in that building and puts an ad in the paper and puts something on the website saying that they're a website designer, there is very, very little you can do if they can't do it or if it all goes wrong (Indus 7: 140-144).

At state level and ID2015 has been trying to do that, trying to explain to people that design is important and design matters, and if you have good designers it can actually generate lots of business and economic activity and profile your company. Good design is better than bad design because good design is a good thing (Indus 11: 150-154).

The consideration that this could be State regulated rather than a private society was not really explored in Ireland; only the directory of design was considered by the ID2015 programme which had a very good response from designers. In October 2015, IDI set up the register of professional designers:

Yes. It will start off as a non-statutory register, so designers will be able to sign up voluntarily, and they will be assessed on a quantitative basis on their education, work experience, advocacy, publications, awards. They will have to hit a bar, and then they will have to keep up CPD (Indus 15: 280-294).

Both current and former Presidents of IDI have been advocating this position on design for some years, with the membership still exploring the concept as they go along:

Should it be regulated in the long term, I don't see that we should be controlling the names of designer or the types of designer. I think it's impossible. I think the type of register designer or charter designer is well worth controlling, so that we are able to

give clients and the industry a quality control mark that they can depend on, that people can go to them and say, "These people have achieved a certain level of professionalism within their own industry" (Indus 15: 303-317).

This lack of visible recognition and the aspect of being able to operate like other professions, such as accountancy and medicine etc., despite the HE education would indicate that design is not considered to be a profession. This is from the design industry itself rather than the views of the State or the general public.

They're recognized. I do not want to see registration or chartership as an IDI thing. I want.....We represent students at an undergraduate level, colleges, designers, businesses, and we advocate at a government level. If there's anyone to run this it's us, but I do not want it to be exclusive. It's got to be open to architects joining it, and I don't care if they're already RIAI members. They can be on this register. (Indus 15:331-334)

The difficulty that this creative designer has in trying to explain the position and the transparency issues that design faces might be explained by the fact that it is a highly competitive environment which undercuts itself, and therefore trying to set standards and enforce these will meet with resistance in some quarters of the sector.

I don't like to use the word "regulation." I'm introducing a register of designers... It's a controlled list of people who, if they attain a level of quality, make the register irrespective of who they are, where they come from. It's completely open and transparent. It's not to say, "You can't be a designer." That's not what it's about, and maybe that's where maybe the RIAI are a bit too ...(Indus 15: 349-352).

In contrast to this, another participant with a UK HE background who had recently changed career to become a designer in the Irish design industry commented:

It's interesting, isn't it? Across Europe, there have been a lot of analyses about employability in the trade of industry ... But, what I would say is that ... And there's a lot of major research in the UK, across England, Wales and Scotland and what they ... One of the key things is the dates and the gestation period. For example, historically, those audits were done a year later, so it's really on what portion of the students are working in the discipline and in the equated industries, it was very low. However, if it ended after five years, it was much higher than most disciplines, so the thing is, it takes longer to get into those positions, because it's a more non-conventional route, so actually, there are statistics, internationally, to demonstrate the vocational ... The vocationality of design is actually higher (Indus 7: 761-772).

The contrast of the two views of the participants provides the difficulty that design has in presenting a standard set of guidelines that can be accepted by all design practitioners.

The concept of a professional designer, as well as the vocational aspect of the job and domain, would not appear to be a difficulty for the discipline area in being taken more seriously as a profession in other parts of Europe. The need for a registered designer would not seem so very important either. According to the one ID2015 senior executive, the vital aspects are visibility and funding:

I suppose in my current role as programme director for Irish Design 2015, I'm hugely passionate about that. We've waited 50 years for the level of investment into design in Ireland and I think it's actually essential. The year is basically focused on trying to produce 1,800 new jobs and dramatic growth in the sector (Indus 12: 876-879).

5.12. What Graduates Need for Industry

The vast majority of industry participants considered this aspect to be very much about the individual graduate designer and their particular talent, in addition to the ability to adapt and be a team player. However, the most important aspects were the ability to generate ideas and be a creative person that has enthusiasm, innovation and the ability to see something through, while bringing the client and other GDs with them (creativity combined with good organisational skills). This was expressed by all participants in different ways, but perhaps the designer working with the ID team in 2015 summarised it best:

Okay, single talent, ability in or for employment in the creative sector. Under talent and ability, I'm probably going to say a couple of skills. So an ability and a talent would be that, being able to do a number of things pulled together. I think the skill of total artistic design, so not held up by any barriers, having a really free range thinking mind that allows you to bounce from one thing to another. So having a free spirit creative thinking, but that's fully held together by having some skills of organisation. By having some skills of appreciation of what people want and being able to finalise that into some achievable, hard outcome. So many people would have the creative, artistic, free-mind spirit, but they're not able to put any rationale or order onto that.

I think that the one single talent and ability is the combination of having a really creative mind, free spirit, that changes and reflects on what happens around a person on an everyday basis, and all of the different things that influence them. Having that

creative spirit but at the same time being able to utilise skills of organisation and achieve outcomes by appreciating what people want at any given time (Indus 5: 656-672).

Therefore, it would appear that being organised and creative with the ability to work with people and motivate them to cope with change in a positive way is high on the agenda. The ability to have ideas and concepts across a wide range of activities in a new and innovative way would also seem to be important. To have accountability in hard design outcomes that is not restricted to conventional barriers would also seem to be highly desirable.

5.13. CPD and the Industry Design Portfolio

The importance of industry designers being offered more opportunities after years of being in a design studio was expressed as a situation that can be easily forgotten by HEIs.

As an IDI President commented:

I think the one thing that needs to be considered is getting employer buy-in, so that employers are seeing value in staff, and doing CPD. We're actually giving them time off to do something. I know that's hard from a billing point of view, but if they see that they're going to retain design staff, they need to see that there's a retention connection, that you do this, you stay with us for three years or something (Indus 15: 293-298).

The biggest issue for the design business is the turnover of staff in companies. This is a traditional aspect of the sector where staff move around to gain new opportunities and better working conditions. As stated in the study, the area does not have unions and so the need to give incentives for staff to stay in a company has not been one that has been featured in any study of the sector to date. Many SMEs are family-run so the designer stays due to family ties or moves throughout their career. Owing to this instability, the requirement to invest in staff training is dependent on individual employers and the particular work they have been engaging in:

The portfolios are critical. Could I get sceptical on this? Working with colleagues, I'm looking at portfolios and some of that old research that shows that when you go in for a job interview that it could be decided in the first five minutes to do with a number of different types of things, looks and that whole interpersonal skillset. Something happens, I think about that, with portfolios and design portfolios. The people that are assessing them jump to conclusions, or jump to their own judgement pretty quick. (Indus 7: 1206-1213).

The portfolio and keeping it relevant is therefore the single most important employment tool that a designer will have to be concerned about, not just at the beginning of their career but throughout. Investing in it by way of upskilling and CPD is therefore the big buy-in for employers and employees alike.

A rolling portfolio for all designers in all design-related disciplines, including GD/VC, was recommended to ensure longevity in the design business:

I've interviewed people for work and signed for the company when they were coming in as non-designers, but a portfolio, again, anecdotally, people talk about, "She had a great portfolio." It's seen as an important facet. Probably more important for particular kinds of design maybe. I don't know. Yeah, one of the important facets, I would have said (Indus 5: 74-79).

The basic requirement whereby designers are hired on the basis of their portfolio and only that was not echoed by all participants:

By looking at what they're looking at. The student's portfolio, I still think it's extremely critical, but it's with the combination of the student and the enthusiasm and life and things that they put in to bring a portfolio to life. So many people ... For real touching wood, real examples where I've seen students that opened up design portfolios of work that they would have done. And where they have amazing stuff, but again within a minute or two you've been looking at it thinking, 'Wow, that stuff looks really good in that,' but then the student themselves actually seems to be a different person to what's in front of them. They're not able to engage or get that excitement that you do need. No one is going to be interested in taking on a designer unless they've some spark (Indus 11: 1215-1226).

The content of the portfolio was commented on in many cases as being very traditional with little personal reflection that provided a new approach or a 'free spirit'. As another participant remarked:

Unless they themselves give something of themselves that adds to the portfolio ... I think it's about adding to the portfolio (Indus 5: 1228-1229).

This ability to bring something new to the business or company, such as a spark that shows something original, was also pinpointed as being desirable. The age factor of the graduate and why design is a young industry was considered by one participant:

Here's a stereotypical ... I'm possibly discriminating against a postgrad, older potential person with the thought that I've got the younger, mouldable, malleable ... It's okay ... Into a stereotype in here (Indus 18: 1240 – 1242).

They added:

But I think given two students with two portfolios, and both are good, a lot of thinking would be that the younger person, the one that still has more shape in her or him is going to be more flexible. An old work-type thing, that younger people have got more zest for work. Having said that, I've got amazing zest for work (Indus 18: 1249-1254).

The scenario of two candidates going for a design job and one having a Masters and the other having an honours degree was presented, and the question of which individual would be the most desirable for a job was met with diversity. As another participant remarked:

I would hope that in every single case it's not about either one bracket, undergraduate, postgraduate; that it's looking for the whole range of different things that match the person with the job. In a general sense, and I think some evidence might show this, I think that the undergraduate that's still got more opportunity for you to get how you want them. I'm not an at-work designer. An at-work designer today that's doing really well might need to take on the postgraduate, thinking, "This is going to save me in time," that they've already developed some other skills at the postgraduate level that I need. Are you with me? (Indus 11: 1258-1267).

However, all participants said that they would not look at a portfolio but go on the candidate's HE qualifications. This very traditional aspect of employment procedure is unchanged from the early 1960s.

I think, increasingly, it is down to portfolios and I think it, within an academic context, is absolutely essential, obviously. No, I think it's really about quality of work and I think there's also self-taught individuals working at a very high level. I do think, sometimes, that it's very easy for us to highlight those, to the exception of lots of other people who would have benefitted enormously from a design education (Indus 14: 799-805).

Although the portfolio is the main employment decision-maker, its contents would appear to be very much helped by the time spent in design HE, the value of which is difficult to assess when compared to 'raw talent' that shines through without any education. However,

although people have entered the area without any qualifications, they are not the norm and are on the decline as the vast majority of early career GD/VC designers have UG/PG degrees.

Everyone has a degree but that was not the case in the past there are still a few that have learnt on the job and come from school but not many (Indus 2: 122-125).

This comment from a designer working in television considered the question as something that happened in the past as against the current situation.

5.13.1. Conclusion – Future Implications for the Design Industry

Funding was considered to be the most important input for design development in the future. Therefore, State intervention was deemed to be a step towards design reaching its potential in an Irish context. An ID2015 team member, considering the future needs of design, believed that there should be a change in the mind-set of the HE and the position that design programmes hold at PG and UG levels. In addition, a change in resourcing and funding will need to be addressed that reflects the importance of the Irish design industries as a factor for economic growth for the future. If the same old system does not change, then this current situation will continue for students and indeed future graduates:

Actually, yes, I'd say it would. It is possible because in a way design is very much rooted in an academia level. Those people that work in design I think take a vested interest in what's coming after them and what's been there before them. I think that the seedling in academia is very important, and as a result of that, I would say, yeah, design education influence in the design industry is possible. I think it does require a major shift perhaps in resources and strategic vision for how design education takes place in Ireland. So I think it is possible, but it's going to require a more significant influence in terms of resources and development of design so that those in design feel that what takes place in education institutions does reflect and have an effect on the design. So I'd say, yes, it is possible, but it is going to need a bit of thinking and resourcing to that (Indus 5: 589-601).

Collaborations between the design industry and the HEIs would also seem to be the way in which future HEIs will be able to influence design. As one participant reflected regarding the UK HE design system:

Yeah. Well, if you look at University of Newcastle, if you look at Tyneside, there are a number of Universities who've gone far more into an integrated design mode. Where what they're doing instead of running an academic type course, they're running the course now much more in industry, with industry people coming in and the students going out into the industry for much longer terms than what would be the case over here in Ireland (Indus 11: 603-609).

Programme development in design and interactions would also appear to be somewhat unstructured and random in Ireland, based on individual contexts and at a personal level. How relevant this is to HE and ultimately the graduate is difficult to evaluate. The placement of students into practice is also hampered by the location of the industry in relation to the HEIs in some situations. The periods of time in practice, as against the HEI, is also seen as being relevant:

Yeah, I suppose the examples that I'm giving there are in high urban areas, where there would be a high proliferation of small units for design. I think what that means is that there's quite a more suitable pool of places for students on internship to do things in design. I suppose with the numbers in Ireland being much, much less, if you take the major urban colonisations [urban centres], like the Cork, Limerick City, Galway, Dublin itself, there isn't as much scope to get as many students out into practicing design areas. That is growing, and I suppose just a plug for Irish Design 2015, I think that there's scope for more of that to take place as the profile of design is raised over the next year and beyond. But I think one of the reasons is that they're ahead in some way because of the numbers that there are in England. I have to say that, quite categorically, in the UK the recession was not as bad as in Ireland (Indus 11: 612-625).

The design industry is very much an urban phenomenon, as opposed to a rural activity, meaning that resources for regional links with industry need to be more of an online activity that can be of value on a global position, rather than on a locational basis.

Yeah, I think it's absolutely essential that we work with those. I think we heard today Offset about AIGA, ICAD, IDI ... All these organisations need to be doing an enormous amount more. I think they have to play a role with that, helping, in terms of mentoring, internships ... And actually, paid internships, rather than free labour (Indus 12: 816-820).

Design agencies both at a national and an international were seen as being in a position to do more for the sector. The hint of the student being exploited by industry was a concern from an ID2015 executive. The general profile of design presenting economic advantage to a country when it is working together with manufacturing and the services industries (inclusive of digital online platforms) is still seen as a luxury rather than a necessity. Design,

therefore, is still considered to be lightweight in the commercial scene. Policy documentation and the proposed developments in HE with the new TU mergers, including the TU Bill from 2015 ready to be converted into legislation, would still seem to be a far off debate for the design industry. In fact, the recent HE policy, including Hunt et al. and more recent reports from the HEA, do not seem to have filtered down to most participants interviewed for this study.

5.15. Key Conclusions and Summery

The chapter aimed to consider aspects of the design industry identity, regulatory procedures, relationship and expectations from the perspective of the design industry.

The HEIs inclusive of curriculum and UG and PG degrees were reviewed to establish the interrelations that presently exist between industry and the graduate. This involved evaluating aspects of common ground between the HEIs and the graduates leaving them. The design industry would appear to be fragmented and difficult to get consistent agreement concerning guidelines for professional practice from the participants. Aspects of curriculum content at both UG and PG and the pace of change was critiqued and found in general to be too slow and underfunded by the participants. The value of HEI degrees as against the portfolio was reviewed and found to be distinctive in terms of other arts disciplines that place a greater importance on the qualification. The funding of the design HEIs and the design discipline as a profession would appear from the industry participants to be in transition and still needing support as an entity. The value to the economy and the introduction of a new regulatory membership for design (October 2015) by the IDI would suggest a push to be seen as a united entity which has professional credibility. However, the issue as to who in the long term should police the design domain was not clear from any of the participants. Therefore, how all the stakeholders benefit from the HE design

education is fragmented and for industry over 50% of the industry participants still felt it was one to come about through formalized links with HEIs and changes in curriculum. At present the HEIs are benefiting from the industry perspective. Who will influence design in an Irish context in the future will depend on how the relationship with the design industry and State funding will develop according to some of the participants. According to some of the participants this will need to be put on a more firm footing than it has been to be relevant for all the stakeholders. The position of the graduate's early socialization into the industry was seen as secondary with none of the participants commenting on it as an issue; this was noted by the researcher in the lack of consideration by most of the participants of the design industry's responsibility to graduates, or their position in the domain for the design associations. Both the State and the design HEI are placed in the role to prepare students with skills and training that is the industry standard at present.

The next chapter reviews the design HE stakeholder and how it views their relationship with the graduate of their programmes and the industry that they are entering.

Chapter 6 | *Higher Education Analysis*

6.1. Introduction

This chapter evaluates the present situation in HE Design at PG level and the different narratives that are at play. An outline of the twenty participants (Table 6.1) provides an overview of their position and/or role in the HEI. The participation of the different academics, from senior management to lecturers in design, was intentional. These are the people who have an influence within HE design education in Ireland. The creative department administrators and senior academics/managers included a number of Presidents of different IoTs in order to provide a broader contextual backdrop to the working conditions of design lecturing staff. These voices allow for different perspectives from the top down and bottom up, thus providing the academic data to draw comparisons and conclusions from. The main areas of consideration included: identity of design, HE design curriculum, retention and progression, the value of degrees, teaching and learning pedagogy, staff engagement with industry, diversity of institutions, funding and cross-disciplinary activity.

Within higher education, research degrees are exceptional as they expose students to prolonged engagements with important issues and problems. For many research students, the experience can be intense and life-changing, making the quality assurance of research degree programmes particularly important (QQI, April 2016, p.7).

This quote from the recent 'Report of Expert Panel on the Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes in Irish Higher Education Institutes,' has been published to coincide with the HEA involvement in centralising HE (Hunt et al, (2011). This task, as Tom Boland, the former CEO of the HEA, has commented on at seminars around the country, supports HEIs and is not to be seen as a monitoring process. Funding and support for design is reliant completely on the state at UG level and on self-funding at taught MA level 9. The transition that HE is

experiencing for all disciplines in Ireland with regard to finance by students at PG level is of particular concern for the Arts and Humanities. Applied areas like design may well fare better than other areas, e.g. languages, as they provide the student with a professional qualification. However, this may only be in the short term. The uncertainty of the academic status of design in HE will be commented on together with the value or currency that design HE degrees hold from a HEI perspective.

6.2. Background to the Design Graduate Sample and Identity

The responses of the Design Academics in the study included a broad spectrum of issues and covered some of the same ground that the Industry participants had voiced in Chapter 5.

The sample was inclusive of senior academics from non-design backgrounds whose main role was the administration of creative departments (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 | HE Design Academia

Participants 20

Gender: 9 [Female] 11[Male]

Design Academia

Nationality	Irish	UK	Resident Ireland	Outside Dublin	Dublin City/Surrounding
	17	3	20	6	14

Industry Demographic	Age 23-55	Teaching Design HEI - UG	Masters Design or Other HEI -PG	Lecturer Qualifications Level 8 Level 9 GD/VC Design/Other		Level 10 Design /Other Discipline
HE-Des 1 SL1 Media MA	1	1	1	1	1	1
HE-Des 2 SL 1 GD UG MA	1	1	1	1	1	
HE-Des 3 PC LG Marketing UG MA	1		1		1	
HE-Des 4 PC SL1 Des MA	1	1	1	1	1	
HE-Des 5 PC SL1 Des MA	1	1	1	1	1	1
HE-Des 6 Registrar HEI	1			1	1	
HE-Des 7 HoS Design	1	1	1	1	1	
HE-Des 8 HoS Education	1		1	1	1	1
HE-Des 9 HoD VC/GD	1	1				1
HE-Des 10 Lecturer GD/VC	1	1	1	1	1	
HE-Des 11 CID L. GD/VC	1	1			1	
HE-Des 12 HoD Grad Sch	1		1		1	1
HE-Des 13 President IoT 1	1				1	1
HE-Des 14 HoD Design	1	1	1	1	1	
HE-Des 15 PC Des UG/MA	1	1	1	1		
HE-Des 16 Lecturer D. His	1	1	1		1	1
HE-Des 17 HoS Design	1	1	1	1	1	
HE-Des 18 LG GD/Photo	1	1		1		
HE-Des 19 PC UX Design	1	1	1	1	1	1
HE-Des 20 President IoT 2	1				1	1

* Note that (i) PC = Programme Coordinator (ii) SL1 = Senior Lecturer 1 (iii) LG = Lecturer Grade (iv) CID = Lecturer Contract of Indefinite Duration (v) HoD - HoS = Head of Department - Head of School.

6.2.1. Identity

Identity, to do with the discipline in a HEI, was found to be an issue with regard to funding whilst the identity of the student cohort centred on gender issues from the perspective of a design academic. The image that design had across the wider HEI community was of particular interest. The 'design world' is being viewed as not something really worth

investing in and is still looking for validation as a discipline that can 'add value' relative to areas like the sciences. To quote one of the academics:

I think it's [the perception of design] quite poor to be honest. I think the majority of the population still see it as something that's nice to have, makes it look good, luxury. Yeah. It's changing a bit, maybe, in urban areas and stuff like that. You have some people who would engage. I suppose I go to a lot of design events, and I was at 'Point of Signs' last weekend. It was interesting to see nobody that would ever be at a design event, and all the people there would never and vice versa. All these events happen, but science is very separate for me, from design (HE-Des: 4| 21-27).

Again, as one PG senior lecturer outlined, 'science is very separate from me, from design.'

This thinking even by sympathetic academics from the science disciplines was shared by other participants (HE-Des: 5, HE-Des: 14, HE-Des: 15, HE-Des: 19, HE-Des: 20) in the study.

I don't know. I would say it's quite positive. I would say the people in Ireland in general believe that the creative industries are something that Ireland is strong at, but maybe don't quite have an understanding of the different subareas of it. I mean, in contrast to more technical ICT skills, I think people are more in touch with this sort of creative side of the whole broad industry and more aware of what's going on. I think it's quite positive, in terms of people's view of us. I think where the negative lies is that there's a big lack of support from government, research agencies, etc., in terms of developing it further. I'm most familiar with the research area (HE-Des: 12| 17-25).

So even if design related areas are being recognised and supported by their respective HEIs, they are experiencing a lack of validation and a lack of direct funding which, while not the same, are maybe related. This places the discipline down the pecking order of the humanities and social sciences that are successful in attracting some funding, i.e. masculinity studies, youth outreach addiction.

Human Computer Interactions (HCI) was seen as an area that could be expanded on. This could be seen as the closest to UX design commented on in Chapter 2. The design industry would see this as a growth area and one that the market would respond to with funding available:

Okay, if you look at all the research centres that, say, Science Foundation of Ireland are funding, there's only really one that touches on this area in any great detail which is an evolution of the SIGCHI⁴¹ centres. There's no big supporter, no well-known HCI research groups in the country. There are a few, but there's none at the scale of other things (HE-Des: 12| 30-35).

⁴¹ Special Interest Group on Computer-Interaction

The reality is that the funding for a discipline is determined by its importance for research purposes and the level of respect that the area demands from the academic community. Though, as a Dean of Research from a regional IoT commented:

I think that there's a possibility that this whole creative industry might be something where the general public come back and say, "well..." (HE-Des: 12| 55-59).

Things may well be changing and a more positive view of the identity of design in an educational environment might be underway, according to this participant. The majority of other participants in this study, however, did not agree with this view.

6.2.2 VC/GD programmes Identity – Gender

The participants who had only worked and studied in Ireland had a very different view of lecturers in design than those that had worked in the UK. For instance, one middle level academic manager who had extensive work experience as an academic in England and Scotland before taking up a position in Ireland had this to say:

I think one of the most heartening things to see is the huge gender balancing that's happened in design and design education over the last 20 years. When I was trained, there were only 50 students graduating, of which three were female, and now, it's generally 50/50. It's actually, at some design schools in the UK, that we're now having to positively discriminate for boys, because they come across less well in interviews, and we're actually at a stage where it's about 60% female ratio (HE-Des: 15| 807-814).

This idea that the Academics' Institute would need to encourage males to take up the programme has not really been found to be a problem in most sites that the study visited. However, more females than males progressed through the four-year VC/GD programmes.

Yeah, I have definitely noticed that the gender split would be pretty close to 50/50 in First Year. However, after First Year, it tends to be more female, probably 60/40, 65/35 insofar as that most of the people who fail in First Year tend to be guys. We probably have maybe, I think the figure we have in the school is about a 22% failure rate, and that tends to be mostly guys (HE-Des: 18| 535-540).

As one Design Programme Leader added, the 'girls' (sic) in design HE work harder and seem to outperform the male students. Their work ethic and ambition to gain better grades reflects their commitment to their studies.

The girls definitely outperform. We even had a look at 'The Marketing Student of the Year' awards. We had only one male winner in the last 10 years, so there tends to be, certainly in terms of performance, it definitely tends to be more female, more girls than guys (HE-Des: 3| 623-632).

The rationale behind that outcome being that the male student in some cases was not as mature and in other cases was influenced by the peer group to be a student first and a designer second was only hinted at by one or two academics.

6.3 The Design Curriculum in HE

Many of the participants had strong views on the design programme structure and curriculum, and also the move towards validation in PG degrees. Learning outcomes, retention, semesterisation and modularisation across all degrees with greater standardisation have also been commented on. The other aspect that academics responded to was the link between the UG and the PG design discipline in relation to curriculum. This was seen as a key component in students deciding to progress to PG Level 9 and 10 in either the HEI they had attended as a UG, or to go on to a different HEI for PG studies.

On a more general level, the connection between content at undergraduate level is really about specialisation. The general guiding principle is that what's covered at undergraduate level is really fairly generic and is giving an introduction into certain areas. By people's fourth year, they're beginning to specialise (HE-Des: 8| 42-50).

As one senior academic from a HEI commented:

They're intrinsically linked. Most universities and institutes would actually focus on prioritisation at the moment, so the connectivity between the undergraduate and the postgraduate degree is core to the way institutes now look at education. It's a continuum. Probably one of the areas that is still open for debate is in the prioritised system, do you

have a two-tiered system? I would say internationally this is normal now, the kind of connectivity between undergraduate and postgraduate is important, so whatever you learn at undergraduate needs to translate into postgraduate or vice versa (HE-Des: 14| 16-27).

The graduate from the UG creative area has developed their talents and interests so that they could be followed up on at a PG level.

You might begin to develop an interest, an appetite, a taste for certain material that you've met, certain content at an undergraduate level, which then will allow you to connect into postgraduate programmes particularly that will explore that content and those skillsets in greater detail. In a nutshell, there is a strong correlation and connection between them. I see them as being sequential, one leading on to the other (HE-Des: 8| 52-59).

Therefore, from this perspective, the UG programmes in design need to be 'fit for purpose' and be able to adapt.

Before it runs through, let alone ending at the degree parchment, it has to have a really clear sense of it being fit for purpose and having the flexibility to adapt (HE-Des 15| 117-119).

The need for the structure of UG programmes and indeed PG programmes in design to be aligned to a formal recognised set of guidelines as required by the Bologna Agreement is now apparent. All of the participants agreed that the European quality standardisation was a very good benchmark for Irish design degrees.

The issue around Bologna is that there was an attempt really to normalise education globally, but particularly in Europe. In a way it's like the industrialisation of education. What Bologna gives you is guaranteeing quality. It's building systems where you have a measurable quality, metrics. They had an idea of moving from this very open system to a system that's semesterisation and modularisation, where there's inputs and learning outcomes, and that performance of a student is measured purely by ... Yes, learning outcomes...? (HE-Des 14| 51-62).

One President from a HEI commented that learning outcomes seemed a difficult evaluation for a student to have to live with as a performance measurement. This suggested that there were aspects of any evaluation system that were flawed and that in the 'learning outcomes' case, it was too rigid. Yet one Senior manager from another HEI in his former incarnation had such faith in design learning outcomes that he had advocated it as a set number of learning outcomes for a whole faculty:

I was a very keen on actually having one set of modules for the entire faculty. We actually had one set of learning outcomes for the entire School of Art, across our underlining media... We had four modules a year, so they're long and fat. We then broke it down in constituent elements and we basically said that ... I think the important thing was to actually focus on the learning outcomes and it was much more about working back from that and actually creating a system which was not just about skills acquisition, but was far more critical. We actually focused on studio, you had research and research was equally weighted to studio, throughout (HE-Des 15| 127-133).

This concept of 'learning outcomes' as a guide for student performance proved to be the norm from 2005 in Ireland. However, looking at the content of UG programmes, which would have a higher proportion of applied creative areas for teaching purposes, the same participant added that the school of design had weighted design theory as being the same as the applied areas. This thinking would be very radical, although the idea of mixing theory and practice in the same module is seen to be a very positive way of teaching the dual aspects of the design discipline.

And that ensured that the integration of theory and practice meant that the practitioners couldn't decide, "It's not our responsibility." Likewise, the people teaching theory didn't feel like they were stuck in an ivory tower. This is all 'doable' and this is best practice, internationally (HE-Des 15| 135-139).

The 'ivory tower' design school of thinking that is being challenged also has not just the 'EHEA⁴²' to look to for examples of good practice, but also North America.

Yeah, setting up programmes of this nature, we introduced a whole post-graduate provision at a college of arts and we had a one-year MA and a two-year MFA [Masters of Fine Art – creative applied in nature]. We very deliberately used the term MFA in the design context, which is very controversial, because American-focused, but the rationale was that you needed a three semester or a four semester. The four semester, actually, was for the domestic students who wanted a studio. The three semester, fast track, was for overseas students, because it's not going to cost at nine to twelve to fifteen thousand sterling, but it was also cost of living. There's a huge investment and so it had fundamentally shifted things. It was interesting. I wrote one of the first structured programmes in the UK, with a notion that design would have its own understanding. It wasn't a BA and it wasn't a BS. There, I suppose, that moved back into the BA model, but I've developed programmes where you had a BA, a BS, a B.Des and they're all variations of the same modular structure (HE-Des 15| 68-82).

How important is the name of the programme or indeed the qualification? It would seem to vary and it is also interchangeable and, according to one senior academic, not really something to be too concerned about. The MFA is generally seen to be an American qualification and not one used in Ireland – however this was considered for the Level 9

42 European Higher Education Area

programme offered in one HEI based in Dublin, viz. NCAD. A Masters of Fine Art had been established and recognised as being different to a straightforward Masters of Art (MA). The B.Des offered at level 8 in Ireland was used in NCAD and otherwise is only used in Ulster University and mostly UK schools of art. In Ireland, the standard BA (Bachelors of Arts) which applies to all disciplines in the Humanities, also applies to design.

I think, having gone for modularisation in the early '90s, in the UK, semesterisation in the early '90s ... It was 20 years ago. Art schools here still are struggling to do some of this stuff, and not necessarily that's a good thing, but there are ways to develop it (HE-Des 15| 88-93).

The implementation of semesterisation and modularisation was met with resistance at every turn of nearly all design HEIs in 2005. The American system did not sit well with many design academics and the system of being made to complete the academic year in 15 week sections did not blend with Irish terms, which also applied to secondary schools. Change of such a magnitude was slow, with only two IoTs converting fully in 2005, i.e. DIT and WIT.

Well, it was tough, but the key thing there was to try and write a set of modules which actually were not briefs. This is one of the things that gets me, is that a module is not a project, and I think, unfortunately, when people construct programmes, and they're not experienced at doing that or they don't understand the creative process, what they're effectively doing is writing a set of project briefs, which are then set in stone and the programmes can't evolve. Actually, it's about creating a framework and fundamentally, it's designing back to the learning outcomes (HE-Des 15| 95-115).

The change in the delivery for design and art programmes was labelled by one participant as being 'tough' because instead of providing students with 'project briefs', the requirement was to design a module in which the project would sit with possibly as many as two or three projects which would be delivered, for example, over a 12 week period. The value of this was not seen to be obvious to most academics, the idea of a catalogue of modules being only seen as something far down the road for most academics.

6.3.1 Retention

The issue of accountability and student numbers in design was highlighted by 90% of the academic participants as being a very disturbing outcome of the modular system.

Everything inclusive of the learning outcomes needs to be seen as transparent:

The problem with the modular system and semesterisation is you no longer have freedom. Everything is predefined. As you know, we've totally engaged in the Bologna system and modularisation system. I think we're now beginning to find that when you look at the retention rate, that there are serious misgivings on that. The universities don't see it as much, but there's a reason for that. One of the reasons is that what you have happening now is, on the one hand there's the massification of [...] accountability?... Third-level education, which means you're trying to educate a larger body of people and ... (HE-Des 14| 79-87).

One HEI President commented:

We are modularised, but we're not semesterised. A lot of Institutions went for the 5 modules at 10 credits, plus 5 or 10. Us, a mixture of what we call long, thin modules, short, fat modules and some modules, particularly in areas of design and film go right across the year.

The same participant added that they did 'embrace Bologna big time' (HE-Des 19| 70):

We are modularised; they're built into modules so if an international student comes, we have been able to accommodate them by letting them do a term or a semester, we can chunk the curriculum, but for us, a rigid, 5-6 modules in term 1 with an assessment to the end of the term just doesn't fit that development of creativity, the development of projects, the development of design thinking and critical thinking. There are some modules for us that go right across the year and are developmental (HE-Des 19| 78-84).

This thinking of how the design modules can be delivered and why they are different to other areas of HE is interesting, as many programmes would have 'critical thinking' attached to them but would not see them as a discipline that would be deemed as necessary to be outside the module system. A discipline can be taught in many ways, both as a standalone subject, or within a modular system by the learning outcomes and the aims and objectives of the programme. However, the delivery of the design area was also commented on by another President from an IoT (HE-Des 20| 831) who was in agreement with the idea of the content of design being allowed to be taught and delivered in a more empathetic manner. This was agreed with by a HoD of Design:

Yes. Fat and thin/long delivery would work, and if you could combine it with other support tools, because one of the things we were looking at yesterday and we were discussing: can you use other types of supports like technology, to provide the support, where everything is not delivered in the classroom, but areas that you may ... Blended learning is the way forward. Yes, and you also have to be aware that we've got what you call now the so-called 'digital natives' coming in (HE-Des 14| 171-190).

The use of technology in every HE teaching and learning context as the norm with the module or semesterised system is important. A transformation in delivery with blended learning and Moodle/Blackboard support is happening through technology and needs to occur if HE is to be relevant and in keeping with a changing student cohort who in turn reflect broader societal trends.

These 'digital natives' together with the modules with either 'fat or thin delivery' systems are in the process of continuous change. What is very particular to the design and other creative media areas is the content of the modules, an issue which is increasingly being questioned in the Irish context. As one senior academic explained:

There are ways to empower students and it is difficult, but I think, in the context of design, in the final year, where you're expecting students to self-generate projects, they're actually, intellectually, developing skillsets which wouldn't necessarily be [required for other domains other than design]... In some other disciplines, they wouldn't be expected to do it all. And that's really an issue, to the translating that it needs for delivery (HE-Des 15| 172-185).

This participant highlights the broad nature of GD and how this changes the experience for a design student. The final year major project in many HEIs is linked with a design firm and/or the design Institutes such as IAPY and, although these were seen to be desirable, there was also a need to maintain a coherent educational rationale, as one participant commented:

... to operate in multiple manners and yes, I don't think you can run a design programme where you're not doing huge amounts of light projects. There has to still be the educational rationale for it. Just being a light project isn't enough – it's the quality of the light project, it's the experience of that. I think that we do have to respond to the industry's needs, but it's more than training, it's education (HE-Des 15| 229-236).

The concern therefore as per the above participant is that the students, be they at UG or PG levels, are not getting 'an education' but are only being produced for industry and that

there is a danger that the HE project briefs are 'light projects' (a project which has a set objective and a given conclusion which allows for a limited engagement of learning). It needs to be structured so that these projects also have a 'quality' to them and that they 'operate in multiple manners'. This would suggest that the curriculum provides more than just a skillset that is dictated by design firms with a wish list.

6.3.2 Student Standards with Expanding Numbers

The other issue that was raised in connection with design is funding which was seen as a general concern for all of HE Humanities.

This grim depiction of the Arts under siege as depicted by Hayes (see 2015, pp. 87-96, Chapter 3) might well be extended out to all of HE as it 'battles' to find a place that fits with the current HEA agenda. The HEA role has become more prominent (Walsh, 2014b, p.33, Highman, 2014, p.263) with a central position that, even for an area like design which naturally works as a professional qualification, suggests it too can be split up and divided – e.g. design thinking can be used as a module for marketing and UX across all programmes as a problem solving module. In this way, VC is no longer seen as a discipline in its own right but one that can service the more lucrative sciences and business degrees with design being broken up into components of 'design thinking', 'presentation skills' and web/desktop publishing (DTP).

In order to be viable, the HEIs need numbers at UG level to gain state funding and they in turn need to attract students to PG that are deemed to be useful for the knowledge economy – in particular the HEIs as at Masters level programmes are needed that will attract numbers, such as those in the Business School that work directly into employment opportunities. An example of this is the MBA. This in turn allows for the state to be able to

facilitate funding as it is a requirement for long-term growth in the Irish economy. As one design course leader in a regional IoT stated:

I think one of the problems that's happened now in the last maybe 10 years is the pressure on colleges to increase the numbers of students on courses, and this has affected design as well. It has meant that people have been specialising....And sub-specialising; this is not the students, this is the colleges (HE-Des 20| 164-168).

A senior academic from a University commented that when it comes to the Arts at PG level, all Humanities inclusive of music, drama and film etc., were areas in which the faculties had worked very hard to keep standards up during the Irish economic crisis which was at its height in 2008:

My numbers, my applications have remained high as well for postgraduate in drama here in this school. The same in the school of drama, film and music. They have remained consistently high across level eight, nine and ten. This year, I think either we're seeing people are immigrating or, I don't know what's going on. It is just this year I saw a substantial, first year [low student numbers] in all of the 14 years offering the masters. [The] numbers of applications were halved for the drama pathway. We're seeing this in music as well. I don't think the climate out there has changed, so people still think they're in the downturn (HE-Des 8| 228-238).

This same academic had found that in the 14 years they had been offering PG drama places that there was now a poor response in terms of student enrolment. This surprised them as just when things would appear to be on the turn and getting better within the Irish economy, the numbers of students entering both UG and PG had fallen off dramatically. There seemed to be no reason for this but as s/he surmised:

[...] it would be worth talking about, because it's clearly not related to job prospects. Job prospects in the Arts are very poor, and people become self-employers, or they're jobbing artists in that sense. They do fine (HE-Des 8| 321-325).

However, as a means of supporting programmes, one design lecturer was very much in favour of providing a generalist education, which would lead to more students of design staying in the system for longer, as they would only specialise at PG level:

I think that the move by the department to try and force a first-year generalist is really good, but I actually think we should push that out. We should be thinking of education as a primary and secondary degree, undergraduate and post-graduate. We should really,

because seriously, where are you going if you don't have a Masters these days, even in design? (HE-Des 2| 173-177).

The so-called credentialism of degrees suggests the idea of the UG having the same market value as a 'Leaving Certificate' did in the past, according to one participant. The participant commented, "Where are you going if you don't have a Masters these days, even in design?" Here, the phrase 'even in design' is perhaps telling, as it is still not considered to be the 'norm' and its 'value' is one that is filtering in slowly with the younger graduates. Another design programme coordinator (HE-Des 4) explained the '3 plus 2 plus 3' model (mapping into the Bologna three cycles). This model of a UG of three to four years with a one to two-year MA and a three to four-year fulltime PhD is in fact one which NCAD adapted in 2013 but has been seen to have a limited amount of appeal at the time of writing. However, the NCAD model has a three-year UG and the IoTs generally offer a four-year degree. HE-Des 20| 173-177 added in relation to the three-year design degree being one that they would like to see implemented in their HEI, "No, that would be like a 4 plus 2" (HE-Des 20| 186). The idea of offering a blended (offering different pathway options) UG degree in general design practice or a discipline such as VC/GD provided in the same HEI to give options to students, would seem a luxury that most HEIs would not have considered in the past as they have not been offered in any HEI in Ireland. However, another participant maintained:

That makes the argument for a blended model [providing disciplines that will facilitate different pathways options for the student] where you do give people the option to do a four-year disciplinary degree, and then another degree which is actually a career in design, where that role that you're doing now today is provided... (HE-Des 20| 182-184).

The inter-relationship between the HEI and the design industry was one that also met with some possibilities as regards acquiring skills and increasing numbers in the future.

I think the one thing that needs to be considered is getting employer buy-in, so that employers are seeing value in staff, and doing CPD. We're actually giving them time off to do something. I know that's hard from a billing point of view, but if they see that they're going to retain design staff... They need to see that there's a retention connection, that you do this, you stay with us for 3 years or something (HE-Des 16| 300-320).

The concern that the programmes offered might not be able to help or be suitable for the industry was not even considered by this lecturer. The use of creative disciplines being broken into shorter components that can service industry was a theme that was returned to by a number of participants (HE-Des: 9, HE-Des: 5, HE-Des: 6, HE-Des: 19, HE-Des: 14). This was echoed by one senior academic manager:

It makes a number of differences on an employability level. Unfortunately what's happened with the Arts is that they have started to occupy a subservient kind of service level role, which I'm not happy with (HE-Des: 8| 434-441).

The students when entering HE and deciding on their opportunities might well want to study a discipline in its pure form but settle for financial reasons to go for a 'diluted' alternative, i.e. a liberal arts degree that offers two pathways. This would allow for employment when graduating, e.g. in teaching. The same participant added:

[...] because they're getting funding. They're looking for money from the health services, they're becoming more applied than they should be in my mind. The likes of The Abbey should be doing pure arts engagement for people. They shouldn't be watering it, or diluting it, or changing it or amending so that it now fits into schools, at school timetables, as their bread and butter. They're doing that now in order to survive more and more (HE-Des: 8| 443-451).

Thus, the disciplines as a single pathway may well be a thing of the past as more and more numbers depend on the ability of the graduate to be able to walk directly into a job, as remarked on by the same person:

They're saying, "Because I want to get a job." It's not that they're going to be a lecturer or anything like that, but they're thinking, "I'll be more credible to a school, a community group, a crèche, whatever, with an educational handle on it" (HE-Des: 8| 452-458).

The lecturers may well want their students to be discipline-specific, but often this is as a result of many students experiencing pressure from parents and family to do something that has a future that may be away from any applied discipline area:

If they choose, but it has to be their choice. It's very easy for me to sit here, who is a person in a job, but I do feel that it's not always their choice, that the choice is predicated on the need to live and to survive (HE-Des: 8| 539 -543).

Even a senior academic found it difficult to be able to justify making a case for some students taking up an area like drama rather than the 'therapy' speech modules that are on offer which allow for a Plan B. Another concern that the numbers situation has had on HE is the standard of entry into some of the programmes. As one participant commented:

... coming in with a lower, if you like, standard. Not intellect, standard. It could be the same, but it's not necessarily, whereas at the same time, the universities are being highly selective. They are not moving so much in terms of opening the doors (HE-Des: 14| 89-93).

Just like other disciplines, entry points are lower and the numbers are falling in all UG design and art degree programmes as was stated in Chapter 3. The other aspect of this is that students that would not normally be following a PG degree are now looking to it as an entry level to the job they want as against what they can get.

Yes, which is not good, because not everybody, A, is ready for a doctorate; B, needs a doctorate; C, is able, which is different from being ready. They're not academically able, because there are certain - For sure, and very demanding academic and challenging criteria. There's a real problem in the system at the moment, because it's seen as the right of entry and the right of passage. Yet, if people were engaged in employment, and engaged in activities within their area, they would learn more, engage with their disciplines (HE-Des: 8| 584-595).

Not all students have the ability to be at PG level and many would be more suited for other pursuits according to HE-Des: 8| 584-595, as a doctorate is not for everyone. Nor indeed should it be.

6.4 The Value of Degrees Generally and in VC/GD

The value of degrees has altered over the years with comments being made like 'degree inflation' which has seen a rise in students in Ireland taking degrees after the Leaving Certificate. The value that degrees at UG and PG have is dependent on a number of variables: the market value, the career value and the personal value to the graduate in the short to medium term career they follow in the design field. In the design domain, the

workforce, as indicated in Chapter 2, would appear to be well educated, with a minimum of a Level 8 degree now being seen as the standard across the sector. The desire for PG degrees would arguably be in keeping with other disciplines against the industry standard.

I think that the student themselves recognised that if you want to move up in a company not having a degree will only take you so far. Whilst the degree might make a difference in your starting salary even for the first couple of years, I think longer term even a degree would not be sufficient but maybe even a Masters would be expected for any senior management position. We also have the MBA programme here, and for that senior managers are coming back. I'd say the average age profile of the MBA would probably be mid to late 30s. These are people mostly who finished their education at 21 but now realise that they're looking for that promotion and the MBA is needed (HE-Des: 3| 475-488).

As stated in the previous section, the desire for PG qualifications has been brought about by a number of issues including: 1) so-called inflation/credentialism of degrees; 2) the economic downturn; 3) pressure from the HEA to increase student numbers and 4) the State to increase revenue.

There's two things there. One is that a PhD in itself gives people the skills, if you like, or the knowledge or the training to manage their own development, to ... It's more fundamental than that. It actually provides you with the tools that allow you to abstract, to deal with very complex issues and problems, and then to order them and structure them in a way that really gives you an awful lot of autonomy. Also, the other thing is that it gives you a lot more control over your own development as a person, but also as a professional person. In the whole design area, it's like what do you get in addition to that? I suppose it depends where you're coming from (HE-Des: 14| 711-724).

The education of desirable life skills would seem odd at a PG level, but perhaps not as people consider their opportunities. As one participant added, when it comes to qualifications, it is not about where you get them – the only factor being considered is actually having them:

Well, anybody can set up a business tomorrow and say, "There they are." They've set up the International Irish Design Academy for Visual Studies or whatever, and they can do it (HE-Des: 15| 335-338).

The need for a programme that students are undertaking to be of a standard which is recognised in design circles and admired is also one that is fading but is still of importance.

I don't know really. You get a feeling that some are better than other [colleges] but that might be only some students that you have seen their work and it looks well (HE: 11| 233-236)

The location or space that one HEI has compared to another can in some cases make a difference to graduates and some employers, e.g. NCAD or the DIT. These programmes have to be suitable for the graduate to be able to gain employment.

Well, it certainly means that the ivory towers have to be fit for purpose. Would you do a Masters, or an equivalent of a Masters at Rhode Island, or would you go to NCAD? That's a big question (HE-Des: 15| 343-346).

The value of the PG design degree is that it will provide a structure that allows for a philosophical approach as well as a clear agenda to go deeper into a creative discipline. It therefore has value that might not be one that will give a financial return, at least not immediately, but is one that gives the participant a method to assimilate information and provide her/him with a balanced world-view. It is not a conversion course:

In design, fundamentally, the idea with that was codifying the notion of it being a self-generated project. Most Masters, traditionally ... and actually, and most undergraduate courses are at times, pretty much the final year, "Well, just write your brief, get on with it." It's not structured. It's a huge contrast to say what you might get at design academy, which is meant to be as liberal as you can get. There's actually a very clear philosophical agenda, and I guess it's an Italian model, but they still have to have a really clear sense of stuff, learning contracts, all that stuff ... I think it is a clear differentiation that, what's the professional qualification, what's an academic qualification? How do they nest and marry? It is that balance. There is a difference between something that continues, there's a difference between something that's a conversion course ... (HE-Des: 15| 152-164).

The same participant added :

Yes. And I suppose, traditionally, a lot of Masters courses were, effectively, conversion courses (HE-Des: 15| 41-42).

The design HEI programme which is standardised at both UG and PG has brought about team teaching and structures in HE that are more of a European approach and in particular an Italian way of looking at PG degrees, e.g. the Bologna declaration. The time scale of how long it takes to get these qualifications has caused some concerns among participants,

who state that within the context of a financial and economic downturn, it is not the best time to be trying to offer the Level 9 and 10 degrees in design and the arts.

I think, to my mind, it is about trying to create a structured set of scaffolding. It's the same with the platforms, and so I think they should directly feed into things. I think that's the notion of Bologna. Certainly, in the experience of writing programmes and validating programmes endlessly and one of the important aspects, I think, was the notion of whether it's that continuous progression. To some extent, in the current financial situation, the fantasy of five year programmes or seven year programmes was up against lifelong learning levels and I do think post-grads, I think there is a real issue about how you balance students who are progressing for an undergraduate directly on and haven't spent time out. Then sometimes, how you can marry that up with people who are using it as a career path, CPD activity, and there is a conflict there, at times, culturally and socially (HE-Des: 15| 24-34).

The career path for a mature person and the individual that is leaving with a UG at 21 or 22 years of age is quite different. However, the number of people setting up a business on their own is making design one of the fastest areas for freelance opportunities; possibly due to a lack of positions in established design firms, with CPD activity being the most important thing once the degrees are in place. The PG qualifications, if they are to be valued, need to provide something new to a UG – otherwise there is no point in doing them, according to one programme coordinator:

"Yeah, but the undergraduates shouldn't back up the post-grads," and you're going with the distance. And distance is key, it's not the same. It's not more of the same. It is a different experience (HE-Des: 15| 45-48).

The degree, however, does not mean that you are guaranteed success so their value has to be coupled with finding your niche area and being able to 'prove yourself in the real world'.

A PhD is good but degrees are only an introduction and they work in 'tandem' with being able to design well and being able to be competitive and innovative:

...your qualifications are like an introduction. It's the personality and the person themselves will make sure that they get on, that they get better money. It's not actually the letters you have after your name, because you have to prove yourself. I don't think that because you get a few letters after your name, that you deserve to start at a certain level. Industry is totally different from it, but it is a good indication of where you fit. It has to be up to the individual to prove their worth themselves. I don't believe, just because you've got something, or a PhD, that you deserve all of this. You have to have something else to back it up. It needs a tandem to support (HE-Des: 11| 487-495).

As one design marketing lecturer, who was a long-standing course coordinator stated, there is little point in giving up a good job to do a degree when you can find another alternative and be able to be financially independent. Part-time programmes are being offered more and more and they can be a very good option for the right candidate.

All I can see from the industry point... well, these people are dedicated, these people work hard. These people have spent time on [doing a part-time course]. If they're not going to give up on that, they're not going to give up on work. It shows more character than coming in because you're this (HE-Des: 11| 499-502).

The type of degree being undertaken by design students at PG level is also changing. But as one senior design programme coordinator commented, it does not mean that the programmes are that different:

Yeah, that's key. It can't be more of the same, but I do think there does need to be a much better underpinning [of design principles], and I think one of the problems is having that experience of a post-graduate provision. I think, in my life, unfortunately, I've written MAs, MSEs, MRes, They all have certain nuances and over a 20 year academic career, they've all gone in and out of fashion and that's the bizarre bit, so I think ... I think it's fair to say that the change that higher education's gone through [in the UK] ... I suppose the commodification of it, the implementation of education in the UK [may happen here] (HE-Des: 15| 50 -62).

The full-time research degree provides a different experience to that of the new structured degrees now being offered. There has always been a little bit of a snobbery value to a research degree, which may or may not last the test of time as the new professional and structured degrees become the norm.

But, I do think there needed to be a clear sense of what the Masters is and a differentiation in notion of what that is. That was one of the things where there was a lot of traction, particularly from Australia, about the notion of the MRes and the Master of Research (HE-Des: 15| 145-150).

The positive feedback that was mentioned by academics repeatedly throughout this research study was that the creative arts discipline is 'on the up' however that funding in the future was going to be strategic. This comment would be in line with the policy documentation (Hunt et al, 2011) the reference to ID15 providing the future optimism.

All of this is very positive, especially with the ID '15 and the injection of €5 million into the economy (Appendix L) for design alone and €35.5 million being promised in the 2017 budget for HE. The reality is that much of the thinking behind ID '15 was not really 'joined up' and thus it needs to be more collaborative with all of the stakeholders coming together to offer a cohesive industry.

I suppose in general terms I think people are looking for more creative solutions. I was at the US embassy and they had a 'creative minds' conference the other day that they hoped to have on an annual basis. Creativity is seen as important to Europe. It's seen as important and after the conference, this guy was saying that someone who advanced research defence and advanced research whatever in the States believes that creativity is now a national security issue. When creativity has gotten up to that level, you think there might be something to this. (HE-Des: 7| 801-809).

Research funding for PG design and the creative arts in general has yet to materialise in order for it to be seen as a competitive tool for not just economic recovery but for a balanced society that looks at aesthetics and creative practices as having value. This would be in keeping with the literature in this area.

6.5 A Changing Discipline? Academic Staff

The change and shift in design communications as a set of practices was explained by a number of design academic participants as being very important at this moment. This change has come with 'design thinking' or 'problem solving' being added to many media programmes and with a broad section of disciplines adapting skills that help with presentations, both online and offline. These creative techniques provide a new or different approach to projects and they are now seen as very much a knowledge economy (KE) tool for innovation. As a Programme leader for an MA degree explained:

And it's always been around, like man has always been innovated from the beginning and it's like design thinking. It's funny because for two or three years I taught the design thinking day or module on the UCD springboard course alongside my colleague. So we

called it design thinking because that's obviously what we were being brought there to talk and to teach about. But really what we were trying to say to them is this is a designer way of working, it's a creative problem solving technique. It's a way to just kind of see things from a different perspective, to have a framework and to have a process that you're working through. The word innovation features a lot...(HE-Des:5| 167-176).

Thus, teaching a design discipline now has more than just a limited appeal. It has become a very popular area and, as stated earlier in the chapter, is something that can be provided as a stand-alone module or offered on any programme. The whole area of teaching that includes social media has also proved to be very popular and the outcome has been to give voice to a variety of different areas. The whole area of design thinking can now be linked to interaction, the Internet and to research new virtual thinking in design.

I think you've got to do an interaction design programme and I think maybe other ones and other colleges are kind of going, "Okay, there's interaction design and there's basically UX and there's Google and there's IBM and there's places like that that want these UX designers who work very much on digital interactions." But then that kind of leaves aside the Internet of Things and big data like centres, like looking at architecture, looking at wearable. So there's that side of it as well. Then there's a lot of really [well regarded] academic research in that area, progressing to PhD (HE-Des: 5| 412-419).

Therefore, the applied area has, according to this programme coordinator in design, become more mainstream, now meriting teaching and research opportunities, all of which are theory based. Applied design was present but not seen as a central component; it is now very much being recognised in the HEIs as the 'new kid on the block' for media academic output.

6.5.1. CPD Training For Design Academics

One of the main areas raised in the research as being very important for current academics was the need for upskilling and doing CPD training themselves. This was outside of the need to offer shorter programmes and encourage more designers to be looking at design as a method for expression.

This is why I think it's so important that academics actually empower themselves through education [CPD] themselves into the course development, because then you're equipped with the rationale and, actually, you're equipped with metrics, you're equipped with student surveys ... I mean, one of the things, in the Irish context, there was a national student survey, in fully-fledged form. That terrifies people, but once you actually understand that if you stuck to that, and it is for the best, and you get amazing responses (HE-Des: 15| 172-185).

As the same participant added, from her/his experience in HE in Scotland:

... I think one of the problems, in the Irish context, is that very few of the staff have undertaken any formal training, in terms of education and one of the things that I did in the Scottish context was ensure that all staff of the art and design school undertook CPD training and then they all got post-graduate certificates in Art and Design Education and Higher Education and that's essential. You just have to do that, because you have to know how to construct and write a course and you might be the most wonderful practitioner or the most wonderful, natural communicator and educator, but constructing a programme, which might have a five ... You know, if you're doing an integrated Masters... (HE-Des: 15| 85-112).

The importance of HE lecturers in design and art having completed education in CPD as opposed to solely depending on their design education before becoming lecturers has only become more obvious in recent years. This whole area of HE lecturers across all disciplines needing more in the way of training in order to teach was something that the study had not considered. However, the fact that this observation came from the teaching participants themselves indicated that the whole area has come to a level of maturity. The responses also showed 'learning' to be a continuous pedagogy, which needs to reflect the student body and how it now takes in information and uses it.

...I think the big problem for me is how, sometimes, I can take how the programmes are structured, but actually, more significantly, how to deliver it. My issue is that there's still a very traditional culture that's not moving with the digital and life experiences of the student body and not necessarily structuring learning for purpose (HE-Des:17| 187-191).

This was brought up repeatedly by the design industry and the graduates but it was the HE lecturers that mentioned that they wanted the programmes to be relevant and to be keeping in touch with current trends. This was by way of new module delivery systems that had a dual purpose of providing new knowledge through new technology, i.e. blended learning and more flexible modules.

Another comment made by a design/photography lecturer who was also working for a design state body argued that one of the big problems in HE was that lecturers stay in one institution/HEI for far too long, and this could amount to decades in some cases. As this participant observed, the lecturer may well be doing great work but a flow of staff would be better and would allow for a greater breadth of new ideas and new directions. The aspect of new blood and the mobility of lecturers providing different experiences was also hinted at:

Having consistency is good, and having a change ... The person who's taking over now has got brilliant ideas, etc. (HE-Des: 13| 127-136).

The lack of new ideas as well as people becoming 'institutionalised' or set in their ways and thinking over time can happen for some staff. This can impact on the staff member's ability to adapt to change, with creativity and innovation falling short for students. There is also the argument that having experienced staff reduces periods of adjustment for students in getting used to changing staff members – as HE-Des: 13 observed, "Having consistency and having a change is good too ... The person who's taking over now has got brilliant ideas, etc." This need for new blood and ideas allows for new programme development, which would be of benefit to the whole HEI.

I can obviously see that in terms of there being good things but in terms of modernisation as well. I mean, one of the things that we're looking here for as you well know is more investment in IT systems and structures and whatever here. One of the things I'd like to see as well is maybe the delivery of more courses online or at least a portion that could be done online. That's particularly moving towards night courses like other institutes. The difficulty I would have is that the modernisation is driven by the staff in terms as a tool to improve learning rather than as a cost saving exercise to save on resources. I think that word, 'modernisation', you have to be very careful with ... that it's quality driven rather than cost-saving driven (HE-Des: 3| 164-177).

This participant's perception of how modernisation and programme innovation occurs and the concern regarding cost savings rather than quality delivery is an insight into the position that teaching and learning may be in for HEI, faced with funding constraints and performance accountability.

6.5.2. CPD For Programme Development

The difficulty of embracing new delivery systems would appear from the experience of HE-Des: 3, shared by other participants HE-Des 10, HE-Des 11 and HE-Des 18, to be a balancing act between not losing the quality in the discipline, while still providing the learning experience but needing to adjust when students are going to access the module and, by definition, the programme.

For one thing, it has given the students a lot less time, because instead of 3 terms of maybe 10 weeks each, they've got 2 semesters of 12 weeks each, so they're losing a year, maybe more, of their 4 years and it's tightening things up and put them into little boxes and it's stopped things flowing as well as they might, even though we do our best to make them flow (HE-Des 18| 87-93).

One of the programme leaders in design also commented on the 'industry' learning part of the programme. The cross-disciplinary aspect of interaction/the moving image has brought with PG teaching a need to consider different pathways and deliverables. A programme that is so robust that it will deliver to different disciplines and still provide a given skillset for a job at its conclusion is a high functioning programme or product. It will attract numbers, but can any programme provide so much to so many?

It's a really broad spectrum of planning the course from September. The decision was we'll focus on these kind of demands from industry and these types of people that they want, which are on this end of the spectrum. Or do we try to deliver as much as possible this whole spectrum and give them the starting point of all these different things and then they're able to find their own pathway through, especially with a major project? Because as a discipline interaction design, it's almost like a diagram. On one end it takes in all these people from all these different areas. To me, if the programme only contained graphic designers and project designers, it would be really, really limited. It needs toxicologists and social scientists and people from the humanities. And then they go in and they all do the same thing. But then they emerge in all these different pathways. And somebody who thinks they are going to come in wanting to do a certain pathway, in a way I hope it disrupts that and makes them see, "There's actually a different pathway for me." So I think it's possible for the programme to deliver that. So that's the aim of it (HE-Des: 5| 442-456).

The modules being delivered over a semester as a 'skinny module' would be normal for theory-based subjects, but for design and applied areas, the idea of being embedded for a condensed period of time is the ideal way of getting positive results from students. The

smaller the HEI, the more flexibility there is to experiment with thin/skinny and fat modules. The more specialised a HEI was in focusing on creative disciplines, the more flexible the design programmes fared. This was in comparison to the large HEIs that had many different types of disciplines and no management from a design background. The participant who had worked in many HEIs that had a flexible delivery agenda had experienced:

So year on year, we can say "Well, actually that skinny long project didn't work. So next year let's not do it." And instead it was delivered in a three-week chunk or something (HE-Des: 5| 562-564).

New programme delivery, on the other hand, was seen to be changing with companies from the outside writing the proposal and providing the rationale and industry support for new industry linked programmes. As in the case of a MA/Level 9 degree planned for one HEI:

So it's an interesting way that that was done. We had an external person do the initial proposal for us at first. So you came in and kind of worked on sort of a consultancy basis for the college and spent a few months doing that kind of background work (HE-Des: 5| 700-703).

The consultancy approach of getting the industry voice without the academic doing the leg work, however, had its disadvantages as well as its advantages:

So talking to industry, talking to people. It was a resource thing. We were all teaching and working so we didn't have the time. So then he kind of finished that out and handed out the document. What I would've loved was, there's a really nice proposal and it looks lovely but there was conversations and transcripts and things like that. I've actually all year been wanting them because I don't know what conversations lead to certain decisions in the programme. So I took over the role in September (Level 9 Programme Leader/Co-ordinator) and as I said, the way it was resourced was because of the HEA funding, we don't usually have that mechanism. I think it's something that's necessary (HE-Des: 5| 704-713).

The same participant went on to add:

You can't be throwing Masters together. We still have some stuff to figure out in the MFA but nobody has the capability or the time or the window to work on it so that means starting on that for me. So I have to read and get validated. It wasn't validated at the programme board stage. So I reworked it quite a lot but it was such a short turnaround time that I wasn't able to go necessarily and do that work. So it was kind of trying to take what was in that document, but take what I knew. I had quite different opinions to some of the decisions that had been made of the actual programme design. So again, that was why I was kind of crying out for transcripts or something so that I can make sense of why certain decisions were made (HE-Des: 5| 716-725).

As programme development for HE is changing, at least in some HEIs in Ireland there will be more industry collaboration, with funding by the HEA in the case above. The idea of having a dedicated staff that look into getting funding for design has not really filtered through the IoT sector, but is really coming from the University HE, who have always considered looking to funding bodies. The idea of CPD for staff programme development and its funding is also not something that is commonly happening. The academic contract, for all lecturing staff at HE, asserts that all teaching staff be available for programme development in their given discipline. Arguably, they should be able to write a programme to their given skills and expertise.

6.5.3. CPD for IT/Digital Media For The Academic

One of the interesting new concerns for teaching is that the 'pen and paper' of HE is now a device, be that a smartphone, tablet or a PC/Mac. This is for the student and the lecturer. The up-skilling for blended learning and virtual platforms are all areas identified by design academics that will need to be catered for now and in the future.

...We looked at the 'BYOD', bring your own device option. I was actually on the Academic Council and one of the, I suppose, issues that was raised at Academic Council was that we weren't in a position to insist that students had any type of computer or software for that computer. We pretty much had to provide them with the materials. I would say that longer term, the solution might be that. We were told by academic counsel that we can't do that now, but there's apparently a subcommittee that's looking at how this could be implemented (HE-Des: 3| 339-350).

The above HEI was evaluating the idea of using technology and how it was supported by the computer services and lecturing staff for students. This is also a concern regarding teaching and learning in design as so much of the technology is now accessed virtually and everything relies on the Web and Wi-Fi availability and the speed that is available. For many design staff, CPD training ideally should be on-going particularly when it is coupled with

digital platforms. New blended learning will be across all disciplines including practice-based fields of study. With new proposed plans for students to bring their own laptops, teaching individual students as opposed to a Mac lab that has uniformity across all students will be inevitable. This aspect of students not having organised labs and the HEIs asking for more expensive equipment has a very big 'knock on' effect on the number of students doing design and also on the viability of students from less well-off backgrounds being able to take programmes like GD/VC. For Design staff, this is an added aspect to teaching through IT that other disciplines do not have. Bringing your own device is something that is to the advantage of the student as they will have used their own equipment and can generate their own work from it. However, it does not reflect the design industry that provides employees with their own Mac. There is added pressure for staff to accommodate different software and hardware issues, with new blended learning expecting everything from podcasting to answering assignments online across all disciplines.

Thus, CPD training for HE for teaching and learning purposes is desirable in being able to perform at a number of levels for design academics. These include: teaching and learning in the design domain, programme development, and up-skilling across new delivery systems. These areas have been identified by academics themselves for CPD training.

6.5.4. Staff Engagement With Industry

An aspect of this study concerning industry collaboration was that for many of the academics interviewed, their personal experience was not good when it came to the industry working with HE.

It always seems like they are doing us a big favour in coming in to talk to the students but they need the students and then they have to be paid. It's difficult (HE-Des |7: 189-193).

However, the concept of being 'accredited' by industry was talked about as being a possible 'deal changer' in the future by some academics.

And there's so many mixed views, particularly among academics. It's not really that industry doesn't really care that much, because actually from my experience industry don't really care that much if you know what I mean? They really don't. But I think the academic world will think quite differently about something being accredited. And how that will impinge on creativity is one of the things that somebody said to me. If we go down that route we're bureaucrats, and we're this, that and the other (HE-Des: 5| 224-231).

So the future of the relationship between the design industry and the design HE will depend on the new links that might be supported in the future such as a 'register of designers'. In general, it was not really considered to currently be important by most academics. Little advantage could be seen in being on a register, as it would not mean gaining anything over someone who was not on one. The work placement for students in design was something that the academics did talk about and particularly so in relation to the three-year UG degree that is currently running in one HEI in Ireland. The main difficulty that was expressed was that it did not allow for students to be able to do an Erasmus year or a work placement. Additionally, the time scale for the delivery was seen to be too tight.

As you specifically mentioned Bologna, one of the things about that was to move them towards three years honours degrees. The big problem I find with that is that for all of our new programmes that have been developed are that three years honours degrees can no longer have work placement? I think that's what in fact one of the objectives might have been in terms of cost. I can understand a degree of standardisation but I think [sic] that's if that standardisation and three years honours means you're eliminating the possibility of work placement, then I don't think that's a positive thing. Because in terms of my students that's one of the pluses of the course in that they have an opportunity to either do study abroad or work placement for one semester. That's not possible under the Bologna Agreement (HE-Des: 3| 141-163).

The same participant added:

....the one difference I think, the biggest change in the past few years has been the amount of companies that are requiring students that have very good social media and digital marketing skills. I think a lot of companies are realising that it's much more cost

effective and it's also much more measurable in terms of you can actually see how many people have actually 'clicked' on a particular ad if you're looking at paper 'click' or something like that than say something like your traditional print or radio or TV advertising. The other thing I've noticed is the amount of free software that's now available. You've got pretty much an alternative to every Photoshop whether it's 'Gimp' or whatever that's out there. I think as well that the difficulties that we've had with teaching on the digital side, difficulties with Wi-Fi, difficulties with getting software are now a problem for the quality of the programmes we can offer (HE-Des: 3| 257-270) .

The first part of the quote from HE-Des: 3 advocates the idea of the work placement as part of the programme of study, which is one that provides a real industry link and gives the student an extra advantage of attending a HEI; it is not possible to have a period in industry in a tighter timeframe. So the four-year programmes that presently exist are those that will continue to be able to offer them. The new programmes will not do so in the planned new structure of 3+ 2+ 3. One participant who had taught for 10 years agreed that many things had changed over the years but that the one thing that makes a difference to an education is getting one's 'toe in the water' and being allowed to work as a practicing designer and understanding what area best suits your skillset. The second issue raised was the introduction of social media and how it has changed teaching and curriculum:

I think there's other areas where you do need a roll through but I've always felt like you need to go into industry first to find yourself because coming out of here, and I've always said even when I did the programme myself, it was kind of a jack of all trades, master of none. But I couldn't figure out what master I wanted to be until I'd go into industry and kind of find myself and mature with it as well. And just kind of enjoy having money and things like that. Then you figure out and then you focus.

I think your confidence goes up so hugely. It's a huge, big change if you know why you were doing it. So at the moment I'm interviewing for the Interactive Design Masters and there's quite a few going straight through from undergraduate and more than I think that there used to be. I think more and more of my students, it's that push. It's like everybody's got a Masters now and then everybody's going to have to have the PhD and then everybody's going to have to have a postdoc. And it's getting a little bit out of hand (HE-Des: 5| 355-368).

The confidence factor of being able to design and therefore do a degree at PG level, either at an MA or a PhD level, did not really matter. This grade inflation or credentialism provided advancement and new expectations from the students undertaking them. The major thing was for the graduate to know why they were doing it in the first place. As HE-Des: 5 explained, "But I couldn't figure out what MA I wanted to do until I'd go into

industry and kind of find myself and mature with it as well.” Academics such as HE-Des: 9 agreed that in the past, for design, this was something that was delayed:

No, we found that they almost never go straight from level 8 to level 9. They have always chosen to work at an industry and then some years later, often in their late 20s or 30s, will be interested in undertaking a PG study (HE-Des: 9| 106-110).

So a PG design student was older and at a very different stage of their life when attending an MA in Design but the new programme delivery of 3-2-3 would now require a change based on that trend.

6.5.5. Postgraduate Internships and Work Placements in Design

The aspect of placements also includes international exchanges and the European Erasmus programme. All of these are popular with students in providing a broad education which allows for reflective learning.

Going all the way back, yeah. Leonardo postgraduate internships more recently which are not dissimilar to Erasmus. They're 13-week postgraduate internships. There's been a very high level of interest from students across the design faculty to take those up. They're paid a decent wage. The company gets a good graduate of their choice and there's no expense incurred by the company. It's a win-win situation. It's quite a lot of paperwork for the college and for the staff who are monitoring it. It's a great benefit to the graduates (HE-Des: 9| 72-82).

The same participant went on to add:

Yes. Have them stay or at least significantly extend their period of time. Sometimes it's provided a real '*springboard*' for establishing a career in another country. Just the fact they've moved out of Ireland. They've been somewhere. Worked somewhere. It is the students with the greatest level of initiative as well as it has to be students that have got a 2:1 or a first so they are clearly the more attractive people to employ. They're a bit more driven and ambitious (HE-Des: 9| 88-96).

The student during the UG programme and indeed at PG level experiences a way of life during exchange and is afforded the opportunity to meet staff from different countries with new ideas of design and to make new connections, all of which are important.

6.6. The Diversity Between IoTs and the University Sector

One of the major factors for the academics participating in the study was the changing landscape that was prevailing in the HE sector. "Consolidation, amalgamation and clustering are the three principles," (HE-Des: 14| 459-460) observed one very senior academic. The whole process of looking at HE and trying to 'encourage' particular IoTs to merge and to possibly become Technological Universities (TU) has been viewed as a 'carrot and stick' approach by the state to try and rationalise its many IoTs. These for the most part are regionally based or, in the case of the DIT and other smaller IoTs, in the greater Dublin area, where the proposal is to become the Dublin TU. The main difficulty for the state (HEA) is that "... Phase one between 1996 to 2008 allowed for some incentivisation" for the IoT HEs who wanted University status, namely DIT in the capital and WIT in the South East. Then the "second stage was not including any incentivisation" according to (HE-Des: 14| 471-473) who went on to add:

There are certain principles that ... require critical mass, there are disciplines that consolidate around the critical mass, have centres of excellence, have institutes focusing on what they do best. They're all very fine. In isolation, it's very good. In theory, it's very good, but the reality is that ... You see, sometimes we forget that education is a rapidly changing environment. One of the challenges you have is that education is there for the citizens. It's there for the community. What you will find, like in a way, the original binary system and the breakdown of the binary system was not caused by institutes individually and collectively deciding that they were going to break through that barrier that was there.

The breaking of the barrier in the South East would appear to be due to the regional remit to serve the wider community with the binary system which was put in place under the RTC Act 1992 and the IoTs 1998, 2006 Acts. The reality also is that competition is seen as being important in creating a critical mass of researchers and aiming for parity among the Universities.

When you talk about prioritisation and reinforcing the boundaries, it's sensible except for two things. Competition is what drives change. Competition is what drives excellence. If certain institutions believe that they are the sole, let's say ... solely responsible for the particular area, there's no motivation to evolve that. Yes, whereas the competition coming up from the new, young Turks in the area will have an impact (HE-Des: 14| 244-251).

Instead of competition, there is another implication from this remark and that is one of divergence between competition versus duplication. Providing the same disciplines, e.g. Liberal Arts in two HEIs without any unique selling point between them only presents choice of location as against quality or teaching pedagogy from the HEA's perspective.

6.6.1. Relationships: Between Funded Irish Design HEIs and Design Societies

The HEI relationship with Design Associations and societies is one experience that is difficult to track. The mission of these design HEIs is to link with the wider community including industry and to provide support for young designers/graduates as they start their early career. The reality is that many of the IoTs /HEIs do not really talk to each other.

I don't see a lot of structure differentiation between courses. One of the things that really surprised me, in Irish concepts, is how little interaction there was between the institutions, and that's a direct contrast to my previous experience in Scotland, where we had educational forums of all the institutions would meet, at least twice a semester, and we would share briefs, we would share attitudes and aspects. We mapped, collectively, the discipline and identified where each of the courses would sit, so when a student was trying to work out whether they should do a Masters at Glasgow or Edinburgh or Leeds, it wasn't just about location, it was about philosophy (HE-Des: 15| 283-294).

The very range of these HEIs is quite impressive. But the main ones are:

ICAD, yeah, advertising and design, right. But in addition to those, we also have the IMI, the Marketing Institute, the AAI, the Advertising Association of Ireland, and the DMI, Digital Marketing Institute. If anything, I think there are probably too many societies at the moment that are, you've got four societies just in advertising that are trying to go after the same cohort of people. I think the Marketing Institute isn't really relevant anymore (HE-Des: 3| 885-893).

The relationship between HEIs to design disciplines in different locations was generally not happening and therefore the relationship between lecturers and design courses lacked consistency and often had duplication:

It was modes of work and modes of thinking, and I think one of the problems I have, often, is that the courses are all very similar, but nobody actually speaks to each other very often and actually says, "Well, you're doing this. You're doing that" (HE-Des: 15| 297-300).

The concern was raised by the design lecturer that the different design programmes are overlapping and that there is not enough dialogue between them so that they can consider possible specialisations with either urban or regional remits.

Another academic commented, "We're all so busy competing" (HE-Des: 20| 775) and that the IoTs do not seem to be working collaboratively and in union with each other. With the planned clusters and mergers, this seems to have escalated rather than subsided so that even HEIs that are located close together are not fostering links for particular disciplines such as design.

I think they are competing and they're competing for student numbers, but I think it's getting a clear sense of what they're trying to do. And I think yes, on a regional basis, if you're studying graphics or design or something, it might be quite locally focused, and I think students should ... I think it's really important, socially, that students, who are able to, work at home or study close to home. There's also an issue about quality, critical mass, and a border engagement, and I think that's one of the challenges in the higher education space is, "What's the rationale?" I understand why the drive towards merger, because there's over-provision ... You know, Scotland has a similar population and you have eight institutions ... (HE-Des: 15| 305-315).

The same participant added:

That's six courses. Well, there's only about six places where you can do graphics or Vis-Com, but they're all complementary. Actually, with some stuff, it's actually two or three. One of the real issues here is that there are 28 colleges in Ireland, where you can do design of one sort or another and the vast majority are graphics, so you look at it here ... You have Dublin Institute of Design now developing their own degrees (HE-Des: 15| 318-324).

The private colleges also provide an alternative to the state-run HEIs.

Well, it's an interesting challenge because, you know, if you go to the Institute of Design, you'll get a degree from University of Wales, which is good enough for Domus. Domus Academy⁴³ is approved by them, so yes, I think it's a huge challenge. The fact that the driver providers in Ireland have got far more freedom than they have in most of Europe ... You know, it's much more of an American model, actually (HE-Des: 15| 328-334).

43 Domus Journal – design-related issues which promote excellence and give a ranking to the best GD/VC schools of design education in the world.

The fact that design academics were not developing relationships and forging closer links with each other was also expressed by another participant who said that it was really important that showing support to each other was something that showed good practices:

It's also joining stuff up. That's the aspect, is because ... Chatting to some of the staff at different institutions and doing reviews or whatever, and you used to say, well, with institutions who remain unnamed, you have that conversation and say, "What other degree shows did you go and visit?" (HE-Des: 8| 1008 -1112).

The relationship of HEIs with the design societies such as the IDI and ICAD did get a favourable mention from some design academics:

I'm not sure that our students have any great awareness of them. Certainly our graduates have availed of the ICAD Upstarts programme and we have had students enter the IDI graduate awards, but that's really about it. It's only at the point they are leaving or have left that they begin to engage, if they do at all, with those societies. Maybe there's a way that the societies can connect or engage with students at a younger age? (HE-Des: 8| 413-421)

Identifying the post-primary area is what many design HE lecturers saw as being the real difficulty in getting design standards up and students selecting a future in design. Design is seen to be of very little importance in the secondary school system, with little funding for art classes and there being a general idea of the area as a fun but luxury discipline. If the design societies started to look at that area as a place to begin design education links with industry and to get students thinking of design as an innovative area to be in, then a greater number of students would think more positively about it. This is the perception of HE lecturers drawn from the semi-formal interviews with the participants.

6.6.2. The Importance of HE Policy for Irish Design

The proposed Technological University (TU) and the mergers and clusters have come from new policy reports that the State and the EU have been working on since 2004. Design lecturers that participated in the study had a variety of different views and opinions:

I suppose these government reports are prepared by leading academics external overseas usually. At the same time, those who are on the panels are selected by the government or the HEA or the Department of Education. In that selection process there may be a certain agenda at work. It's difficult to unpick all of that as to who is determining they are independent reports, but depending on who you select to form the panel that writes the report that's going to nuance or determine. At the same time governments should have policies clearly. The Department of Education needs to have policies and there is a need to look externally beyond these shores (HE-Des: 9| 28-41).

An acceptance that the State's policy, shaped by reports, has influenced attitude and thinking towards HE in Ireland was seen to be normal and very understandable. However, as HE-Des: 9 hinted, "Panels are selected by the government or the HEA or the Department of Education...it is difficult to unpick and determine if they are independent reports." The reports around funding and research are based on financial long-term planning in the sciences and in cross-disciplinary activity, which again is angled towards the sciences. Another participant commented on:

The Hunt; Landscape documents have had a huge impact on the HE sector and I think, obviously, they're in a real period of change. Obviously, they include TUs, NCAD, Academic Alliances, UCD. The private sector is booming, but I do think that investment in creative design and higher education can boost economic recovery (HE-Des: 9| 870-874).

Investment in the creative arts is proving to be something that the State can see benefits from, as verified by the current ID '15 policy reports:

I think the landscape documents and the recent documents, they're okay, but I think ... It's funny, but we had this illusion of creative sector review and what really scared me on that was the fact that the amount of time that the international panel was spending with each institution was maybe an hour, or a half an hour ... (HE-Des: 15| 889-894).

The national and international panels would appear to be 1) given very little time to access individual HEIs and even less time to talk to academic design staff and 2) when it comes to the creative arts, the value of the discipline coupled with the lack of knowledge by the panel could also be added as another reason not to address design in any substantive way, as an area that is less accessible and more disseminated by the nature of the discipline.

It's really difficult to try and get a bit of fresh thinking and whatever into it, but I wonder about some of these documents that they're bringing in from the EU anyway. As far as another link with American slant with our semesterisation and modularisation, and then we've got the OECD reports coming in and that's with the European slant (HE-Des: 7| 366-371).

The policy in HE for North America and for Europe is quite different with an MFA as opposed to an MA and it varies across the HEIs as to how design is taught. Yet in an effort to try and strike a balance, which will provide graduates with the best prospects, the Irish HEIs would appear to be trying to offer a combination type of approach. The importance perhaps of keeping an Irish mindset and identity within the HE policy might well be served by adapting a more specialised philosophy with a national graduate design school in two or three HEIs or developing key pathways such as graphics and UX which can be done in the DIT, CIT or WIT.

They have a philosophy that drives the way education is rolled out in France, the relationships between different institutions, the polytechnic, traditional universities, their role in society and what society expects from them. You've got a specialist school for politicians [specialist institutions for recognised professions, e.g. law]; you've specialist schools for engineers; and they were designed to be that.

We don't have that in Ireland, so we come up with the Hunt Report. We come up with the technological university. We've no definition of what a technological university is. We've never had an intellectual debate about what is it, and what is its relationship to a traditional university, right? (HE-Des: 13| 303-316).

This participant was not alone in their view which was commented on by HE-Des: 17; HE-Des: 6 and HE-Des: 12. The transition that design education is experiencing is brought

about by trying to create a new Irish HE that is presenting leadership in given areas of expertise and this means looking at the research field which will allow for a new type of University. It is an exciting time but also one which has yet to be defined in an Irish context. With no models of what the Irish TU will look like and how it will reside alongside the more traditional Universities, the Irish design academic would appear to be 'stepping on egg shells' as they try to navigate a way forward. The design academic is not alone on this journey but perhaps less visible than other more historically profiled disciplines that are more vocal in the process. The lack of engagement of design academics with the current HE restructuring can be tracked down to: 1) A concern by design academics for their own domain as an identity in a crowded arena in the larger HEI; 2) Small staff numbers in the design academy when compared to other fields of study across the country; 3) This study has identified a lack of a cohesive, united voice around the design identity in Ireland as a characteristic of design in the context of the greater design domain.

A hint of criticism can be found in relation to the policy reports that are driving the new HE landscape. For instance, a middle manager, after many years as a design lecturer can realise that panels can be put together to serve a particular agenda. They have little time to spend evaluating the situation at hand and they do rely on their first impression of a person or place when putting forward recommendations. The insecurity of the design domain could also be a factor in design academics holding pre-existing attitudes to these HE issues.

6.7. Summary

In this chapter, the HE design academic identity and the relationship it has with industry and other HEIs has been evaluated from the individual perspectives of the participants. Design academics did have concerns around the quality of the programmes both at a learning outcomes level and the introduction and also discussed semesterisation and modularisation in relation to teaching practices. Design, like other disciplines in HE, has been introduced across all levels of learning with Bologna since 2005 and this aspect was expressed positively by participants. However, only two HEIs claimed to fully embrace every aspect of it, with many participants expressing reluctance. The value of degrees at PG level including the inflation of qualifications or credentialism was seen as something that was across all disciplines and design was no different. This is not necessarily the case as those in the creative domain are very qualified for other disciplines in the workplace. The academic participants were interested in collaborations and clusters with the design industry. However, no formal HE policy has been developed. The manner in which best practice can be implemented to formalise relationships with other HEIs and the design industry was still at an early stage. There were few really formalised relationships with design societies and associations with a mixed response as to their value to students. The HEIs would appear to be quite 'insular' and insecure when looking at other areas of academia. The value of CPD upskilling in a wide variety of areas, i.e. technology was discussed by more than half of the participants as being desirable for the design sector.

The engagement with policy documentation by design academics did not feature greatly and those that did have knowledge of the Hunt Report were in management positions as opposed to design lecturing. There was a hint of criticism from a manager on the current HEA position which they considered to be driving the new HE landscape and they also spoke negatively of the role of the national and international panels. When considering the implications of some of the HE policy, the concern for some of the regional HEIs is that the creative design sector will not be considered for PG research. Resources and funding

which seemed to be centralised in Dublin and not distributed to smaller research HEI locations were the main issues for academics. The next chapter reflects on the early career and experiences of the graduates.

Chapter 7 | *The Irish Design Graduate*

7.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to analyse the graduate experience under a number of headings. These include (i) the formation and the identity of the design graduate at UG level; (ii) the early design career experience in the workplace and (iii) the decision-making process that influence students undertaking postgraduate study. The vast majority of current GDs do not seem to come from a background where design and the arts have featured professionally (O’Connell et al 2009). Therefore, the design graduate is considered through the prism of the graduate’s relationships with the stakeholders, industry, HEIs and peer group via societies and day-to-day interactions after leaving the HEI. The chapter considers which of the stakeholders benefits the most from PG design education, e.g. the design industry; design HEIs or the design graduate. By reflecting on the difference between the design UG and PG degrees from the student’s perspective it will establish if the PG qualification can *add value*, be this creatively or regarding career advancement for the design graduate opportunities in design practice. Financial constraints on attending both full time and part time study at PG will be examined along with evaluating the importance placed on PG qualifications (degree inflation/credentials) as the graduates review them before, during and after completion as they progress into their design careers. The data collection is positioned in the context of the available literature see chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis. Therefore, this Chapter seeks to present a ‘snapshot’ of the experiences of design graduates in the contexts of both the current Irish design industry and HE in Ireland.

7.2. Background to the Design Graduate Sample

All of the participant graduates had a WIT VC/GD UG qualification, with participants either considering; undertaking or just finishing PG design degrees. For those who held one, their decision to undertake a PG qualification was based on the experience they enjoyed at UG level. As stated, the 20 qualitative interviewees were conducted with graduates who had undertaken their four-year UG degrees between 2009 and 2014. The programme was not altered in any way (no CE 3⁴⁴ process had been required in the five years that it was fully rolled out), with the exception of *content updating* for some of the participants in different years. The qualification was completely modularised and semesterised, replacing a three-year traditional ordinary level degree, which had been phased out from 2005.

The current shift to include PG degrees across all disciplines in the HEIs has been highlighted in state policy documentation with the Hunt report (HEA 2011) and the Landscapes policy documentation HEA, 2012 across governance, structures and funding during the course of this study. This has changed the position of what is considered to be a *traditional design degree* for the applied GD/VC domain. The design industry, the design HEI and the graduate alike all indicate the transition in programme development and the current curriculum as being an ongoing situation. In addition to this, since 2011, the Irish HE sector has been considering the re-structuring and possibly mergers/clusters (Hunt (2011) and HEA (2012)). The inclusion of the design industry in the HE design curriculum in a more formal setting has yet to be implemented, but greater links with outside agencies would appear to be encouraged at all levels of programmes for HEIs from the HEA. This chapter therefore further explores the identity of the field undergoing transition, along with the implications of the design curriculum for PG from a graduate perspective.

44 All programmes are validated by the HEA in Ireland and are benchmarked via the QQI system of levels of learning (see chapter 3). When a programme requires a modification, this is undertaken by the HEI internally with the programme board presenting a Course Evaluation (CE 3) report which is reviewed by an external academic board. Allowing that the changes are considered appropriate, this report will replace the CE 1 and 2 reports that have previously been validated for the programme to be offered to students.

7.3. Graduate Semi-Structured Data Analysis

Graduate Sample

The participants for the study represent a broad range of graduates leaving WIT between 2009 and 2014. The selection process based on criteria as discussed in Chapter 4 was finalized by the participants who accepted the invitation to take part in the study. See Table 7.1 for an individual profile.

Table 7.1 | Graduate Profile

Participants

Gender: 11 [Female] 9 [Male]

(For confidentiality purposes, names have been changed for the study)

Graduates	Single	Married	Children	Resident Ireland	Resident Europe	Resident Other
	13	6	3	16	3	1

Graduates	CPD Training Considering/Process	UG Degree	MA Degree	PhD Degree Process/Aspiring
20	16	20	6	4

Graduates Demographic	Age Range Years		Working in Design	Working Freelance/ Internship Placements	Considering Design PG	Attending/ Holding PG MA Full/Part- Time	Attending PG/ PhD Aspiring
	23-30	31-49					
Grad 1: Paul	1			1		1	
Grad 2: Harry		1	1		1		1
Grad 3: Cian	1			1	1		
Grad 4: Molly	1			1		1	1
Grad 5: Lucy	1			1	1		
Grad 6: Jack	1			1	1		
Grad 7: Gerry	1		1		1		
Grad 8: Úna	1			1	1		
Grad 9: John	1			1		1	
Grad 10: Pippa	1		1			1	1
Grad 11: Anna		1	1				
Grad 12: Karl		1		1		1	1
Grad 13: Claire	1		1		1		
Grad 14: Mohammed	1			1	1		
Grad 15: Paula	1			1	1	1	
Grad 16: Orla	1			1	1		
Grad 17: Elizabeth	1		1		1		
Grad 18: Susan	1		1		1		
Grad 19: Tom		1	1		1		
Grad 20: Maura		1		1	1		

7.3.1. Identity

Upon reviewing the GD identity for graduates, there are two very distinct considerations. The first of these was the general community that the graduate had come from (i.e., family, friends, etc.), and the second being the design industry community the graduate entered into. They are both relevant for different reasons, the first one being perceptions (from an insider's point of view) about the design identity and the socialisation of a design graduate who has been educated and is debating his/her choices and decisions for future advancement. The second consideration is the broader picture of where design is positioned as an employment pathway, and its associated cultural and commercial activity. From the 1960s, the Irish economy placed an importance on '*value added design*' for exports, e.g. Franck et al 1962 and the Kilkenny Design initiative, but the introduction of digital interactions has meant that most interfaces and virtual design platforms are seen as a set of simple transactions, e.g., smartphones/Internet. The desire for design to be inherent in the expectation of the consumer is still one approached from the education system, at secondary level in Ireland (see Chapters 2 and 3 in this thesis). Like other aspects of marketing, with regards to the consideration of how 'good' design can be harnessed and reached, a benchmark of quality is still to be defined. A real attempt by the Irish state to address this was the ID15 Year of Design with policies in this area already alluded to in Chapter 2. An evaluation of the year by Milton et al in 2016 '*Making Design Matter*' provided an overview on design which included enterprise agencies, associations and educational bodies responsible for design and the wider enterprise case firms' contributions. It reflected that the strategic role of design for national and industrial competitiveness is now universally recognised.

During the data generation for this research, the participants considered training at HEIs from a number of perspectives including location, creative IT and a changing HEI. The

identity and design characteristics shaped the conversations. As one graduate participant who now works in the UX area commented when considering the GD/VC identity:

I can only comment on the area I work in – User Experience (UX) Design. We specialise in Enterprise UX – applications for financial institutions like the AIB, Genworth, Bank of Ireland and other large corporate clients. Our profile is highly regarded and sought after (Grad 2| Harry: 14-17).

After completing the Level 8 degree, Harry had returned to the GD/CV area to look after the web design aspect of the company, which is a multi-national computer company. During his time in college as an UG, he had worked as a designer on a freelance basis. Coming close to the end of the UG degree, he responded to an advert and was hired full-time and offered CPD training in 'UX' and 'design thinking' for interactive design. Upon finishing his training, he realised that not only was this the area that he really wanted to work in, but it was one of the fastest design areas experiencing high demand from all kinds of corporate companies who could see the value of design that was linked to technology. This technology essentially makes it easier for people to navigate everyday interactions that involve on-screen interactions. The identity of GD/VC and the HE experience resulted in this participant rethinking his personal design approach. Design thinking had shifted and altered and was now more than the end product, or indeed problem-solving. It was an opportunity to be creative from the beginning of a project right through to the end user. His identity as a GD was one of value and inclusion at all stages of design rather than at the end stage to promote the product or service. As he also was a mature student, he had the advantage of being focused and had strong people skills from working in marketing prior to taking up full time UG study.

Another graduate respondent who had been working as a GD for a number of design consultancies had started in the design business as a result of winning an intern position with a nationally recognised design agency at the end of his UG degree. He went on to gain more experience by going from one internship to another one, including the state-

sponsored *JobBridge*⁴⁵ scheme for six months, before returning to freelance work with the same company, but now as a paid designer. He felt that the wording or title of GD was misleading as it did not really inform people about the identity of the *profession* and what it did. From his perspective, it presented an image of fine art, which he considered to be better known or recognised as a profession:

to somewhat meld together with other various creative industries to portray one general artistic community within the eye of the public. It seems that when we try to break down what we do to the uninformed, we unintentionally misrepresent ourselves with the title we use. Maybe therefore it is time to scrap the term 'graphic designer' altogether, as perhaps the term 'communications designer' or indeed 'visual communicator' might be far more indicative of what we do (Grad 6| Jack: 21-31).

Another participant, who had returned to education after a period of working across a broad range of unrelated areas including banking, thought that the design identity issue was a real barrier to the practice of being a designer in GD. In particular, this was true for family and friends who found it hard to categorize GD as they would other work-related domains such as accountancy and medicine:

I asked my girlfriend just to see what she thought. I think people find it hard to explain what it is exactly without breaking down the two words, visual and communication, into what they know ... They know what visual means and they know what communication means, but they don't know what the two of them together mean. When I asked her what exactly my degree was or what it meant, she couldn't tell me (Grad 1| Paul: 11-16).

The same participant added:

I've had this conversation with many people even excluding my girlfriend and my family. Still, I don't think they're able to put a meaning on what I'm qualified to do or what I've done in college ... They're not aware so I don't think it's their fault that they don't know. They're more commonly adjusted to a business degree or, say, whatever other normal degree or whatever it is (Grad 1| Paul: 24-28).

For the most part, the participant graduate designers felt that the area and the name of the UG design programme name VC/GD was either confusing or not valid for the vast

⁴⁵ This State sponsored scheme was dissolved in 2016 with the intention of being replaced with another initiative that would see the internee gaining a better financial reward than €52.00 a week to add to their social welfare benefit. Jobbridge, had come under public scrutiny as being open to employer exploitation. The scheme had run from 2011 to 2016 and is to be replaced in 2018 with a new State intervention initiative (<http://www.thejournal.ie/internship-programme-budget-18-3640186-Oct2017>; Received 12th November 2017).

majority of people. As another participant commented:

...the visual communication/graphic design profile-identity with the general public is often a confusing one. Not many people can describe what graphic design is in one sentence. Some may describe graphic design as a process of communicating visually using text, images and colours to present information (Grad 9| John: 1-4).

Another participant whimsically simply responded, '*Hipster*' (Grad 10| Pippa: 1). The lack of consistency between the respondents was very marked and proved to be a difficulty in being able to provide a conclusive profile/identity e.g., that it is a profession as discussed in Chapter 2, as the level of contradictions between the graduates meant that several identities of VC/GD could be considered from their perspective.

In general, most people still find it difficult to understand what graphic designers really do; in most cases, it is easily assumed that it is like being an artist. The profession is different from the fine arts though as it borrows one or two key foundations from fine arts. Current UG students assume it's all about the deliverance of the final project requirements, emphasis on the cosmetic side, and post graduates see the profile as a profession able to break barriers of the corporate world and business as board members or advisors, not as simple workers (Grad 4| Molly: 5-11).

The reality for many of the graduate designers was that there seemed to be an element of mystery about what they did and, indeed, the view of one participant echoed the responses from both academia and the design industry...'*I think that design is often taken for granted by the general public, and that many people are unclear of the meaning of Graphic Design*' (Grad15| Paula: 12-15). What is in a name, e.g., GD and what perception it represents was perhaps best echoed by another participant who just thought that the name was wrong. Design is something different to GD which just does not really allow for it to move between disciplines, and for people to get to know it and trust it as they do other areas such as '*education*'. For one participant, it had been something he had liked the sound of and enjoyed doing when he obtained a place at WIT, but he also could see the humour in doing something that he could not really describe:

Visual Communication is something you study and I say it to people and they go, "That's very interesting." The general public probably do not know what it is... ...As to what graphic design is, well, to be honest, I don't know how to explain it, even though I am a designer. That's kind of strange (Grad 14| Mohammed: 10-16)

The experience of many graduates was that other people thought it was easy to do a GD degree. It therefore, had the perception of being somewhat lightweight to undertake at HE compared to other programmes of study both at UG and PG. In fact, participants had felt the strain of the value placed on it, particularly when it came to being paid for design work. This they had experienced only fully after they had graduated. These perceptions were reflected in the interviews by both graduates at UG level who were beginning PG, and present and post PGs, including Karl, Susan, Maura and Elizabeth who stated:

This is difficult! Not to sound too 'Us and them' but overall I think the general public don't really understand it. I feel they think that anyone can do it and they fail (sometimes spectacularly!) to see the time or skill that goes into design work. They will also take bad design over good because it's cheaper or they have a friend who can use a computer! I think the perception is that it's a simple job (anyone can put some pictures and words onto a page), that it is overpaid (how can it cost so much to design a logo, it's just a little thing!). (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 3-11)

Another graduate who responded via email (as discussed in Chapter 4 not all of the graduate participants could engage in a face-to-face interview) concluded:

I think that depends on who is considering the field of Visual Communication /Graphic design – in my experience that is:

- a) **Close friends** – who see graphics as “doing them a quick favour” – generally for little or no pay.
- b) **Medium Business** – who perceive the industry with suspicion and question the validity and complexity of the work when invoiced, and often haggle to underpay. This also makes getting repeat work more difficult.
- c) **Big Companies** – who understand the time invested in good design and appreciate the fact that they could not do it themselves. They also understand the time and effort invested in education, as opposed to ‘just being good on computers’ (Grad 7| Gerry: 3-21).

The identity and image to the non GD world would therefore appear to be confusing and unclear. This is further compounded by its title of GD or VC, which presents an irony for an area that focuses on branding and presenting corporate identities for others. As one respondent remarked: *‘We have a client, and then where you are involved with companies, you also have other aspects of the job to consider’* (Grad 12| Karl: 60-62). The value of design and what is considered to be *good design* and *good practice* also affected the graduates

when they entered the sector. This was debated by some of the participants in relation to the design and creative industries, and their position in the wider business sector.

7.3.2. VC/GD as a Professional Identity

Most of the participants considered that they were in a profession, although the idea of a *chartered designer* or some form of regulatory body presented a conflict for some participants. The idea of a professional designer who has been regulated was put in place by the IDI (see Chapter 2). This takes into account the designer's education and work practice, and their position of advocacy in the design area.

I think it would be a bad idea if you finished a level 8 and you were called a professional designer. No, no, because as much as you're qualified to do that through the college process, it will take you at least another five or six years to actually build yourself up through the ranks or whatever, even more. You're never professional. I don't think you are. For me, I don't think ... I'm like, "If I was ever to tell myself that I was professional, I think that I'd have to retire." You're learning all the time. I don't think you would be able to say 'professional'. I think that would be a massively bad idea (Grad 1| Paul: 30-36).

The same graduate considered the aspect of a chartered or regulated designer as:

It sounds isolated than more grouped. I don't know. I don't think there's an individual chartered designer anywhere else? ... No. It sounds restricted... (Ibid.: 44-48)

For this participant, the idea of being part of a bigger picture with a united voice was not how he saw it, as it presented something more limited or closed off from other aspects of the creative world. Many of the other graduates did not share this opinion, however, as one graduate remarked:

I'm a strong believer that if the degree can be ... practical and maybe there should be a board just like a registered board like the accounting one whereby you've got a degree but you have to register as a chartered designer ... which will be able to promote you and protect the industry as well.... because we can have someone just waking up tomorrow and saying, "I'm a designer" (Grad 12| Karl: 34-45).

This sentiment was also expressed in one participants' comments:

...if we could come up with a recognised chartered board which separates us. Yeah, because that's why the industry is not moving forward because you have fly-by-night designers. Their reputation, it affects the whole industry of course ... It's a process

actually, design is a process. Would you understand why? It's because it's not protected. Get the money in... It's to get the clients in as well (Grad 4| Molly: 340-450).

The protection and lobbying for design gives an impression that the area is marginalized and not recognised for what it does. It is a commercial entity and one which has many aspects to it. It would appear to be difficult for it to have a profile that is more united and cohesive when it comes to presenting a professional status/profile for itself. This aspect would appear to be relevant among practitioners themselves and in relation to the general public. The field could therefore require policing and fostering so that design will be valued as a profession with a given skills set. The concern that anyone can become a GD/VC designer and undercut qualified designers resonated with more than one participant, but was expressed by one particular respondent, Molly, as follows:

You can't be happy with that, people designing logos for €50, for €30 euros, really. There's no value because 20 people can get that logo, just tweaking the colours, changing the font. I speak to marketing lecturers all the time and they inform me of this. It's awful (Grad 4| Molly: 17-25).

Until a designer is working in a more established environment, the early career of the design graduate would appear to be very unstable, with little advice or support available from the HEI after they have completed their programme. This would appear to be the case more so at an UG level, as the PG participants felt that they had a good experience with the programmes they had attended.

7.4. Early Career; The Socialisation of Graduate Designers

The graduate experience, after the completion of their degree at UG level, and just before undertaking a PG degree, presented a picture of optimism in relation to their career options. However, more than half the participants expressed their expectations that their future was not in their own location, but rather further afield. However, there was a feeling that, even in the regions, design was something that was becoming more present:

I think most people within Waterford, from what I've seen, have studied in Dublin or have gone to Dublin, have gone to London and have moved back to Waterford. I think Waterford is on the up from a design basis (Grad 1| Paul: 174-176).

The interview process and the first steps towards obtaining a design job were expressed by the same participant as being as much about one's personality as the creative work in their portfolio. This remark was not only based on his experience, but was shared by a number of other participants:

I made them laugh and I showed my personality and whatever to them. It's getting your personality across, whether it's in your portfolio or whether it's in your own day-to-day personality. I think it doesn't matter what age you are. I think if you show what you can and can't do, I think that it has to be taken at face value (Grad 1| Paul 1: 349-353).

The experience of working in a full-time design job and the reality of how competitive it is as a sector was expressed by a number of graduates. For example, one participant had been working in the same print company for over a year. It had a small design studio attached and the graduate noticed in the first few weeks that any business that came to the firm was never turned away as long as it was print related, such was the pressure to keep all design print work in the business. This meant that it provided a full print service to the client, even if it meant that the only part of the design job they were handling was the finish process, e.g. cutting and gluing, etc.

At the moment I'm working with a print company. They have a relationship with other print companies, as well. For example, they ask for any experience to do with a printing plate if they're having difficulty with the printing machines. If there's any project that they cannot print because it uses a different printing process, then it will be sent to another printing company to do it for them. They never turn down work because they can always take the work and then send it to another printing company. For example, they do that and then the printing job will come back printed and then they will finish it as the external company (Grad 14| Mohammed: 238-250).

The importance of being able to keep up and to be able to do what is asked of you as a young designer was also described as being very pressurized by more than one participant. The early experience of dealing with clients who might not come from a design

background also seemed to be a new and added burden to the job of designing, as one participant remarked:

I'd often be down on myself and put myself down a bit, but when I'm going along on this process of designing logos, brochures and helping on websites and stuff like that, I just draw on the small things that maybe I've learned. He (*the client*) doesn't come from my background, so when I'm explaining things to him, I'm like I'm in college again and I'm doing a presentation. I'm not really honed into my skills. I'm just presenting it to him like I would have done two or three years ago (Grad 1| Paul: 56-61).

The idea that the graduate would still be looking back to his college programme and using the experience of presenting work was interesting because it showed: (i) that the programme of design study was relevant and (ii) that in the early years of a designer's socialisation, after graduation from an UG programme or a PG degree, the time factor and speed of delivery of design jobs came as a surprise. The requirement to multi-task, talking to clients and keeping them informed of the process, is all part of the work involved in being a designer. For many, it was the first time that they had to deal with clients as the programme of study did not include an internship or a one-to-one experience of dealing with a design project from beginning to end. As one participant commented:

Working in a company is about dealing with people, not just design. It's really important you can understand the customer, the client part of the job... understanding the clients, what they want and how they want it (Grad 14| Mohammed: 142-145).

One of the most important aspects of being a designer, as stated in Chapter 2, is being able to read and interpret the client's requirements. Providing a brief and some projections of how design can be used as a tool for communication is a key factor for designers. Even before the designer begins the project at all, everything needs to be signed off and agreed on, and the designer usually provides the financial side of the design outcomes. The areas of communication can be broad, as stated in Chapter 2, and that means that throughout the lifetime of a designer, if they move around to different design firms and studios, they will develop a style that presents deliverables that help define the project for the client. This is the key to working with a client and keeping a design company over a period of

time. It is experience that is difficult to emulate in a HEI environment. In many other cases, however, it is something that has to be 'honed' over time, as was expressed by graduate participant Paul previously in this Chapter.

Another participant who was preparing to return to college to complete an MA in Marketing also found that working with clients was vital for design, but difficult to be taught at HE. This was based on his own year-long work experience in a design studio. Other aspects of the designer's day-to-day work included being self-motivated and having a good general knowledge and broader interests than just design:

I think self-motivation, I think, is the most important thing ... You have to be motivated to consider different aspects of design and have the ability to learn different software as you go on. It's very broad... Yeah, because if you say you're dealing with clients one minute, you're trying to get materials probably to design something, you're trying to think the concept and the idea, be self-motivated, motivate them and learn about what their needs are (Grad 14| Mohammed: 154-164).

During the interview process, I asked graduate participants what they considered was the one single ability that a design company asked for from them. As an add-on to that question, I asked them what they felt was the real reason they had been successful in gaining a design position when they had finished their degree. A number of insightful remarks were provided, which were surprising considering their short experience in the domain:

On one hand, I suppose standing out creatively, but in real terms I think competence is more valuable to an employer (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 65-66).

The concept that someone who is practical and even systematic, as opposed to being creative, might at least in some design studios be more important than a person with a very good portfolio of design work, was expressed by a few participants. The UG and PG degrees for the industry were also regarded as being important only for some designers, depending on the position that was being offered. As one participant commented:

It depends what position you are going for. If you are going for a senior position, then it is important to be able to have further training and skills such as a postgraduate degree (Grad 14|Mohammed: 103-105).

This remark would not be out of place in most careers and therefore understandable.

Perhaps somewhat unexpected was the comment by one graduate, again looking at PG study. They stated:

I think people straight out of college are considered fresh and enthusiastic while people in their 30s are considered professional and experienced. I'm 27 and I feel like I'm in no man's land. This may be my own personal experience but it's how I feel (Grad 8| Úna: 31-34).

The worry from a female graduate that she was in 'no man's land' only a few years out of college in the early part of her design career was a surprise. A 'tight' timeline for gaining a position as a designer, with new design concepts and to be 'considered fresh and enthusiastic' could indicate that there is an issue around how long any graduate should stay in college. The self-awareness of what 'young' is for design, and therefore an attractive proposition for gaining a good design position, was experienced by both males and females alike in the study. However, with more females leaving HEIs at UG and PG design levels, the experience of looking for an edge with something to offer a potential employer seemed to affect a higher proportion of females. Many participants expressed their motivation for looking at further education as a means to have security and indeed longevity in the field. This is something some of the male participants felt would be to their advantage only in some situations. As stated by graduate Mohammed while both Pipa and Orla considered it to be more important:

I think an undergraduate degree is an expected qualification to have. It's like a right of passage. The majority will go to college and obtain an undergraduate degree. A postgraduate qualification is a progression of interest and more dedication. Postgraduate degrees are expensive. I think its viewed as a higher commitment to your career (Grad 10| Pipa : 90-94).

And Orla added:

I think a postgraduate degree is far more important. You are honing and adding to the skills you build in your undergraduate degree (Grad 16| Orla: 64-65)

7.4.1. Graduate Relationship With Industry: Design Societies and Organisations

One of the other aspects of the research has been the response to what the design associations and societies are providing for students and new graduates. Over half the graduate participants did not know what function or role these played on their behalf '*I have never even heard of ICAD. I'd never even heard of these societies*' (Grad 15| Jane: 386-389).

In some cases, participants did not even realise that design societies existed and therefore could not comment on the relevance or relationship that they provided. Those that did had very mixed views of the function, and especially of the support it provided to them as an entity within design HE. This was from a number of perspectives including industry links, as one respondent remarked:

I love the whole idea of what they say they represent. I love all that ... I don't love this Upstarts Programme that ICAD do. I don't love that because it's like The Hunger Games It's just like The Hunger Games because I know that's what the whole industry is. It's like The Hunger Games that you have to kill off or whatever ... I just believe you can rely on yourself better than relying on what people think of you (in these societies) (Grad 1| Paul: 376-386).

The most visible format that the design societies have at HE, UG and PG are design competitions, many of which link in with designers working in practice. This provides an opportunity for an UG/PG to be mentored while completing a project or brief that has been set by the designer. This is considered to be a benchmark of who is the best and the brightest in the design institutes. Grad 1 | Paul's view was that he had misgivings about the competitions and workshops provided by the societies, and he questioned how effective it was for the vast majority of UG students or PG students that had submitted work. Many did

not meet the set of requirements to be mentored; however, this was not a reflection of the quality of the submissions according to himself but rather, the process of competition.

Like I said, I like the idea of them. I like what they say they stand for, but I don't know. I feel they could be working a bit harder (Grad 1| Paul: 391-392).

Another graduate, Mohammed, who was undertaking a PG degree in design management added:

It creates a lot of battles and competitiveness within people, which is great, but I don't know. It's constantly pushing that, "You win this, you win that, and you win however." I don't know. I like the idea of them ... (Grad 14| Mohammed: 150-155).

Competitiveness between the graduates to win was highlighted by those that had taken part in submitting work. As Mohammed continued:

... from when I first was in college, I'd have to say yes, it does support new designers because for example, we worked on the typographic project (ISTI). They are challenging students to show their talent, to show what they know about type and at the same time, they're learning, as well. There is an opportunity for a student to challenge themselves while at college (Grad 14| Mohammed: 206-212).

Many of the graduates who had attended conferences such as the OFFSET one held in Dublin had not felt it to be a very positive experience, as Paul elaborated:

I've been to OFFSET and I've seen a snobbery within the industry from people. There can be. I've seen that ... For me, there's a snobbery within it. There's a created hierarchy when there shouldn't be (Grad 1| Paul: 397-401).

Another participant, Grad 13| Claire: 83, was very upfront with her statement: *'I haven't joined either so I have no educated opinion on this one.'*

With regard to membership of the IDI, one longstanding member remarked that older members used it for networking: (See Chapter 5 of this thesis); this aspect of the design society was noteworthy for the perceived lack of relevance among the new designers interviewed. Another participant when asked about the relationship between HE and the design societies commented:

Connection between any of the societies and the Institute ... I didn't know that there was one until the lecturer presented us with our project brief. No, it's not relevant (Grad 14| Mohammed: 218-221).

This negative theme continued with Grad 6| Jack giving a more balanced reason for his discomfort with the design associations, even the better known ones:

I certainly believe that as a graduate in a creative industry, confidence within your own ability is vital to succeed. One of the biggest aids to this is recognition from work colleagues and other industry professionals that you are successfully executing your work to a high standard on a continual basis. However, I am also of the opinion that unfortunately, the Irish creative scene over the last number of years (in particular the Dublin scene) has become increasingly egotistical in practice, and sadly, although the emergence of platforms such as the IDI and ICAD offer great graduate opportunity and support, one can't help but feel that they also, in a lesser capacity, serve as nothing more than a narcissistic means of being able to say, 'Look at us, aren't we great' (Grad 6| Jack: 158-168).

Only a few participants, including Elizabeth (Grad 17) and Orla (Grad 16), believed that such associations were important to the graduate:

I feel these societies are important and could create a professional and cohesive element to an industry that is not inherently consistent or regulated (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 72-73).

I think they are very important. They inspire many young creatives and are motivational through the annual awards. They are current and give more exposure to the design world (Grad 16| Orla: 74-76).

The awards that these societies run mean that they are current from a design perspective, but the design awards and the aspects of professional and cohesive voice are all very valid reasons for their existence. When asked if having an award was of value to a graduate designer, the reaction was consistent:

Yes, they are important, especially within Ireland, however not so much for anyone wishing to work in another country, but it still looks good on a CV if you have had some award or association with IDI or ICAD (Grad 19| Tom: 140-143).

As Karl remarked:

The design industry and in particular GD/VC are facing difficult times and need to have a united and forceful industry association which can provide leadership and raise standards (Grad 12| Karl: 346-349).

They are also required for support to HE, particularly at Level 9. He went on to add:

I think they are important considering the challenges they are currently facing in Ireland. They can do more, they can do more like in policy creation and influence the government or create a policy, just as I mentioned before, like as the architects and the health or the accounting boards have done. If they can develop professional standard evaluation courses and licensing, it would be much better.

But currently ... if you look at IAPI, the advertising one, they have developed a course which is run with DIT, and DIT is not just a college that will want to partner with anyone⁴⁶. This course is like, it helps the creative people whether you are coming from the design school or from the marketing school to gain a postgraduate level nine qualification in the creative advertising, storytelling, design, all that, and marketing, so it's quite good if they could ... (Grad 12| Karl: 654-672).

The point being that industry needs to have a more transparent link with the HEIs so that they take ownership and responsibility for the graduates like in other areas of academia experience, such as in accountancy, engineering. If this means that this role is carried out by the societies, then so be it, but greater links and more communication is required, according to Karl. It is worth noting that the design graduates from both the UG and PG cohorts have diverse experiences and views with a number of participants extremely critical of the societies.

7.4.2. Internships and JobBridge Experience

Work experience and internships (which have been referenced in Chapters 3 and 5 of this thesis) would appear in some cases to be nothing less than exploitation of design graduates at both UG and PG level, according to some of the participants. When one respondent was asked how long he was on work experience in a design firm, he remarked:

Just about 9 months now... for nothing. You have to do it if you're looking for experience. It's just a matter of finishing at this place and if I'm not too busy (*the graduate would be kept on if the firm needed him*)... They haven't said anything about keeping me on and I'm not sure about going to a place that is different or to move to a place that is quiet, as well (Grad 14| Mohammed: 303-320).

⁴⁶ This arrangement will end in 2018 with IAPI considering other alternative arrangements.

His experience of working in design was based on how busy the studio was, and at no stage was he provided with a promise of further work which would be paid. The early experience of having to work like this in order to gain experience was one that was shared repeatedly by design graduates in this study. From the perspectives of the graduates, this was a mixed experience, but it seemed not to be of importance as to the level of HE attainment, be that UG or PG, as the majority of participants had to start working in design in an unpaid 'employee' capacity somewhere.

No, no because as much as you're qualified to do that through the college process, it will take you at least another five or six years to actually build yourself up through the ranks or whatever, even more (Grad 1| Paul: 130-136).

In Paul's case, he could not say he was a professional because of the expectations and the responsibility implied by the word. Though this is a personal response to the question, it does shed light on the discipline and why there is a lack of confidence to be considered a professional. It is quite possible that the discipline has not developed an identity that engenders confidence in what it provides. It is in transition and still needs to define itself.

7.4.3. WIT Design UG Experience

Trends in Design

The majority of graduates from the design programme at WIT enjoyed their study. Many agreed that it was fit for purpose:

In my experience I have to say yes. My degree ticked every box as far as I was concerned (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 15-16).

Or

I've been out of college five years now so I'm not sure, but at the time I think it did keep up with trends (Grad 8| Úna: 6-7).

This participant commented that the study was evolving with the current trends in design and that, as a result, they felt that they had gained employment and a career in design.

However, one participant saw the UG programme as... *important as a starting point. It could be better if colleges were able to catch up with day-to-day challenges and trends of the industry* (Grad 4| Molly: 15-17).

The changing trends in the industry and how the curriculum of design programmes of GD/VC is changing were reflected in other remarks:

I did my thesis on comic books and I did it on imagery and how it would help people with learning difficulties. Education wise, I think design is the catalyst that people haven't discovered yet. Design education as a whole itself is evolving. I've seen it evolve myself and it will always evolve and it will always try to evolve. I feel design is a catalyst for education in general (Grad 1| Paul: 286-290).

The creative experience, mixed with design theory, allowed him to consider his options when it came to leaving the programme:

I've investigated it and I've been researching. I've seen how people change with subtle design. It doesn't have to be a massive thing thrown out of pace that people don't understand and they're like, "Woah, this is ... " "Look, it's graphic design. How can you not understand it?" It just has to be simple. It can be broken down simply, but everybody can follow from the person that's here with dyslexia or a person that's here with any ... autism or whatever can follow it the same as somebody whose IQ is 136. I just think design is the catalyst for the future of education (Grad 1| Paul: 296-303).

The area of GD/VC design, which was seen as being limited to advertising and branding/promotional work, has shifted. It now is more concerned with a broad range of areas inclusive of *user and information* design. It is not that these areas did not exist before, but rather they have now become so much more important with current trends in design. As stated in Chapters 2 and 3, the curriculum of the GD/VC programmes and Design in Creative digital media has expanded. In many cases, they now include ethics, sustainability and information design, coupled with user experience. This step has allowed for a greater flexibility for interdisciplinary activity to exist between domains outside of the Art and Design programmes, departments and schools, with HEIs now looking to *design thinking* in education and business alike.

7.4.4. Future Curriculum Considerations for UG

The importance of the teaching and what is considered to be of value to the graduate for PG study and early socialisation focused on the graduate being flexible, open to change and confident. None of these things are the names of modules, but instead attributes that the graduates felt had helped them to gain a step towards a PG programme or securing employment in design:

From looking on the WIT website and seeing the semester breakdown, I can see that the course layout is still relatively the same. I benefitted greatly from the progression of the course and I think a lot of the modules were crucial in giving me a good understanding of design, the design progress and to flourish an innate design aesthetic (Grad 10| Pippa: 2- 6).

The reality is that most of the graduates only became aware of what the programme of study was about when they started to work and many regretted that they were not doing things more from a self-motivated standpoint at HE. For others, they had to reconsider the role of the lecturer of design after they had completed their programme of study:

You're not doing a project for a lecturer, to impress the lecturer. You do it for yourself (Grad 14| Mohammed: 223-224).

The self-reliance aspect of design and the requirement to be able to motivate both clients and yourself was seen to be very important by all participants, but how that could be introduced into the curriculum was not something that was easy to define:

Adding more opportunities to learn more of the practical and business side of the design industry – with perhaps more information on self-employment and freelancing. As fewer people are walking into jobs, I think these things are becoming more common and I don't think there is quite enough emphasis on how to deal with self-promotion and working out how much to charge, etc. I think it would be great to walk out of a degree with a business set up (your own website/logo/stationery/identity/mission statement/branding /blog/professional social media etc.) even if walking straight into a job, it would still solidify you as a designer with an identity and style (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 45-52).

Another participant considered the curriculum for UG design:

It's difficult to say. Certainly the design landscape is an ever-changing one and it is becoming harder to remain constantly informed. When I was undertaking my studies, the vast majority of modules were centred around print-based workload, although we were offered the opportunity to explore digital media in a lesser capacity if we so wished. In the

time since I have completed my studies, there has definitely been an increased industry focus on digital media/digital publishing which, I assume, will have an impact on the direction of the design HE curriculum over time (Industry trend awareness is one of the main reasons why I feel it is imperative to offer work placement to students during the course of their studies) (Grad 3| Cian: 29-38).

The consideration of a work-related period spent in an industry, e.g., work experience/internship seemed to resonate with all participants. However, the ability of the curriculum to reflect the industry with digital platforms and marketing was expressed by a number of participants as a way to integrate industry and the HEI experience at UG and indeed PG level:

When I apply for jobs, they generally think that I have good web design skills but there was a very big lack of that on the course when I was doing my undergraduate programme (Grad 13| Claire: 12-13).

When considering the day-to-day experience of going to college at UG, many graduates thought it was the finished design solution as a project that was key, and that getting a design job was the desired outcome, according to one participant:

... Can I just say, current undergraduate students assume it's all about the deliverance of the final project if you look at the undergrads.

You'd give them a brief, they're thinking of, "Okay, I have to pass this" and then they would look at the cosmetic end. They don't think about the processes, and then you have the postgraduates. They see the profile as a profession, and the postgrads are able to break barriers of the corporate world and business, and as I mentioned before, we need people in the boardrooms so once we have a postgraduate designer, they are thinking beyond design only. They are thinking of innovating leadership (Grad 4| Molly: 65-84).

This opinion expressed by one of the participants indicates a difference between the expectations of the curriculum for UG and PG at HE. The implication of gaining a good design job from an UG degree would be the desire of the vast majority of design graduates after a four year standalone qualification:

I think in this day and age it is important to have a degree in order for graduates to get a job. Ireland is accustomed to a highly educated work force and employees automatically search for this ... I think it is important for young designers to have a degree now days to get their foot into the door of a studio (Grad 20| Maura: 73-77)

But the UG respondents felt that they had the basics of design but not the fluency in virtual platforms:

No, I think the basics and complexities of Visual Communication must be understood. I do not think enough is done in the digital areas of design. To not be fully competent in being able to translate print design to motion graphics is a big disadvantage when applying for jobs (Grad 7| Gerry: 14-17).

They also felt that the business side of working in the area as a freelance designer or self-employed would be an advantage:

More importance should be placed on the business side of things – i.e. invoicing, quoting, etc. (Grad 7| Gerry: 165-167).

The current trend towards UX design activity was commented on by all participants in the research study as being important to the future, with concept development and design process as a tool for innovation being something that is not so much a trend but rather something more fundamental to design practice:

I also think UX design should be a massive part of the course. It teaches the students the fundamentals of design. It's giving them an unbelievable ability to get to the core of design and forces them to design with purpose and not to give into fads/what's popular.

Courses shouldn't change because of the present economic situation. This situation is changeable. The design process is not. No matter what situation Ireland is in economically, there will be small and big budgets. It will always be your job to solve the creative problem with the project restraints (Grad 10| Pippa: 16-22).

This very practical approach to looking at design problem-solving and applying it to design has always been there, but the UX aspect of applying it to all design activity is new for graduates, thus the value for curriculum to include UX/IX is evident. As another participant reflected on what he would consider for the curriculum, he also went back to the basics of design:

It's very hard to choose one as so many skills/abilities contribute to succeeding in employment. If I had to choose one, it would be creative thinking.

In our area, we work very closely with business analysts, developers, product owners, managers, software architects, testers and the end user of our products. The ability to form an idea and develop it thoroughly while considering the applications framework is essential. It's also very useful to be able to let go of your own ideas, be open to constructive criticism and work within a team.

Sketching ideas is so important. Our lecturers in college always stressed the importance of sketching ideas. A typical working day for us involves sketching ideas ourselves, with colleagues (informally) and white-boarding ideas in meeting rooms and in Design

Workshops. Design Workshops are where we invite members of the team to sketch ideas on paper of what they believe to be the solution to a design problem, usually attended by six people. Each person gets to present three ideas to the rest of the group for critique. This helps everyone stay on the same page and no idea or question is ever out of place. Presentation skills are also very important (Grad 2| Harry: 119-137).

According to Harry, who as stated, had returned as a mature student in order to further his opportunities for advancement in the industry, there were three areas of curriculum on a degree that mattered for the future: (i) design thinking; (ii) teamwork and the ability to be able to work with people across disciplines; (iii) good GD presentation skills.

Interestingly, the final consideration for inclusion on curriculum for UG/PG degrees was presentation skills for visual element of the design. The main aim and objective that the design programme at UG focuses on is design problem-solving, now newly named as 'design thinking' or 'design opportunities'. The new wording reflects a more collaborative and positive approach in all design areas, which is expected from graduates, particularly after completion of a PG degree. Being highly motivated was also considered as a desirable trait and one that was missing from the UG programme as an outcome. This is difficult to build into a programme as a module outcome, and it requires building a student's self-esteem with a mix of modules run collectively over a period of time that can produce a confident graduate. The importance of talking to designers and bringing them into the college and collaborations was repeated by Tom who had finished his UG programme of study five years earlier and had worked in Europe rather than in Ireland. The globalisation of the design industry was expressed in the following terms:

...focus on the kind of tasks that the industry needs to cater for. Talk to companies and ask the designers what their daily tasks entail. Then, brainstorm ways that might improve on how those industry tasks could be improved and tailor the educational programme to that. Example: SAP⁴⁷ is always strongly searching for visual designers with user experience (UX – user-interaction design) skills, or visual designers with HTML/CSS skills; visual designers that can do prototypes are the ultimate prize. Publishing houses also have a demand for layouting skills, but also digital skills as most print houses are also online or need people with XML (Extensible Markup Language) skills to create in-design templates (Grad 19| Tom: 92-101).

⁴⁷ SAP (Systems, Applications and Products) implementation. A German software company who developed a system that allows businesses to track customer interactions, SAP is well-known for its Enterprise Resource Planning and data management programmes (www.businessdictionary.com).

Some of the responses from graduates reflected the areas of industry experience they had worked in which did not require promotional work or branding, something which features predominantly in most design programmes. Updating and looking at what is now currently being designed for, e.g. app development, and what is seen as good practice involves continually working away on your own style and creative look.

Students need a little guidance to platforms where they can learn what is going on in the design world. Example: HTML5 CSS3/4 is constantly being updated. GitHub/open source community, and responsive websites' design and web applications versus native are constant topics that are getting more and more attention regarding visual design and user experience. Smashing Magazine keeps constantly up-to-date with new topics. Typography has never been more important on screen as in print until now, but screen text needs to be understood differently than print in terms of coding and behaviour. Example: aligning type inside a div container that allows web fonts to fall back to system fonts, understanding the Matrix/bounding box, differences in baseline behaviours/ascender/descender heights. This is all sought after expertise. User Interface control visual design in HTML is a huge topic. Icons, scalable vector graphics, animation with CSS. Flat design is also such a huge hype at the moment, although if you look at Google Material Design and iOS, you can see this is more in the direction of Almost Flat. This is a great time for print designers that want to cross over to the screen... more and more layouting methods and typography usage/hierarchy that comes from print is appearing on screen (Grad 7| Gerry: 36-53).

Gerry's interest in the area and the enthusiasm that he has is also part of the attraction of making something that has design thinking behind it. The insight into the difficulty that some designers have in the crossing-over from being a print designer to a virtual and on-line designer is evident in Gerry's experience. Providing creative content for 'app' mainly associated with mobile utilities and 'web' platforms also provides a reflective understanding of the ever growing need to keep abreast of the changes in the design arena. Keeping relevant by investigating in current tutorials and on-line learning is worth noting e.g. GitHub/open source community. This kind of learning and up-dating is not about reinventing design principles but building on them and further combining them with technology. A new breed of 'community' which was also commented earlier in this Chapter and in Chapter 5 in relation to net-working practices for the industry design societies/associations has been a shift to interact virtually and not face-to-face. Typography the very heart of VC/GD design according to Gerry is given more opportunities to take a leading role in ever expanding platforms on-line. The topics that concern design

involve interactions and user responses on mobile/web applications. Design content at the core still being typography and flat illustration design executed to in a style that communicates and dictates trends in GD/VC.

The creative knowledge to design programmes in accordance with best practices needs to be unpacked in the early stages of planning a curriculum. This will be considered in more detail in Chapters 8 and 9 of this thesis.

7.5. Degree Programme Development: Content Change - Internships

The future of the design curriculum for UG and PG was viewed as difficult from one graduate's perspective due to the *time delay* that curriculum developers experience in HEIs. The design curriculum would appear fit for purpose for a very short period of time when it is being rolled out. However, it dates over the years, with the same curriculum in place for many years. Changes in design programmes cannot be expressed by the modules on offer which end up being generic, and that is not really useful for the industry. The traditional generic programme, with little indication as to what it is actually going to teach the student, does not work for the design industry which needs transparency and accountability, e.g. it quite literally needs to say what it does on the tin – 'illustration for packaging':

Looking at how the industry is moving with the trends because at times, the college is with the trends. The way you plan your programme is, "Okay, we want to run this programme." You plan it for the next four years. This is, let's say 2020. You're planning it for people who graduate in 2024. New technologies are coming in 2022 By the time they graduate, it's out....Basically, I think the colleges have to play catch-up with the industry (Grad 12| Karl: 101-116).

The importance of including a 'real world' experience of industry was shared repeatedly through the participant semi-structured interviews. One particular participant, when asked if she had undertaken a work experience period, replied:

No, I didn't, and I think that it's extremely important to work in the industry even briefly during college.... I think an internship as part of the academic year would be important. I

also think an online presence should be considered important. Social media sites such as Behance or blogs will get you noticed and the earlier you start this, the better (Grad 8| Úna: 10-18).

The developments in design and social media have been incorporated into the curricula of nearly all programmes of VC/GD. But it did not exist to any real extent in 2009 when Úna had left the UG qualification. Internship, as part of the GD/VC programme, was also considered as being a desirable addition to the WIT programme delivery by nearly all participants, including one graduate, Claire, who worked in a printing firm as a GD:

I think that an internship would be great during the study period, even just to learn the basics. I had worked in a printing company before going to college so I understood the terminology used, but many of my classmates were lost. Even when it came to the size of paper that is being used on a job (Grad 13| Claire: 41-44).

7.6. Work Experience and Greater Options

Participants felt that design programmes need to present a graduate with options even at UG level, providing the graduate with pathways of opportunity after they leave HE, and developing a number of choices for the UG programme that allow for a plan B. A liberal arts degree with two pathways, design and marketing, was suggested by Molly:

...I believe programme developers for colleges, for courses, they should say, "Okay, fine." They should (GD students) have a Plan B just in case something happens.

When we started in 2006 when the economy was ... We thought, "Graphic design, oh wow. Yes. By the time we finish, we will be all designers", but unfortunately down the road, we ended up in supermarkets, McDonald's. Some jobs are not worth talking about, so if maybe there was a Plan B, that just in case the economy takes a fall, they'd come up with something that ... (Grad 4| Molly: 170-186).

Allowing that the economy does fluctuate and that there are graduates who end up not working in the area of design, the remit for the HEIs could be to plan another option for the graduate, a 'Plan B' which includes a related pathway to design modules like marketing or IT:

... Let's say they come up with something like, "Okay, when you finish off, you have the entrepreneurial skills, proper entrepreneurial skills so that you would be able to start your own business" ... and start off as an SME and provide for yourself, and the other thing, if

maybe we can look at the way the School of Nursing is being run around the world (Grad 4| Molly: 191-199).

When asked about what did the School of Nursing mean as a role model for design HE Molly responded that nursing is regulated and there are guarantees of employment and professional recognition. This participant also considered a 12-week semester that would provide work practice for the UG programme:

Placement for design before you graduate, that says you are in the industry, they can come up with something like that ... say, maybe 12 weeks (Grad 4| Molly: 211-221).

Karl, a graduate holding an MA and working on a PhD programme, stated:

No ... technology, the IT, it was missing. You would get people from the accounting, but they don't have anything from the IT. The IT guys, they don't have anything from the accounting. What they did, they put it together ... (Grad12| Karl: 15-19).

IT skills are also an area that is very popular outside of design, and according to Karl, graduates can diversify into more creative digital areas. He went on to add that:

People from the IT are the most wanted, it's like 100% when you're just finished (your degree), so if you can just look at the way it is structured, why it's working and then you bring it to design, and ask yourself, "What should I combine with design?" Maybe it's design and business. It's happening in Germany and in Amsterdam (Grad 12| Karl: 21-28).

Greater flexibility in the programme development at PG level could incorporate industry and also encourage networking and forming contacts. This is something that the Institutes do not really push at UG level, but was seen by all participants as being very important in the early career of a designer:

A second plan, like a fall-back plan ... It could have been better for me to work there, or the networking as well. It could have improved my networking. The design industry, they didn't have time to be training people because you have to hit the ground running (Grad 12| Karl: 951-958).

According to Mohammed, the UG curriculum could have an internship during years two and three on a UG programme:

Yeah, it would be good to have it in 2nd or 3rd year instead of 4th. When you come to 4th year, you should know things about marketing straight away (Grad 14| Mohammed: 31-33).

Many of the graduates had not undertaken internships so as it was not part of their experience, they were unable to say that they had benefitted directly from it.

I didn't participate in an internship or work placement as part of my programme, but believe it would've been very beneficial for preparing for work in the industry (Grad 2| Harry: 44-47).

Other graduates were more direct with regard to the programmes offering placements and internships:

Yes, I think it would be very desirable. I found the degree in Visual Communication not relevant enough to modern day design. I think doing a work placement where you can be exposed to real life situations would be a valuable experience. It would also build confidence in students and make them feel more prepared for the outside world when leaving college (Grad 16| Orla: 25-29).

The importance of confidence and being prepared for industry was raised by many of the graduates, as stated in previous sections in this chapter. One graduate, Tom, who had taken part in an internship as part of his GD/VC programme in 2009, stated a direct positive response when he went for interviews, having design experience. He had been able afterwards to gain employment in the design arena because he could place this experience on his CV.

Yes, I got an internship at UG level, an internship with TSSG, but only because I was awarded it. TSSG⁴⁸ was in Waterford and was essential for me to build up experience. I also did another six-month internship in Germany at Springer Verlag (Science and Medicine Publishing) extremely helpful because I got to do both print and screen. Work placement is very helpful, I would even say essential for the development as a designer (Grad 19| Tom: 19-27).

He went on to confirm a direct correspondence between his placement and his present situation, adding:

If I did not have this, I would never have gotten my foot in the door at SAP. If the programme does not have a work placement programme, then most students will simply not end up working as designers because the industry is mostly not interested in taking students without some form of experience (Grad 19| Tom: 19-27).

Even if the design programmes cannot offer a direct internship, all UG GD/VC programmes encourage their students to look for them during the summer holidays or at other times in

48 Telecommunications Software and Systems Group, Waterford.

the year. This is often seen as a step towards the design area they hope to pursue after they graduate at UG:

Things like the summer holidays. People won't be doing much, but what I'm trying to say here is it will be good to bring students into that, taking the model of the nursing whereby the concept would transform people from their relaxed mentality of being a student to that of a well-prepared trainee ... (Grad 4| Molly: 223-228).

This participant went on to remark, possibly in a critical way, that students have a responsibility to look for opportunities themselves:

Yes, of the design industry, instead of being like, calling now, "I'm a student, I'm a student." They're relaxed. But when once they have this mentality that, "Okay, I even go to the industry, I've practiced during holidays or weekends" or "I work one day during the week," they start to believe that they're actually designers, and it raises their spirits as well. As well, it would allow for most graduates to be able to become successful as freelancers, or consultants, even entrepreneurs, because they now know how the industry works ... confidence effectively (Grad 4| Molly: 230-240).

One participant who had considered a work placement a good idea while attending a degree programme changed her mind after she had finished college:

I did not take part in a work placement/internship as part of my programme of study. On reflection, I don't think it's desirable. I took an internship straight after I finished my degree and found it to be a really amazing opportunity to learn. I am not sure if it would have suited me to do it as part of my degree course though. It was a nice introduction into the industry but without the pressure of having to still complete a degree. When in college, I thought work experience would be a good idea. My feeling now is that a three-month post degree internship is better. It's less disruptive to study and it feels like a springboard rather than something to complete to achieve the degree. I also feel post degree placements might be less complicated in the sense that a person could move to a different city to work a placement that really suited them, however if it was part of the college year, this opportunity would be lost for lots of people because of insufficient funds, i.e. living away from home, renting student accommodation and also needing to find a place to stay for a course placement if not in the college vicinity or hometown (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 23-36).

Elizabeth was not the only participant to have concerns about internships at HE during the degree:

.... internship programme. It is a flawed system where the industry gains from this and the graduate is utilised and discarded once the internship has expired (Grad 7| Gerry: 120-127).

Location, funding, and accommodation issues, together with being able to select the internship that will lead to the design area that the graduate wishes to work in are all key reasons to wait until after their programme is over. In addition, having a bad experience of an

internship while completing the degree might also have a negative impact on their confidence and interest in the field. Therefore, selecting positions that provide a fair and equitable experience would also need to be factored in.

7.7. The Relationship Between the Graduate and the HEI [at PG Level]

The Hunt et al report (2011), which encouraged a more inclusive and integrated HEI with local enterprise that is community-based with greater transparency between all levels of education, is currently being implemented in Irish IoTs and Universities in Ireland. However, it would appear to be a process that is still in its early stages. The PG design degrees taken by the graduates from WIT, in the main, are at Masters level as opposed to PhD level (see Table 7.1). The MA programmes in design have been undertaken by the graduates migrating to other HEIs as WIT presently does not have a dedicated design MA programme. The IoT of choice for the WIT UG programme for this study was developed at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) as a taught programme. These PG qualifications were established at both research and taught MA level for the DIT as far back as 1998. One participant graduate, who was undertaking a PhD and had graduated from the WIT programme after completing his MA in Professional Design Practice at the DIT, had returned to WIT for a PhD in Business/Marketing with design thinking as his specialisation. His views on the relationship between the graduates and HEIs were quite simple:

There should be a relationship whereby all the parties concerned sit down and exchange all their ideas... Because the industry needs students and ... future leaders as well, and the students, they need to know what's happening in the industry, so we both need ... We need each other, so it's possible (Grad 12| Karl: 120-125).

His remarks indicate that the HEIs and the design industry would need to work on their relationship. On leaving third level education, the graduate designer is left to navigate the divide upon entering the design employment arena, making early socialisation difficult.

However, from a graduate perspective, the idea of not having any training before beginning in the industry was seen to be rare, if at all.

Yes, I feel it is important that attending higher education at UG and PG will serve the design and media students for the future, as having a degree of any kind to their name will be of much benefit to them when they start to pursue their careers (Grad 9| John: 24-26).

The concerns for new designers working in their first job after their PG Masters was that the gap between the design industry and the HEIs was more prominently felt when attending their design programmes of study. There was little financial contribution for supporting programmes or direct links such as scholarships at PG level. This meant that students had financial worries long before leaving the design HEI and that although they would like to attend PG, they had to consider ways of supporting themselves while they did so:

Financially, yes, because the registration fees (for under-graduate) are going up and the recession is still there. Nobody will be able to pay his or her fees (Grad 14| Mohammed: 73-74).

Mohammed was aware that when it came to the HEIs at PG level, the financial input from international students could provide greater income to the Institute as a whole. 'An international student would probably pay more than eight grand or so' (Grad 14| Mohammed: 95).

7.8. Part-time or Full-time Study at PG Level

Graduates in the process of undertaking PG design study, or who were planning to do so, had opted for part-time study with a preference to be able to do it full-time. This was for mainly financial reasons, but as the quotes below indicate, this was also based on family and career situations:

Full time is obviously ideal but part time might only be possible if the student has to pay their own way through college. Online would be helpful if the student has to take care of a family. Therefore the answer is: A, B, and C – no easy answer because everyone is different (Grad 18| Susan: 34-38).

In a number of cases, the respondents indicated that they had decided to veer away from direct design at MA (Level 9) in favour of other programmes of study for both financial and practical reasons.

When I was in college, I was happy I waited and I was happy that I got it, but financially being independent, I couldn't afford it. That meant I had to push it back a bit and tweak it around. After really carefully scrutinising what I had selected, I ended up moving to a postgrad diploma. As I wouldn't be as academic as other people, a part-time postgrad has given me an opportunity to save a bit of money, first of all, and to come from a more practical side rather than a theoretical side. It would take away the thesis from me. The Masters would be more thesis-based. For me, I think choosing what you want and really detailing and scrutinising what you know about the courses, that would be the best way of going around, selecting it at a later time rather than rushing at it (Grad 1| Paul: 90-102).

The changing economic environment over the last ten years has seen many disciplines develop part-time delivery, however it would appear that full-time is still considered to be the most popular response by graduates. However, as Grad 1| Paul added:

It would be part-time for me because ... If you were going full-time, I think you'd just need to be focused completely on the course. Whereas part-time will give you a bit of freedom ... That's it. Financially, it's a massive burden in doing the level 9 (Grad 1| Paul: 105-110).

As another participant commented:

This really depends on the needs/requirements of the individual. Personally, if I wished to remain within the industry and wanted to progress within a certain area of my field (e.g. digital media), I would consider part-time study or perhaps online study to be adequate. However, as is now the case with myself, I will be required to partake in a full-time attendance as I veer away from practical design to explore design within an educational capacity (Grad 6| Jack: 69-75).

Before beginning the research study, I had always thought that the majority of graduates that consider MA or PhD study would be doing so because they planned a career in teaching at either secondary or HE level. This has been the case for many of the participants in this study including: Harry; Cian; Jack; Pippa; and Karl, but this only represented five out of the twenty participants. Those that expressed an interest in education were looking at it from a HE perspective and only Jack (Grad 6) had decided to continue on towards secondary school teaching. The need for PG qualifications at all levels of education in Ireland has seen the former HDip for secondary education change to a full-

time MA/PME two-year degree. This would appear to be reflective of the implementation of the Bologna Process which was explored in Chapter 3 and the Teaching Council initiative.

Three of the participants, Nicola, Gerry and Harry, all wanted to undertake a part-time PG degree in design, and they also were accepting of the fact that CPD training would be continually required, particularly in the marketing and digital areas of expertise:

Being someone with some industry experience, I would consider returning for both full-time and part-time study, maybe to do a 1-2 year Master's degree, or even consider doing a 6-12 week course in the likes of photography and website building courses (Grad 9| John: 17-19).

The fact that training and up-skilling was seen as normal for the area and something that would be beneficial was interesting. The graduate participants had already completed a four-year full-time degree which is a long period to be in full-time education. Other participants only wanted to go for degrees. One in-house graduate designer explained the reason for her choice:

... part-time – no need for childcare, or the possibility of keeping a job or freelancing also (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 40-41).

Another graduate who holds an MA from DIT was now considering undertaking a PhD. Pippa, currently working in a design consultancy in Dublin, thought that it would be useful for HE education work opportunities in the long term and remarked that she was 'considering part-time or online. Bills need to be paid' (Grad 10| Pippa: 41). Harry, who had returned to HE to gain a UG degree in order to advance himself in the design industry and had now decided to complete an MA so he might have the option to teach at HE down the line, also added:

Part-time when I decide to do a Masters. After 10-15 years working in the industry, I'd consider a full-time course, i.e. PhD with a view to lecturing in design (Grad 2| Harry: 57-60).

One of the graduates who had only been in industry for a short time had a preference for attending PG full-time:

I have a small 2-month experience of the industry but my preference would be full-time (Grad 16| Orla: 32-33).

The reasoning behind why graduates wanted to obtain a PG degree was to help their long-term goals however, how they could afford it, presented everyone with different solutions, as Tom explained:

Full-time is obviously ideal but part-time might only be possible if the student has to pay their own way through college. Online would be helpful if the student has to take care of a family. Therefore the answer is: no easy answer because everyone is different (Grad 19| Tom: 34-37).

Circumstances change when attending PG education as graduates have lives that need to be fitted around the study. The financial burden was mentioned by both genders as being something that would make them consider a blended learning or online/part-time study option, but a full-time attending programme would be ideal with everything being equal.

7.8.1. CPD Training

Many of the graduates expressed an interest in updating software skills and marketing. They did not, on the whole, see short-term courses outside of those areas, although one student did express an interest in photography and video. One of the respondents, Tom, remarked, "Yes. For any needed up-skill training" (Grad 19| Tom: 13), while another, Gerry, stated, "I would return for two short courses – digital skills short course and entrepreneurial short courses" (Grad 7| Gerry: 124-12). All the participants saw this as an ongoing situation.

7.8.2. The Relationship of HEIs with the Design Industry from a Graduate Perspective

For many of the graduates, the inter-relationships between the different HEIs and industry, both during and after their PG training, had not been something that concerned them. Many had experience at PG level of an interplay between industry and the HEI they were attending. DIT in particular was seen to be good, as was cited by the graduates:

In the postgraduate I'm doing soon now, it's what, 75% of the lecturers work in the industry, rather than through any association with IAPI. I don't know. If there was an association that could be involved within the course, that could help. I get the feeling it would be massively beneficial (Grad 1| Paul: 164-169).

Another graduate was also very optimistic regarding industry and the current situation for the design programmes:

I believe that design education programmes are actually fairly well placed now as opposed to a couple of years ago. It would appear that industry-experienced resident speakers and creative workshops within college hours are on the increase. It is also evident that organisers are now willing to pump more funds into end-of-year rollout for grad shows. This wasn't always the case, however. Certainly, the economic climate had a negative effect on my own time in design education (Grad 6| Jack: 83-90).

From Jack's experience, things had changed in the few years since he had attended his UG programme, and the PG degrees had always been aligned to industry in one way or another.

The size of the industry and how that impacted on the HEI relationship was articulated by Molly: "The industry is SME ... It's who you know and have connections with ..." (Grad 4| Molly: 600-602). The inter-relationships between the design HEIs was based on an individual staff basis to network and establish contacts. One graduate, Karl, made two very distinct observations regarding PG provision for any HEI. One observation was:

If the degree is seconded by a registered recognised chartered body like in the accounting or nursing profession, which promote and protect the design industry (Grad 12| Karl: 4-6).

He then further added:

Industry connection will allow for students to learn, appreciate and exploit new trends and technology as it develops. New design domains seem to be mushrooming with the ever-increasing availability of new technologies (Grad 12| Karl: 40-43).

This thinking is currently being rolled out by the IDI Society, as stated in Chapters 2 and 5 of this thesis. How successful it is has still to be evaluated because the field is very fragmented and, as can be seen from this study, the profile of societies is not good among the newly graduated designers.

7.9. The Value of Design Degrees

The value or currency that PG degrees hold in Ireland was one that had not been considered by many of the graduates. This would appear to be because it was not viewed in isolation but rather in connection with other disciplines that had a history of PG attainment.

I think from an industry perspective, someone with a PG qualification is going to be more professional, capable and motivated. I think there is still a reverence for PG qualifications. A PG qualification is going to open more doors (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 85-88).

The value of a PG qualification and whether it should be recognised as having more value was an issue on which the graduates all had views or opinions. As Mohammed commented:

It depends on the industry you are working in. Graphic design has a lot of different areas. Say, for example, you are a graphic designer or an illustrator, having a postgrad degree could only benefit you because as an illustrator, you want to be self-employed, you want to be a freelancer so you can only charge more for yourself. As a graphic designer, that depends on talent. If you are the first one to be in that industry, then the industry is entitled to pay you more. If the industry has an undergrad graphic designer working before you come, then are they just going to pay you more money and leave the undergrad? (Grad 14| Mohammed: 190-199).

Another graduate who was considering her position with regard to going back to do an MA felt as follows:

I would think that the postgrad would get you more money but not always ... I wouldn't say I would do it for more money. Doing a postgrad is developing yourself (Grad 18| Susan: 201-202).

Another participant in much the same situation also thought that it should be recognised and saw a value in returning to do more training:

I'm thinking of branching into marketing, purely for financial reasons. I would like to get into copywriting in an advertising agency ideally but I haven't made a definite decision. I don't think I can afford to take a year off for a Masters but there is a diploma night course starting in January that I am considering (Grad 8| Úna: 5-9).

This view was shared by quite a number of graduates who in the main appeared to be female: "Yes, the more knowledge and qualifications you have, the better" (Grad 13| Claire: 54).

When Claire was asked if everyone should have a degree, after some thought, she said:

Not always. I think if someone has natural talent then they could learn a lot on the job. But if someone just has a little bit of talent, then a degree will help focus them more and give them little skills and tips that will help them in the long run (Grad 13| Claire: 61-63).

However, the general consensus was that the value of holding a degree was vital in the short-term for design:

I would be of the opinion that a design degree is vital within the short-term when trying to gain entry into the industry, as it serves to prove that you have gained an educated, informed understanding and knowledge of your field. However, once in the industry for an extended period, I believe your degree becomes less and less relevant as the landscape of the industry evolves. Approaches and trends will constantly change and what you left college with can only get you so far. It is therefore my opinion that the greatest importance to the long-term career of a designer in Ireland is not having a strong graduate degree, but having a strong ability to adapt (Grad 6| Jack: 120-129).

This idea of early career in design and the currency of a degree (value both creatively and as a mark of academic attainment) was shared by Grad 16| Orla who simply said, "It is hard to get anywhere nowadays without a degree."

She went on to add:

I think in this day and age, it is important to have a degree in order for graduates to get a job. Ireland is accustomed to a highly educated workforce and employers automatically search for this. If the country did not work in this way, I think a degree is desirable but not necessary. I have witnessed people with a postgraduate degree in Ireland and no degree, but who are naturally creative and so have worked their way up in the industry. I think it is

important for young designers to have a degree nowadays to get their foot in the door of a studio (Grad 16| Orla: 50-57)

That view was not shared by another participant who adding:

I think a portfolio and experience is far more valuable than College. To my mind, it's more about selling your skills and attributes than qualifications (Grad 7| Gerry: 160-162).

Gaining work experience and being able to be creative and have design skills would appear to some graduates to be of more importance than a degree in the design profession. As one graduate now working in the design field commented:

Undergraduate is a definite. We interview candidates for current roles within Dell for our UX Design teams. One of the first things we look at on CVs is the candidate's education (followed by portfolio). Having a PG really has no bearing on our decisions in choosing candidates but we do look for at least an UG (Grad 2| Harry: 87-91).

The working environment, as outlined by Harry who mainly worked as part of a cross-disciplinary team, did not see the PG degree as holding more weight than an UG in his firm. However, the idea of not having any qualification at all was not something that he could see as being viable.

Definitely. Everyone I work with has a degree and we work on client accounts where all the other professionals have degrees. Having a design degree is a must for working in the industry, both in terms of commitment to a course of study and design thinking (Grad 2| Harry: 98-101).

Therefore, the postgraduate qualification can be useful at a certain point, but not even in a UX environment is it a deciding factor in getting a better job or gaining more opportunities:

Having a PG wouldn't be a deciding factor over a UG. It comes down to a strong portfolio with a clear progression from brief (user requirements) to sketching to wireframes to high fidelity designs. The ability to show project development from start to finish is key (Grad 2| Harry: 182-185).

Therefore, it really comes down to the individual and what they can do in the workplace. This would suggest that the push for higher degrees in design is not coming from the ground up, but rather from the top down.

As another participant remarked:

Yes, in my experience, the Bachelor Degree is necessary, and is sufficient along with experience. It depends on the company but a degree, experience and enthusiasm go very far to getting the job. However, a postgraduate is not so necessary, but of course it is always beneficial. It depends on the industry and line of business (Grad 19| Tom: 106-109).

The relevance of having a degree of some kind remained important at all stages of a career:

I would not hire someone who did not study design and have a degree (Grad 19| Tom: 11).

He went on to add...

....PG is like the icing on the cake, however, the UG qualification is sufficient. In the design industry, the best portfolio wins because no matter how educationally qualified you are, your experience is reflected in the portfolio. I have seen more educated people (on paper) losing out to bachelor graduates who were simply more experienced (Grad 19| Tom: 166-171).

The basic UG degree that was seen 20 years ago, and to this day in some cases, as being desirable has now really become the norm and, in time, it may be expected that the PG qualification will also become standard for some areas of practice.

More and more places are asking for a degree as part of the job specs. I've only noticed this in the last couple of years, so yes, UG is important and I'm starting to realise PG might also be necessary. Yes, I do. You learn a huge amount in college. Yes, you can teach yourself the programmes and technical side, but I feel college gave me the skills to think differently, to think creatively and that's not something you can learn on YouTube (Grad 15| Jane: 19-25).

7.9.1. What is the difference Between a UG and a PG degree?

When graduates were asked about how holding a UG degree differed from holding a PG qualification, the responses were positive about degrees but tentative with regards to what it really was meant to do at an UG level:

I believe having a degree, it's a good basis because you know the values of design, you know the rules of design, yeah (Grad 4| Molly: 346-348).

As Molly remarks, the degree provides a seal of approval to practice design. After all, you 'you know the rules of design'. But Jane above suggests that critical thinking is also a positive attribute from a VC design degree. It would appear that the UG degree is an introduction stage or right of passage. When one of the graduates was asked what he had learnt from his PG degree, he was very positive:

Yeah, because even when you look at it, you say it's unbelievable what I've gained in the space of a year doing a Master's degree, from what I gained in four years. Yes, I was ready for it. It was a challenge. Yes, so you become a master of a certain subject. If it was illustration or if it was branding, you're the master of it, the consultant of it (Grad 12| Karl: 596-600).

This experience was shared by John who also felt that it was very different to the UG experience:

Yes, it is extremely important because it shows possible employers of designers in Ireland that they've done and completed a course and qualified for their degree. This then obviously shows the employers that this designer is qualified to work in their industry (Grad 9| John: 33-36).

One UG graduate who considered the added value aspect of gaining degrees explained the relevance of having an MA degree in design in terms linked to the judgment of motivation by employers:

I don't really know. I assume doing a PG makes you look more ambitious and more determined (Grad 11 | Anna: 40-41)

Molly, when considering the UG, stated, 'It's just a foundation' (Grad 4| Molly: 602). She went on to add:

I'm a postgraduate ... You have come to that level whereby you are specialising in a certain domain in design whereby you are called a master or a doctor ... Where you are called consultant and master of something. Unlike you're just a designer, you don't know where to turn, you just don't know, you're everywhere, so as I said, I gave an example of doctors. You're a special in-house surgeon, you're not a general GP. A house surgeon can give you tablets for headache just as much as the specialist, so I believe, yeah ... (Grad 4| Molly: 603-631).

The issue of salary regarding the PG graduate earning more than a graduate with a UG degree had mixed responses. The feedback was that it should be about gaining a better understanding of the design processes and in time gaining a better salary as one became more experienced and entered management (as already stated), or as in the case of Karl, they should be paid more from the outset because more should be expected from a graduate with a PG degree in design.

PGs should gain better salaries as there would be a call for a certain standard (Grad 14| Karl: 633-634).

Molly, another graduate who held a MA in design, added:

PG level focuses on specialty subjects and in-depth and it's industry-associated which helps in allowing one to be a master and consultant of the chosen design domain. UG foundation touches almost everything in design. One of the weaknesses of the UG is that students or their graduates concentrate or give so much attention to the cosmetic end of their project and in most cases fail to reflect sufficiently on their design process and lose focus of the brief, which in turn can be costly for the parties involved (Grad 4| Molly: 703-725).

This view would not have been shared by all graduates, as was stated previously in this chapter; raw talent and ability without any qualifications were also deemed to be a factor, which meant that there were designers who did not hold a degree of any kind. However, the general view was that the main difference between the UG and PG was:

PG designers are now working in managing design processes in companies, working as researchers, and contributing to consumer research (Grad 4| Molly: 28-32).

This idea that PG design was preparing the graduate for leadership and/or more specialised design aspects such as the creative end typography was expressed repeatedly, for example by Grad 6| Jack who stated:

... the main difference would be 'understanding'. Although design at UG level covers all areas and sets graduates up with a good general knowledge base prior to entering the industry, I would assume that if one were to undertake a PG course which was relevant to the industry (e.g. MA in Typeface Design), then potential employers could only benefit from taking someone on board who had a far greater understanding of one particular area of their field. Being that typography is a major element across both print and digital platforms, it serves as a good example as to how holding a particular PG qualification can have a major beneficial impact from both an individual and industry-wide perspective (Grad 6| Jack: 200-212).

Overall, the graduates did realise that the PG degree was valuable in industry and that it helped 'hone the skills' already being used in practice. It therefore created a more desirable designer, which was deemed by one participant to be of more importance than the UG degree in the long run.

From an industry perspective, I think the PG is far more important. You are honing and adding to the skills you built in your degree (Grad 13| Claire: 15-18).

The difficulty of returning to a HEI to participate in a HE degree presented a number of responses which I had not considered while working on the semi-structured questions for the graduate cohort. It provided insights other than just financial and family considerations, which is worth noting in the study.

7.9.2. Peer Group Support During HEI

Peer group support while attending HEI was cited by three participants as being important. These participants had all returned to HEIs after a period of time working in a number of areas, including internships in design and freelance work. The different support relationships and networking considerations were expressed by one participant as follows:

I am a graphic designer. I'm also a shoulder to lean on kind of thing at every stage we're going through. Plus with people I've been in college with, I've drawn on them. There's two, Andrew and Gary, they're helping as well. It's good to pull them in as well (Grad 1| Paul: 75-78).

Therefore, the early socialisation of PG graduates would indicate that peer support and friendships by way of networking did form part of the design HE strategy behind the design education. However, another PG graduate pointed to the globalisation aspect of design as being an issue:

We are competing, but if we continue with the Irish way of thinking and Irish way of designing and we don't adapt to the European way of thinking, we'll be left out (Grad 4| Molly: 134-141).

This idea of working together and being less competitive on a one-to-one basis has been brought about with design thinking and joining forces collaboratively, which is common practice in other European countries in the design industry. By creating relationships and looking at how the Europeans work together and networking creatively, the same participant added, Ireland would have better design thinking in industry and would thus enjoy a better design culture and a better Irish design identity:

But if we can just adopt one or two things from there (Europe) because if you look at, let's say for example, the Spanish, they have got their own way of designing. The Germans have got their own way of designing ... We are all different ... That's the identity, or the Swiss typefaces, with the Helvetica style, etc. (Grad 4| Molly: 150-157).

One participant who returned to further study commented:

As I say, I was overwhelmed from coming back into it. The world changes naturally and I didn't know until I went back and then the people changed, I noticed that. Then the whole culture changed, the design culture. It was a different ... From what I knew, I knew nothing until I came back and I started. I started at zero (Grad 1| Paul: 245-249).

This experience was escalated when he went on to add:

When I've seen certain people and I've seen the standard that I was coming back to and just the sheer amount of change within the IT packages that were used and ... The programmes, everything, it was nuts. That's the only one word I can say. It was nuts. It was challenging. From what I knew to what I know now, it's 100% different. What way would I describe it? All I remember is going in and the name of one subject was changed. It was just completely different. You could see a change in the culture and the way design has gone. (Grad 1| Paul: 245-265).

When Paul went to third level the first time to do his UG degree, it seemed to him to be more laid back and relaxed. He also was at a different point in his learning. Therefore, returning to complete a degree at a different junction in his life presented a challenge he was not expecting. The workload was heavier, the standards higher and the subject names had changed in some cases to very specific names like typography as opposed to graphics. Students had now become more focused. In fact, the HE culture had changed so much that it seemed to be a 'revolution'.

I was an army on my own thrown into a battle. That's the way it was. I was having to learn faster and faster and faster. It was just near the end I was getting it. That's the way I've gone since that. I've been forever learning and that's what I've learned from the last time I went to college is that you don't know everything (Grad 1| Paul: 267-271).

Even though Paul seemed to be initially overwhelmed by his return to college life, from his description, it appears to have been something that has captured his imagination and surprised him. This surprise had been that it was more complex, and also that he still had a lot to learn as the design environment and design HE were changing and evolving all the time. Put simply, 'you don't know everything'. The other aspects that had changed according to Grad 13| Claire: 78 was the inclusion of the necessity of having 'confidence and adaptability' even to take a PG programme. As Jack commented:

I have previously mentioned adaptability as being an important attribute within the creative industry, but I believe that in order to adapt, you must first be willing to adapt, so I would say that a strong/correct work ethic is key (Grad 6| Jack: 145-148).

The other aspect mentioned that was really being pushed by the HEI system and was reflective of industry was that of having a work ethic. Many of the graduates mentioned that the PG programmes they had participated in were very hard work, and that there was a great deal of work outside the lecturing times that needed to be carried out. Another participant confided, 'You need to have established yourself as a person' (Grad 9| John: 45).

7.10. The Graduate Portfolio

The portfolio was considered to be the one element that was needed above all other aspects of consideration when it came to leaving a HEI. How important is the portfolio at the end of the degree?

Very. It needs to be eye-catching in order to get you in the door. An actual physical portfolio isn't important at all but either a website or a digital portfolio is the way to get an interview (Grad 13| Claire: 91-94).

The participants all looked at this as the means to a career in design:

Again, portfolio (catalogue of work) is most valuable. This depends on who the employer is and doing research on the perspective employer, be that digital or print (Grad 7| Gerry: 92-96).

The reality was that whatever employment the graduate designer was seeking, an interview of some sort was involved which included having the all-important portfolio, even if the portfolio was not to be viewed online for confidentiality reasons.

I can't stress enough how important it is to have an up-to-date creative portfolio. We look for a candidate's online portfolio before interviews as it gives us a good indication of skills and creativity. You'd be surprised how many people submit CVs without a portfolio link. This can be due to a weak portfolio or Non-Disclosure Agreements with employers, but a portfolio is a must (Grad 2| Harry: 169-174).

Not all portfolios are good or suitable for the firm the applicant is applying for, as one participant found out after leaving her UG degree:

... The graduate needs to be able to show what they can do, and more importantly, progression of their work. Feedback from my own portfolio was that it was not relevant or realistic enough to the studio projects (Grad 5| Lucy: 86-88).

The advantage of finding out at the interview stage that your portfolio is not what they are looking for is that you are not left waiting for a call back. You know at the time that you have not been accepted for the position. However, preparing a portfolio that is suitable for a position or that shows your strengths is a key factor in preparing for a job interview.

Another graduate designer working in Germany, Tom, remarked:

The most important part, even more important than the CV, letter of application or dare I say it, the degree ... however the programme of study is always taken seriously. After all, if the student does not study and have a degree to prove this, they tend not to get past human resources. The education also is seen directly in the end result – the portfolio (Grad 19| Tom: 158-162).

What is deemed to be a good portfolio is one that gets you into the job you would like, or the programme of PG study which you are applying for. In the long run, it will also need to be able to convince the client that you are the designer for their firm. If it is not able to do so, it means that it has to be flexible for adaptation:

I believe that the portfolio is a vital component of being able to successfully land a design position upon completion of studies. Of course, it is noted that upon graduating, the student may have very little/no industry experience. The portfolio therefore, rather than showcasing a plethora of well-executed real world jobs, becomes a reflection of personality,

approach and work ethic to potential employers. Ultimately, the portfolio serves as a representation of the student themselves (Grad 6| Jack: 189-195).

The personality of the graduate and the presentation all are important, but can still be seen in the portfolio when viewed by either industry or the HEI graduate school. As Úna remarked:

A good portfolio, I suppose and a relevant one. If you are applying for jobs in packaging and all you have to show are posters and business cards, then you are not going to get the job. I think it's important to tailor your skill set for the job you want (Grad 8| Úna: 27-30).

She then went on to add:

I've blagged my way into many jobs but if your portfolio doesn't reflect your personality, you are at nothing (Grad 8| Úna: 38-39).

The portfolio and the designer's personality are key for design practice and, as Elizabeth voiced: "Again, going on my limited experience, less important than attitude and competence" (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 83). Working with people who are reliable, who can work with other staff members, and who can contribute in a very positive way to the end solution are the most important qualities. While they may not be the most talented designers, they are creative and have the ability to be flexible. As Elizabeth hints, it is these qualities that bring an extra definition and individual stamp to the portfolio and the interview process.

7.11. How do the three stakeholders benefit from a design degrees?

One of the considerations for this research study was the question of how do the different design domains benefit from the Design HEI PG qualification. This question was asked in this chapter from a student perspective. Some of the responses can be seen in Table 7.1

How do the three stakeholders benefit from a design degrees

The Graduates (Grad 6| Jack: 175-184)

I would say that the primary beneficiary of HE design programmes is the graduates themselves. Referring back to question 7, I stated that it was my personal belief that a designer's personal understanding/style/approach to their craft is forged within those four years of education. Without these HE design programmes, I feel that young men and women would be embarking into the industry as far rougher entities without having sustained any real direction. This of course would then cause a ripple effect within the industry, as any potential agency looking to employ would take far longer to integrate an individual who hadn't passed through a HE programme.

The Institutes (Grad 2| Harry: 162-164)

Mainly because the graduates have so much to still learn when entering the industry.

The Graduates (Grad 19| Tom: 150- 153)

If the graduate is serious about the education, then the benefit is first and foremost on the graduate. The institutes and the industry need to focus on the people before benefitting from the growth and experience of the designer's success.

The Graduates of an MA (Grad 4| Molly: 819-838)

Are we benefitting? Is it benefitting the creative? I think if they could put more on the MA side because we are talking of the leaders, the future leaders who have got the management skills and all that so if you can manage, you can bring the industry up. But if you're just promoting it for the undergraduates, you're just promoting creative work and they can't, I'm not undermining them but they can't grow... it's still the foundation.

The Design Industry (Grad 4| Molly: 872)

The difficulty with the design industry is: It can't mature so

The HEIs (Grad 14| Mohammed: 255-258)

I think at the moment with the recession, the colleges/education benefits the most because after all, they get rid of students and many are not going to get jobs from the course or not as soon as they hoped.

The Design Industry (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 77-80)

Probably the design industry, and by extension the graduates, the institutes and society as a whole! I think standards and traditions are important to bring into the future of design and not to become too diluted. It needs professionals with the proper training especially now that anyone can put together an advert or a logo using a PC.

This question will be considered in more detail in Chapter 9. However, the breakdown from the graduate participants was that 65% of the respondents considered the graduate to be the main benefiter, followed by industry at 25%, with just 5% citing the HEIs.

7.12. Overview

The majority of the graduates, upon completion of their UG degree and either during or after their PG qualification felt, on reflection, that they had found modules on the programme at UG level that were useful. However, it was evident in the participants' comments that there was a diversity of views on all aspects of curriculum and the role of postgraduate education. Topics that dominated the debate included digital technology and design thinking across new platforms. With UX and IX mentioned as desirable for new programme delivery. The catch-up that many HEs experience with technology lagging behind was also expressed. There were concerns around exploitation and unbalanced work experience for graduates when it came to placements offered as a part of an UG programme and indeed, this was echoed for internships after graduation. This included personal cost when needing to travel or securing accommodation in order to take the position in the first place. As stated, the responses from the graduates were provided for this study at a time of a changing Irish HEI vista.

The design societies that support the industry and their links with the design HEIs appeared to be only visible when the design lecturer presented a brief that was a design competition to the class according to one participant. Other participants were critical of the associations and cited that they did not see them as relevant. On balance there was enough interest from the participants in the design awards they offered to see continued interaction due to creative recognition.

An interesting irony in design, which is about individuality and difference was that the industry is being challenged with the concept of being team-focused, with particular roles or functions as in the digital and IT industry. A more collaborative approach can be achieved with success for all involved with design thinking, confidence and motivation as a module for the future when it came to curriculum development. The responses of the

graduates to the design industry/profession requirements (virtual/interactive environment) suggested greater digital awareness of the business going from the HEI to the design industry. It was also noted that this builds on the UG curriculum and work placements/internships experience in order to further understand the PG candidate before, during and after the degree at HE. The gender issues expressed by one female participant as requiring up skilling and PG qualifications for longevity and leadership management roles in business will be discussed in Chapter 9. However, the gender imbalance in the field has been noted in Chapter 2 with new developments of self employed woman in leadership roles becoming more evident in recent years.

7.13. Summary

This chapter explored the Irish GD/VC design identity from a graduate perspective. The Irish HEIs are currently going through a period of transition, with proposed TUs and mergers together with funding issues affecting all three stakeholders of the study. The graduate experience has been explored at UG and PG level particularly concerning design training/curriculum and early design career socialization. The PG design curriculum was reviewed in relation to content, experience of HE and funding of fees by the graduate which had implications for attendance, be it part-time or full time, for the graduate of the future. The relationship between the graduate and the early socialisation of a career as a designer was considered from a number of angles including the interview, the portfolio, the ability to adapt to new surroundings/technology and teamwork. General aspects of a career in design such as gender and age have also been touched upon. This chapter concluded by posing a question to the new designers 'how do the stakeholders (the design industry, the HEIs or the design graduate) benefit from design education at either UG or PG stages'? It also provided an overview of the chapters main findings. I will discuss this point in more detail in Chapter 9.

Chapter 8 | *Evaluation and Discussion*

8.1. Introduction

This chapter revisits the research questions in the context of the case-study findings. It looks at the three stakeholders, i.e., the design industry, design academics and the graduate VC/GD designer and the interplay between them from a graduate student perspective. The use of the research design 'triangulation' (Chapter 4, Methodology) has been mirrored through the early part of the chapter. While the concluding sections explores the common themes that were highlighted in the previous analysis chapters by way of the cross-case evaluation and discussion. Therefore, it is considering the comparisons and contrasts between the three distinct stakeholders, while setting the study against the literature in the field.

8.2. Themes From The Data Generation

The design profile/identity of the stakeholders (design industry, design HEIs and the graduate designer) involved in the early career of a designer was identified as a theme and question for the research study. This early experience of new graduate designers leaving Irish HEIs and what they found as opportunities for career and social inclusion followed on from this question as a progression to better understand the phenomena. How had the new designer's time in the academy prepared the GD for early career advancement and was it fit for purpose? The Design HEI became part of the design industry when it became the main source of training (skills acquisition - digital media across the design domain) and educating (design culture/creativity and business) a GD for design practice. Aspects of the new designer's life in the design arena, including their social mobility, gender roles, status

as a professional designer inclusive of salary and working conditions all provided a rationale for investigation. The design sector until 2015 had provided little evidence of the 'value added' and creative practices that a designer was contributing to in society other than the excellent *Opportunities in Design* report (1999). This policy report provided a picture of design in Ireland that marked a new millennium.

The outpouring of State policy documentation captured in 2015/16 has brought design to the public's attention once again and has been long awaited. These State and industry reports have allowed for a rare insight into how design in Ireland has developed since the pioneering State policy report commissioned by Córas Tráchtála, and authored by Franck et al *Design in Ireland* (1962). This report highlighted the requirement to have a Year of Design when Ireland had come to a level of maturity:

Irish design, should not be inaugurated until the programme [of design quality] is well under way and there is an appreciable improvement in Irish design standards (Franck et al, 1962, p.ix).

It has taken over half a century to finally see that outcome come to fruition with ID2015. Many of these State or industry policy documents provide a platform for design, based on economic value and had set out the gross value added (GVA).

The employment impact of the *Design Footprint* for Ireland is comparable to that in the UK when compared on a similar basis. However, exports from the Design Sectors in Ireland were valued at more than €37bn in 2013, much greater than the £9.8bn (estimated at €12.78bn) reported by the UK for exports from a similar set of Design Sectors Harvey, 2016, p vii).

These policy reports also set out recurring themes such as: education, public awareness of design and the need to engage with the different levels of learning so that better design is 'tackled' at an early age. None of these reports track a design cohort such as this thesis has nor documented the experiences in the domain.

Considering the new designer's position required reflection on the other actors that were involved in the space. This study therefore, has attempted to go beyond the general themes and by engaging with the stakeholders consider the research questions (What type of employment do graduates secure after leaving the design HEI and what kind of identity and position do they enjoy?) to further evaluate the relationships between the design industry HEI and the graduate. The study also explored how each of the design stakeholders benefited from PG degrees. This particular focus on PG qualification had been significant from the start of the project due to credentialism inflation across all disciplines.

Not only has formal education credentialing become widely interjected into the occupational process, the nature of educational credentialing itself continues to intensify. Expanding beyond just participation in schooling, there is an emerging normative assumption in the labour market and society that an individual's educational training ... vocational degrees, associate degree, the bachelor's and all sundry graduate and professional degrees are salient social constructions supplanting lesser and older educational training distinctions (Baker, 2011, p.6).

In many occupations the requirement for UG degrees and now PG degrees has become standard practice across many sectors including nursing and indeed teaching at second level school (Masters). In what way did the qualification for a designer enhance their position and allow for greater opportunities in industry? The GD/VC domain and all design disciplines have above the national average of qualified design practitioners compared to other sectors (Harvey , 2016). From some of the industry participants' feedback, the area is very competitive and it also has highlighted insecurity around employment (Chapter 5 and 7 in this thesis). The study could not determine that more Programmes at UG and PG level in design was leading to a corresponding growth in the design industry. There is evidence to suggest that the two are correlated, which is based on credentialism in practice design in Ireland.

8.3. Graduate Findings

The design profile/identity of the stakeholders (design industry, design HEIs and the graduate designer) involved in the early career of a designer was identified as a theme for the research study. The value that design and communication has in an Irish context was also seen as a theme, which all the stakeholders found to be central to their working life. Where graduates find employment after completing their design degree and how a PG MA or PhD might change the graduate's opportunities also was deemed to be important in the light of the changing HE and IT environment in Ireland. To answer these questions the inter-relationships between the HE sector inclusive of the role of the HEA and QQI, has been a consideration with the new legislation and policy documentation.

Irish HE is mainly characterised by being a binary system, with this division being embedded in primary legislation: the 1997 Universities Act and the 2006 Institutes of Technology Act...Although at an inter-institutional level and in particular recent policy initiatives (such as the HEA 2012 documents *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape*), this divide has become more fluid. At one level it can be seen as mission drift and on another the emergence of new opportunities for institutional collaboration and development. (Loxley, in Loxley et al 2014 p127)

The relationships that the design discipline in the Irish HEIs and Universities currently enjoy have not been reviewed in any formal academic papers that I could find on the subject and it, therefore, formed another line of enquiry for me. In the absence of any HEI formal inter-relationship study I targeted six HEIs with GD/VC UG/PG programmes for the study both urban and rural, which formed a base for this investigation to make some observations. How HEIs communicate with each other and how they work with the design industry sector underpinned the research and was reflected in all the participant responses.

The UG and PG designers' experience after leaving the HEI can only be commented on by way of how they have navigated the design/media labour market. So how do the different stakeholders benefit from the PG design education? Indirectly they all benefit but the student/graduate of a design programme at UG level was described as the most direct

entry level by students. The early career designers stepping back into HE to do a CPD or PG qualification in Ireland did so to further advance their opportunities and longevity in the design area. The design curriculum that the graduate cohort felt they needed after being in the design industry came under a number of headings. Leadership for management and for further specialization in IT, marketing or design thinking/culture and even critical thinking all featured in the semi-formal interviews. However, as the findings in Chapter 7 show, this was not always evident from the responses of the participants, with some graduates expressing disappointment in the design industry and the HEIs for not working more closely together, and for not providing relevant work practice such as internships and work experience. As one graduate remarked:

Placement for design before you graduate, that says you are in the industry, they can come up with something like that ... say, maybe 12 weeks (Grad 4| Molly: 211-221).

The UG degree programmes needed to be more industry aware and linked for instance, like the MA offered by DIT in Digital Media, which had a direct connection with IAPI:

The degrees need to be more relevant to today. Allow students to take part in work placements linked with businesses and firms. Focus more on current technologies and have an internship (Grad 12 | Karl 45-55).

The graduates who had taken degrees at Levels 9 and 10 appeared the most satisfied with their programmes, due to the desire to be introduced to new innovative teaching and learning practices such as blended learning, part-time delivery, specialisation disciplines and location. As expressed by another participant who commented:

The Masters I did was so different to how the UG programme was. The MA was hands-on and everyone was working in the design area this is the way design should be (Grad Karl | 24-27)

The desire from the graduates that the HEIs and the design industry would develop a better relationship was expressed by 80% of all graduates, as it was to every one of the stakeholder's advantage to work together.

There should be a relationship whereby all the parties concerned sit down and exchange all their ideas... Because the industry needs students and ... future leaders as well, and the students, they need to know what's happening in the industry, so we both need ... We need each other, so it's possible (Grad 12| Karl: 120-125).

The desire is for a new way of developing programmes in the future which would be one of collaborations, with a greater fluidity between the different stakeholders going forward in response to current practices.

Graduate participants evaluated aspects of working conditions for designers. The early career paths identified issues around gender, status, e.g., leadership roles and economic value, both personally and as a collective professional status, and for cultural and personal development:

I would consider returning to college for a Masters so that I could consider other positions in the future but it will be a short course in App development in the next few months (Grad 16| Oral: 14-23).

The reality of going to HE provided a cross-sections of responses from the graduates with Orla expressing a very common response and one of conflict with the desire for what an MA can provide, but the immediate situation not providing the opportunity for same.

8.4. Industry Findings

The design sector's identity and how it has been achieved was difficult to extract from the sector itself. Aspects around salary and public perception were also difficult to define. The socialisation of a designer who has just graduated and the need to have graduates that are ready for the working environment was highlighted from the employer's perspective and was articulated by over 50 % of the participants.

Designers mostly work full-time at approximately 90% of the total design workforce employed in 2014. This is higher than the overall proportion of full-time workers employed

across the economy, which was estimated as 77% of the total 1.94 million persons employed in the QHNS data in the EGFSN Skills Bulletin 2015 (Harvey, 2016, p.25).

The design industry requirements for a graduate and the terms of reference that socialisation involves for a new designer was quite broad. Undertaking their first steps as a 'creative' in a design company meant being able to use software across virtual and print platforms.

Much of the industry criticism was based on the traditional generic UG not being fit for purpose, as it did not address new media.

As stated by one graduate working in a design studio:

[...] basics and complexities of Visual Communication must be understood. I do not think enough is done in the digital areas of design. To not be fully competent in being able to translate print design to motion graphics is a big disadvantage when applying for jobs (Grad 7| Gerry: 14-17).

The question of the currency that the degree in design holds in industry and how important a Level 9 or Level 10 degree is to the design sector was also examined. The different opportunities, e.g., career advancement that it afforded the graduate were also asked in the interviews. Many of the responses indicated that the degrees gave the recipient confidence and provided a long-term gain as against a short-term one. The longer the graduate designer was in the industry, the more the value of the degree particularly at PG level would be needed. Many design graduates (70% of participants did not expect to be paid more for having a PG qualification, but in the end the effort in acquiring one showed the level of interest and commitment that the 'creative' had. As one graduate considered the difference of a PG degree compared to that of a UG qualification:

I think from an industry perspective, someone with a PG qualification is going to be more professional, capable and motivated. I think there is still a reverence for PG qualifications. A PG qualification is going to open more doors (Grad 17| Elizabeth: 85-88).

While another graduate added:

I would think that the postgrad would get you more money but not always ... I wouldn't say I would do it for more money. Doing a postgraduate degree is developing yourself (Grad 18| Susan: 201-202).

The newly acquired skills at Levels 9 and 10 and the networking with like-minded people at the PG HEI encouraged taking on greater responsibility and leadership/management roles. So the PG degree allowed for more flexibility and adaptability to follow a design management career. It also allowed for another route 'plan B' that would lead to a 'creative', having more economic and creative benefits and opportunities.

...I believe programme developers for colleges, for courses, they should say, "Okay, fine." They should have a Plan B just in case something happens (Grad 4| Molly: 170-186).

This important comment about programme development and curriculum that was sensitive to the commercial market, with a built-in capacity to be adaptable and provide alternative routes or pathways, has not really been explored in an Irish context. There is evidence of programmes that are linked to the liberal arts in the Universities and HEIs in the UK that would allow for those possibilities. Other comments from the early career designers were in relation to the desire for long-term security in the design sector practicing as a designer. HE was seen as a factor for providing a role in management by 100% of all males interviewed, while females trailed behind at 40%.

Recent reports have provided evidence (Harvey, 2016, p.65) that greater qualifications can lead to more engaged careers. There is no evidence to suggest that this situation is a direct result of acquiring another qualification.

Some parallel from the participant findings, those higher qualifications did indicate longevity in the design industry, but other factors might explain the phenomenon.

For many of the design industry participants, this was the first time they had been asked any questions about their working conditions and their views of the design sector. The creative and cultural impact of the design experience was also ascertained during the interviews and this received a very positive response from 70% of the participants.

8.5. Academia Findings

The position of the academic lecturer in design seemed to be one of transition. The plethora of new policy documentation and the Government's endorsement of links with industry was welcomed, but is difficult to achieve in the present HE set up. A number of academics commented on the Bologna Declaration. This was in relation to student retention and the push by the State for HE to have greater retention.

The problem with the modular system and semesterisation is you no longer have the freedom to do that. Everything is predefined. As you know, we've totally engaged in the Bologna system and modularization system. I think we're now beginning to find that when you look at the retention rate, that there are serious misgivings on that. The universities don't see it as much, but there's a reason for that. One of the reasons is that what you have happening now is, on the one hand there's the massification of ...Accountability?... Third-level education, which means you're trying to educate a larger body of people ...(HE-Des 14|79-87)

Other academics found that the content of the programmes and the recommended structures, e.g., timetable delivery did not always sit comfortably:

We are modularized, they're built into modules so if an international student comes, we have been able to accommodate them by letting them do a term or a semester, we can chunk the curriculum, but for us, a rigid, 5-6 modules in term 1 with an assessment to the end of the term just doesn't fit that development of creativity, the development of projects, the development of design thinking and critical thinking. There are some modules for us that go right across the year and are developmental (HE-Des: 19|78-84).

So there was a concern for the student and the design HEI with an assessment model that was accountable but limited in the flexibility to be creative or innovative. Applied Business

(UG and PG) that can provide work experience, travel and study exchanges and internships after degrees have been concluded, added more pressure on the academic. The locations and the limited positions for graduates in Ireland were discussed as a real barrier for many programmes in offering placements as part of the remit for a UG degree. Unlike marketing degrees, which can place students in any setting including retail, few graduate designers find their way into design positions as students, due to the area being very much dominated by SMEs.

The position of the academic in a HEI setting is worth commenting on, as it was so varied depending on the HEI and the years of service of the design academic. For many design academics the lack of funding and IT support was a real concern, and CPD in IT was seen as a solution, together with investment in the sector. It was a multiplicity of concerns including the need to prepare students for industry with technology:

... to operate in multiple manners and yes, I don't think you can run a design programme where you're not doing huge amounts of light projects, but that doesn't necessarily say that you're doing ... You're basically ... There has to still be the educational rationale for it. Just being a light project isn't enough, it's the quality of the light project, it's the experience of that. I think that we do have to respond to industry's needs, but it's more than training, it's education. (HE-Des 15| 229-236)

The general consensus was that the design career academic identity seemed to be lacking in confidence due to lack of funding, support and communication from senior managers who only saw the area as requiring constant financial infrastructure to operate. This would tie in with the current literature in HE which has been conducted by Clarke et al 2015 as quoted by Clarke, Kenny & Loxley (2015, p. 37):

The importance of external funding, the development of relationships with private industry, the constant requirement to secure funding streams, the short-term nature of such funding and the lack of institutional support all contribute to the challenges that exist in the working environment that academics experience.

Other areas in the Social Sciences and Humanities that had a more theoretical discipline delivery could be run more effectively with fewer overheads. Design staff therefore found they were in a 'catch up situation' with technology and that they had to justify expenditure and on an annual basis to struggle to offer basic design platforms needed for the design industry.

One University level HEI had found that it was now in a position to offer a new programme on 'Design Thinking' that had been commissioned by the staff faculty management. A private external consultancy had carried out the marketing report justifying the need and suggesting the market requirement and target marketing students. The University level HEI then brought this to a staff member who was appointed to run it with effect from the next academic year. The report did not provide any original interviews from the participants who had agreed to the study. It did provide the HEI with a blueprint for a new programme structure, which was rolled out as per its recommendations.

So talking to industry, talking to people. It was a resource thing. We were all teaching and working so we didn't have the time. So then he kind of finished that out and handed out the document. (HE-Des: 5| 704-713)

The implications of this curriculum approach for academic autonomy and aspects of academic freedom are concerning. This is a new development in HE whereby outside consultancies are employed to carry out the preliminary background on design, programmes in Ireland. The vast majority are developed by in-house by an existing or new programme board. This could be interpreted as undermining design staff by not including them in the process of the rationale behind having the degrees. It also presents the idea that the MA is a training programme for business only, a skills acquisition situation, as against going beyond that to promote research activity.

8.6. Relationships

The relationship between the design HEIs could be described as friendly but informal. Apart from external examining for another Irish HE or attending seminars on design related subjects, the vast majority of contact is on a personal level. The number of HEIs offering design at UG stands at nine, so most lecturing staff know each other by reputation. There are a further five design Masters programmes operating in the Republic. The poor communication between HEIs was seen as disappointing although not that surprising as it is highly competitive, with HEIs reliant on student numbers. The recent developments in HE with the Hunt et al 2011 report provides a strategy that impacts across all disciplines and HEIs in the future. The proposed new TU was not something the academics had a great deal of faith in (see Chapter 7); there was also a hint of institutional survival that was being threatened by collaboration which was being promoted by reports such as Hunt et al (2011) and HEA (2012). A great many design lecturers had not familiarized themselves with the State policy documentation in any detail. As noted by one participant:

If there's somebody who wants to push this forward and who wants to push research forward, it will be pushed forward. It will be made a priority, no matter what the circumstances (HE-Des 17| 20 -26.).

The debate about the new legislation for the TU was not one that had been critically or intellectually tackled as a collective entity from this study.

8.6.1. Funding

Design lecturers argued that the value of the design discipline has been eroded because of a lack of priority for funding, international development or any strategy. As an academic who had been involved with the ID2015 Year of Design elaborated:

I think the Landscapes documents and the recent documents, they're okay, but I think ... It's funny, but we had this illusion of creative sector review and what really scared me on that was the fact that the amount of time that the international panel was spending with each institution was maybe an hour, or a half an hour ... (HE-Des: 15|889-894).

The position on funding was viewed by one Programme Leader who had taken over the position of rolling out a new Level 9/MA degree as being only possible when funding was in place as there was no possibility of developing new delivery unless it was resourced as his/her programme was:

...it was resourced from HEA funding, we don't usually have that mechanism. I think it's something that's necessary. (HE-Des: 5| 704-713)

The importance of being able to find funding for new programme development was less of an issue in the past but since 2008, with the economic slowdown, the HEIs have not been able to tap into the central capital budgets.

8.6.2. Age and Gender In Industry

One of the main findings in the study was that the age profile of the design industry was, between 20-40 years of age, with a 60:40 ratio weighting towards men in the design working environment (IAPF members survey 2013/4 and the IDI questionnaire 2014).

Designers are mostly male at approximately 75% of the design workforce employed in 2014. This compares to 54.3% of the 1.94 million persons employed in 2014 across the whole economy being male (Harvey, 2016, p.25).

This was less evident in academia. Still, there were more men in design HE than women though in some HEIs this was not the case i.e. WIT had a 60:40 weighting to women, as against NCAD 100% men in the VC design programme in 2014.

The ratio between the genders was more marked in the sector with even less women in the design and advertising industry sectors. The advertising society, IAPI, identified this as a disadvantage and considered measures of offering longer maternity leave as an incentive for more women to continue their careers. The other design organisations such as ICAD and IDI, although identifying membership with higher male employment numbers, did not have any policy to try to change the balance in their statistics. With women not seeing opportunities to remain in a more long-term capacity, the ratios would appear to be consistent over decades in the Republic.

8.6.3. CPD and the Value of Degrees

The findings from the study indicate that the design industry is not strictly a profession in the traditional sense, but a sector which is still finding a 'voice'; this will be considered in more detail later in this Chapter. The three stakeholders (the design industry, the Irish design HE and the graduate designer) are connected by technological advances with new creative innovative demands. The domain VC/GD has always been an umbrella discipline, inclusive of many visual elements (see Chapter 2). However, it is now pushing forward as a virtual digital sector with a global appeal as stated in Chapter 3. This means that it is cutting edge, fast paced with a constant need for CPD training. Degrees need to work over a three or four year period and the traditional elements delivered for design inclusive of design theory will always need to be reinvented as new platforms emerge to be designed for coupling with new hardware and software implications for designers to master as the digital culture changes. For some participants this was a concern as a studio manager commented:

...Certainly I presume colleges take that into account... It's a much slower cycle. That's the thing I've noticed from being in working environments. It takes about four or five years to get into the cycle. Yes, but I think that's a weakness in the system (Indus 7: 245- 260).

8.7 The Identity of Irish Design

The design identity is one that needs promotion and support with the general public as underlined by the ID2015 review publication. Many of the participants in the study could not describe the discipline area even to family and had difficulty explaining what they did as an occupational sector to the general public.

...the visual communication/graphic design profile-identity with the general public is often a confusing one. Not many people can describe what graphic design is in one sentence. Some may describe graphic design as a process of communicating visually using text, images and colours to present information (Grad 9| John: 1-4).

With the profile still almost invisible it also remains unclear as to how it adds value to society either economically or culturally; although the ID2015 has changed this perception. Indirectly the growing dependency on social media and virtual platforms is heightening the visual awareness of digital communication with the general public. This insatiable appetite for creative visual content is increasing among the younger age groups. More young people have grown up as digital natives with virtual platforms as standard this has changed the design sector, as stated in Chapter 2. A sector that previously relied on commercial practice to survive, has seen a gradual decline in direct commercial design activity to one of information and entertainment, or social interaction. This aspect of design will continue with the development of technology. The implication for this has been articulated in Harvey (2016) and Milton et al (2016). The inter-relationships between: 1) Designers among themselves 2) The design industry and HEIs and 3) The design firm and the design graduate, are fluid and interchangeable. To track any kind of generalisations would not provide a true picture of design in 2017/18

Designers, including newly qualified designers, value their peers from the design HE they have graduated with; this is both at UG and PG levels. The significant differences in age and gender have impacted traditional societies as virtual design communities are better engaged and participated in by younger designers. This has brought about a two-tiered networking environment in industry. The first and most populated one is largely free and online for an early career designer; it presents no responsibilities, no financial implications or any loyalty or buy-in when observing it. The exception to this is the motivation behind entering the Design Awards that the design associations run on an annual basis. Here the communities navigate quality and peer recognition. Ambition and career advancement ride high on these accolades, as their implications provide a new credentialism for advancement and acceptance. 'The professional designer is born here in this community which is self-regulated.

The older designer is one that sees community as a mix between online and face-to-face workshops and AGMs, and that sees the awards as a social event. There are implications and recognition to be part of a society or association with a professional register desirable.

The lack of confidence and the HE/industry inter-relationships are viewed with some scepticism and many designers seem to work in isolation as freelancers or in small SMEs with a small network or community (Chapter 3). The struggle for a cohesive voice is further complicated with division by designers. Regulation of the discipline is not popular, as there would appear to be too many different organizations that would see themselves as the one to implement it. The lack of regulations is not unique to Ireland (Chapters 6 and 7) However, without regulation, a free flow of new designers entering the area is not hindered in anyway, but they do not have any security and simply work from job to job. As one graduate articulated:

From what I have experienced in relation to this question, the identity of the graphic design community within the public eye appears to be somewhat misrepresented. I think a cause of this is the fact that there are no (to my knowledge) legislative regulations for the term 'designer'. (Grad 6| Jack: 21-31).

The disadvantages for the sector are that standards in quality can vary greatly between design firms and independent designers. Those designers who are operating a design business that is limited and paying taxes are competing with non-compliant designers with no overheads who are undercutting them. Many of the graduate designers expressed concern over internships, including JobBridge schemes and more direct arrangements with design firms that go on too long without offering any long-term permanent prospects, thus encouraging casualization.

8.8 The Socialisation Of New Designers

When asked what was the most important quality or talent to be a designer, the graduates who participated in this study stated that 'flexibility, adaptability and dependability' all ranked very highly (65% across both genders) and in some cases these attributes came before 'creativity' (45% across both genders). Confidence and self-motivation would be seen as 'assets' to have as a module on a UG/PG programme according to the graduate participants. The key needs for the graduates were stated to be: minimal influence, content strategy, skills acquisition, creativity design thinking, providing opportunities and education that provided a design scaffold which linked all aspects. The design industry is now more about creative teams than an individual approach to working on projects. In some cases this team designing means that everyone owns something instead of just one person, and so encourages a new type of a 'creative' that could be described as being passive in nature and replaceable, with no distinctive design traits stylistically or conceptually. The positive of this wave of design thinking that is now very central to the GD/VC world is that it is based more on a pedagogical approach. In the future, there

should be more safeguards to avoid burnout and stress which previously was very much part of the design world.

8.8.1. Barriers for Graduates' Socialisation

One of the most significant outcomes from the study has been that most programmes at UG level and indeed PG MA do not have an internship in place. Only one VC/GD programme, in Letterkenny IT, included work placement in their programme delivery. By not offering internships or work experience the new designer graduating from the Irish HEI has little to 'go on' when it comes to what the business is really like. This means that for many the first design job can be a 'baptism of fire' and not what the new designer thought it was going to be.

I think that an internship would be great during the study period, even just to learn the basics. I had worked in a printing company before going to college so I understood the terminology used, but many of my classmates were lost. Even when it came to the size of paper that is being used on a job (Grad 13| Claire: 41-44).

The difficulty for most design HEIs is that they cannot provide a consistent work experience or placement for each of their students. So looking at alternative collaborations such as Erasmus funding for student mobility, and design competitions with the design societies provides experiences that encourage the student to look for placements themselves while attending the design HE. In this way, the students begin to develop relationships that might lead to networking in the design field.

8.9 Curriculum

In 2011, Hunt et al initiated the publication of a number of policy documents by the HEA linking HE with industry. Proposed mergers of IoTs leading to a possible TU and work experience/internship as standard practices for UG programmes are reminiscent of the polytechnics' upgrade to Universities in the UK in the 1990s. The Irish IoT system has a remit to serve its local community; this in fact goes back to the old RTC system that encouraged vocational training at a regional and local community level. The general public, local businesses and local interests are now to be considered when developing a programme and integrating curriculum with practice is also highly desirable. The HEA, has become a more central 'figure' in all aspects of the HE system in Ireland (as manifested in the HEI compacts), including the QQI policy at all HE levels. Since 2011, all HEIs are required to be more accountable for new syllabi, even if that means a 'dumbing down' of the theory elements.

It is possible that the new Irish HE system has a conflict of interests now as it handles its 'dual roles' of 'being above industry and at the same time part of industry'. The wider aspect of education is a balancing act of bestowing formal accreditation and allowing for the wider leadership and creativity aspirations to follow. Team or collaborative learning is strongly being advocated. A desire for ever greater numbers of students in the HEI has had the effect of the IoTs and the University level programmes in design looking for more funding, in order to be able to have a critical mass in their chosen field.

Financial difficulties expressed by graduates indicated one reason for not going forward to do the MA, but the growing number of part-time and blended learning opportunities after a period of design work practice seemed the best way forward. This has meant that the PG design qualification can wait a few years. Talking to academics this historically was always the case for design graduates. Some 95% of academic participants recommended that a period in design practice helps returning students to be more focused, with as many as

55% of graduates being glad to be move on to the next big break. Thus the PG student has a clear desired direction of investigation and objective in their desire to up-skill.

At the UG level the desire by some academics to have a more generic qualification was resulting in students in the design HE system being faced with a longer period in HE, with a three-year UG and a two-year PG where specialization would take place, e.g., VC/GD. This was also the result of needing to gain greater student numbers. The common entry of year one extended out so the student has a breadth of knowledge across trans-disciplinary design activity.

The desire for student numbers, the HE design environment was resulting in very good students trying to keep the class together. This also had a knock-on effect of having less time to focus on the individual student. The International quality assurance structures provided by the Bologna declaration and recent QOI reports did not cover the content provision on individual disciplines like practice-led design at PG; instead they appeared to be assessment led. This meant in some cases design HEIs conforming to assessments and timetabling issues that did not fit with the practice elements at UG, leaving the MA level to specialise and allow the graduate to have a reflective experience. However, as indicated by Meyer-Dohn '*courses extended beyond 5 years are generally agreed by industry and commerce to be too long*' (1990, p.64). The importance of getting out there into the real world, and learning to interact with knowledge for innovation purposes is not a new one, and in some fields of study has been around for many years. Meyer-Dohn in the UK as far back as the 1990s provided a model for a Quality HE, which was not discipline-specific (Ibid p. 63); the table below 8.1 demonstrates the knowledge breadth for the design domain.

Table 8.1		
1.	Professional and technical knowledge =	<i>Creative and Design Professional learning with digital hardware and software – skills acquisition.</i>
2.	General knowledge =	<i>transferable skills; liberal arts</i>
3.	Formation of attitudes =	quality of performance; acceleration of change that is interdisciplinary in nature.
4.	Length of time =	the interplay between HE and industry that is fully integrated.

Sourced Mayer-Dohn 1990 p.64.

A further issue to do with the content of HE at both UG and PG is the time lag or 'catch up' as the IT elements of the programme fall further behind the design industry, with equipment such as photography also becoming obsolete and not being replaced. The requirement for the curriculum to have a number of pathways that allow for a 'Plan B' for the students still needs to be created for design in Ireland in the HEIs. PG staff need to be connected with design practice that is relevant to the design industry in order to guide a practice-led project at Levels 9 and 10. This can however, take staff away from their teaching or being available to students and some HEIs require staff on campus five days a week. The support for conferences and networking for many HE design academics is not visible in reality when it comes to funding.

Leadership marketing and specialisations, including digital media need, to be further developed for design academics to be able support their PG student cohorts. From the graduate perspective, the HEIs at UG level are not always seen to be supportive enough for the students when it comes to helping them adjust to life in the 'real world' of design. Some of the graduate data indicated a very difficult transition, which they felt ill-equipped to handle.

At PG 9 and 10, design was found to be geared towards graduates interested in strategies for leadership and management and these PG degrees had an inclusion of technology, with some of the graduates expressing a need for more marketing and digital understanding. The PG programme responses indicated a part-time option for financial and lifestyle reasons from graduate participants. In design, PG 9 and 10 can be practical as against research based.

Lecturers face greater difficulties in teaching as they cope with greater expectations around social media and platforms. This meant that assessing the quality of teaching in design is very difficult. It would appear to be driven by the lecturer and the individual HEI School or Department and the level of knowledge and interest there is from the academic to equip themselves for content and assessment at PG level. Like all disciplines at the time of writing, design degrees are re-defining the role against a backdrop of HEs converting to collaborations and a new future way of teaching and delivery, i.e., blended learning etc. Cross-disciplinary activities between modules are popular, but they can also dilute disciplines if they are introduced too early according to some of the academic participants in the study.

8.10. Research Questions Re-Visited

The research study focused around four main questions all of which built a profile of the VC/GD domain in an Irish context. The aim of the study was to track the graduate designer experience and evaluate working conditions that shape the early socialisation, particularly after a PG degree. This meant examining the graduates that had recently left their period of study at third level and questioning them as they decided on their career choices. Returning to take a PG qualification in design or a related area was something that some of

the graduates saw as having value. The fact that the design industry did not have a regulatory body and, therefore, no requirement for a PG qualification was a factor when comparing it with other disciplines such as teaching, accountancy and medicine. The recent ID2015 documentation and State policy have provided solid economic figures of the contribution the domain makes to the Irish economy (Harvey, 2016; Milton et al 2016: DJEI, 2016).

There is a very positive response to funded HE going forward and a requirement for new designers particularly with UX/IX experience.

The four research questions for the study are provided with a brief outline of the findings based on the current literature and the data generation in the thesis:

1. What type of employment does a design student attain through having undertaken an MA or PhD level education?

(From the graduate data generation it would appear that the longer period working in the design industry and returning to take a PG Level 9/10 would suggest further opportunities in leadership or management. Directly continuing from the UG to a PG degree provided a new creative teaching and learning pedagogy. The accreditation of a PG qualification in design did not necessarily provide more financial or creative starting opportunities to that of an UG student holding a design degree. In the long term, the higher qualifications particularly at MA level generally helped longevity and better earnings in the industry).

2. What is the current employment status for the design graduate in the (VC) industry?

(It is good with graduates gaining employment in design directly or indirectly after UG/PG education if they are prepared to move location and spread their net wide. These did take the form of unpaid internships, but also paid employment across the broader spectrum of the domain).

3. What is the relationship between the different stakeholders, i.e., graduate designer, higher level Institute and the design profession?

(This is a complex domain from all of the three stakeholders perspectives. The data generation outcomes indicated that significant planning and strategies needed to be formulated for greater collaborations at all levels. However, there was evidence to suggest that informal relations existed between all of the stakeholders).

4. To what extent does each of the stakeholders, e.g., higher level Institute, design profession or postgraduate student designer, benefit from postgraduate education of designers?

(The general consensus was that all the stakeholders are benefiting from HEI design PG education. The design PG, Masters or Doctorate graduate was seen to have the most direct benefit from the economy; creative and skills accumulation prospects in the short term leading to employment opportunities in the long term.)

8.11. Concluding Findings and Summary

The 'day to day' interactions between the different stakeholders was of importance to the study as this had been highlighted in the literature review as being based very loosely on individual relationships rather than any formal process. My own interest in finding ways of

developing more cohesive lines of communication between the different stakeholders therefore provided a justification for the study.

The identities of the three stakeholders (design sector, HE design provider and the design graduate) in the research also presented a challenge for all three of the stakeholders who appeared to have difficulty in presenting an identity for the Irish design industry as an entity. Aspects of professionalism and credentialism presented a very conflicting environment, with little evidence of any formal recognition, either financially or creatively for the acquisition of design GD/VC degrees, either at UG or PG level. However, the industry did accept, and both the UK student questionnaires (Chapter 2) and current literature could prove that the Irish designer is very well qualified for their role as a GD. Many of the graduates from 2016 supported the sector having an UG degree for entry and the value of up-skilling with CPD and PG degrees desirable for leadership roles. All the stakeholders could see that design had potential for economic growth for the country particularly through design thinking and UX/IX.

The HEIs and the design academics are taking a reactive approach to the circumstances they have found themselves in, rather than a leadership position. This is in the context of the proposed new policy and TU implications. There is evidence to suggest that there were significant differences between management of design and the lecturers teaching design with regard to the HEA and mergers and clustering. With management less cautious and facilitating the intended changes, while design staff, were more fearful of competition and mindful of duplication of programmes. This position has meant that design academia appeared in the study to be 'squeezed' on all sides. The design graduates want the HEIs, to be accountable and at the cutting edge of new technologies and creative platforms. The design HEIs are looking for more tangible outcomes for funding and investment. The HEA

and the design industry would appear to be reluctant to engage with design HE without financial incentives. The document policies in the area have all indicated that without a critical mass, PG development will only be provided in HEIs that have the funding to support it. With no funding and critical mass there will be disciplines that will only be available at UG level. In Chapter 9 I will evaluate the findings to the research study from the perspective of future planning and recommendations.

Chapter 9 | *Conclusions and Recommendations*

9.1. Introduction

This research has been conducted at a time of great changes in education HE policy. It has come about during a time when PG design practice based research has been included into the suite of PG offerings, including structured PhD programmes currently being promoted in Universities and some HE IoTs in Ireland. These PG programmes in GD/VC do not have the background that the theory based programmes of study enjoy. They do have some common ground with research areas of study in architecture and engineering ...

Design as multidimensional concept: The existing literature sees design as having a broad meaning and uses for companies beyond only that of traditional concerns such as aesthetics and styling of final products of services.' (Henderson and Whicher, 2015, p.ii)

and the recent policy drawn up by the HEA has been able to utilize the standards and requirements that have been provided for these areas as well as the Universities⁴⁹ and EU documentation⁵⁰. My understanding of the area as both a designer and an academic of VC/GD provided me with an insight of the curriculum issues for the study. The relationships and the roles of the stakeholders were less clear and the graduate perspective had never been examined from an Irish context in any detail. The inclusion of

⁴⁹ IUQB- Good Practice Guide- in the Organisation of PhD programmes in Irish Higher Education 2009; QQI – Good Practice Guide – For Institutional research in Irish Higher Education 2009, Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria 2013, NFQ Award Standards 2014, Policy for Collaborative Programmes Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards 2010 and the Report of the Expert Panel on the Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes in Irish Higher Education Institutions; IOTI, Technological Universities Quality Framework 2013; IHEQN, Guidelines on Collaborative Provision 2013 and the HEA documents; Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape 2012 and Towards a Performance Evaluation Framework 2013.

⁵⁰ ENQA-Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015; EC, European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers 2005, EC - Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training 2011. EUA – Doctoral Programmes in Europe's Universities: Achievements and Challenges 2007; European Science Foundation and ALLEA (European Federation of Academics of Sciences and Humanities) European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity; QAA –UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Research Degrees.

greater collaborations between the different stakeholders was timely as it coincided with the new state policy from HEA.

The graduate is the product of the entire education system, and skills and aptitudes that are nurtured and developed at the various levels of education must complement and build on each other. Hunt et al, (2011, p.77)

This in turn has been encouraged from OECD reports dating back to the 2004 to more current reports⁵¹. The importance of design as a tool of economic growth was expressed in the DJEI report 'Policy Framework For Design In Enterprise Ireland,' January 2016; and the ID 2015 year of design:

the importance of design is demonstrated by the contribution of designers to total employment in the economy (2.48% in 2014) and the contribution of the Design Sectors to total exports from Ireland (estimated at 19.5% in 2012, and more than 21% in 2013). This economic impact is heavily influenced by activities associated with design occupations and Design Sectors of the Digital Group⁵²; however, non-digital design roles contributed 1.28% to total employment (in 2014) and the remaining Design Sectors contributed more than €0.94bn to exports (in 2012) (DJEI 2016, p.9).

The figures show statistics that would indicate Ireland to be in a stronger position than the UK with regard to employment in the design sector. Though the situation with regard to the future and UK design as a measurement of success for Ireland will be hard to predict with 'Brexit.'⁵³ The UK and Ireland according to Harvey, (DJEI 2016, p.64) seem to have more in common than expected with similar figures presenting per head for the economic gross value added (GVA) from design in the economy. This data has as stated in Chapter 2 been compiled across all areas of design and not solely GD but they do provide a benchmark for VC and digital media which are the main design disciplines in the sector Brexit may well change these statistics not unlike the 'turbulent' economic and political history that the two countries have shared in the past but it would seem unlikely. As both countries currently place a value on design with GD/VC in the 2016 Irish policy reports

51 Galindo-Rueda, F. and V. Millot (2015) "Measuring Design and its Role in Innovation", OECD Science and Technology and Industry Working Papers, 2015/01, OECD Publishing.

52 The digital group is a new area in design circles which has established a cluster to provide support and networking as it expands across gaming , animation, moving image and other virtual platforms.

53 Brexit- United Kingdom (UK) June 2016 Referendum held to leave the European Union (EU) was carried by 52%.

showing the design creative industries are of economic benefit to the Irish economy and the UK.

...employment in design-occupations are spread across the economy, and are particularly prevalent in three categories: Industry, Information and Communication and Professional Scientific and Technical Activities, - 75% of designers employed across these three categories (Harvey 2016, p.17).

9.1.1. Justification of the Study

The lack of any evidence to show that UG/PG degrees could provide career advancement for graduate designers, aligned with the current economic policy, was a factor for the research study. Another important consideration was the funding for the humanities disciplines inclusive of applied design, or lack of it by comparison to the sciences. This aspect became particularly relevant for the study with the HEA evolving from an advisory supportive role for HEIs to a more central, regulated body. The HEA had always played a role in the HEIs funding both for IoTs and Universities. From 2008 their input against the backdrop of the economic difficulties Ireland experienced also saw this aligned to performance across all HE domains (Loxley, 2014; Highman, 2014). This encouraged competition in all of the HEIs for student numbers and for the State-funding they bring with them.

It appears to be creating an academic lottery for 'extra' funding, with a total of 10% to the HEIs that have economic evidence of self-financing sourced from R&D projects (science and communication) and/or thrifty financial controlling, i.e., staffing requirements reduced⁵⁴ by way of new proposed mergers/clusters and shared facilities.

⁵⁴ incentives via early retirement, proposed redundancy packages, new blended learning technology with new programme development as a consequence, less staffing requirements.

It also provided me with the incentive to investigate the experience of current PG graduates of design in Ireland in order to explore the VC designer's needs in the future. At the beginning of the research study, my own background as a design practitioner and HE academic also required more up-to-date knowledge in order to be prepared for the inevitable changes in the design domain. This was at HE and design industry level from 2011 onwards. The general design area is shifting from a traditional design sector to a broader non-design intensive sector, which have design requirements particularly, in the GD/VC area. In 2016, the impact of funding for the design UG programme became critical with little financial input for either hardware or software since 2008 for many HEIs around the country. This is not to imply that buying hardware/software before this time was not difficult, but rather there was more understanding of design requirements regarding resourcing. Design has always been an expensive course to run in a HEI and it is digitally interdependent with photography labs and audio visual studios needing to be available. The 'bring your own device' (BYD) as a substitute to HEIs providing Mac labs is currently being piloted on some design programmes from Year 1 and it presents consistency difficulties for all students and staff. Staff numbers have reduced in many HEIs since 2011 and new UG design programmes that are still traditional (no significant differentiation in content or creative output) have been developed that will require less staff and facilities to operate. In 2013, NCAD introduced a common entry for Year 1 across all design and art disciplines. This was followed by a two-year specialization in GD/VC for a Bachelors of Arts degree. This curriculum structure change to a three-year degree from a four-year professional standalone degree has not as yet been followed up by other HEIs in the Republic. Although a common entry in Year 1 is on the horizon for all Schools in the HE sector and an Art and Design common entry in Year 1 (with pathways of specialisation following) was viewed by 50% of the participants as being a positive step. Only 25% of the

academics thought that a general degree that covered a broad base of trans-disciplinary design areas would be a very good 'Plan B'.

The implications for HE training at UG and PG design interested me with regard to collaborations with all stakeholders, as it reflects industry and design which is generally team driven. Current industry requirements, inclusive of gaming, moving image and other virtual platforms, have digital implications for HE provision in the future. All HE design staff will need to have ongoing CPD/CPP training in order to be relevant, which is reflective of the design industry. The main difficulty is the funding at HEI level to support it on an on-going basis.

The collaborations with industry are still on an individual footing in many HEIs nationally. However, with these changes and greater flexibility comes a new responsibility for HE to provide graduates with design skills and training that will generate bright creative designers for a vast array of new platforms. It has regrettably to be done on less resources and staffing in the future. This may be compensated for with funding from new IT input (blended learning) and the all-important student numbers attending via part-time and online, even for applied domains like design.

To achieve real progress in an era of constant technology change, opportunities for innovation need to be recognized and assessed appropriately. For example, ubiquitous mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones may offer pedagogical opportunities not previously recognized or explored (National Forum, 2015, p.40)

9.1.2. Literature

The current literature in the field in Chapters 2, and 3 provided the background to the discipline in an Irish context, together with the creative design definitions. The number of

graduates at UG and the interplay between modern society and the digital providers at PG level informed the exploration of the curriculum in the HEIs within the Schools of Humanities and Creative and Performing Arts. PG design is evolving as an academic activity as it does not have a long history in Ireland. The graduate experience was viewed through early career experience before, during and after the PG design degree at level 9 or 10. This provided the basic framework for the discipline at HE and this study considered who benefited from the HE PG degree. This was not limited to the design industry, design HEI or the design graduate but explored all the inter-relationships inclusive of the client, general public.

9.2. Research Findings

The experience from the graduate perspective is that the PG qualification is not a luxury or something just for the candidate who chooses to teach, although that is important. It is one that encourages management and leadership, which legitimises the designer and hopefully provides longevity in their design industry practice. This thinking was held by both genders in the study. The graduate designers in their responses saw both the UG and the PG as a measure of success and an advantage for career options and advancement. The expected work placements and the internships were also seen to have a mixed reaction from graduate participants with regard to the experience of design practice and therefore not consistent for training purposes. However, 90% of the respondents said that they would opt for the experience anyway. The 'JobBridge' scheme, which 6% of the participants had experienced, was considered too long. Two of the participants had expressed disappointment in the nature/quality of the work which they did in the studios they had been working in after UG graduation.

The inter-relationships between industry and design education were seen to be remote by graduates, with little networking opportunities. Lecturers had a difficult time trying to engage with industry experience in curriculums, other than in setting competitions and working on given set projects. There is little support with regard to strategies to help graduates when they enter industry. The data provided in this thesis suggested that it was a difficult sector to navigate in the early part of a designer's career, with difficulties in securing job opportunities. However, the general consensus of academics was that the graduate should be self-motivated to do this themselves'. The custom in the past has been to leave that aspect of early socialisation to the graduates.

The identity/status of design was also unclear at HE, with only some locations being advocated for PG degrees after a UG design qualification. According to the Hunt et al Report, only HEIs with a critical mass and track record of PG research will be considered for funding in the future, leaving some UG programmes unable to offer potential students those opportunities. It also means that with degree credentialism being important in the sector, some HEIs will find it difficult to attract staff and students in the future. One academic explained that if some HEIs can provide PG level only in urban locations, then the regional areas would not see opportunities locally and therefore have no design experience at Levels 9 and 10, and possibly be seen as only second best. The research in the creative arts area was still waiting to be developed in Ireland according to some participants in academia and so was wide open for possibilities. The present State support by way of funding for other disciplines by the HEA at Levels 9 and 10 was not happening outside the Dublin and Cork locations in design. Furthermore, some of the academics felt that a lot of ground had already been lost with regard to funding and international links in the creative arts.

9.3. Recommendations

9.3.1. Industry - Links with HEI

The recommendation from the research study is that PG design if it is to be successful in any HEI should be linked on a formal footing with Industry. It is important to note that design is a business as well as a cultural expression of a society. To get industry 'on board' the model presented by DIT with the IAPI seemed well regarded for long-term collaboration.

The benefits are mutual for the design programme. This is for graduates and for the creative association via young membership and knowledge transfer, together with traditional networking for early career socialisation. Failing this, an MBA or Doctorate that provided a cross-disciplinary approach, not unlike Business with modules across different supporting areas, would be worthwhile.

9.3.2. Academia - Teaching and Learning Innovation

Competitions and awards at PG level raise the creative standard and actively encourage collaborations between Industry/HEIs and the design graduate. They were all seen as positive and welcomed by all interested parties in the study.

Curriculum is changing in design GD/VC and the inclusion of 'design thinking' with flexibility via interchangeable modules and cross-disciplinary activity that involves marketing, IT and UX /social media would indicate that the future is positive for the creative field, even though it is still in transition. This is particularly the case as the print

industry becomes less significant and is referred to as 'traditional' with more design online and new platforms with broader outreach.

9.3.3. UG & PG Curriculum - Opportunities

The design PG graduates are increasingly required to be flexible, adaptable and at the same time competitive and confident. Group/team design work is part of the creative process, from SMEs to multi-nationals in Ireland. The graduates interviewed felt that more design thinking and greater team work opportunities needed to be introduced even at UG level in HEIs. One of the main recommendations from the graduate participants was a placement, as stated in Chapter 7. However, even at UG level the graduate feedback was that the present design GD/VC programmes offered in the Republic could also consider looking at a more integrated qualification with another discipline.

This would offer a cross-disciplinary degree not unlike a theory based arts degree at UG level. The student would then have a 'plan B' if the design 'plan A' of a stand alone professional degree to be a GD/VC designer did not work out. The timing of the research study data generation between 2011-2015 was a period of economic flux (nationally). The design sector growth dipped and then returned to pre-2008 levels in 2016. Many young graduates emigrated and gaining any employment in Ireland in many disciplines was difficult. This has changed radically in the (2016/18) period since the data has been collected with almost full employment reported from the WIT UG design programme in the Autumn of 2016 (see Chapter 3). However, the creative quality of the design work experience on offer could not be evaluated for this study and the financial remuneration for the graduates remained at internships as unpaid for long periods of time after graduation.

The visibility of design was seen by all of the three stakeholders as too poor and one that needed to be encouraged at all levels of education from primary school to secondary school.

This meant getting greater funding to provide a more comprehensive design presence. All participants including industry saw this as a priority for the future. The status of an applied area such as design and communications needed to be promoted and seen as a desirable option and one that could benefit many discipline areas and allow for cross-disciplinary activity. In 2015 and 2016 the state intervention and interest was very evident with both the ID15 year of design and a new evaluation report commissioned as stated earlier by the DJEI 'The Irish Footprint: Economic Value and Characteristics (January, 2016) from the design sector's perspective and the wider industry implications. This needs to deliver a strategy that has long term planning for development across sustainable and universal design that has a wide appeal and remit to serve society for all. Education is not limited to design orientated students as UX and IX have at the core a user experience that has empathy and understanding as a value system to promote a inclusive design identity. This aspect of providing leadership and proactive guidelines are how the design community can establish a recognised set of professional credentials by their own code of practice.

9.4. Digital Technology

The technology required for design is like other areas in HE, being in a cycle of 'catch –up' and dependent on the individual circumstances of the HEI which it is housed in. With IT constraints the gap between Industry and the design HEI provider could be seen as a

barrier to integration between the two sectors. Industry considering the HEI as an apprenticeship situation also did not seem to be helpful to the HEI.

Social media and new platforms such as 'app' development are now seen as everyday requirements but many lecturers are not trained to teach these areas. New pedagogical practices at both UG and PG level design will require new methods of teaching including design thinking, digital up-skilling and blended learning, all team and collaborative based. If these are encouraged then a more inter-disciplinary approach of theory and practice module delivery can be achieved.

9.5. Overview

A negative aspect of the design industry is that it is based in urban locations and this limits the numbers at PG level in rural areas.

Those students that can and do gain design placements responded that consistency as to what one placement was offering over another was very difficult to measure and in some cases was disappointing. The need to provide design staff with CPD was not an optional extra, particularly in digital technology (see Chapter 6). Many design staff lacked support from the HEI both at a funding and value level for the discipline. Therefore, low morale was recorded in a number of HEIs in the study.

The positive feedback was that the area was expanding and was organically becoming interdisciplinary. Growth via social media and virtual platforms was also predicted for the future.

Programme curriculum delivery is still very traditional in Ireland at UG level. In many programmes in the Republic there are no unique selling points. Thus they can be described as largely generic in structure. The delivery via timetables and engagement with modularisation/semesterisation has an impact, more than the content, when it comes to reputation. This needed to change to be able to accommodate a framework that was more flexible in content and that was able to respond to digital requirements and design trends in a timely fashion.

The policy currently being promoted, by the state for greater links with community and industry at local, national and global levels would seem from the study to be desirable for design activity if VC is to develop organically. Therefore, State intervention as in the 1960s and again with ID15 has provided a launching pad that should be built on in the years ahead.

9.6. New Structures and Strategies

Design at PG level has more in common with established pedagogical approaches as in architecture and the sciences.

The designer who is most able and who possesses the best foundation of knowledge is turned out in a school where he is brought up with architects, or who has made a postgraduate study following his/her architectural course (Franck et al, 1962).

Collaborative planning with Industry on a formal basis that is agreed for curriculum is very difficult to attain as there is not any official inclusion of Industry on the Programme Board team. Marking can only be recommended by a design industry external examiner with the Academic Programme Board having the main responsibility for grading students.

Designers can be invited to meet with the class and in some cases provide an internship/placement for a design programme at either UG/PG levels thus allowing for work experience but nothing else. However, the HEI academic will remain as the key person that is responsible for the learning and will make the deciding assessment and marking. A recommendation going forward for students looking to upgrade an ordinary level 7 degree to a level 8 and or a level 9 would be to base it in a working design studio with some modules located in the HEI and others in a design company; this joint or linked degree with industry would allow for consistency and be monitored with equal marking from industry and the HEI. This type of marking scheme works better at a higher level of attainment as discussed in the previous sections.

9.7. Future Relationships

Design academics need professional development and with an advanced course in IT software such as Adobe etc. This needs to be supported by the HEIs involved. Many of the respondents expressed a lack of trust in management in HEIs to recognize their areas of expertise. The strategies for curriculum development in leadership/management policy, which require links with the design industry, still needed to be supported. Graduates that leave the HEI should be kept on alumni lists and invited to take part in CPD programmes.

Short up-skilling courses in marketing, digital media and critical evaluation and team building would be following current design practice trends and could be jointly participated in by graduates and current students at UG level. This would allow an informed debate between the two levels of socialization and allow for greater flexibility between the HEIs in their “ivory towers” (Chapter 5), with the early career designers providing greater insights into the needs of the students going forward.

The past students from UG degrees should also provide an important link with the industry where applicable and be encouraged to take part in mentoring or contributing via seminars /workshops to the UG/PG candidates. Many graduate respondents felt that when they left their HEI that it was difficult to keep in contact. The findings in the study showed that a system that encourages new graduates to keep a link would be helpful both from the HEI's perspective and of course the graduate.

Design academics felt that they were under-valued when teaching and performing in a broad range of creative disciplines (See Chapter 6). The new HEI policy documents and curriculum requirements require outcomes and accountability, with little room for flexibility. Building on industry and community links at all levels of HE is based still on the individual lecturer and their contacts (See Chapter 7). Design academics responded that administration was becoming more a priority in their role and in some cases, less about teaching [see Clarke et al (2015)]. Lecturers also stated in Chapter 6 that their specialist design experience was being moved to a more general design area with no focus. This was particularly expressed in the IoTs, which are proposed for mergers. These HEIs were more concerned about numbers to gain a critical mass and create funding. The lecturer to student ratio and funding will be dependent even more with applied disciplines. The role that blended learning strategies and off-campus learning will develop is particularly valid when applied to areas that have always had a more hands-on approach. Design will be struggling to provide placements for students as the industry is mainly made up of SMEs and is located in the greater Dublin area (see Chapter 2), although this is changing. The unique selling point of programmes, inclusive of the diversity and creative dimensions, seem blurred with overwhelming technological demands. But this is not the only concern

for academics; it is also about administrative load and a new outcome fused sector that has added to the demands of design lecturing staff.

The thesis has identified a number of significant aspects around identity, socialization and relationships. The agenda to look at further research going forward are:

- To develop a Plan B for design students that encourages greater cross-disciplinary activity.
- That national funding would be set aside to encourage a real clustering of design activity and encouragement of greater national and international links that have been established in 2015.
- That joint degrees between HEIs will become more recognised in applied areas like design.
- Nursing and other social sciences that have a long tradition of an applied area with theory support can be used as models for best practice and that a less competitive area be encouraged with stronger focus on collective goals and collaborations between HEIs.
- The requirement to have HEIs in one location has changed because of technology and a virtual platform uniting design and related areas can be presented as a real possibility for the future with blended learning and a new delivery of cross-institutional pathways that offer greater choice for the learner.

Issues regarding women in the industry need to be addressed by the HEIs going forward, providing an inclusive environment for both genders and long-term career prospects. A radical study needs to take place at HEI level regarding gender inequality, with recommendations to redress this via education and working with industry for the future of the creative design economy.

In the process of my research, with the exception of WIT which was used for this study, the findings show that the design HEIs are attracting a student cohort from a relatively socially affluent background. This needs to be reviewed and to be more inclusive for the design academy in the future.

These are issues that will take a long-term view to changing the mind-set, and in some situations are deep-rooted:

The rules must be carefully drawn which ensure a fair representation of the various forces and outlooks alive in Ireland at any period (Franck et al, 1962, p. 54).

GD/VC is not just surface design for commercial gain. Design has a place that belongs to every discipline while retaining a distinctive identity all of its own. The design identity will always be in a state of evolution. The role of education now is to inform society of the sector so it will be more accepted and understood domain. This will mean more integration and underpinning that is inclusive, collaborative and creative.

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