

Chapter 10

Integrating Personalised Learning in a School of Design: The Role of Practice-based Research, Emerging Technologies, and Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

The chapter explores the integration of personalised learning within a school of design, presenting the insights drawn from the trajectories of the two Master's programmes within the design portfolio: the long-standing MA Web Design & Content Planning and the transitioning MA Design. By discussing the pedagogical frameworks of the two programmes, the focus is put on the ways in which personalised learning strategies can cater for a diverse student body, leveraging technological advancements and inclusive practices. Personalised learning is seen, here, as a vital approach for preparing students for the real world in the post-digital era, equipping them with transferable skills in the constantly evolving interdisciplinary landscape of the creative industries. The chapter further underlines the need for embedding research-driven practices into art and design education, thus ensuring its continuous relevance and adequate responsiveness to both market demands and academic developments.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-7718-5.ch010

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapidly evolving landscape of Higher Education in the post-digital era has created a need for a critical evaluation of the ways in which personalized learning can be integrated into STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education, in this case particularly focusing on the postgraduate Design portfolio of the School of Design at University of Greenwich, London.

The present chapter presents a selection of pedagogical strategies that have proven to be effective in personalising learning within the discipline, with a specific focus on the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, the integration of emerging technologies and new platforms (including AI-driven and collaborative tools) to enrich the learning process and the courses' curricula, as well as the inclusion of all learning types, abilities and speeds in the student community. It also presents instances where previously effective strategies became less impactful, mainly due to the way that technology and different platforms have evolved and integrated into everyday life. However, it is important to note these instances as they flag the need for continuous changes within learner-focused learning in Higher Education.

Drawing on literature on the subject, as well as the authors' experience from the two postgraduate programmes offered in the Design portfolio at the University of Greenwich (MA Web Design & Content Planning and MA Design), the chapter examines how personalized learning can be successfully implemented in Art and Design Education. Additionally, it examines the ways in which the above methods can contribute in cultivating the students' critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills. To this goal, the authors offer practical recommendations for academics and curriculum developers who are interested in integrating student-centred learning into their STEAM courses. These guidelines are based on the experiences and best practices drawn from the programmes in question and will provide strategies for enhancing personalized learning in different educational contexts within an Art and Design education.

It is important to note that the two programmes are addressed to different student profiles and have unique focuses. MA Web Design & Content Planning is one of the longest-running postgraduate programmes at the university since its inception in 2003, and places a strong emphasis on practical training and application. In contrast, MA Design welcomed its first students in September 2021 and is currently in the process of evolving into a more holistic and interdisciplinary offer by merging with other MAs within the School of Design; it promotes a balance between theory and practice. Both are one-year programmes of study, with the majority of students being international, many of whom come to London for the duration of their studies. Additionally, for most students English is not their first language, and they must quickly adapt to the demands of UK Higher Education, including learning how to use new virtual learning platforms (such as Moodle), embrace new methodologies and find new ways of working. This limited timeframe presents challenges on its own for introducing personalized learning; however, at the same time it highlights the adaptability of students when new approaches come into play.

In the detailed presentations in the next chapters, specific examples are offered from each programme in an effort to best portray the ways in which personalized learning methods are integrated in STEAM education and tailored to meet the unique needs of the specific student cohorts.

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