

The Influence of Teaching Interior Design Ethics on Applied Arts Students (An Empirical Study)

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ABSTRACT:

“The scope of design research and practice has changed - from focusing on material appearance to focusing on the intangible, from functions to satisfaction, from goods to services and values” (KEITSCH & Bjørnstad, 2010). Due to many ethical problems in our society in economy, environment and identity, the classic way of design cannot solve them. The definition of ethical design and its impact on design education should be discussed. This paper discusses the principles which were taught to design students (in the Higher Institute of Applied Arts at 5th settlement, Cairo, Egypt) to make the ethical design on a sample of 65 undergraduate students. This experiment shows unusual ways of design, from interior design students, which follows the design thinking process: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test, (interaction-design, 2021), a flow chart had been designed. The empirical study methodology started with a discussion with students about ethics definitions, design definitions, and design ethics. The way of thinking which has been taught to students to realize design ethics can be summarized in four words: Intention, Message/value, Impact, and Social responsibility. Through intention, the author had shown the students an example of an unethical design in order to teach students to consider the differences between people in skin color, age, disabilities, etc. Thus, the value, the impact, and the design show social responsibility through many examples. The most important one was saving heritage and solving environmental problems.

After the lecture, students answered a survey (through Google Form) to analyze their benefits from the lecture. During one week, students presented old sketches before and after the lecture. Lecture details, students' sketches, and survey analysis will be shown below with detailed analysis.

Introduction

"The best among you are those who have the best manners and best character" (Sahih Bukhari, 6029). As per default, and especially after the Bauhaus, the design has been a creative problem solving (divergent thinking, Design, 2021). According to the hadith, [As the majority of the South Mediterranean population are Muslims] designers should reconsider the ideas and the principles through human manners that address characters. That is why design ethics are indispensable and essential principles to any designer, especially facing today's challenges as the pandemic. Design ethics has become a key instrument and a central issue in the design field. This paper studies and discusses design ethics criteria and the effects of teaching design ethics on students and becoming at the heart of their understanding of design discipline.

Aims

This paper aims to clarify several aspects of design ethics; first the definition and then the criteria to develop an understanding of design quality. In addition, the paper investigates the usefulness of teaching design ethics to students and evaluates the effects on them.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis that has been tested is that teaching design ethics will create different and wider perspectives in student design results either in:

1. The design's new function, or
2. Choice of different categories of clients with disabilities, such as blindness, mobility disabilities, etc.

Methodology

The data for this study were collected using

1. Descriptive methodology (to describe lecture's content, design thinking process, and design ethics).
2. Analytical methodology (using a survey through

- Google Form template). Through design thinking process, their projects and marks were analysed.
3. Empirical methodology (through explaining the design thinking process).

Literature review

Before talking about the effects of teaching design ethics on applied arts students, the paper shows:

1. The lecture's content they were taught.
2. The characters of the sample of students and the survey questions.
3. Design ethics through student's application

The Content of the Lecture:

Historical Review

As human society existed thousands of years ago, the interactions between people needed a chart or a code to rule the relationship between them through principles as justice and honor, That is what we call now ethics. Then, either religions or philosophies appeared to insist on upgrading human ethics. In this paper, an example of Ma'at ethical code in Ancient Egypt is represented. Ma'at is the most ancient civilization known either in the Mediterranean or in history.

A Positive Confession for the 42 Ideals of Ma'at:

1. I honor virtue
2. I benefit from gratitude
3. I am peaceful
4. I respect the property of others
5. I affirm that all life is sacred
6. I give genuine offerings
7. I live in truth
8. I regard all altars with respect

What are ethics?

It is one of the most sophisticated questions to solve but in an easy way.

"Ethics is concerned with what is good for individuals and society" (BBC ethics guide, 2014).

What is design?

Although it is complicated to answer, simply "Design is a creative problem solving" (divergent thinking, Design, 2021)

So, after those definitions what is ethical design? It is a design that respects others, without racism.

Here is an example of non-ethical design, for more

comprehension:

A racist soap dispenser that works with a white man and does not work with a black man (Sgarro V, 2018). Last year, a video posted on Twitter capturing two Facebook employees using a soap dispenser in employees' bathroom. The white employee places his hand under the dispenser and receives soap without incident. But when the black employee holds his hand under the dispenser, nothing happens. The sensor cannot recognize his hand.

It was a small example of a problem that plagues the design industry. "If you have ever had a problem grasping the importance of diversity in tech and its impact on society, watch this video" (Gizmodo, 2021).

On the other hand, an advertisement by an Indian Ads company was shown to students about Samsung for deaf-blind people; its link is: Samsung Ads - India Good Vibes App: Caring for the impossible | Indian Ads Company.

It shows students how ethical creative design can change people's lives and how the collaboration between different design fields helps the user to get access to his suitable product. Those videos from different parts of the world (USA and India) show that design ethics is not only a local question, it is also an international concern.

9. I speak with sincerity
10. I consume only my fair share
11. I offer words of good intent
12. I relate in peace
13. I honor animals with reverence
14. I can be trusted
15. I care for the earth
16. I keep my council
17. I speak positively of others
18. I remain in balance with my emotions
19. I am trustful in my relationships
20. I hold purity in high esteem
21. I spread joy
22. I do the best I can
23. I communicate with compassion
24. I listen to opposing opinions
25. I create harmony
26. I invoke laughter
27. I am open to love in various forms
28. I am forgiving
29. I am kind
30. I act respectfully

31. I am accepting
32. I follow my inner guidance
33. I converse with awareness
34. I do good
35. I give blessings
36. I keep the waters pure
37. I speak with good intent
38. I praise the Goddess and the God
39. I am humble
40. I achieve with integrity
41. I advance through my abilities
42. I embrace the All" (URI, 2020)

Moreover, the lecture discussed the ethics of Islam, as the majority of the population are Muslims. Ethics can be summarized through the following verses:

"Allah commands justice, goodness, and generosity towards relatives. And He forbids immorality, injustice, and oppression. He instructs you, so that you may remember." (Quran 16:90)

"We did not send you except as a mercy for humankind."(Quran 21:107)

Hence, the most important concepts in Islam are justice and mercy.

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Thus, it is very important to respect the context when you design.

Here are other examples for ethical designs:

1. Blind Tiles, tiles specially made for blind
2. Blind Lift Bottoms, bottoms specially made for blind people.
3. Plane Wheelchair, a redesign for either a wheelchair or plane chair, won the European Design Award 2019 (Barnett, 2020).

It is a redesign of a wheelchair to adjust the plane's chair without the need to help handicapped people.

Important questions:

Thus, what are the steps to make ethical designs?

1. Intention
2. Effect
3. Message/Value.
4. CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)

Without intention, you will never make an ethical design if you do not believe in its importance. Believing in the importance of ethics is the first step.

Then, the role of design effect on the consumer begins. An example of the bad effects of designs is the effects of bean bags on the back. Although it looks good, it is physically harmful. That's why we should think about the effect before the design. Examples of message/value in design:

1. Reading chair (which helps the person to read while sitting or waiting to avoid boredom)
2. Lovers chair
3. Half mugs (To make partners share the same plate, creating a romantic ambiance)

The concept in those designs is based on a value, not on a figure. If you want to describe their idea, you will say reading, sharing, etc. Especially lovers' chairs, its idea is to make the couple share reading the same newspaper; he reads the first page, and she reads the

last one and

In the same context, the students were shown two examples of an Egyptian designer's work, Chérif Morsi. The Babel sofa is transmitting a message that the heritage can be redesigned in a modern way.

WODOO ashtray, designed for Sawaya & MORONI, ITALY, 2004 (Moroni,2004). This ashtray inspired by the paper doll (used for protection from envy) that is well known in Egyptian folklore. The ashtray imitates body prickle while extinguishing cigarettes.

Another example in the same domain is the collection of Sigga Hemis. She has made a collection of home accessories to transmit a specific message to people which is that if you are ready to receive an organ in case of your illness, you should be able to donate. This collection was made from handmade glass in the Far East to save this type of handicrafts and was sold in an auction. All the money that came in was donated to specific organizations: the Cancer Foundation, the Heart Foundation, and the Organization for Autism. (Heimis S, 2009) This is a great example of design ethics as it should be.

What is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?

"Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders." (UNIDO, 2021). These concerns are:

1. Respect of Handicaps
2. Design effect
3. Message /value in design
4. CSR
5. Eco-Friendly designs and materials
6. Revive handicrafts
7. other

CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company can achieve a balance of environmental, economic, and social Necessities ("Triple-Bottom-Line- Approach").

Examples of Egyptian companies making CSR, in the furniture field in Egypt are:
lecture?

1. Nadim
2. Wissa Wassef.

Finally, we discussed that saving Egyptian handicrafts is one of our CSR as designers and we showed 3 videos:

1. About handmade glass: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8XS7KTDWwg>
2. About banana tree scrap recycling fabric bags: <https://www.newstag.com/clip/6635843?share=99875644>
3. About cement tiles: <https://www.alarabiya.net/Al-Arabiya-today/2018/06/17/%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%8A-%D8%B5%D9%86D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7-%D8%B7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D9%88%D9%86>

Finally, after this brief exposure to design ethics principles, comes the survey to check students' comprehension.

The character of the sample

This lecture was taught to students from the preliminary, first, second, and third academic years. They are interior design students. Their number is 65. The survey was answered voluntarily through a Google Form by 26 students in the preliminary year, 22 students in the first year, 14 students in the second year, and 3 students in the third year.

The asked questions were:

1. What is your academic year?
2. Did you benefit from it?
3. What is the most important thing that caught your attention in the lecture?
4. In your opinion, what is the most important video in the lecture?
 - A. About handmade glass
 - B. About banana shell bags
 - C. About cement tiles
5. Did you apply anything from the lecture in your designs?
6. If the answer was yes, what did you apply from the lecture in your designs?
7. If the answer was no, why?
 - A. Ignorance about materials
 - B. Ignorance about handicaps dimensions
 - C. Design ethics do not lead to rates
 - D. Lack of a clear message, feeling distracted
 - E. Not convinced, state the reason
 - F. Other
8. If you did an ethical design in one of its principles, attach it.
9. Write a short notice about your design
10. Do you have suggestions for developing the lec-

ture? If you have, kindly write them.

The answers of students.

The first results to be shown are applied projects.

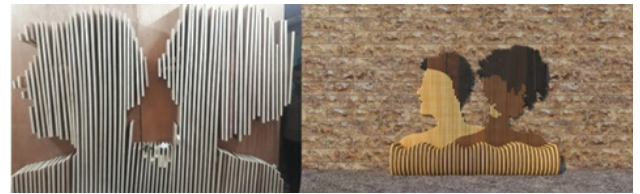


Fig.1, (Philippe Maher & Christie Philip) "say no to racism" 2020, A furniture design by second-year students, the Higher Institute of Applied Arts, 5th settlement.

It is a sample of a student's work after the lecture. The concept here is inspired by the value of equality either between men and women or between black and white people.

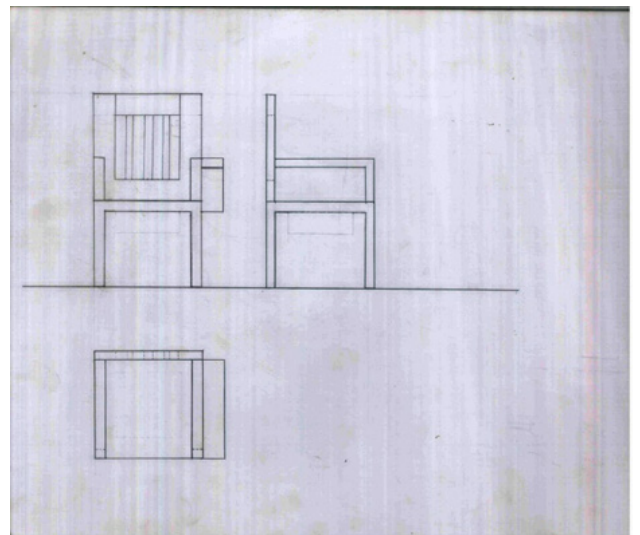


Fig.2, by Mohamed Mosbah, 2021. It is a reading chair by a first-year student, the Higher Institute of Applied Arts, 5th settlement. This design focuses on the principle of design effect on consumers to present a good and useful design.

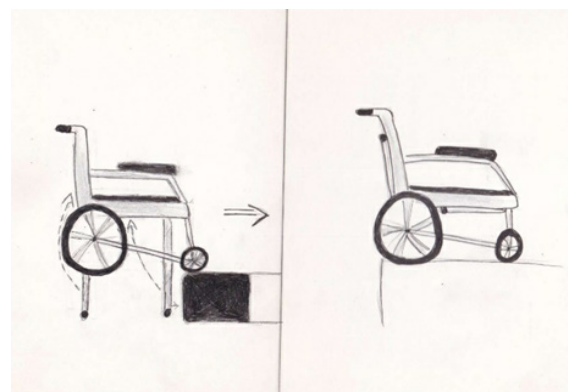


Fig.3, by Nourseen Ashraf. A wheelchair for high sidewalks, 2021. A furniture design by a first-year student, the Higher Institute of Applied Arts 5th settlement.

This design focuses on the principle of universal design to solve a local problem which is high sidewalks.



Fig.4, by Sara Roumany, blind mural, 2021. A decorative design by a first-year student, the Higher Institute of Applied Arts, 5th settlement.

This design focuses on the principle of universal design to help blind people to touch the artwork.

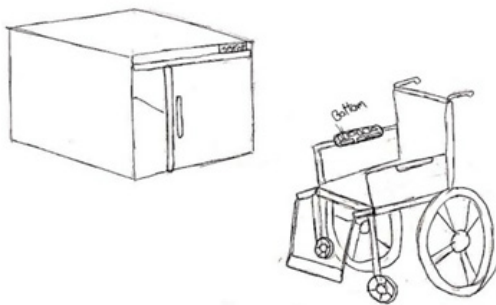


Fig.5, by Martina Nagy Nagib, a smart cabinet connected to a wheelchair, 2021. A furniture design by a first-year student, the Higher Institute of Applied Arts, 5th settlement.

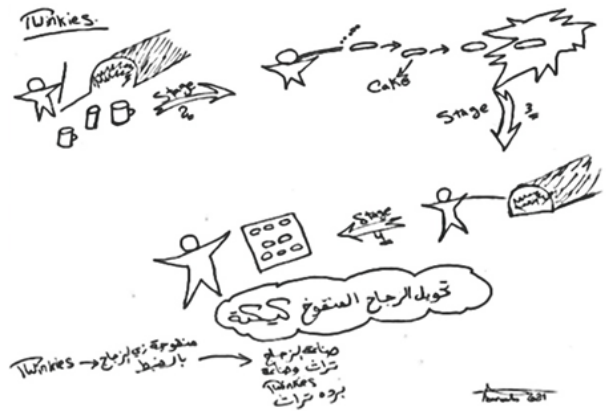


Fig.6, by Abanoub Basem. "Twinkies and Blown Glass", 2021. It is an advertising idea to market blown glass by a preliminary year student, the Higher Institute of Applied Arts, 5th settlement. This advertisement idea is based on comparing Twinkies fabrication and handmade glass fabrication, as it is a method to imitate the ancient Egyptian technique of blown glass. Pieces of Twinkies contain a coupon to win a blown glass artwork, as an advertisement to both Twinkies and the blown glass.

Results

1. The principles of ethical design:

- A. Respecting others, despite their differences (age, capabilities, skin color, poverty or wealth, etc.)
- B. Respecting cannot be applicable if the designer did not emphasize the user's problem and define it in a specific way, following the design thinking process.
- C. Frank advertisement of design.
- D. Designing Long-lasting products vs designing low-quality products.
- E. Having the intention to make the ethical design.
- F. Studying the impact of your design before you implement it.
- G. Having a value in design to transmit messages.
- H. To apply the CSR concept to upgrade society.

urvey analysis

1- Students' academic year:

Academic Year	Number of Students	Percentage
Preliminary year	26 students	40%
First-year	22 students	33.8%
Second-year	14 students	21.5%
Third year	3 students	4.6%

Table1 shows the response of students to the survey according to the academic year. This analysis shows that younger students are ready to listen to unusual topics more than elder students.

2-The most important things that caught students' attention in the lecture

The Most Important Thing	Number of Students	Percentage
Respect of the handicaps	26 students	39.7%
Message/value	21 students	31.7%
Revive handicrafts	1 student	1.6%
Eco-Friendly designs	1 student	1.6%
Design effect	14 students	22.2%
CSR	2 students	3.2%

Table 2 shows the response of students to the survey according to the subject's priority in their opinion.

3-The most important video in the lecture according to students' opinion:

The Most Important Video	Number of Students	Percentage
Banana shell	17 students	26.6%
Cement tiles	10 students	15.6%
Handmade blown glass	38 students	57.8%

Table 3 shows the response of students to the survey according to the most important video in their opinion.

4-The ratio between students who applied the principles of design ethics in their work and other students who did not apply:

Lecture application	Number of students	Percentage
Students who Applied	46 students	70.3%
Students who did not Apply	19 students	29.7%

Table 4 shows the ratio between students who applied design ethics principles and who did not apply.

5-The ratio between the applied principles of design ethics in students' work after the lecture:

(This question was answered by 39 students only)

The Most Applicable Subject	Number of Students	Percentage
Respect of the handicaps	3 students	7.7%
Message/value	11 students	28.2%
Revive handicrafts	1 student	2.6%
Eco-Friendly designs	2 students	5.1%
Design effect	21 students	53.8%
CSR	1 student	2.5%

Table 5 shows the response of students to the survey according to the most applicable design ethics principles in their opinion.

This result shows that there is a lack of knowledge about handicaps ergonomics and design.

In addition, there is a lack of knowledge about handicrafts regarding manufacturing techniques, how to modernize their designs, how to pack them and how to solve their manufacturer's problems.

6-The reasons for not applying design ethics according to students' opinion:

(This question was answered by 31 students only)

The Reasons for not Applying Design Ethics	Number of Students	Percentage
Ignorance about materials	14 students	45.1%
Ignorance about handicaps dimensions	10 students	32.2%
Design ethics do not lead to rates	2 students	6.5%
Lack of a clear message, or feeling distracted	0	0%
Not convinced, state the reason	5 students	16.1%
Other	0	0

Table 6 shows the response of students to the survey according to the reasons for not applying design eth-

ics principles in their opinion.

Discussion

1. Teaching design ethics created a different perspective in design in student's eyes.
2. Lack of concentration on design briefs (either emphasize phase or define phase in design thinking process) cause a lack of creativity and depth in designs. However, applying the design thinking process helps the students to define new problems and create unusual designs.
3. When designers focus on design ethics, they can define new problems, then create new products, as deafblind mobile phones or other solutions.
4. There is a weakness in design education in Egypt considering ethics, that students don't know about handicaps measures. Scholars should pay attention.
5. Students don't know about different Egyptian handicrafts. Hence, design scholars should pay attention and put handicrafts into consideration.
6. Lack of students' knowledge about agricultural scraps in Egypt. Then either agricultural scholars or design scholars should collaborate to solve such a critical problem.
7. The suggestions of students showed us that there is a lack of knowledge considering affordable design software or free alternatives (discussed as one of design ethical problems facing design society). That is why scholars should invest in teaching many alternatives to the same use (either 2D or 3D programs for photo editing, etc.) to avoid urging indigent students to use crack which is a theft. [As the population of most of the Mediterranean countries are not prosperous]
8. Investment in teaching programming to develop smart usage of design ethics.
9. Doing bilateral projects between design institutes and agricultural institutes to solve the waste problem.
10. Doing bilateral projects between product designers and advertisement designers to increase people's awareness about ethics and ethical consumption.

Recommendations:

1. Teaching design ethics course theoretically during a semester at Design educational entities.
2. Teaching both implementation and manufacturing methods, either manual methods (handicrafts) or advanced methods like AI (Artificial Intelligence), to avoid handicrafts disappearance.
3. Paying attention to redesign handicrafts to fit nowadays lifestyle, even in dimensions, in packaging, etc.
4. Paying attention to teaching handicaps measures.
5. Insisting on emphasizing and defining phases in the design thinking process, through teaching how to write a design brief.
6. Investing in teaching programming to create a wide range of free design software to avoid monopoly.
7. Teaching both free and most popular design software to avoid using crack.

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Kindly find the results via:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zdSSFU2rgUVVmb0s0h68nL88SKcbCF5wybZiieMEZWc/edit?usp=sharing>

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