

Review

The Global Studio: Linking research, teaching and learning

Title:	The Global Studio: Linking Research, Teaching and Learning
Authors:	Erik Bohemia Kerry Harman Kristina Lauche
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At its most basic *The Global Studio: Linking Research, Teaching and Learning* documents a course that brings together design students from three universities (Northumbria and Napier Universities in the UK and TU Delft in the Netherlands) to collaborate on a product design project. This book is a much richer resource though; it records an ambitious and challenging project that explores areas as important as design education, cultural communities, changing design practice and new design technologies, processes and research methods.

The book, which is part of the *Research in Design Series* collection from Delft University Press, is laid out over five chapters and at 100 pages is concise and efficient, it is rich with illustration, imagery, diagrams and educational resources. The book begins with a rationale, and this sets the content for the project and book, centrally it addresses the research area being explored and speaks to the question of “why is it important to provide designers with skills for working in distributed design teams?” (Bohemia, Harman, & Lauche 2009:3) The chapter also gives an overview of the thorough literature review undertaken for the book – areas covered include: managing virtual teams; shifts in manufacturing paradigms; design management; and, communication technologies. (For any designer or researcher working in any of these areas the lit review is a rich resource that leads one to many more readings and discoveries.)

Chapter 2 lays out the aims and objectives of the Global Studio project, describing in detail the organisation and content of the course. The authors document the five-stage design process that the students will work through in designing the chosen product – a kitchen timer. They also further explain how the students from the three

Universities will work together using different communication technologies; additionally they describe how students will act as both designer and client in the collaborative project.

In Chapter 3 the authors describe the process of implementing the Global Studio, noting what worked and what did not; they also discuss outcomes of the course. The authors detail the work required to set up the course and how they responded to seen and unforeseen challenges presented by such diverse factors as class enrolments, University administrative restrictions and scheduling restrictions. The students are also introduced and we begin to see the rich and vibrant cultural component to this research project.

The fourth chapter provides a review of how effective Global Studio was in achieving its “desired outcomes and objectives” (2009:4), importantly this review is mapped onto material that is covered in Chapters 2 and 3, bringing the review full circle. The fifth and final chapter identifies further research areas that offer potential for exploration. The end materials contain over 10 pages of references and a further 10 pages that contains documentation of material used throughout the course; we have access to survey examples, schedules and samples of design briefs.

One of the greatest strengths of this book is the transparent and honest documentation of a research project in the area of design. Often we are presented with the conclusion of a research project with all the outcomes tied up neatly and aligning with the stated objectives, this book presents a research project narrative that involves starts and stops, miscommunications, serendipitous discoveries, changes to the game plan and large and small

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successes. It is refreshing to read an account of research that tackles a complex subject from initial inspiration to final conclusion, in short we are given the story of how to persevere and conduct a research exercise in design.

This book is of value to those teaching design, particularly product design, and those interested in exploring the ramifications of changing manufacturing models to the field of product design. The authors lay out a well-researched case for a need to explore new ways of teaching to prepare design students for an evolving profession. From a teaching perspective the book is rich with resources—from research findings concerning the state of the manufacturing industry to thoughts on using distributed learning models to examples of briefs used that explore these territories much is to be found here.

The book is also highly valuable for those interested in design education and how to conduct research in this field, as the authors note one of their aims is “to generate different ideas and approaches for ‘doing’ design education and ongoing discussion around ‘what counts?’, and ‘for whom?’, in relation to curriculum development in design” (2009:3). The richness of the explorations documented into design pedagogy serve as a resource for inspiration and confirmation for academics undertaking educational research. Throughout the book the authors are also explicit in documenting means and possibilities of how “research, teaching and learning can be linked” (2009:3) and this linking serves to demonstrate to other practitioners and academics possibilities of achieving this.

This is an important book. One that is a useful addition to the library of design educators, design researchers, product designers and graduate design students. The book presents a succinct, well-documented and rich case study of design pedagogy, allowing the reader to enjoy the narrative of a successful design project in addition to providing a rich collection of inspiration and resources to put into action when considering the education of future designers. On the whole, *The Global Studio: Linking Research, Teaching and Learning*, is a fascinating and useful documentation of a significant design education research project.

References

Bohemia, E., Harman, K., & Lauche, K. (2009) *The Global Studio: Linking Research, Teaching and Learning*, Amsterdam, IOS