DATE: Design Approaches in Training and Education

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Introduction
In this paper, we will reflect on the first stage of the research project 'Design Approaches in Training and Education'. This project will become part of a University Research Program on Design Approaches in the Social Sciences, that aims at the development and specification of a design methodology for the social sciences. Starting point for this University program is the diagnosis that there are interesting, successful, and relevant professional design activities in social practices, but that existing design methodologies and models do not fit practice adequately. On the one hand this may be due to insufficient insight and unsystematic exploration of what really happens in practice, on the other hand it may be due to incomplete and inadequate theories on designing. By relying on more adequate theories of designing (in the program, Schön's work (1983, 1987) is assumed to be the basis to start from), and by reconstructing successful design processes in practice, new knowledge may evolve that leads to a more appropriate methodology for the social sciences.

Design of the research
The main questions that guide the research are:
- What are the professional design processes and practices in various education and training contexts?
- What are potential improvements of the design methods in those domains?

Roughly, the DATE-project consists of three stages. The first stage has been reserved for a literature study on design. Also, 14 training or education design experts (9 Dutch and 5 American experts) have been interviewed about their views on design and their design approach.

In the second stage of the project, empirical information will be gathered in specific design projects. Based upon findings from a survey, successful design projects will be selected. Reconstructions will be made of the design process in these projects, guided by questions like 'What kind of activities are carried out, with what reason, for what purposes, with what frequency and intensity? How do design team members interact with each other? How are specific problems solved? What stakeholders are involved in the process, when, how and with what intention?, etc.

In the third stage, based upon findings in the second stage, efforts will be made, in interaction with professional designers, and utilizing knowledge from other design oriented research, to generate and test proposals for the improvement of a design methodology in education and training.
Results
This paper will reflect the findings and conclusions of the first stage of the project. In comparison to theory on design, a summary will be given of the findings in the interviews with experts from different education and training settings, such as educational publishers, courseware developers, external and internal consultants for education, training, and development. While articulating and comparing design processes in these different settings, attention will be paid to, for example: design and evaluation methods; criteria for quality, effectiveness, and efficiency; involvement of clients; etc. The gained insights will result in a conceptual framework that will guide the second stage of the project.

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