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**PROFESSIONAL CREATIVITY COMPETITIONS AS A MOTIVATIONAL  
TOOL IN DESIGN EDUCATION**

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*Abstract*

The article gives a comprehensive analysis of a role of creativity competitions for thorough training of students in the sphere of art and project activity. In this article the means of cognitive interest stimulation and their effectiveness are analysed. In the given context the competitions are viewed as one of the most successful tools of educational activity stimulation of design students. The authors consider students' self-actualisation and desire to present the results of their work publicly to be a basis for motivation and self-motivation of a creative individuality in the process of gaining of new knowledge and skills. A great significance is given not only to attracting of students to creativity competitions but also to active organization and promotion of these competitions. There are certain arguments supporting design establishments of higher education in their competition activity as a condition for improvement of quality of educational services, upgrading of pedagogical techniques and mutual integration of the Russian and world design education.

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**Keywords:** Cognitive activity, motivation of educational activity, design, creativity professional competitions, competition management.



## **1. Introduction**

Educational activity is a goal-oriented controlled process of setting of new knowledge, skills and capabilities by students. Nowadays higher education places an emphasis on the system-structural organization of cognitive activity of a student, the upbringing of his independence and initiative. Thus, in the context of modern education concept an accent has shifted from “learner who is being taught” to “learner who is learning”. One of the effective elements of this organizational structure is a motivational or stimulating component, the meaning of which is a stable interest of a learner in acquiring new information and its practical application. It is the interest in learning that causes the student positive emotions and stimulates his cognitive activity (Thienhuong, 2008).

## **2. Problem Statement**

Wakening of interest takes place on different levels. First of all, it can be based on visual and organizational means of learning. Educational act should be dynamic and up-to-date. Of course, a student needs a special surrounding, i.e. creative atmosphere that depends on one hand on material-and-technical equipment of educational process, and on the other hand on content and quality of educational material (NACCCE, 1999). Successfulness of educational results can also be stimulated by financial mechanisms, that have an aim to provoke interest in learning. The importance of these factors should not be underestimated. Yet for achieving the main goal they should be used both separately and as a complex of measures.

However much more effective ways of wakening of cognitive interest are understanding the goal of learning, shifting the focus to the result of the activity and public assessment of the quality of this result (Stirling, 2014). This factor acquires special significance for the organization of the educational process in the field of arts-related professions, in particular, for design education, where along with the formation of professional competences, the forming of a unique creative individuality with a desire for permanent self-improvement is declared to be the main goal (Thienhuong, 2008).

## **3. Research Questions**

Interactive educational technologies are vital for an effective model of professional training of future designers. Unlike traditional active methods of teaching, the essence of interactive technologies is active involvement of students in research and artistic-creative processes and development of their educational self-motivation (Vlasova, & Berdnik, 2014).

In the programme of training of students-designers the central educational discipline that forms professional competencies is "Design-project development". This is an academic discipline, which is present at each level of the whole educational process and integrates knowledge and skills that are acquired in courses of other academic subjects. In our study we consider conditions and technologies of the learning process contributing to the approaching of educational process to real professional activity. Performing assignments in the framework of training students create design works, the content of which is as close as possible to real professional tasks. The teacher of the discipline "Design-project

development" should also create for students conditions as close to real design production as possible to fulfill the project task closer to the real life. Using interactive technologies he creates the atmosphere of a design bureau, where a task can be performed both individually and as a part of a project team. At the same time students actively interact not only with their teacher, who acts in this case as an organizer of training, but also with their colleagues in the team.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to substantiate the role of creativity competitions for students' training in the sphere of art and project activity and to suggest the means of cognitive interest stimulation and the ways of their efficient application during the learning process.

#### **5. Research Methods**

During the lessons the real life situations are modeled and a concept/idea is being generated. This work is performed in the form of role games where effectiveness of learning process is provided by means of active involvement of students into solving a problem. Specificity of design, which is a syncretism of engineering, technological and artistic activities, has determined the diversity of approaches to design-project development that is based on the unity of scientific, engineering, technological and creative methods (Belkina, 2008). In the process of training all modern methods and techniques used in real design work are applied: pre-project analysis supported by technical task for a project; a brainstorming method as an effective tool for developing of an original idea; a method of image-associative thinking aimed at achieving artistic expressiveness of an object of designing; modeling the result of which is creation of a prototype, etc.

Creative competition becomes an important moment of interaction within a group. The excitement of successful solving of problem and the approval of this success by the teacher and fellow students dramatically increase the degree of satisfaction with the educational process (Villalba, 2008). The experience of success of the work results at the level of intellectual and emotional satisfaction, a sense of one's own importance due to professional victory becomes a motivational factor in the pursuit of educational and professional development (Aleeva, 2014; Alyabusheva, 2016; Pedró, 2006). A learner forms a need in pleasure from success of his work, and he tries to test it again and again. This need is correlated with the need for a creative personality in self-esteem and respect from others, as well as with need for prestige, authority, professional reputation.

An important activity-motivational factor can be desire for self-realization through the implementation of their own projects and ideas (About the Theory, 2012). One of the main characteristics of representatives of creative professions is an intention to search for original means of self-expression and unique author's interpretations. In a desire to emphasize their creative individuality students come to necessity to thoroughly study experience of their predecessors, which gives them on the one hand knowledge of methods for solving similar design problems, understanding of actual aesthetic trends in artistic and project activities, and on the other hand comparative analysis in order to avoid repetition of the already created. The ambitious aspiration of design students for formation of original author's handwriting in project creative activity should be supported by the teacher in every possible way even

despite some idealism of the given task. After all the result of this aspiration will be at least a wide professional erudition (Vlasova, Berdnik, 2014). The qualitative analysis of the available sources has become one of the used research methods.

## 6. Findings

The aspiration of young designers to get public recognition of results of their creativity motivates them to participate in professional competitions. In Russia there is a large number of high-level competitive events, many of which have become traditional and already have a long history. The mission of these competitions is that they provide the future designers with a platform for presenting their creative potential in the format of competition with their peers from all regions of Russia and foreign countries. In this competitive process participants learn a lot from each other, observing different, sometimes very original approaches to solving similar project tasks. Such experience greatly expands their professional expertise.

Young designers participating in contests also have an opportunity to get an assessment of their professional competence from foreign representatives of modern design. Many international competitions that are held in Russia invite to the jury professionals from abroad. The jury, as a rule, includes teachers of well-known European and world design schools, representatives of business and mass media. Often foreign jury members note a high level of training of Russian designers, bright individuality and artistic expressiveness of their creative work. The most talented contestants compete for prizes that allow them to win a cash grant for participation in foreign competitions or internships for obtaining additional training in foreign schools and design firms, which is a convincing motivation for participation in creative activity and training.

Participation of students in professional creative competitions gives great advantages not only to future designers, but also to the universities they come from. Many Russian design schools, thanks to the success of their students, become known in Russia and abroad because the contest always evaluates not only personalities (students and their teachers), but also educational institutions in general. Many competitions even set a special nomination "the best design school", in which the winner is the educational institution which most clearly presented its students. Steadily from year to year the repeated success of students of a certain university in independent competitions of a high international status proves the fact that the training there is carried out at the proper level. The high effectiveness of the participation of an educational institution in competitive events becomes for it an excellent promotion and the most effective career guidance event.

The competitions demonstrate potential of design schools: their qualitative level, methodological and pedagogical technologies, artistic and stylistic preferences, professional specifics. The latter circumstance is particularly significant in the context of mobility of students who have an opportunity to continue their education in another institution, as stipulated in the Bologna Declaration (Kislitsyn, 2011; Plaksiy, 2012; Gretchenko A. I., Gretchenko A.A., 2009). If we take into account the fact that due to objective reasons (mental features, financial realities, language barriers, etc.) for a Russian student a change of university within the country is more accessible, knowledge of the features of Russia's design schools is necessary.

Contests can be considered as a real opportunity to upgrade the teaching staff of the university. For teachers in the framework of such events, training methodical seminars, master classes, problem round tables are often held. It is also important informal, but interesting interaction of teachers, which becomes a basis for the exchange of experience, author's pedagogical techniques and creative ideas. Meetings of students and teachers at major competitive events contribute to overcoming the cultural and informational isolation of design schools removed from the center, as well as the regional disunity caused by the vast territory of our country (Belkina, 2008).

One of the innovations of recent years is competitions in the format of correspondence participation. In design education, which actively uses digital technologies in the process of implementation of the educational design task and its presentation this form of attracting participants is very logical. Its obvious advantage is a significant reduction in associated costs for both - contestants and the organizers of the competition. The possibility of placing participants' works in the Internet space ensures openness and accessibility for the general public of all stages of the competitive process. According to the conditions of many competitions, third-party viewers can participate in the evaluation of works, even in some cases, influence the final result. Thus, almost unlimited number of stakeholders is involved in the creative process of the competition.

The most effective tool for motivating creative activity of students is an independent organization of competition on the basis of university with involvement of regional creative unions, design firms, enterprises of profile business. In this case the students can become not just participants of a competition, but also its active organizers. Organization of a competition has all features of a project activity and it is possible to apply existing methods of project management to it. Project culture of an event depends on: the level of the project culture in the university; availability of the material and technical base in general; engineering requirements and limitations, as well as the subjective experience of the organizers of the event, their personal qualities, style of work, level of aspiration (Hargadon, Sutton, 2000).

For the period of preparation and holding of the competitive project, a temporary creative team is created, whose duties include the development of the ideology and content of the project, the choice of technologies used, the organization, maintenance and promotion of the project. It includes: the author of the project concept, curator, designer-performer, organizing committee, interacting with the public and exhibitors, volunteers, press attaché. The project is most optimally implemented if all the above-mentioned officials participate in its implementation. Competent management of the competitive project allows attracting students to participate in all types of work on the organization and holding of the contest, at all its stages. The active position of the student in this process contributes to the formation of not only professional, but also the most important social and personal competencies that are necessary for him as the future head of production teams (Alyabusheva, 2016; Wayne and Padgett, 1997).

Demonstration of the most "fresh" works of young Russian designers in the frameworks of different competitions helps to get a full picture of trends in design education in Russia and to find out its up-to-date problems and to predict ways of overcoming them in the future. The educational aspect of competitive activity shouldn't be underestimated: an opportunity to present one's work on a competitive test and win in it is an effective motivation for students' creative and educational activity. Communication in the process of competitive events expands professional horizons and enriches artistic culture of young designers, students and recent graduates, who will determine the place of Russian design

in world art process in the nearest future. Photo and video reports brought from competitions, significantly supplement educational and methodical resources of university with new, diverse and accessible information (Berdnik, 2014; Wayne and Padgett, 1997).

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the participation of a design university in creative professional competitions and their independent organization on its own basis is undoubtedly an important condition for improving the quality of education, evidence of the readiness of the university to further improve pedagogical technologies, its openness and desire to cooperate with other universities, and their role in the market of Russian and European education. Participation in competitions and their organization of young people contribute to the improvement of the quality of profile education under the continuing education program "school-college-university", help to assess their abilities and desire to meet a high level of the chosen creative profession.

Of course, the contest cannot replace the system development of the curriculum with its clear structure of reporting students. However, the participation in contests can make a significant contribution to the formation of professional competence of future designers. This experience can be an effective means of immersing the student in the situation of a real project, the results of which are implemented in practice.

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