Personal Development Plan

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Identity

I believe design is a tool to improve the world. With my background in teaching, I love working with people and focusing on the interaction between humans and machines. I strongly feel that the designer, and by extension design, has an ethical responsibility towards the world and the products he or she creates for that world. As a teacher, I try to have a positive impact on the world, and as a designer I want to continue to create this impact. This is why I think designers should have a strong moral compass and think about the ethical ramifications of what they design. Especially in this time when we're becoming increasingly glued to our smartphones, I think it's important to create designs which help people communicate with each other in human ways, and which promote interactions with technology in a healthy manner.

Nevertheless, I realise that my desire to become a designer does not fully stem from the fact that I am a teacher, nor does it overlap fully. As a designer, I get enormously excited by the iterative design process as I love seeing a design become incrementally better. With my passion for improving people's lives, I could see myself become a designer of prosthetics, for example, as this would allow me to integrate the social aspect of design (helping and interacting with people) with the mechanical side (creating an artificial limb that is strong yet flexible and offers freedom in movement).

My versatility and broad interest is my biggest asset during design projects. As a designer, I'm fascinated by the inner workings of things. My first question when encountering something new is usually: "So how does it work?" This interest in the mechanical engineering side of things helps me create working prototypes rapidly and allows me to iterate on those designs successfully. Nevertheless, my extensive experience as a language teacher enables me to communicate my ideas effectively both in speaking and writing. I continuously strive to combine the best of these two worlds. This versatility allows me to perform well in different settings as I can adapt my role to suit the needs of the team.

Vision

As a designer, I want to design for the future instead of the present. With challenges facing us such as climate change, I feel that we are entering an era of unprecedented change, which is why we need to come up with solutions that work for the world of tomorrow instead of today. I believe design is a mentality instead of a product that we develop. I want to apply the unique design mentality taught at the TU/e to the problems I encounter. A question that I want to examine in the future is: "how can I apply design thinking to teaching to create a more effective learning experience?" One area I want to explore is that of the Electronic Learning Environment (ELO) to see how design thinking can help educators create and test learning content more quickly. Another area I'm interested in is creating new interactive teaching aids to support learning in the classroom, be it physical or computer-based. As most of the students in schools today will go on to have jobs that don't exist yet, we need to teach versatility. I firmly believe that a designer mindset will prove to be invaluable in helping students become citizens of the future. I want to design education that helps students attain the tools they need to adapt to a changing world. Instead of teaching a set curriculum, we need to teach versatility and adaptability.

As a teacher, I feel I have a unique perspective on these matters because I can combine practical teaching experience with an education as a designer. In general, I feel that interdisciplinary work is a cornerstone of innovation. It is my goal to leverage my experience in different fields to create innovative solutions. People often ask me what I think the classroom of the future will look like. My answer is that the classroom won't change that much; it's the mindset of the teacher or educator that determines how innovative the classroom is. An important factor in this innovative mindset is whether the educator can apply design thinking in his/her teaching practice. In the future, I want to apply the iterative design process to teaching and mainly to developing new teaching materials. I feel that education has been lagging behind in this respect, and many advances can be made by applying design to teaching.

Competency Development

In the first semester of my bachelor's, I mainly explored different fields and theories of design. I want to take the first year to explore different design avenues to see where my interests, strengths, and weaknesses lie. However, coming into this degree, I already knew I wanted to focus on Technology and Realisation, and as I'm doing the course work, I notice that this is indeed where my strengths lie. In the next semester, I want to focus more on the design process, which I will hopefully learn about in Project 1. I'm hoping I can bring this knowledge to my teaching practice, allowing me to design teaching materials more effectively, and perhaps coming up with a few innovative techniques at the same time.

I don't have a clear idea of where I want to go as a designer. At the moment, I'm mainly interested in applying design thinking to teaching. I'm very much interested in the concept of iterative design, and how I can use this approach to make designing new teaching materials more effective. I also learnt a lot from the course User-Centred Design as it gave me a better understanding of the role of users in the design process. I now see the connections to my teaching where students can take the role of users in the process. For the next courses that I'm teaching, I will implement what I learnt, for example analysing when to create a whole new prototype (course method) or when to keep reworking existing ones.

In terms of attitude and quality of deliverables, I'm mainly trying to learn as much as possible without compromising quality. In the first semester, I did better in this regard than I originally expected (or hoped). In the next semester, I still want to learn a lot, but I want to focus more on bringing together what I've learnt so far and integrating these different aspects.

Expertise Areas

Business & Entrepreneurship

Next to studying Industrial Design, I'm also setting up a language institute, which involves a lot of entrepreneurship. Because of this hands-on experience, I'm purposely focusing less on this expertise area within my studies. Although we gained some business experience communicating with Craze in From Idea to Design, this area has so far been the least present in the curriculum.
GOAL: For the next semester, I will try to apply more of my existing entrepreneurial experience to my studies. In Project 1, Smart to Touch, we will design a new product, but I will also devise a marketing strategy based on what I know about marketing language courses. I will ask my coaches for feedback regarding his strategy.

Creativity & Aesthetics

This is one of the areas I'm most interested in. In the elective Exploratory Making, I learnt a lot about aesthetics and about expressing quality in form and interaction. Initially I was afraid that this would be my weakest area, as I consider myself to be good with technology, but not with the aesthetics of products. In From Idea to Design, I received the feedback that I should work on my InDesign skills. However, in the elective I did well and I realised I shouldn't underestimate myself.
GOAL: In the next semester, I want to keep expanding my expertise in this area through Project 1 by learning about material explorations in quartile 3. I'm also reading *Thinkertoys* to expand my brainstorming techniques, and I'm writing most of my reports in InDesign (including this one) to become more adept at the software.

Technology & Realisation

Technology & Realisation is the reason I want to study Industrial Design and the one I've made the most progress in. In the first semester, I learnt about programming and electronics, both inside and outside the bachelor's. The courses Creative Programming and Exploratory Making were great at providing the fundamentals. In my spare time I also occasionally visit a weekly electronics meetup to learn more about Arduino on my own.
GOAL: In the next semester, I want to continue in the same manner as I've noticed I learn well this way. However, I want to focus more on using open source software. This was a goal I set myself for this degree, but I've noticed some teachers really appreciate the Adobe Suite so I've deviated a little. I will make sure to also work in alternatives (Inkscape, Gimp) for at least a 3 deliverables in Professional Identity and Vision.

User & Society

Learning more about the role of the user in the design process proved to be quite relevant for me as I can also use this information in my teaching practice. The course User-Centred Design taught me a lot in this regard, although the learning experience felt rushed at times.
GOAL: In the next semester, I want to take my time to really absorb the material I was taught in quartile 2 by applying it to Project 1. So I'm looking forward to doing user tests about materiality and seeing how people respond to certain textures or interactions. I want to analyse this data with the techniques I'm learning in Data Analytics. I'm also looking forward to delving more into the societal aspects of design, in particular AI and Ethics, in the USE course in quartile 4.

Math, Data & Computing

This is the area I feel the most insecure about, especially the math and data aspects. In terms of math, I passed the Calculus course but I don't feel that I've learnt a lot of mathematics that I will use as a designer. Computing we covered in Creative Programming. This I feel more confident about, as I did well in that course. I know I will need Python for future projects, so I organised and followed two Python courses.
GOAL: I want to be able to interpret data and analyse it using Python. I'm learning this now in Data Analytics. I want to combine my knowledge of Python with Raspberry Pi. I'm working on some projects that involve Raspberry Pi, such as building an 'unconference kit', and I occasionally attend a weekly electronics meetup where I meet like-minded people and work on these projects.

Design & Research Process

Doing research is something I'm already quite good at, having finished an MA in English Literature and winning a prize for best BA thesis of the English Department. We were introduced to the design and research process in the course From Idea to Design and I the differences and similarities between ID and English became apparent to me.
GOAL: I realise I need to develop my skills in doing *design* research specifically. To this end, I'm working on reading secondary literature on design (*The Craftsman*, *Emotional Design*, *Universal Principles of Design*) and using and referencing this research in Project 1. In this project, I want to create a strong research foundation for our concept and I will ask my coaches for feedback on this.