

## Book Review

### **Lyon, P. (2011) Design Education – Learning, Teaching and Researching Through Design**

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Condensing five years of work done under the umbrella of a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) into a cohesive text was always going to be a formidable task, maybe even more so when the centre in question was the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Through Design (CETLD). Run with partners based at the University of Brighton, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal College of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum, all the projects instigated here took place in a very specific teaching and learning culture, which to a certain degree might seem baffling to an outsider.

Philippa Lyon was game to take this on, and coming from an academic background in English Literature rather than Design herself, she makes the most of her outsider's perspective, which makes this a valuable introductory text. Lyon carefully explains this position and is a sympathetic guide to a culture clearly alien to her, carefully unpicking a number of contexts in which design education can be analysed as well as a multitude of ways designers can be understood – and understand themselves.

Lyon also pays special attention to research in design education – and how this is not yet fully aligned to pedagogical research. Particularly she unpicks the notion of 'learning through doing' as an approach that "can appear simultaneously vital and insufficient as a design education approach" (107), and identifies the research of the CETLD projects as a positive factor for both participating staff and students.

The rest of the book is akin to a whistle-stop tour through some of the projects - Lyon discusses theories of what creativity is and means, and the importance of ambiguity in that context. She also touches on the somewhat difficult relationship between the visual and the verbal, and the difficulties both students and staff sometimes have with writing, academic writing particularly – and she highlights the work done by a number of people involved with CETLD projects in order to explore writing in a creative, and above all practice-based way. She ends with discussing the ongoing exploration of integrating and utilising technology in design education.

In covering all these strands that could be identified in the 40-plus projects funded by the CETLD in its lifetime, *Design Education – Learning, Teaching and Researching Through Design* by the nature of the book provides an overview, backed up by evidence drawn from the research reports and from the project participants. As such this is a useful introduction

for non-designers or people about to embark on careers as design educators. For people more familiar with this culture and its practices, the book's uses lie more as an introduction to some of the fascinating CETLD projects, although as the mentions of those are teasingly brief, readers might prefer to directly consult the reports (listed in the bibliography).