Course reflection form
Department of Industrial Design
DHB411: Do, Reflect, Learn: Design Research and Processes
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Reflection

My motivation to join this elective was primarily to learn more about structuring a design research process and to explore new design processes[i]. When reading up on this elective on OASE I found that this elective was going to be a mix of gaining new insight on design processes through lectures and applying that insight in a team-based setting. This really spoke to me, as I have experienced that I can get the most out of the lectures this way.

A big goal of mine was to lead a project, which is why I stepped forward at the start of the first lecture to become the captain of our group. I made sure that everyone within the group did what they were supposed to do, and I took the lead whenever the others appeared to be rut. This was a big step for me, as I normally am more passive, which makes it hard to see my own input in group projects. As a result of this, I have learnt a couple of things. Ever since adopting a more active attitude within my electives and projects I have noticed an increase in productivity, both for myself and for others. I also find that my vision is more noticeable within my activities.

In the first few weeks we were asked to make videos[ii] to showcase our progress. These videos were shown at the start of the lectures, basically as some kind of presentation on our work of the past week. I also took the lead in the production of the first two videos, as I have some experience with creating videos. However, something I did not have much experience with was strict requirements for the videos. In the past, most concept videos I made did not have quite as strict requirements as these ones had.

The videos made in this elective were not allowed to exceed ninety seconds in total length, which made the process of selecting the relevant footage we wanted to show quite tough. In these videos we not only had to introduce our concept and its use, we also had to explain our process and its relevance in the reflective-transformative design process. Something I took out of this activity was to make a clear storyboard of the video beforehand, summarizing what exactly I need to explain in this video, and why I want to explain those things. I found that doing this is very beneficial to the end result, as it gives you a tool to verify that quality of the video is satisfactory.

Looking back on these videos, it's easy to pinpoint what our focus was for that week, and to spot the new things I had learnt during that period of time. Still, I don't think I will be applying this to future projects, or at least not in this format. The videos had to be made within very short periods of time, and at a high pace. This led to me feeling like a lot of the work we did was spent on producing the video, instead of making progress in our concept development and research.

The second part of this elective was spent setting up the procedure for a research, conducting said research and analyzing the results. In retrospect, I have learnt a lot from doing this. As this was my first time ever doing research that aspired to be of academic level, some things did not go as well as I would have wanted.

One thing that stood out for me was the fact that every word we used in our research question in our paper[iii] had to very sensible. We went through numerous iterations of the research question to ensure the question had a good balance of broadness, yet also novelty. With our research question in mind, we were able to select a research method to find an answer. We went for a questionnaire with mixed qualitative and quantitative questions on a 5-point wording scale[iv]. In this elective I have gained more insight in what methods are suitable for a user research, and how these methods can be validated. One of the methods that seems the most suited for user testing in Industrial Design is Attrak-Work questionnaire. This is something I will definitely be applying in future projects.

Overall, I feel like this elective helped me understand the basics of doing qualitative- and quantitative research. During the lectures I have received sufficient information about numerous methods to gather data and their benefits and drawbacks, which allows me to set up a studies in an adequate manner. I have also learned about analyzing the data, and how data can be misleading. It is wise to not only take the average of quantitative data, but also the mean value to check if there are significant differences.

Finally, I have learnt how to ensure that the results of a research are valid by conducting a power test[v]. In the process of writing our paper we calculated the amount of participants we would need to get significant results, and unsurprisingly, we were quite far off the amount of participants needed. All in all, this elective has given me the tools to successfully continue my current design research project.

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[i] Personal Development Plan for the B22 semester, http://arthurgeel.com/uploads/PDP_B22.pdf/

[ii] The videos on the process of this elective can be found on Vimeo, https://vimeo.com/user35760334/

[iii] Influence of Intentional Phone Disabling on Nomophobia Levels, http://arthurgeel.com/uploads/nomophobia-levels.pdf/

[iv] Wording for rating scales, http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/evaluation/documents/Wordingforratingscales.pdf

[v] IBM – SPSS SamplePower, http://www-03.ibm.com/software/products/nl/spss-samplepower