STATUS OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN KOREAN DESIGN EDUCATION

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Abstract: Recently, a growing number of Korean universities are introducing doctoral program in design. This phenomenon has been influenced both by the belief that design requires advanced knowledge, and by current economic, social and cultural environments of the nation. This research aims at providing a diagnosis of the current status regarding the establishment of design doctoral program in Korean universities through survey and analysis of the phenomenon. In addition, this paper will provide a support data to compare situations both at home and abroad, thereby facilitating its use on a practical purpose and identifying obstacles to its development. To achieve this purpose, this study suggests two viewpoints: first, whether the objective of the establishment of design PhD program is to train the students to be design experts or to train personnel to hold teaching profession in university; second, whether this phenomenon is taking place in the process of expanding and deepening of existing design sectors, or is proceeding with an aim at establishing the newly emerging ‘Design Studies’ as an academic discipline in the field.

Keyword: Design Education, Discipline of Design, Design PhD. Program, Design Studies

1. Introduction
Since the 1980s, the number of design-related departments has sharply increased in Korea with the rapid development of the design industry, and over 700 departments have been created in more than 300 universities across the nation. As a result, annually, they produce over 30,000 graduates, a record number in the world as a proportion of total population, which explains why universities in Korea are rushing to establish PhD program. Compared to the growth in quantity, however, the quality of personnel in the design sector still remains insufficient by the international standard. Facing this, ‘establishment of PhD program’ has become important to deal with the problem. Against this backdrop, an increasing number of PhD program has been established in recent years, and this trend is further accelerating now. However, due to lack of curriculum or faculty members, several problems have emerged as a result. Introducing a program with no solid curriculum in place, even though in its early stage, can bring about more side effects rather than benefits from it.

Several overseas universities have offered design PhD program for a long time; yet, they have sufficient time to prepare before actually introducing disciplines or degrees in design.

This study is confined to identifying the current situation regarding the establishment of design PhD program, which is because, drawing a conclusion on the on-going phenomenon will be made possible after more in-depth studies in diverse perspectives are available. Follow-up studies are expected regarding detailed analysis and conclusion based on this study.

2. Proceeding
This study is divided into two parts: first, providing an overall picture by analyzing an annual data regarding the establishment of design doctoral program in domestic universities; second, surveying the curriculum and faculty and identifying its structure. Due to lack of relevant data available, this paper focuses on comparing characteristics of each university, classifying the outcome and then, providing detailed data on selected universities based on a thorough research into them. Those surveyed include: ① Hongik University, Seoul National University, ② Kookmin University, Graduate School of Techno Design, ③ KAIST; and summed-up data will be presented on remaining universities.

Characteristics of structural type of discipline in the three categories above as follows:

Type①: Running design department within an entire structure of Art College

Type②: Structure focusing on expertise of major

Type③: Structure compromising type① and type②

Each type is expected to have its own merits and demerits; yet, there is no clear distinction between them, which indicates the structure of discipline still remains in its initial stage. It is not easy to distinguish features of the department based on its curriculum. More detailed and coherent curriculum is required.

Kookmin University, Graduate School of Techno Design, originally created putting focus on expertise, is currently pursuing curriculum structure, which is more detailed, and comprehensive by expanding the concept of design, a desirable approach in response to the global trend.

This research has produced three major viewpoints as
follows:

**Viewpoint 1:**
The most noteworthy is the issue of “on what purpose the doctoral program is introduced”. The objective of producing skilled professionals has two perspectives: training teaching personnel in university; and generating design experts. In conclusion, even though both aspects are working, the former is considered to be a primary objective. This is revealed in the composition ratio of student and faculty or its tendency. The future development cannot be predicted at this point; yet, the major objective is training teachers, at least now. As Victor Margolin noted in “Design History in The United States, 1977-2000”[1] that, design PhD program was first introduced in the U.S. out of the necessity of training teachers, this objective has been pursued in other nations when introducing the program. In fact, for design experts, degree is not a prerequisite in domestic workplace. Rather, degree is needed when shifting to a professor’s career in university or out of necessity to enhance qualifications as a professor. It is considered inappropriate to apply a vague standard of the overall quality improvement in design without putting this issue in an objective light. From the perspective of training teachers, it is required to secure the ability and qualification to match that of other disciplines, since design will continue to increasingly become inter-related with other disciplines, thereby making establishment of PhD program inevitable.

**Viewpoint 2:**
It is also notable that several universities that have recently introduced the doctoral program use the term ‘D.D. (Doctor of Design)’ in English, which is compared to ‘Ph.D. (Philosophy Doctor)’, which is normally used for a degree in design. This refers to so-called ‘Professional Doctorate’, which puts more focus on expertise of design and is conferred in some countries with advanced design capacity including Germany, Japan, the U.S. and Scandinavia. This trend, however, is a departure from the view of ‘design is human science’, as scholars such as Richard Buchanan[2] argue, and provides different analysis on traditional concept of the doctorate. When introducing a degree, it should be named based on a clear definition.

**Viewpoint 3:**
There emerged another issue of the use of the term ‘Design Studies’. In Korean, the term ‘Design Studies’ is also used referring to the traditional design department, thereby leading to confusion in the use of the terminology as a result. Some scholars in Korea are seeking for a clearer definition of ‘Design Studies’, and research on this issue is also underway globally, centering on whether design is equipped with qualifications to become an academic discipline, and if so, how to structure its curriculum. Few Korean universities, in this respect, seem to address ‘Design Studies’ in terms of discipline, nor to have a firm grasp of its concept before applying it. This phenomenon demonstrates that terminology in the design sector including ‘Design Studies’ needs to be clarified based on prior studies that have long been sought to establish a clear definition in response to changes in environments and thoughts.

3. **Conclusion**
In summary, the current trend of the establishment design PhD program in Korean universities is a phenomenon, which:
1. reflects both practical and disciplinary perspectives of design.
2. suggests the gap between global trend and disparate situations in individual nations.
3. is a result from the gap in time between the establishment of thought on design due to the economic growth and improved social awareness, and the establishment of discipline of design.
4. has been resulted in, while seeking to meet the rapidly emerging social, policy needs amid insufficient prior research done in diverse perspectives.

4. **Reference**