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## Addressing the gap between Creative Individuals and Technical Experts in the Design Job Market Report

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Irbid, 4 July 2023



### The issue:

In the professional sphere, there appears to be a preference for machine-like individuals over creative minds. The term "machine-people" is used to describe those who possess technical proficiency in operating software but lack a deeper understanding of the scientific principles underpinning creation. This trend in the job market seems to favor the machine-oriented approach rather than valuing creative individuals who base their work on scientific knowledge.

There is a pressing need to explore the designer and design market in a more elaborate manner. The problem lies in the educational system, particularly universities, which are failing to provide relevant scientific education and training that meets the demands of both learners and the job market. Central to the issue is a lack of comprehension and understanding of the culture of design. This deficiency has significant implications, and the job market fails to address the complexities of this situation, leading to a potential failure in the future.

To clarify the role of universities, it is essential to understand that their primary function is to organize knowledge. The universities should focus on developing competencies that would enable individuals to seize job opportunities successfully. This necessitates personal effort and dedication from the students to enhance what they learn within the university setting. Education and learning, when approached in the right manner, can create a supportive environment that equips students with knowledge and tools to facilitate self-learning.

Learning and education as distinct concepts; while education encompasses formal instruction, learning encompasses the active and ongoing acquisition of knowledge. The responsibility for learning lies with the learner; their willingness to engage and invest in their own learning journey is vital to achieving personal and professional growth.

### **Gaming in Jordan:**

Gaming development has emerged as a prominent and lucrative field in Jordan, with the establishment of "Mais Alward" gaming lab. This innovative lab has extended its presence to seven governorates, with an additional mobile lab to reach a broader audience. The gaming lab aims to provide comprehensive programs that foster creativity, skill development, and industry knowledge among aspiring game developers. However, a significant challenge lies in the lack of student interest, primarily attributed to the prevalent focus on attaining high grades rather than a genuine passion for learning.

### **Mentoring role:**

The role of a mentor holds significant value, particularly for students and young individuals who have limited life experiences. Mentors play a vital guiding role during this critical phase of personal and professional development, offering wisdom, support, and insights that can shape their journey towards success. It is important to recognize that the need for mentors extends beyond the younger age groups. Mentoring remains relevant and valuable throughout one's life, irrespective of age or career stage. Seasoned professionals can benefit from the guidance and perspective of mentors who have traversed similar paths and can provide valuable advice for further growth and achievement. In addition to the following measurements that was explored:

- **Fostering Student Interest:** Businesses and educational institutions should work together to cultivate an interest in gaming development among students. By showing casing the exciting opportunities and real-world impact of the industry, students can be encouraged to pursue this field with genuine enthusiasm.
- **Aligning with Industry Demands:** It is essential to tailor the curriculum to encompass both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills required by the gaming industry. Integrating the science of game design with a focus on job market readiness equips students with the right skill set to thrive in their careers.
- **Practical Training Programs:** Universities can play a crucial role by mandating practical training periods for students. These internships or training sessions provide valuable hands-on experience and exposure to real-world challenges faced by professionals in the gaming industry.

- **Addressing the Paid Training Dilemma:** Offering paid training opportunities can be advantageous in attracting students to internships and ensuring their commitment. However, universities and businesses must collaborate to explore funding options or stipends for students, especially when unpaid internships present financial challenges.
- **Expanding Training Opportunities:** To accommodate students from various regions, it is essential to expand training opportunities beyond the capital city. Establishing training centers or partnerships in different governorates, including remote areas, can make these opportunities more accessible and inclusive.
- **Shared Responsibility:** The success of the education process lies in the joint efforts of educational institutions, businesses, and learners themselves. Encouraging active participation and engagement from all stakeholders will contribute to a more robust and dynamic gaming development ecosystem in Jordan.

#### **Case study from Lebanon, Bridge the Gap training centre<sup>1</sup>:**

Major media industries and advertising agencies, including those in the MENA region and Gulf states, face challenges in hiring graduates directly from universities due to a noticeable skills gap. While graphic design skills are covered in design education, there is a need for additional soft skills that are essential for thriving in the workplace. To address this issue, "Bridge the Gap," developed a specialized program aimed at bridging the transition between university-level design education and the demands of the labor market.

The "Bridge the Gap" program spans ten days, with half-day sessions, and is conducted in collaboration with select universities. The curriculum covers various crucial subjects, including time management, teamwork, presentation techniques, and specific aspects of graphic design, such as storytelling. Expert scholars from prominent universities, such as the American University of Beirut and the EU Business School, contribute to the development of these courses.

The culmination of the program involves the participants making a pitch to the MENA region's Saatchi and Saatchi CEO, based in Beirut. This unique opportunity allows the students to showcase their abilities and interests while receiving constructive feedback. Moreover, we connect the students with other advertising agencies, offering internships to qualified candidates, which, although not fully paid, cover necessary expenses. So far, the training center has successfully run four cohorts, with a total of 80 students, and 32 of them have secured internships through this initiative.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bridgethegapcentre.com>

## **Apprenticeship and Training in Design Specializations**

Certain design fields, such as engineering, architecture, and interior design, can be prone to stagnation if not supplemented by ongoing skill development and training. In particular, the software dilemma arises, where professionals must decide which software they are proficient in and whether it aligns with the industry's prevailing choices, such as 3D Max versus Revit or SketchUp. To further empower the designer community, it becomes crucial for individuals to recognize their rights and understand the value they bring to projects, including how to appropriately set their prices and negotiate contracts. This awareness can lead to a more equitable and sustainable professional practice.

The role of syndicates, which serve as regulatory bodies overseeing the work landscape and safeguarding the rights of designers, comes under scrutiny. The effectiveness and clarity of the syndicates' functions, in terms of establishing fair working conditions, protecting intellectual property, and promoting industry standards, are essential aspects to evaluate and optimize.

To ensure the continuous growth and relevance of design disciplines, fostering apprenticeship programs and ongoing training becomes imperative. By staying current with advancements in technology, industry trends, and professional standards, designers can maintain their competitive edge and contribute effectively to the ever-evolving design landscape. Collaborative efforts between industry stakeholders, educational institutions, and regulatory bodies are key to fostering an environment of continual learning and professional development within the design community.

### **Real stories of job seekers, no. 1:**

#### **Insights on Design Software and Creative Thinking in the Job Market**

In the realm of design, the choice of design software can sometimes be a divisive topic, leading to debates about its importance and impact on job prospects. It is essential to acknowledge that software should be perceived as a tool rather than the ultimate goal for designers. A versatile designer should possess the ability to work proficiently with any software, adapting to the ever-changing technological landscape. Within the job market, there exists a pertinent debate. While some argue that software proficiency is a primary goal for companies seeking skilled designers, others maintain that software mastery should be viewed as a means to an end. The latter perspective emphasizes the significance of fostering creative thinking and conceptualization as foundational skills for designers.

While learning and understanding design software are undoubtedly crucial, companies primarily seek designers who can think critically and innovate creatively. A strong creative process lays the foundation for successful design execution. Therefore, students should prioritize developing their creative thinking abilities alongside software proficiency.

Aspiring designers often seek unpaid training opportunities to gain valuable practical experience. This practice is instrumental in honing their skills and adapting to real-world challenges. In the workplace, employers often prioritize assessing a designer's proficiency with tools and software rather than their overall creative mentality. Surprisingly, portfolio creation is not always deemed crucial in some instances, and there are concerns about the risk of theft or plagiarism. However, it is essential to strike a balance between safeguarding one's intellectual property and showing casing one's capabilities to potential employers.

In the educational setting, there might be gaps in the curriculum, lacking subjects that address vital aspects like presentation skills or specific graphic design techniques. The industry often expects designers to possess a well-rounded skill set, but this expectation might not always align with the skills taught in academia.

## **Real stories of job seekers, no. 2:**

### **Tools Versus Concepts: Navigating Creativity in Design**

The path in the creative world has been both unconventional and inspiring. Initially drawn to graffiti art, he faced challenges when caught twice, affecting his pursuit of a degree in Information Technology Systems. Undeterred, he shifted his focus to visual art, where he found his true passion. After completing his studies, he explored the world of creative coding, utilizing his knowledge of coding to create mesmerizing visuals for music, all through self-guided learning. In the process of exploring his newfound interest, he realized that the university provided him with the foundational knowledge necessary to explore further and push the boundaries of creative coding. Despite the relatively low market value for his work in Jordan, his artistic journey led him to international residencies, where he honed his skills, created innovative projects, and exhibited his creations.

The concept of creativity is dominant in his philosophy. He emphasizes that designers must continually expand their toolbox of skills and techniques, using them as needed to bring their concepts to life. For him, creativity is the key that sets individuals apart, influencing their thought process and ultimately shaping the outcome of their work. His perspective extends the value of ideas and concepts over more coding or tools. He believes that what is bought and appreciated is the concept behind a design, not just the code or the tools used to execute it. This insight reinforces the notion that creativity and innovative thinking form the core of a successful designer's approach.

However, he has encountered a significant hurdle in the Jordanian design industry. Many designers are not given the opportunity to present their ideas or concepts. Instead, they are often perceived as implementers, restricted to executing predetermined designs without the chance to fully showcase their creative vision. This issue also highlights a larger problem with the architectural mindset prevailing in Jordan, which merits further investigation. Understanding and addressing these challenges can pave the way for a more progressive and nurturing environment for designers.

### **Labor Market Intelligence: Addressing Challenges in Job Distribution**

In the labor market, there are concerns that jobs are often allocated based on personal connections (*wasta*) or through government bureaucracies (*diwan alkhedma almadanyeh*). This existing system of job distribution can result in qualified individuals being overlooked in favor of personal affiliations or bureaucratic processes. The current reality for job seekers is that they must actively search for opportunities, often facing obstacles due to the prevailing job distribution practices. In some cases, talented designers may find themselves without a significant role in the decision-making process, limiting their potential for growth and contribution within the organization or industry.

Diversity plays a pivotal role in distinguishing exceptional architects, designers, and professionals from their counterparts. Embracing self-learning and continuous improvement allows individuals to develop their skills and stand out in their respective fields. This ability to distinguish oneself becomes a significant advantage in the ever-changing landscape of the job market. Freelance work offers a potential solution for individuals seeking opportunities to showcase their talents and gain valuable experience. By taking on freelance projects, designers can leverage their skills, build a portfolio, and establish their presence in the industry, ultimately opening doors to more substantial and rewarding opportunities.

### **Enhancing Fair Rewards for Designers and Architects: The Role of Government**

To ensure that designers and architects receive fair and equitable compensation, several key actions need to be taken, primarily driven by the government's role and involvement. These actions encompass fostering connections and networking opportunities within the industry and implementing thematic and focused capacity-building initiatives. A crucial aspect contributing to the issue is the lack of an institutionalized and regulated body to address the challenges faced by designers and architects. Establishing such a body would play a significant role in addressing the dilemma and providing much-needed support and guidance.

Furthermore, the government must actively work towards attracting and encouraging large design companies that left the country to return, making Jordan a regional hub for



capacity-building initiatives. By positioning Jordan as a destination for regional designers to receive specialized training and knowledge enhancement, the country can foster growth within its creative and cultural industries. The barriers faced by designers and architects are diverse and span various industries, making the resolution of these challenges a cross-industry effort. Therefore, concerted efforts are necessary from government agencies and other stakeholders to create a conducive environment for the development and recognition of the creative and cultural industries.

In this pursuit, the concept of establishing a legal organization or association, similar to the model of the Medical Laboratories Association, can play a crucial role in supporting the process. Such an entity would facilitate structured and goal-oriented interactions, ensuring equitable outcomes for all parties involved. To further promote the value and potential of the creative and cultural industries (CCI) in Jordan, it is essential to emphasize the economic benefits and opportunities that these industries offer. Clearly showing the economic value of the CCI will serve as a catalyst in advancing the sector and garnering greater support from both the government and private sector.