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# Design Hegemony: an Exploration of Hegemony in the Curriculum and Instruction of Industrial Design Education

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Hegemony stands for domination, leadership and ascendancy. In industrial design education, it has become more important because of its dramatic impact on the industrial design discipline. Historically, educators have been the dominant class in the system of industrial design education. Although the students are playing an improving role, curricula design and teaching strategies are still dominated by the concept of hegemony. In view of this, several conclusions can be drawn. Similar to the administration of a state, the execution of hegemony in schooling throughout the curriculum and teaching is necessary. Hegemony can be viewed as a tool, and how it is used can result in significantly different results. As such, expanding teacher awareness in this area is crucial. Hegemony also represents a type of ideal in the application of the concept into design education. A new term can be created, *design hegemony*, to mean design *domination, leadership or ascendancy*. A good understanding towards these concepts is important to improve the quality of design education. Without hegemony, a state cannot be administered; without design hegemony, a design education cannot be executed effectively. If used properly, hegemony in industrial design will enable design education be executed effectively.

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## INTRODUCTION

Apple pointed out that education was not a neutral enterprise, that by the very nature of institution, the educator was involved, whether he/she was conscious of it or not, in a political act. The educators could not fully separate their educational activity from the unequally responsive institutional arrangements and the forms of consciousness that dominate advanced industrial economics [1].

Giroux takes the pedagogy of the schools as an effort to transmit cultural tradition and ideology as knowledge of hegemonic groups in society [2]. This concept breaks the traditional viewpoint on schooling: that school is a neutral academy. In a sense, there is something missing in the academic approach. To put it another way, schools are social sites characterised

by an ongoing struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces [2].

Hegemony and ideology represent important concepts in educational theory and practice. This is because they expose the political nature of schooling and point to the possibilities for developing alternative modes of pedagogy [2].

The education of industrial design has a close link with issues of politics, economics, social-culture, philosophy and, in particular, the field of curriculum design and teaching strategy. The driving force amongst these intimately related subjects cannot be ignored and the topic of hegemony is one of the crucial ones. Hence, this paper is intended to explore the influence of hegemony on the industrial design education.

## THE MEANINGS OF HEGEMONY

According to various authoritative dictionaries, the meaning and definition of hegemony can be identified as follows:

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\*A revised and expanded version of a keynote address presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asia-Pacific Forum on Engineering and Technology Education, held in Changhua, Taiwan, from 8 to 11 July 2001.

- Oxford Dictionary: *leadership, authority, and influence, especially of one state in a group of states. [in Greek hegemonia: hegmon - leader, order].*
- Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus: *ascendancy or domination of one power or state within a league, confederation, etc.*
- Dictionary of Philosophy: *From Greek verb meaning to lead, hegemony has sometimes been used as a synonym for domination. In its subtler sense, however, it implies some notion of consent and is particularly associated with the writings of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Drawing on writers such as Machiavelli and Pareto, Gramsci argues that a politically dominant class maintains its position not simply by force, or the threat of force, but also by consent. That is achieved by making compromises with various other social and political forces which are welded together and consent to a certain social order under the intellectual and moral leadership of dominant class. The hegemony is produced and reproduced through a network of institution.*

It has also been stated by Femia that:

*Gramsci especially emphasized the role of intellectuals in the creation of hegemony. The result is one of the most important, if elusive, concepts in contemporary social theory [3].*

From the various explanations and discourses of the above texts, the common factors for hegemony can be identified as *leadership, authority, ascendancy and domination*, especially the intelligent and moral leadership of the dominant class. Through the institutional network, hegemony represents the identity of *legalisation and institutionalisation*, and plays the role of producer or reproducer on concepts and beliefs.

Although there exists no fully developed theory of hegemony, the starting point for studying the concept has to begin with the work of Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, who succeeded the initial concepts of hegemony from Marx and Lenin [2]. Indeed, it has been commented that:

*Hegemony as it is used by Antonio Gramsci appears to have two meanings. First, it refers to a process within civil society whereby a fundamental class exercises control through its moral and intellectual leadership over allied classes. In this perspective, an*

*alliance is formed among ruling groups as a result of the power and ability of one class to articulate the interest of other social groups to its own.*

*The second use of the term takes on a much more dynamic character. Hegemony, as it is used, points to the relationship between the dominant and dominated class. In this case, hegemony refers to the successful attempt of a dominant class to utilize its control over the resources of state and society, particularly through the use of the mass media and the educational system [2].*

## History and Evolution

Table 1 summarises the study of hegemonic concept undertaken since Marx in 1848. As described in this table, Gramsci was the first scholar dedicated to the approach of hegemony. He provided three models of hegemonic concepts and the first theory of hegemony undertaken during his era.

The study of hegemony from the 1920s to 1930s focused primarily on the issues of moral and philosophical leadership. In recent years, the approach of hegemony has been transmitted from national and political issues to social-economical and educational topics, such as women, minority groups, gays and lesbians and less privileged groups.

## HEGEMONY AND IDEOLOGY

Basically, hegemony is related to the issues of ideology entirely. In other words, hegemony itself is ideology. Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between hegemony and ideology.

Hegemony is related to the thought that someone occupies on a dominating position, which includes everything from the social, cultural and economic levels in all societies [5]. The relationship of hegemony with society can be discussed in terms of the political, economic and social domains, elaborated on below.

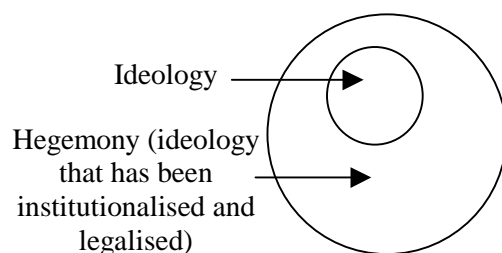


Figure 1: The relationship between ideology and hegemony.

Table 1: The concepts, models and definitions related to hegemony [2][4-6].

Researcher	Era	Concept and definition
K. Marx	1848-1875	<i>State</i> is seen as a tool of the ruling class, but not the domain of autonomy or relative autonomy.
V. Lein	1961-1969	Emphasis on the importance of theory of hegemony. <i>Only equipped with the advanced theory can a party practice the function of advanced warriors.</i> State is a product and presentation of classic contradiction.
B. Corce	1941	Developed the concepts of moral and ethical leadership.
A. Gramsci	1928	Designed three models, which can be stated as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In terms of culture and moral meanings, hegemony is seen as something that is exercised in civic society. State is a place that polices and the military represents the form. Economics is a dominant force that executes working discipline, cash exchange and currency control.</li> <li>Hegemony is recognised as something that executes in the national and civic society. The importance of the institution is placed on education and law. Education and social security are important activities in establishing hegemony.</li> <li>The so-called <i>state</i> is not only recognised as a governmental mechanism, but also understands the private mechanism of hegemony or civic society. Hegemony belongs to the private power and civic society. The civic is so-called state, in other words, the state itself.</li> <li>A concept is related to a set of complex system.</li> </ul>
L. Althusser	1969-1977	Rationalism and structuralism. The national mechanisms of ideology and suppression. Anti-humanism. Anti-hegemonic concept.
P. Anderson	1977	Enjoy hegemony before coming to power, thus an integrated state can be established, ie wide agreement is essential.
C. Buci-Glucksmann	1980	Disagreed with the similarity of hegemony and legitimacy created by Gramsci and Web.
J.V. Femia	1981	Emphasised ethics and cultural values in the study of hegemony.
E. Laclau & C. Mouffe	1985	Each viewpoint of hegemony is based on the foundation of an unstable balance. Extended the field of hegemony from politics, society and culture to women, minority groups, gays and lesbians and less privileged groups.
R. Boccock	1986	The execution of hegemony has to be matched with rational understanding. Therefore, uniting citizens from all levels and also the agreement of emotions and morals from themselves, should not be done using force.
A.H. Giroux	1981	Schools are social sites that are characterised by an ongoing struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. Giroux takes the pedagogy of the schools as an effort to transmit cultural tradition and ideology as the knowledge of hegemonic groups in society.
W.M. Apple	2000	Curricula are the products of often intense conflicts, negotiations and attempts at rebuilding hegemonic control by actually incorporating the knowledge and perspectives of the less powerful under the umbrella of discourse of dominant groups.

## Political Domain

Hegemony is the foundation of the ruling class. In order to come to power, the struggle of hegemony is necessary. If there were no complexity of struggle existing amongst the classes, then the revolution could not be undertaken. In other words:

no hegemony, no revolution [7].

In terms of the democratic practice, the reconstruction domain of hegemony itself carries powers concerning the extension and depth of socialist political practices. Without hegemony, socialist practices can really only focus on the needs and interests of the working class [7].

## Economic Domain

Hegemony always has to reflect the fundamental economic class. This is because it not only ensures the fundamental of economics, but also confirms the role of economics in the sphere of reconstructing the hegemony in the society. The logical construction of the economic domain does not belong to the logic of hegemony [7].

## Social Domain

Hegemony is the boundary of the assumption of a socially incomplete and arbitrary nature. Therefore, hegemony is generated only on the domain of joining practices of domination. The social mobility is the necessary condition of hegemonic practices [7].

## Forms of Hegemony

In schools, as in other institutions, the production of hegemonic ideologies *hides* behind a number of legitimating forms. Some of the most obvious include:

- The claim by dominant classes that their interests represent the entire interests of the community.
- The claim that conflict only occurs outside of the sphere of the political, ie economic conflict is viewed as non-political.
- The presentation of specific forms of consciousness, beliefs, attitudes, values and practices are natural, universal, or even eternal [2].

Hegemony, then, is an ideology that has been institutionalised by the state. The means that ideology is a set of beliefs, values, and social practices that contain opposite assumptions about varying elements of social reality, ie society, economics, authority, human nature, politics, etc. Ideologies become hegemonic when they are institutionalised by the dominant society [2]. Hence, the execution of hegemony may lead to a negative influence in the society if the dominant class improperly uses the idea. On the other hand, an effective rule or administration cannot function without a common belief or ideology. To institutionalise these concepts is what hegemony is all about.

A more comprehensive theory of ideology and social reproduction occurs when hegemony is related to all the major spheres of social existence. Kellner demonstrates this by identifying four major ideological realms as described in Table 2.

In summary, cultural hegemony is generated through the offering of knowledge, morals and

Table 2: Kellner's four major ideological realms and the associated media [8].

Realms	Media
Economic realm	Ideologies of production, exchange, distribution, etc.
Cultural realm	Ideologies of culture, values, science, technology, mass media, art, etc.
Social realm	Ideologies of the private sphere, family, education, social groups, etc.
Political realm	Ideologies of the state, democracy, civil rights, legal-judicial system, the police and the military.

philosophy from the ruling or dominant class in order to achieve the goal of the basic concept of society.

It is not easy to explore the concept and operation of hegemony. However, the meanings of hegemony can be condensed in terms of generation, path and function as follows:

- Time and ways of generation: When encountering crisis and pressure, the ruling class uses *legal* methods to achieve agreement or consensus from civic society and manipulates hegemony in order to achieve the goal of integrated ruling.
- Media and paths: Throughout the realms of economics, culture, society and politics, hegemony provides its influence on society. In other words, hegemony scatters its ideology over the path of education and the mass media.
- Function: By using *legal* means to reach the consensus of organisation, the dominant class justifies its legal role to rule its citizens. The execution of hegemony may prompt the operating efficiency of organisation. However, it also has negative effects on the total development of the individual.

Hegemony expresses the character of both aggressive and passive natures. Human beings play a critical role in the quality of hegemonic execution. It is understood that a better understanding of hegemony can result in a better quality of schooling.

## THE INFLUENCE OF HEGEMONY ON INDUSTRIAL DESIGN EDUCATION

Harris pointed out that the *state* represents the micro interests of ruling class. It equips the function of scattering the thought of the ruling class and makes it legalised. This thought is recognised as the interests of the entire civic society; it is also deemed as being the only reason and general effectiveness is to be accepted [9].

As the main mechanism of the *state*, school contributes to scattering the ideology that has been legalised and institutionalised (so-called hegemony). That is to say, the main function of the school is to scatter hegemonic thought and the purpose of the school is merely the supplement mechanism of hegemony. Therefore, both students and teachers are greatly influenced by cultural hegemony. This is due largely to their being given the obligation and responsibility to scatter the ideology by the ruling class.

One approach in analysing how hegemony functions in the school curriculum would be to investigate the following four separate, although interrelated, aspects of the schooling process:

- The selection of a culture that is deemed as socially legitimate.
- Categories that are used to classify certain cultural content and forms are seen as superior or inferior.
- The selection and legitimisation of school and classroom relationships.
- The distribution of and access to different types of culture and knowledge by different social class [2].

Schools, in the words of British sociologists of the curriculum, do not only *process people*, they *process knowledge* as well. They act as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony, in Williams' words, as agents of selective tradition and cultural *incorporation*. However, they help create people (with the appropriate meanings and values) who see no other serious possibility to the economic and cultural assemblage now extant [10]. This definition of schools may be too extreme. However, having said that, it indicates the dramatic influence of hegemony on any educational system.

The former British Minister of Education, Mr Kenneth Baker, mentioned that, under schooling in a capitalist system, the main factors to improve the quality of education in greater London relied mainly on choice and diversification [11]. Presumably, Baker is against the idea of hegemony as the meaning of hegemony stands in opposition to the elements of choice and diversification.

In this manner, curriculum differentiation based on *intelligence* lends itself in creating cultural homogeneity and thereby stability within American society [10]. The voices from less privileged groups often have been ignored. Namely, we may unconsciously recognise that the first school day is the day that the children come from less privileged groups to say goodbye to their own cultures.

## The Design Educator's Influence

In view of the issue of the design side, a design educator of college tends to dominate the process of schooling. The values, beliefs, and ideology of individual educators are crucial in affecting the development of curricular design, as well as the teaching strategy.

The selection of values, culture and the philosophy of design have a dramatic impact on the trends of design education. For example, a teacher who is a believer of modernism may not be able to appreciate the works of post-modernism by others such as his/her own students. This creates an artificial barrier in evaluating the performance of learning. On the other hand, a design teacher without a certain belief would not be able to execute design hegemony in order to prompt the learning of students. Therefore, the proper practice of hegemony in the educational ecology is necessary.

Figure 2 illustrates the results from students of a design school who are influenced by a strong ideology and cultural hegemony [12]. Under the strong design philosophy and belief, the designers created the same idea using the different design information in machine and vehicle design projects, in terms of usage, styling and philosophy (form follows function). Obviously, the differentiation between the works of individual students has been modified slightly. On the other hand, these strong ideologies and cultural hegemony may lead to a solid thought, which can then clearly identify the design philosophy of the department in comparison with others.

Moreover, computing technology scatters its influence on industrial design education. It has become not only a type of ideology, but also hegemony already. Under the manipulation of computing technology, the tutor and students in industrial design education form a new dependent relationship and the stability of the tutor's foundation is no longer based on classic authority. Instead, it is controlled by an instrumental ideology. For example, the tutor who masters in computer has more influence on students than that of design philosophy, although design philosophy should have a deeper influence on students than computers.

## CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

In order to address how the dominant groups in the process of industrial design education convey the hegemonic factors, both the curriculum and teaching of industrial design have to be examined. These are discussed in more detail below.

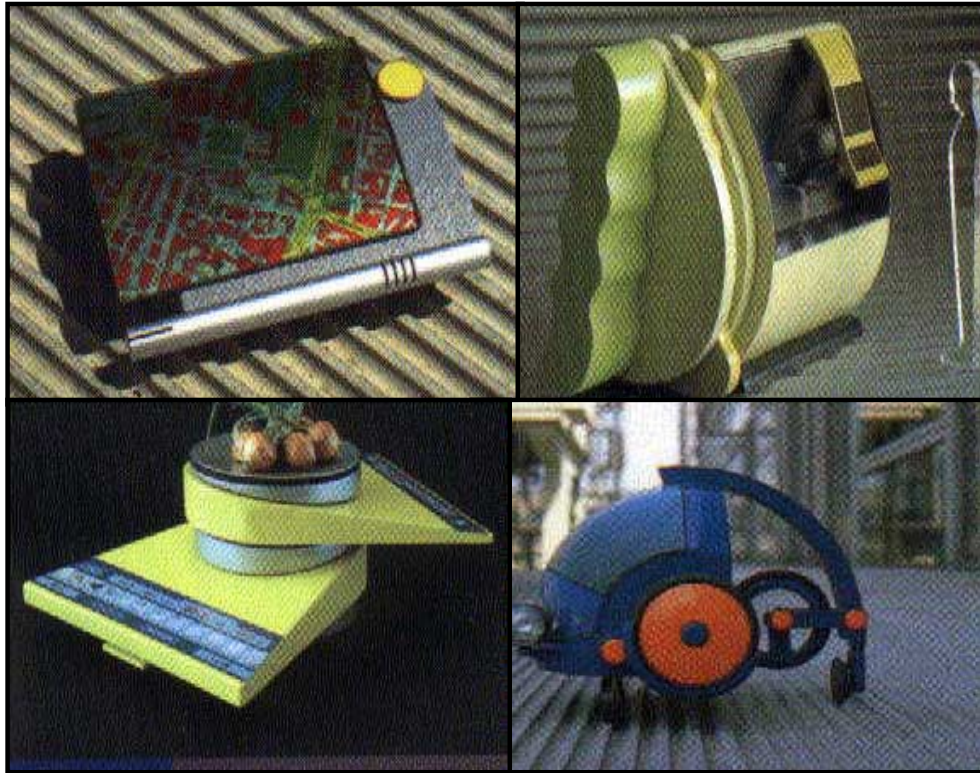


Figure 2: Design philosophy or design hegemony? [12].

### Curriculum

The curriculum of industrial design is defined as planned and unplanned learning experiences. This is significantly different from those associated with other subjects, such as mathematics or physics. The following factors explain the influence of hegemony on industrial design education:

- The profession, values, interests, beliefs and ideology of the design educator dominates the selection of contents and the processes of curricular design.
- The selected-reference of the curriculum may be influenced by the educator subjectively. The variant factors include gender, the educational background of the individual educator, working experience and goals of the curriculum.
- Influence from outside force, such as technological ideology or preference, may have a significant impact on the industrial design course.
- The hidden curriculum is often encountered in the arts and design fields. The location, sphere, architecture, verbal presentation and style of individual teachers will greatly influence the students.

### Instruction

Several factors need to be taken into account in the teaching field, namely:

- The individual interest of educator may be presented during the interaction of teaching, especially, in the ideology of aesthetics and design schools.
- The influence of implicit teaching (subconscious), such as the class and disposition, has to be taken into consideration in the education.

### CONCLUSIONS

In view of what has been discussed in this paper, the following important conclusions can be identified:

- Similar to the administration of a state, the execution of hegemony in the schooling throughout curriculum and teaching is necessary. Especially, the communication of concepts, ideologies, and thoughts are essential in the mechanism of industrial design education.
- Hegemony can be viewed as a tool. To some extent, how it is used can result in significantly different consequences. Therefore, improving individual teacher awareness of industrial design education on the issue of hegemony is crucial.
- Hegemony also represents a belief or an open-minded ideal on teaching the topic. It is also a proper attitude in applying the concept into design education.
- A new term can be created, *design hegemony*, which can be interpreted as meaning design



*domination, leadership or ascendancy.* A good understanding and proper attitude towards these concepts is important in improving the quality of design education.

- Without hegemony, a state cannot be administered; without design hegemony (so-called domination, ascendancy or leadership), a design education cannot be executed effectively.

The authors of this paper would like to define the hegemony as a common guideline, value and belief. It facilitates the effective practice of administration. Design hegemony has to be executed in design education and properly executed by the dominant class. In order to succeed in the execution of design hegemony, a better understanding is necessary. Eventually, a proper industrial design education can then be achieved by carrying out the concepts that have been mentioned.

Much like Hegel, then, long before Gramsci, who helped to effect the decisive shift in political theory from the problem of ideology to the question of hegemony, this paper discloses the automatic nature of hegemony, which is different from ideology [11].

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## BIOGRAPHIES



Wen-Jun Cheng received his MA degree in Industrial Design from the University of Central England in Birmingham, UK, in 1992. He received his PhD degree in Industrial Education from the National Changhua University of Education in Changhua, Taiwan, in 2001.

Having majors in both design and education, his current research interests include the influence of ideology and hegemony on the arts and design education in Taiwan. He is also interested in design practice related to the fields of living goods and information products.



Hsi-Chi Hsiao received his PhD degree from the State University of Indiana in Indiana in the USA. From 1992 to 1999, he was the Chairman of the School of Industrial Technology at the National Changhua University of Education, based in Changhua, Taiwan.

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