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The 'Skills Gap' in Animation/VFX industry in Scotland

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY

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Intro & Data gathering – via interviews

This presentation outlines the perceptions of professionals from the animation/vfx industry in Scotland regarding the teaching of animation in Further and Higher Education. With the concept of a possible 'Skills Gap' explored through questions posed to eighteen participants in in-depth qualitative interviews.

[Interviews conducted from November 2018 – May 2019]

Skills Gap / Knowledge Gap

Overall, the interview data shows industry wants students with **multidisciplinary skills** who are **creative, technical, and team players** in many different roles. Indicating it is necessary to not only focus on skills and aptitudes in students, but also in **tutors and lecturers**, and on the opportunities offered in industry for student experience.

72.2% of participants indicated there is more of a **knowledge gap** instead of a skills gap. Inform students about the different roles within the animation sector: illustrating the huge amount of disciplines within animation; layout artists, concept art, 3D artists, riggers and FX artists.

Knowledge Gap - Industry

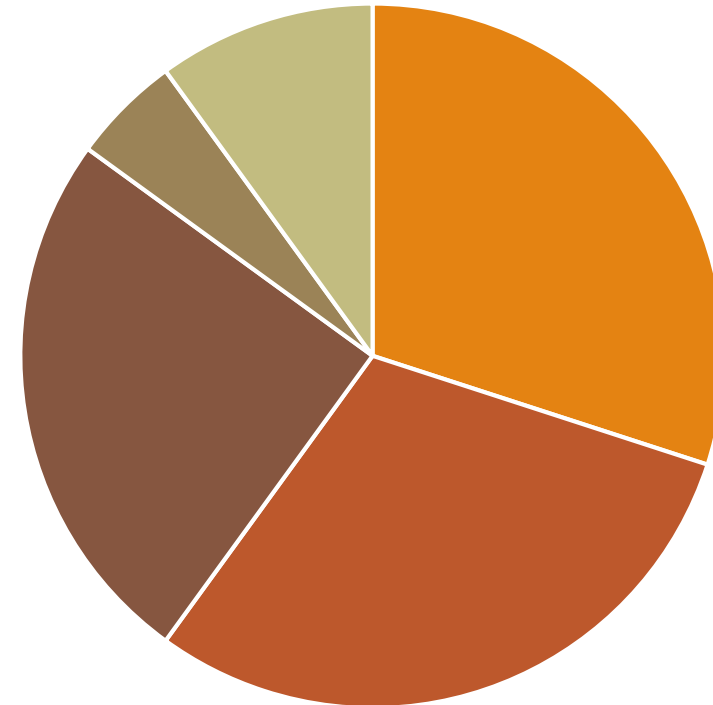
Informing students of industry demand on posts.

Concerns raised for students training themselves up to a job, due to a lack of information and guidance on available roles. Students need to know of the challenges and limitations of work that some positions may cause.

Inform to better enable animation students to make a informed choice when choosing their specialism.

[Primary & Secondary skills]

Example: Industry demand within 3D production



*Asset creation 30%, Animation 30%, Lighting artist 25%, Character design & concept art 5% and Production coordination 10%

Industry's recommendations - curriculum

The following are points raised by animation professionals who would like to see the following points brought into the curriculum of how animation is taught;-

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Production pipeline | 5. Addressing production / studio conventions |
| 2. Animation production | 6. Animation production coordination |
| 3. Proper naming conventions for files | 7. Interview advice |
| 4. The soft skills of work practice | 8. Portfolio and show-reel guidance |

44.4% of participants indicated their concern that students and graduates are not being properly informed or taught about how to construct a portfolio or/and show-reel in order to engage with industry.

Skills / Knowledge gap - Table

| 1, Art focus | 2, Production focus | 3, Tutors/Lecturers |
|---|---|---|
| <p><u>33.3%</u></p> <p>of participants stressed the importance of a fundamental skills base in how animation is taught. Fundamental skills being defined as; - -----</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life drawing • Traditional Art • Developing stronger draftmanship • Getting into the mind-set of the character • Storyboarding skills • Develop a core skill as well as identifying their secondary skill/s • A dedicated 2D animator or 2D specialist in every institution • More feedback - constructive and helpful advice • Continuously developing a portfolio | <p><u>11.1%</u></p> <p>acknowledge that education is a challenging environment in terms of funding and priorities for education in this country. If there was a stronger industry there would be different types of courses to feed that industry.</p> | <p><u>27.8%</u></p> <p>indicated concerns that Universities and Colleges do not hire animation professionals to delivery classes/modules, even on a part time or one day a week basis. With many saying that they have never been approached to deliver modules to a local institution.</p> |
| | <p>A need for developing future leaders of the sector to drive and grow the sector. With the focus to producing more young people with a creative confidence and vision. With an empathise on Writers, Directors, Producers & Production Coordination for the animation/VFX sector. With leadership skills, and the ability to inspire and lead a crew.</p> | <p>The majority of participates cited certain course leaders who make great efforts to provide for their students, but it would appear that there is a much larger problem with the education system and funding.</p> <p>Concerns over some lecturers with no experience or interest in the animation/VFX sector.</p> |

Conclusion - time to collaborate

This presents us with a unique opportunity for further discussion about Skills & Knowledge required for the Animation/VFX sector, and how this applies not only to Scotland but to the different regions of the British Isles.

For the animation/VFX industry to grow and develop further, there needs to be a collaboration with education. With industry concerns about recruiting domestically. We need to challenge current curriculums and educational models for animation/VFX, in order to respond to the requirements of a dynamic industry.

Areas for development

1. Wider discussions between educators and industry professionals in Scotland, examining these findings and to discuss possible solutions. Perhaps with a focus on FE and HE first, and later on secondary education.
2. Further discussions between national & international academics, for comparable study and to investigate possible solutions. For example to consider a unified approach to training.
3. Investigate tutor/lecturer training (CPD) opportunities within the Animation/VFX industry in Scotland. For example to ask industry who would be willing to take on academic training courses, or to research animation lecturers' views on the challenges and issues they face.
4. Investigate means for better informing the education sector & students of the necessary skills and demands of the animation/VFX sector. For example, studio focused training opportunities for students, lecturers and teachers.
5. The social & financial aspect of animation/VFX training outside of FE & HE.

And if we do nothing?

In previous work I have written: *“Animation/VFX studios in Scotland are eager and willing to further develop the animation/vfx sector in Scotland. If this chance to engage with an enthusiastic industry, is not seized, it would truly be a catastrophic missed opportunity, and a far greater loss than any that has come before.”*

Students may start to disengage with FE/HE and turn to online training or even go abroad.

Industry’s impression of education in Scotland may deteriorate further to a point that it is extremely hard to recover from.

Industry has started, and may well continue to recruit from France, Spain and elsewhere.

And this is before we even consider the impact of Brexit

Mortimer, J. (2018), ‘How universities can better engage with the animation/VFX sector in Scotland’, *Animation Practice, Process & Production* 7, pp. 161–77, doi: 10.1386/ap3.7.161_1

Thank you

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