Designing Learning: An Intervention in General Education

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This thesis documents the investigation of design learning as a model to support the overall wellbeing and educational development of learners, thus enabling them to develop as confident, capable and autonomous individuals, with the ability to actively engage and participate within society. Drawing on a review of the literature, the research aims to extend existing arguments for design in general education, specifically within the context of ongoing curriculum reform in Irish second-level education. Adopting a designerly approach, the research actively explores the potential of design learning as a model for teaching and learning in the 21st century by embracing the implicit value in out-of-school experiences and extending the learning beyond the four walls of the school. Positioning the design workshop as an explicit intervention, the research investigates the potential for leverage on school learning. Over the course of the research, a design workshop was developed and actively explored across various settings, both within and beyond school, over six iterative cycles. Hedge School Dublin, the primary instance of the workshop, brought together the findings from the first five workshops, and was positioned deliberately in an out-of-school context, in an environment designed and tailored to support the design learning experience. The findings across the research suggest that the deliberate implementation of the design workshop in an out-of-school setting, has potential as an approach to support the development of the student and their ability to act as active citizens in a constantly changing world. Overall, the research has shown that, by engaging participants in design learning beyond the confines of the curriculum, students can be supported in taking ownership of their learning, in developing the ability to think for themselves, and in becoming confident, capable and autonomous individuals. By adopting a designerly approach within the research, an emphasis was placed on moving beyond rhetoric, to offer potential solutions with the active exploration of a design workshop in out-of-school settings. The research demonstrates the potential of a designerly approach to educational research, which focuses on trying things out in real-world

settings, embraces the potential to learn from mistakes, and moves through an iterative process to develop practice through to implementation.