

Education in SA's design and creative industries mirrors the world's best

 By [Harry Kalmer](#)

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I recently travelled to Denmark where I was invited by the Brecht House Foundation. I also travelled to Copenhagen to study the Danish approach to preparing students for a career in the creative industries.



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In a country that is as famous for design (just think of all the Arne Jacobsen chairs in South African homes, restaurants and advertising agencies) as it is for Carlsberg Beer, an emphasis on the training of designers is to be expected. One only has to visit the Danish Museum of Design and Art in Copenhagen and spend some time in Danish Homes to realise that in Denmark, design is a way of life. However, when it comes to the applied creativity educational offering – the available courses go far beyond design.

I was surprised to learn that many of the disciplines most South African students only encounter after leaving school are taught at high school level in Denmark. Should they wish, high school learners can explore options like animation, digital design, packaging, TV production and print production. These skills are rarely taught at secondary level in South Africa.

A selection of marketing and advertising specialisations

All subjects are taught in a hands-on fashion using approaches that prepare the learner for a flying start in the tertiary educational or even workspace.

This specialisation continues at tertiary level with institutions like the Danish School of Media and Journalism, the Copenhagen School of Design and Technology and the Copenhagen School of Business all offering a selection of marketing and advertising specialisations.

At tertiary level, a strong focus is placed on skills acquisition and creative disciplines such as Brand Creation, Communications Theory, Creative Thinking and soft skills such as teamwork.

In modules like multi-media design and E-Concept Development course material is developed in close relationship with business and industry to ensure that students gain insight into real-life situations and the needs of the creative industries they will enter once their studies are complete.

At the end of a course, a student is also required to complete an internship. Only then are they considered to be ready for the job market. Employers want creative individuals that are able to create and design campaigns that emotionally connect to their audience in a way that is both elegant and convincing.

SA is getting it right

In a world where ad-blocking is growing exponentially, where 90% of TV viewers skip ads whenever they can, and an over-populated digital space, this is the type of creativity that delivers results.

But after getting used to the abundance of resources and the high level of technology, I realised that in SA we're actually getting it right in terms of preparing students to enter the agency world, armed and work ready!

Like our Danish counterparts, we appreciate the importance of interaction with our industry and importance of work-based learning. Like them, we also focus on "big ideas" and consumer insights. Our approach to education is very much in line with the, dare I say it, best in class Danish methodologies and philosophy.

ABOUT HARRY KALMER

Harry Kalmer is the Faculty Head of Creative Brand Communication at the AAA School of Advertising Johannesburg Campus. In 2018 Harry was named the recipient of the Barry Ronge Fiction Prize for his book, *A Thousand Tales of Johannesburg*.

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