

Re-Thinking Design/Build Curriculum in a Virtual World

Authors : Bruce Wrightsman

Abstract : Traditionally, in architectural education, we develop studio projects with learning agendas that try to minimize conflict and reveal clear design objectives. Knowledge is gleaned only tacitly through confronting the reciprocity of site and form, space and light, structure and envelope. This institutional reality can limit student learning to the latent learning opportunities they will have to confront later in practice. One intent of academic design-build projects is to address the learning opportunities which one can discover in the messy grey areas of design. In this immersive experience, students confront the limitations of classroom learning and are exposed to challenges that demand collaborative practice. As a result, design-build has been widely adopted in an attempt to address perceived deficiencies in design education vis a vis the integration of building technology and construction. Hands-on learning is not a new topic, as espoused by John Dewey, who posits a debate between static and active learning in his book Democracy and Education. Dewey espouses the concept that individuals should become participants and not mere observers of what happens around them. Advocates of academic design-build programs suggest a direct link between Dewey's speculation. These experiences provide irreplaceable life lessons: that real-world decisions have real-life consequences. The goal of the paper is not to confirm or refute the legitimacy and efficacy of online virtual learning. Rather, the paper aims to foster a deeper, honest discourse on the meaning of 'making' in architectural education and present projects that confronted the burdens of a global pandemic and developed unique teaching strategies that challenged design thinking as an observational and constructive effort to expand design student's making skills and foster student agency.

Keywords : design/build, making, remote teaching, architectural curriculum

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