

Promoting Class Cooperation-Competition (Coo-Petition) and Empowerment to Graduating Architecture Students through a Holistic Planning Approach in Their Thesis Proposals

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Abstract : Mentoring architecture thesis students is a very critical and exhausting task for both the adviser and advisee. It poses the challenges of resource and time management for the candidate while the best professional guidance from the mentor. The University of Santo Tomas (Manila, Philippines) is Asia's oldest university. Among its notable program is its Architecture curriculum. Presently, the five-year Architecture program requires ten semesters of academic coursework. The last three semesters are relevant to each Architecture graduating student's thesis proposal and defense. The thesis proposal is developed and submitted for approval in the subject Research Methods for Architecture (RMA). Data gathering and initial schemes are conducted in Architectural Design (AD), 9, and are finalized and defended in AD 10. In recent years, their graduating students have maintained an average of 300 candidates before the pandemic. They are encouraged to explore any topic of interest or relevance. Since 2019-2020, one thesis class has used a community planning approach in mentoring the class. Compared to other sections, the first meeting of RMA has been allocated for a visioning exercise and assessment of the class's strengths-weaknesses and opportunities-threats (SWOT). Here, the work activities of the group have been finetuned to address some identified concerns while still being aligned with the academic calendar. Occasional peer critics complement class lectures. The course will end with the approval of the student's proposal. The final year or last two semesters of the graduating class will be focused on the approved proposal. Compared to the other class, the 18 weeks of the first semester consist of regular consultations, complemented by lectures from the adviser or guest speakers. Through remote peer consultations, the mentor maximized each meeting in groups of three to five, encouraging constructive criticism among the class. At the end of the first semester, mock presentations to the external jury are conducted to check the design outputs for improvement. The final semester is spent more on the finalization of the plans. Feedback from the previous semester is expected to be integrated into the final outputs. Before the final deliberations, at least two technical rehearsals were conducted per group. Regardless of the outcome, an assessment of each student's performance is held as a class. Personal realizations and observations are encouraged. Through Online surveys, Interviews, and Focused Group Discussions with the former students, the effectiveness of the mentoring strategies was reviewed and evaluated. Initial feedback highlighted the relevance of setting a positive tone for the course, constructive criticisms from peers & experts, and consciousness of deadlines as essential elements for a practical semester.

Keywords : cooperation, competition, student empowerment, class vision

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