

## An Investigation into the Use of an Atomistic, Hermeneutic, Holistic Approach in Education Relating to the Architectural Design Process

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**Abstract :** Within architectural education, students arrive fore-armed with; their life-experience; knowledge gained from subject-based learning; their brains and more specifically their imaginations. The learning-by-doing that they embark on in studio-based/project-based learning calls for supervision that allows the student to proactively undertake research and experimentation with design solution possibilities. The degree to which this supervision includes direction is subject to debate and differing opinion. It can be argued that if the student is to learn-by-doing, then design decision making within the design process needs to be instigated and owned by the student so that they have the ability to personally reflect on and evaluate those decisions. Within this premise lies the problem that the student's endeavours can become unstructured and unfocused as they work their way into a new and complex activity. A resultant weakness can be that the design activity is compartmented and not holistic or comprehensive, and therefore, the student's reflections are consequently impoverished in terms of providing a positive, informative feedback loop. The construct proffered in this paper is that a supportive 'armature' or 'Heuristic-Framework' can be developed that facilitates a holistic approach and reflective learning. The normal explorations of architectural design comprise: Analysing the site and context, reviewing building precedents, assimilating the briefing information. However, the student can still be compromised by 'not knowing what they need to know'. The long-serving triad 'Firmness, Commodity and Delight' provides a broad-brush framework of considerations to explore and integrate into good design. If this were further atomised in subdivision formed from the disparate aspects of architectural design that need to be considered within the design process, then the student could sieve through the facts more methodically and reflectively in terms of considering their interrelationship conflict and alliances. The words facts and sieve hold the acronym of the aspects that form the Heuristic-Framework: Function, Aesthetics, Context, Tectonics, Spatial, Servicing, Infrastructure, Environmental, Value and Ecological issues. The Heuristic could be used as a Hermeneutic Model with each aspect of design being focused on and considered in abstraction and then considered in its relation to other aspect and the design proposal as a whole. Importantly, the heuristic could be used as a method for gathering information and enhancing the design brief. The more poetic, mysterious, intuitive, unconscious processes should still be able to occur for the student. The Heuristic-Framework should not be seen as comprehensive prescriptive formulaic or inhibiting to the wide exploration of possibilities and solutions within the architectural design process.

**Keywords :** atomistic, hermeneutic, holistic, approach architectural design studio education

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