SESSION 8-3 Studio Focused Learning

The Challenge of Teaching a Studio Course to Eighty plus First Year Planning Students

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Amid widespread recognition of the need to improve the student experience especially in the first year (Pitkethly and Prosser, 2001), built environment and planning educators are challenged with increasing pressure on their time and resources for teaching. Studio based education, in which students apply ideas to a real site to solve real life problems, has been considered as key to a well-rounded student-centred education in the built environment and planning professions. At the same time, traditional studio-based courses require a high degree of tutor time and attention for each student, which is increasingly impractical given resource constraints and increased class sizes (Tippett, et al., 2011). Drawing on research exploring the growing challenges towards studio teaching (Long, 2012), and in order to maximise the merits of the learning-by doing approach a core first year design-based studio course in Griffith University, Australia has been re-designed through a step-by-step outcome-oriented process.

This paper reports the ongoing attempts including the steps already taken through the re-design process over the last two years, and speculates the future steps that need to be taken to better integrate the studio course with the new technology-based online tools. Key elements of the redesign up to now include: use of unfolding process-oriented analysis-centred design exercise for critical thinking and synthesis of ideas within and across groups; extensive mapping and layered spatial analysis; simulating simplified aspects of community consultation, without directly contacting the community; effective use of regular student-led in-class presentations in giving feedfore to students; and including an individual reflective learning journal (in-class diary) as part of the assessment for learning approach. The success of the new design is evaluated through a number of channels including assessment of student graduate outcome, student satisfaction and retention rate. At each stage of the redesign process, the evaluation results outline the future steps. The latest round of evaluation, for example, has illuminated the need for further development of the reflective journal assessment task as an online diary to monitor students’ progress outside studio sessions and enhance student time-on-task. The innovations trialled in this studio course enable an interactive studio experience with a high degree of feedback resulting in outstanding learning outcome to be created for large classes.

References:

