



FLUX: Design Education in a Changing World

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Designing “In Person” – Locally or Globally

Abstract

Problem

Professional undergraduate degree programs in built environment disciplines prepare students to become practicing architects, interior and landscape architects, industrial designers, planners and construction managers. However, students are rarely exposed to projects in their coursework or in work experience that challenge them beyond the theoretical, and adequately assist them in developing empathy for the needs of disadvantaged or marginalised groups in our society. Design students generally work on briefs provided by their studio leaders, and within discipline-specific groups of their education programs. As a result, many students are not adequately prepared for the collaborative communication and interpretative skills required to engage with community projects in the “real world.”

Approach

In recent community-based, interdisciplinary design electives, students representing four Built Environment undergraduate programs collaborated to develop concepts for two different projects. The first designed a community facility for people with schizophrenia; the second a residential/education masterplan for Ugandan HIV/AIDS orphans. Both electives were conducted in an action research framework with all key project stakeholders contributing to reflective evaluations of the process throughout the semester. On the first project, the students resided close to the site and met several times with the client groups. For the remote Uganda project, the students relied on third party information and communicated with the project client via a unique interactive web-based software program.

Conclusion

This paper reflects on the differences and similarities in the learning processes and outcomes that resulted from these two learning environments. The qualitative feedback from these ‘situated learning’ experiences reveals a significant potential for interdisciplinary design studios to provide integrative and personally transformative learning experiences for students and community members. The evaluations confirm that students recognise the need to collaborate productively with one another, to value insights gained from working with colleagues from other disciplines, and to innovatively engage with community networks.

Contribution

The role of the teacher in these learning situations becomes one of “communications navigator” and co-learner, rather than the transmitter of knowledge and expertise. In the project that used a web-based communications system, this was also found to be the case. The design outcomes of the studios demonstrate the possibilities for institutions of higher education to productively interact with local communities and creatively address serious social issues while transforming individual lives, within multiple contexts.

Key Words: *built environment, interdisciplinary, collaborative learning, service learning, social and cultural contexts.*

Subtheme: Community

Introduction

Built environments of the 21st century must respond to rapidly changing social landscapes. Their realisation will require the expertise of professionals with solid disciplinary skills in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, building construction and engineering, who also have the capacity and resilience to work in this state of flux. Many of our graduates will work on large-scale

projects that address the increasing complexity of global challenges, particularly in urban environments.

Pre-professional design programs must introduce students to working in interdisciplinary modes where they blur the boundaries of their disciplines and engage with projects that challenge their world views. The design studio is an ideal setting for this as students collaborate on projects with colleagues from other disciplines and gain multiple perspectives on issues that impact their projects. When an interdisciplinary design studio also has a service learning focus, students must engage with complex physical, social and economic scenarios (Cumberlidge and Musgrave, 2007:6).

The pedagogy of service learning has grown in prominence over the past 15-20 years. It is increasingly considered an educational approach that can re-position universities as vital, active leaders in integrating knowledge, scholarship and community citizenship for public benefit (Subotzky 1999). Service learning and the notion of “engaged scholarship” emanate from Ernest Boyer’s Scholarship of Application, while interdisciplinary learning and teaching relates to his Scholarship of Integration. In ‘application’ Boyer proposed that academic expertise, disciplinary knowledge and professional practice could be applied with rigour and accountability to social problems of importance to communities. He was interested in how ‘new intellectual understandings can arise out of the very act of application [where] theory and practice vitally interact and renews the other’ (Boyer 1990, p.21).

Service learning (SL) has been formalized at numerous American universities within the mainstream of learning experiences to advance and enhance the scholarship of application. This approach has the potential to catalyse the relationship between knowledge production, student learning, and social consciousness with action for the public good. Recognising its significance, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has introduced a “community engagement elective classification” whereby institutions of higher education can publicly project their commitment to SL.

Definitions of SL have emerged that provide a framework for program and course development that link community engagement with deep student learning. Such definitions of SL include Bringle and Hatcher’s:

a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (1996:222).

Central to the concept of service learning are four key components:

- the community identifies and defines the need, issue or agenda to be addressed
- community members are active participants and partners in the activities with the students, academic staff and institution
- SL is intentionally integrated into the curriculum of degree programs
- Students are co-learners with their teachers in “discovery-based learning experiences” (Subotzky 1999) engendering a link between research, learning and teaching.

Interdisciplinary learning draws on Boyer’s scholarship of integration and has been found to generate vibrant intellectual inquiry and citizenship (Sill 1996, Barnett 2000, Lattuca 2002, Frost and Jean 2003). In this domain, the community – combining academics, students and external groups – accepts the challenge of risk, creativity and encountering the unknown in constituting new knowledge and shared understanding for social action by moving beyond disciplinary boundaries to interact with other disciplines and their practices in context.

In interdisciplinary learning and teaching, students and teachers work together as a team. Integration is initiated at the planning stage and everyone must be predisposed to the necessary collaborative interactions, ie.

...they must loosen the boundaries, break the rules, dare to venture onto another's turf, and become welcoming tour guides for their own turf... Team members must be willing to suspend any sense of superiority of their own discipline's principles, methods, goals and subject matter even though that sense is so often validated by one's immediate colleagues and one's own experience (Wentworth and Davis 2002:24).

Ultimately, the real benefit of the interdisciplinary approach, as Wentworth and Davis comment, is developing...

...the habit of seeing issues of topics from multiple perspectives...This habit...doesn't mean students or teachers will "know" the fullness of a topic, but it means they will move toward it knowing they don't and probably can't know everything about a topic. Through this process students discover the need for further learning, and they develop respect for different views (2002:17).

Approach

With some 2000 students, the University of New South Wales' (UNSW) [r1] Faculty of the Built Environment (FBE), is one of the largest and most diverse faculties of its kind, offering six professional degree programs in architecture, interior architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design, planning and urban development and building construction project management. FBE has traditionally had strong links with professional practice and has maintained strong relationships with various communities within the Sydney metropolitan region and throughout the state of New South Wales.

In response to students' desires for exposure to community-based projects, FBEOutThere! (FBEOT) was created in 2005 to consolidate the Faculty's involvement with community engagement activities. Committed to the principles of service learning and the scholarship of engagement, FBEOT offers SL elective courses in cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary modes. Electives offered through FBEOT attract undergraduate students keen to gain a deep understanding of social issues related to a specific locale and expand their understanding of social responsibility and ethical practice relevant to their discipline. They work with a real client, on a real site, to conceptualise a built environment response.

Two recent examples of FBEOT electives are the Wollongong Clubhouse Project and the Agape/Uganda School project. The following section briefly describes these two courses and the findings of the participatory action research project that investigated participants' perceptions toward interdisciplinary, service learning experiences.

Project descriptions

The Wollongong Clubhouse Project

The Wollongong Clubhouse Project involved 18 FBE students representing four undergraduate programs: Architecture, Interior Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Planning and Urban Development. The elective was taught by an architect and part-time lecturer, in a design studio format with weekly four-hour class meetings. An interdisciplinary approach was adopted from the outset with the course outline and program prepared in consultation by the two authors, representing the disciplines of Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

Numerous stakeholders were involved in the project's inception and implementation. The external partner for the project was the City of Wollongong, represented by an individual who played the role of the "project champion". The Clubhouse project emanated from a personal project of the Lord Mayor's addressing the serious local issue of mental health and young adults. FBE was approached with the proposition that our students be involved in designing the new facility.

Known as the Clubhouse Project, the new community facility will be associated with a global network of programs and facilities that create opportunities for people living with mental illness to become

contributing and productive citizens. The Clubhouse program presents a model of integrating such people into the community. The City of Wollongong wanted to create a purpose-built centre, and invited FBE's involvement.

The Agape Project

The second FBEOT elective involved another interdisciplinary service learning studio; this one taught in a blended learning format with weekly four-hour class meetings, supplemented by an online learning and teaching platform. Co-taught by the authors, this course attracted 24 undergraduate FBE students from Architecture, Landscape and Industrial Design. Their project was to consider planning and design possibilities for a school and accommodation for Ugandan children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.

The students, the project site, and the project champion were located on three different continents, across various time zones. To facilitate successful communication and collaboration between the various parties, and to overcome the remote nature of the site and project, FBEOT used Omnium™ [www.omnium.net.au], a unique web-based software program to host its online classroom. The *Omnium Research Group* at UNSW's College of Fine Arts, has been researching practices of online creativity and collaboration since 1999 and developed software that has been specifically designed and tested to meet the unique requirements of collaborative design practice, and that integrates social interaction into the learning and teaching process. (McArthur, McIntyre, Watson. 2007)

Child and World Agape Outreach (CWAO), a non-denominational non-government organisation (NGO), was the client and the 'project champion' is, an Australian woman who has taken this on as a personal project. CWAO provides primary, secondary and tertiary education to over 500 children located in various education facilities throughout the Kampala region. CWAO has ownership of some 55 acres (22.26ha) of land and their dream is to build the Agape Education Centre which would include accommodation for students and teachers on this land. Another stakeholder in the project is ARUP, an internationally renowned engineering firm which has a strong commitment to social issues and gets involved in the implementation of projects such as this.

This studio elective was the third iteration of planning and design for the Agape project. A two-day workshop with practitioners and students initiated the planning in May 2006. This was followed by a two-week intensive studio in July 2006. This paper focuses on the studio that was conducted in the first half of 2007. The course content acknowledged the work previously generated, but encouraged students to focus on 'systems thinking' and comprehensively investigate the social, political and community issues associated with such a project.

Discussion

The similarities and differences in learning processes

The two projects shared many similarities. Both dealt with real projects, which had real sites, clients, stakeholders and consumers. They were run as interdisciplinary studios where students worked in groups and where both the teaching staff and students involved represented a combination of undergraduate programs including Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Interior Architecture, Industrial Design and Planning and Urban Development.

Both courses encouraged community engagement and focused on the social, environmental, political and cultural components evident in such projects. In both cases the courses ran over a 14 week semester and included a four-hour weekly face to face session.

Their differences are also of note and particularly important was the proximity of the site and stakeholders to the University. In the Wollongong project the site was an hour's drive and the stakeholders local. Communication and access to the site and client was easy to facilitate and any feedback, presentations and communication was immediate, direct and first hand.

The remoteness of the Agape Project meant that this was not possible. Students had to rely on third party information, in other words people that had visited the site or been involved with the project previously, or individuals that were involved in similar projects in similar locations. This remoteness highlighted the need for a “blended” learning environment, where the face-to-face studio sessions were supported and supplemented by an online learning classroom. This enabled students, staff, guests and stakeholders to communicate and exchange ideas online.

This difference in the projects highlighted two different forms of communication and work practice: the Wollongong Project facilitated direct, or *synchronous communication*, ie where all parties involved in the communication are present at the same time. This was done through meetings, presentations, studio sessions, workshops and site visits.

By contrast, a large portion of the Agape Project was facilitated through *asynchronous communication*, ie two way conversations where there is a time delay between a message being sent, and a reply being received. Asynchronous communication does not require that all parties involved in the communication be present and available at the same time. In the Agape project this was done through the Omnium™ software where students communicated with stakeholders, guests and fellow students in various areas of the online classroom. Areas such as the Message Board, Pin Up Wall, Resources, Image Gallery and Team Discussion and Feedback areas allowed all participants not only to exchange ideas, but also provided a medium to effectively share and consolidate information and resources, facilitate stakeholder feedback, conduct team peer reviews and co ordinate group work.

Conclusions

For both studios, students were invited to participate in an email feedback survey which asked a series of open ended questions to elicit perceptions of their experiences of both the interdisciplinary and service learning aspects of the projects. The conclusions and outcomes were similar for both projects and confirmed the relevance of the educational framework and its learning outcomes. They also reiterated the need for similar courses within Built Environment program curricula:

- The realness of the situation demanded different pressures, skills and commitments from students to those usually experienced in their studio environments.
- it highlighted the need and desire for students to work in interdisciplinary teams with students from other design backgrounds which mimicked the real world, and which provided collaborative and successful outcomes and experiences
- the empathy gained while working on a community and socially engaged project created transformational experiences for the students and taught them valuable research methods, design approaches and communication skills,
- the need to communicate effectively was a strong learning outcome and students enhanced their verbal, written and graphic communication skills. The application of synchronous and/or asynchronous communication in appropriate contexts proved an effective tool for project communication. The languages of other design disciplines were introduced and the listening and interpretive skills required to understand situations and people from different social, culture, political and language backgrounds was highlighted.

The ‘realness’ of the project and ownership thereof

In the feedback surveys 77 % of the students on the Agape Project and 100% of the students on the Wollongong Project confirmed that working on a real project, as opposed to a theoretical studio project, was very important/important. The realness of the situation generated a different sense of ownership, responsibility and duty to the project and hence, greater pressure to perform.

Students emphasized the authenticity of their professional development experiences during the project by:

- working on a “real” project at a real site, i.e. one that would be built.
- dealing with actual clients – either those with schizophrenia, who were referred to as the ‘consumers’ and their carers, or the children orphaned by HIV/AIDS both of whose needs were special and acute.
- the necessity of working together collaboratively in an interdisciplinary team to achieve design outcomes that were achievable.

- graduate attributes where students learnt skills that were transferable to their professional careers.

... having a real site and having a bit of external pressure on the project makes it much more challenging. The real issues in architecture such as cost, complexity of design, detailing begin to arise and are true concerns of ours as students, once again mimicking the real world - Student, Agape Elective

In qualitative feedback 95% of students indicated they wished to be kept informed of the progress of the project and other similar opportunities to engage with more projects like this. In the Wollongong project, many students continue to initiate email and personal contact with the teacher and faculty regarding the project's development, despite the elective finishing twelve months prior. Several students have voluntarily attended or contributed to subsequent events, functions, public presentations and professional publications related to the project.

Although at the time of writing the Agape elective had just finished, and opportunities for informal contact have not yet arisen, 93% of the students expressed an interest in attending a future workshop attended by the project champion. Thus far, three students have participated in all three of the Agape Project components (ie the charette, winter elective and 14 week session), providing important continuity.

Interdisciplinary and collaborative dimensions

Unanimously the students reported that this project delivered a range of significant benefits of interdisciplinary practice, not previously experienced during design studios within their disciplines. These benefits include:

- the value of learning to work as a team in which individual expertise is pooled in the collaborative (as distinct from an individualistic) nature of the design process and in the sharing of knowledge and ideas.
- gaining a holistic understanding of factors likely to be involved in realising "real world" design projects.
- stepping outside the particular conceptual limits of their discipline to explore new concepts and approaches through engagements with other disciplines.
- realistic insights into, and reaching more mature conclusions about their preferred career pathways – and thus preparing these students' graduate attributes.
- co-learning processes – this extended to the stakeholders who reported that they too learnt a great deal about collaborating in a design process

The diversity of students gives you a greater range of expertise, so the work is more complete in a sense. The teamwork also allowed for a lot of cross communication and critical analysis of ideas, and working collaboratively for the best final outcome, compared to a more introspective analysis in a studio. - Student, Wollongong

The benefits and successful outcomes associated with collaboration were not limited to student interaction. Stakeholders also expressed satisfaction and positive insights into the benefits of industry and community collaborating with academia:

Personally I am humbled and grateful for the wonderful support we have received...sometimes a project team comes along that has a profound effect...The involvement with the University was one of the most satisfying involvements I have ever had. We as a Committee [Light and Hope] intend to complete the job and hopefully build a legacy that the students and the lecturers can visit for many years to come...[this is] best summed up by a fellow committee colleague: "working with UNSW, FBE and the Students has proved a stroke of genius – Project Champion, Wollongong

Development of empathy, community engagement

Students in both projects demonstrated an increased empathy and understanding of the complexities and implications of the issues involved with their project. When students of the Agape Project were asked “What top three issues of social and/or community significance have you gained an understanding of while working on the Agape project?”, five emerging themes were:

- understanding different cultures and values other than Western and the need to question our assumptions when designing for these projects (67%)
- understanding of the family structure, orphans, social system in Uganda
- importance of community interaction and development in projects
- health and impact of HIV/AIDS
- the built environment is for *people* not *designers*.

In the Wollongong project, all of the students surveyed affirmed that this project significantly increased their understanding of, and empathy for, a major health issue: analyzing the hitherto unmet design needs of, and gaps in community services and facilities for those with schizophrenia and those who care for them. It also deepened the students’ understanding for the ramification and social impacts of mental health, including the provision of government services and community support.

This course definitely raised awareness of the true nature of a subject that a lot of people are prejudiced about – Student, Wollongong

Two Architecture students elaborated on how the project challenged them to research appropriate design for mental health sufferers, and to explore the healing powers of good buildings and landscapes. They discovered a new context, relevant precedents in Australia, and so this course took them on learning journeys into new territories.

What I learnt from this course was the healing potential that architecture and landscape had. From the readings we were provided and the first research assignment, my perspective of mental illness and architecture shifted dramatically – Student, Wollongong

The positive experience of community engagement and empathy was not limited to the students. When stakeholders in the Wollongong project were asked “What was the one most positive experience for you in participating in this project?”, the response overwhelmingly reflected an increased understanding and appreciation of the qualities and abilities of the students. Stakeholders reflected on the students’ interpretative skills, collaborative qualities and their absence of ego. This highlighted the significance of the empathy and rapport that developed between the students and those with mental illness issues.

I found the whole process quite inspiring: the willingness of the staff and students to engage with consumers and carers; the attitude of the students to the consumers and carers; the way they took up the information that we provided on what the building was to be used for, and didn’t put their own design ideas ahead of the functionality of the building. - Stakeholder, Wollongong

Improved communication skills

In both projects, students responded positively to the question of whether their communication skills had been improved. The acquisition of new communication skills and capabilities was both a strength and a significant outcome for both courses. The types of communication skills and methods learned in the two studios differed, yet were equally valuable.

The nature of the Wollongong project promoted many opportunities for direct contact, feedback and communication with the client, participants and stakeholders, etc. This was manifested through the numerous workshops, site visits, informal and formal presentations, meetings with stakeholders, and studio discussions.

Throughout these interactions, students had to learn a wide variety of verbal and graphic presentation skills. In addition they had to participate in interdisciplinary dialogue and engage with non-academic experts and reinterpret their advice within the context of the design brief.

... both my oral presentational skills and graphical presentational skills benefited. The group work greatly improved my ability to express my ideas and opinions and in turn listen to and appreciate my peers' opinions and ideas. There were also numerous occasions where we were put into the position of talking to a diverse group of clients, professionals and the public, at both an informal and formal level, and learning to explain oneself appropriately for each. My graphical presentation skills also benefited as working in an interdisciplinary environment allows for learning different skills that others can teach that you don't necessarily learn at uni. - Student, Wollongong

This was re-iterated in the reflection statement by the studio leader

It taught, and re-iterated, the value of true communication. It enabled design students to interpret and write a brief in the real sense – taught them how to extrapolate information. They had to listen to what was being said (from a large variety of sources, sometimes conflicting), and then acquire new skills to re-interpret this information into their design-studio format. They also needed to identify which issues had priority or precedence over others, and substantiate why. The students were then required to present their design schemes back to the stakeholders, in a non-academic environment and language, and demonstrate that they had both listened and understood the stakeholders. - Project Navigator, Wollongong

The realness of the project and the importance of each presentation gave students many opportunities to learn to 'think on their feet,' read body language, present to large gatherings and improve their interpersonal skills. This learning process was very synchronous, verbal and first hand.

By contrast, the remoteness of the client, the site and the stakeholders for the Agape Project meant that students could not have this opportunity. Information was largely delivered third hand, requiring students to reinterpret and adapt what they understood to be significant and relevant to their own project. The introduction of the Omnium™ online classroom software facilitated more direct and frequent communication between students and stakeholders, as well as the students themselves. However, the variation in global time zones amongst the stakeholders, as well as the clashing timetable commitments of the interdisciplinary student group, meant that all participants were not able to be online simultaneously and that feedback and communication was not immediate. It was therefore necessary for students to learn and adopt asynchronous communication and work methods in order to successfully collaborate and coordinate their group projects and research.

Omnium was a great tool to communicate amongst team members... It was a great forum and database where great discussion continued outside class. It provided rich discussion and inquiry, not to mention having guests contribute to the class also. Just brilliant!! - Student, Agape

Omnium™ also introduced participants to an additional, contemporary forum for peer feedback which differed from the traditional studio setting that most students were familiar with. The use of blogs, wikis and websites has become a well-recognised practice in the design industry, (McArthur, McIntyre & Watson. 2007) with community engagement groups such as *Architecture for Humanity* launching their new website [www.openarchitecturenetwork.org] recently. Awareness and familiarity with these new online communication forums provides students with skills to engage effectively with socially responsible designers in creative networks.

Contributions

The feedback and conclusions of the two projects reflect a strong desire by students to participate in projects outside of the theoretical studio environment. These provide them not only with a "real life experience," but also with the opportunity to become actively involved with socially-engaged design; to

gain a deeper understanding and empathy towards important broader issues associated with the project; and to collaborate with other design disciplines in doing so.

Projects such as these reflect the new approach generated in community industry practice which ensures the development brief provides a vision and function that can engage and inspire users and stake-holders, rather than relying purely on a design-led approach. (General Public Agency. 2007)

The role of the academic staff becomes one of “navigator” and co-learner, that leads, facilitates and observes students through this process. Project briefing and feedback on student designs are provided by the client or stakeholders and students work towards a collective outcome where individual expertise is pooled into a collaborative design process.

The opportunity for communication and interaction between students and stakeholders first hand or “in person”, undoubtedly extends the learning experience beyond the theoretical and contributes to very real, positive outcomes and opportunities for both. What is significant is that projects no longer need to be local to provide meaningful ‘real’ experiences. With the support of specific online creative technology and asynchronous communication and work practices, students are able to participate ‘in person’ on such projects both locally and around the globe. This blended environment broadens the social engagement experience beyond the parameters of a students’ immediate locale and facilitates interaction with cultures and issues very different to their own.

As a result, UNSW FBE remains committed to the service learning and interdisciplinary approaches to learning and teaching. The experiences gained in teaching these two courses are informing further FBEOutThere! electives in terms of how projects are structured, the mixing of students in their working teams, and the opportunities provided by the updated Omnium™ software.

Note

All quotes from students and stakeholders of the Agape and Wollongong Clubhouse Projects were extracted from the email feedback survey which asked a series of open ended questions to elicit perceptions of their experiences of both the interdisciplinary and service learning aspects of the projects. The surveys have been listed in the Reference Section below.

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FLUX: Design Education in a Changing World

Cape Town, 3-5 October 2007

Designing “in Person” – Locally and Globally

Karin Watson and Assoc Prof Linda Corkery

FBEOutThere! University of New South Wales

FBEOutThere!

- consolidates Faculty of the Built Environment/UNSW community engagement activities
- service-learning and the scholarship of engagement
- real client, real site, authentic learning experience
- interdisciplinary student experience



The “University-Community” Partnership

Two case studies

- Wollongong Light and Hope Clubhouse Project - local
- Agape Uganda School Project - remote



Differences:

Wollongong

- local site, client, stakeholders
- international design standards/brief available

Agape

- remote site, client, stakeholders
- no predefined brief
- preceded by workshop and intensive winter elective

Similarities:

- conducted as 14 week studios,
- interdisciplinary experience (both student and lecturer)
- community engagement: focus on social, environmental, political and cultural
- driven by strong “Project Champion” for stakeholders



WOLLONGONG CLUBHOUSE

Induction Process:

- workshop
- site visit
- Pioneer House
- expand and develop brief



WOLLONGONG CLUBHOUSE

Concepts:

- students worked in mixed discipline teams to present 3 options
- presentation to stakeholders in Council Chambers
- immediate feedback from stakeholders



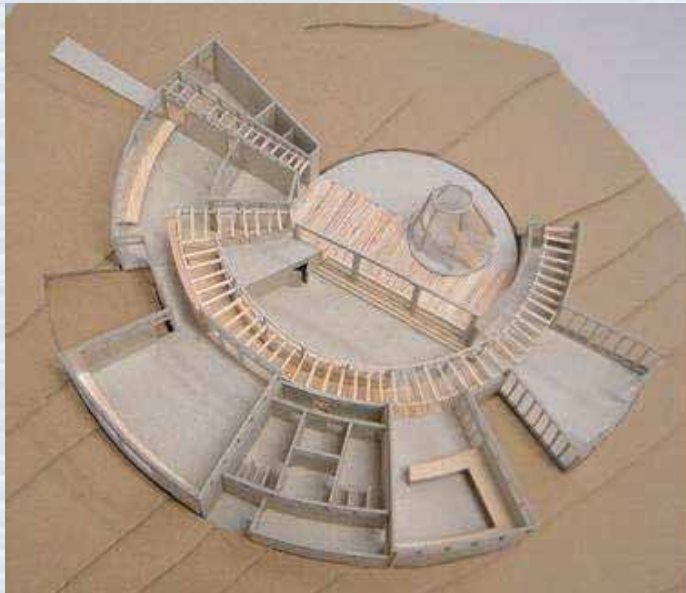
WOLLONGONG CLUBHOUSE

Concept Development:

- students worked in their own discipline groups, on one design concept

Final Presentation

- to all stakeholders
- feedback immediate.



AGAPE UGANDA SCHOOL PROJECT

Induction Process:

- introductory video by Project Champion
- ARUP site photos and site notes
- presentations by people involved in similar projects
- precedent studies outside of their discipline



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UNSW

FBEOutThere!
BENV006 - Agape, Uganda Project
Version 1, 2007

TEACHING STAFF

32768 - 04 Sep 07 1 User online

Welcome

Special guest profile

Teams

Slide

Resources

Teaching Staff

Useful Links

Live Chat

Image Galleries

Message Board

Help

Admins

Logout

Special guest profile

Dave Hyde

My involvement in the Project began a year after my partner Betsy passed away, he was 38 and it was 2001. To ease my grief I decided to embark on a journey. First stop was to Senegal, West Africa where I had spent farm home to be laid to rest. I met his entire family of 14 and without local language formed an amazing bond with them. After one month I decided to continue on my journey traveling landly through Gabon, Nigeria, Kenya and finally ended up in Uganda.

I did some volunteer work for a local Non Government Organisation called "The Child and World Agape Outreach", it's aim is to provide orphans and destitute children with education, unconditional love and hope for the future. The organization is non-denominational, is headed by Agnes Kabakwe and seeks to interact with all churches, religions and bodies who share the same vision for these children.

I saw first hand the enormous plight of these children and was immediately captivated by the vision of a better future that Agnes and DWAO wanted for these children. The DWAO had acquired 60 acres of land and they had a dream to build the AGAPE Education Center and Orphanage on this land.

After 2 months in Uganda I went back to Australia and began the long journey to try and facilitate this dream. With enormous support from friends, Arup Engineering and the UNSW (FBE Out There) this dream is now taking shape.

Once the building design process has been completed, along with a website and business plan, the next stage will be to find sponsorship funds or avenues to start the building construction for The Agape Education Center and Orphanage.

I now live and work in Dubai and travel back to Australia from time to time to meet with the University. Nothing takes away the loss in my life since losing Betsy but this all feels makes some sense for me, that his death will in some small way create life for orphaned and destitute children.

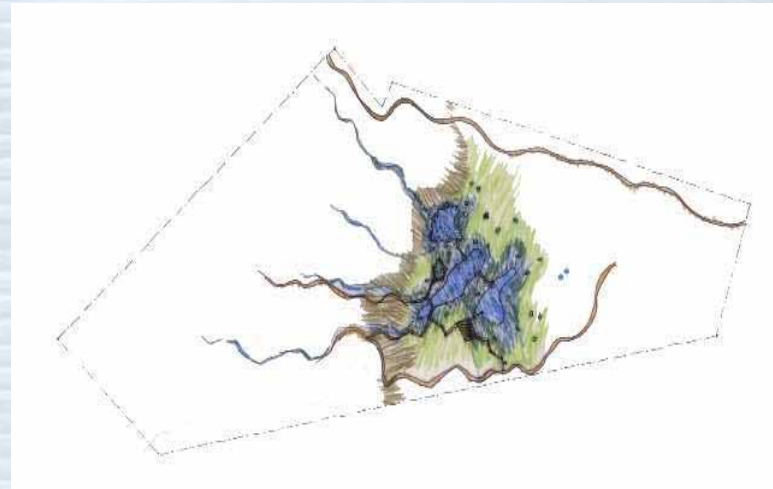
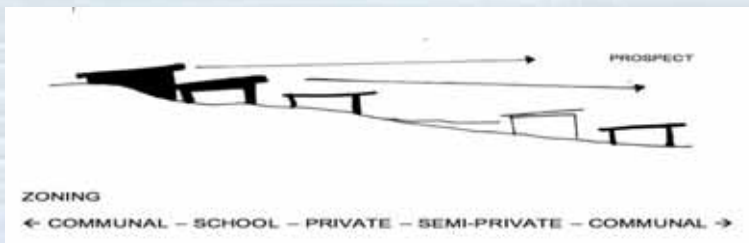
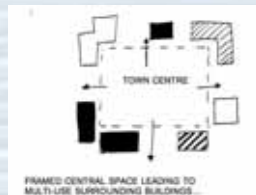
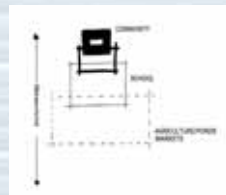
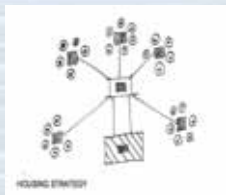
I hope to meet you all soon
Kind Wishes,
Dave

Change password | Edit details

AGAPE UGANDA SCHOOL PROJECT

Concepts:

- self directed briefs, projects and time lines
- systems thinking
- each student worked on a Physical and Social Project
- *Physical*: Masterplan, Water, Landscaping, Permaculture, Statement of Intent
- *Social*: Ugandan studio, Marketing and media, Fundraising and financial sustainability, Powerpoint presentation



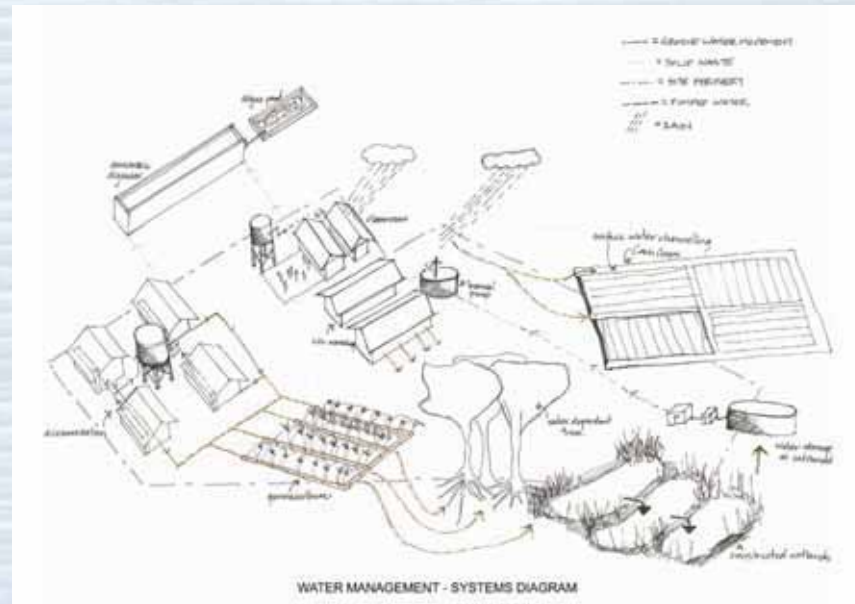
AGAPE UGANDA SCHOOL PROJECT

Concept Development:

- Blended learning environment (face to face and Omnium)
- students worked in mixed discipline groups
- weekly presentations in class to ensure coordination

Final Presentations:

In class, and afterwards to Project Champion



DISCUSSION

Communication: Synchronous versus Asynchronous



The screenshot shows an online discussion forum interface from the University of New South Wales (UNSW). The header includes the university name and a logo for 'FDEOutThere!'. A navigation menu on the left lists various forum sections. The main content area displays a message board with two posts. The first post is from 'Mallika Laha' and the second is from 'Audi Lab Lindorff'. Both posts include user avatars and text discussing a presentation and a project related to 'Ligandase' and 'ADG'.

FEEDBACK

Completed through confidential email feedback survey which asked open-ended questions.

The screenshot shows a survey results page titled "ASPP student survey". At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, New Survey, Survey, Results, Template, Email List, Results, No Results, and Logout. Below the navigation bar, the page is titled "Survey Results - Details" with a "Results Details" button. The survey name "ASPP student survey" is displayed in red. Below the name, there are two rows of information: "Responses: 16" and "Status: Closed", and "Surveyed From: 1/15/2017" and "Closed Date: 1/16/2017". The main content area lists 18 questions with their corresponding response counts. The questions are:

1. What are the top 10 most positive behavioral experiences you had from this course? (16)
2. Getting to know some of the people in the course that are from different backgrounds and bringing about self-discovery. (16)
3. Not having a lot of homework all that week! (16)
4. Meeting with other people from different cultures and different ranges of knowledge. (16)
5. Getting to know people from different backgrounds and different degrees, and learning from what they have to teach you and also teaching them too. (16)
6. Getting to know of how other disciplines develop their design and combining collaboration and expertise from those. (16)
7. Seeing the end result, after over a semester and you have a great presentation. (16)
8. There were some positive experiences about completing the design project. The first 15 minutes for the rest of the first class, which included how it started, part of the being, and for the class, and especially all of the knowledge students that get to know and appreciate. The overall experience is really positive of how students together, and by getting those in-class projects, and experience, gave a chance for students to share creativity and created a strong class team. Thanks again great course. (16)
9. Being involved in a fun 3D project that an all disciplines from architecture, landscape, and the community to work on and help make a community to meet. Students for the future. (16)
10. Learning to work with students of other disciplines, and sharing a way for the next semester through design experience to create a well-rounded education. (16)
11. The opportunity to encourage all students from other courses and disciplines to learn to work with each other and understand the design industry in the design with other disciplines. (16)
12. Working in a design studio and not thinking in building a building in creating the overall to be the whole, to then over the semester work on the next experience for the members of the design studio (not just the team). Did appreciate all the info, it's experience and collaboration from the experience of all disciplines. Students who will use the design and experience considering their qualifications are working and challenging. (16)
13. The opportunity to do something for the first time people in experience such as (experience through experience, I am only in person in our class I am very passionate about, and the great job, I appreciate it all the people I get to know it to those who need it more. (16)
14. Working with other disciplines and other people to create a collaborative design experience. (16)

At the bottom of the page, there is a URL: <http://www.the.nyu.edu/survey/ResultsText.asp?DisplayHeader=Y&id=7822> and a date: 9/25/2017.

CONCLUSIONS

Realness of the Project and Ownership thereof:

*“... having a real site and having a **bit of external pressure** on the project makes it much more challenging. The real issues in architecture such as cost, complexity of design, detailing begin to arise and are true concerns of ours as students, once again **mimicking the real world**” - Student, Agape Elective*

*“...such an enjoyable experience. **To have clients and all these really important people have such faith in our work is so amazing!**” – student, Wollongong*

CONCLUSIONS

Continuing Input and Involvement

- 'turning the soil' ceremony
- Ugandan contacts meeting



CONCLUSIONS

Interdisciplinary and Collaborative Dimensions

*“The diversity of students gives you a greater range of expertise, so the work is more complete in a sense. The teamwork also allowed for a lot of cross communication and critical analysis of ideas, and **working collaboratively for the best final outcome, compared to a more introspective analysis in a studio**”.* - Student, Wollongong

*“Personally I am humbled and grateful for the wonderful support we have **received**... sometimes a project team comes along that has a profound effect...The involvement with the University was one of the most satisfying involvements I have ever had. We as a Committee [Light and Hope] intend to complete the job and **hopefully build a legacy** that the students and the lecturers can visit for many years to come...[this is] best summed up by a fellow committee colleague: **“working with UNSW, FBE and the Students has proved a stroke of genius** – Project Champion, Wollongong*

CONCLUSIONS

Development of Empathy, Community Engagement

*“This course **definitely raised awareness** of the true nature of a subject that a lot of people are prejudiced about”– Student, Wollongong*

*“What I learnt from this course was the healing potential that architecture and landscape had. From the readings we were provided and the first research assignment, **my perspective of mental illness and architecture shifted dramatically**” – Student, Wollongong*

*“I found the whole process quite inspiring: the willingness of the staff and students to engage with consumers and carers; the attitude of the students to the consumers and carers; **the way they took up the information that we provided on what the building was to be used for, and didn’t put their own design ideas ahead of the functionality of the building**”. - Stakeholder, Wollongong*

CONCLUSIONS

Improved communication skills

*“It taught, and re-iterated, the value of true communication. It enabled design students to interpret and write a brief in the real sense – taught them how to extrapolate information. They had to **listen** to what was being said (from a large variety of sources, sometimes conflicting), and then acquire new skills to **re-interpret** this information into their design-studio format. They also needed to **identify** which issues had priority or precedence over others, **and substantiate why**. The students were then required to present their design schemes back to the stakeholders, **in a non-academic environment** and language, and **demonstrate that they had both listened and understood the stakeholders**. - Project Navigator, Wollongong*

*“Omnium was a great tool to communicate amongst team members... It was a great forum and database where great discussion continued outside class. **It provided rich discussion and inquiry, not to mention having guests contribute to the class also. Just brilliant!!** - Student, Agape*

CONTRIBUTION





FLUX: Design Education in a Changing World

Cape Town, 3-5 October 2007

Designing “in Person” – Locally and Globally

Karin Watson and Assoc Prof Linda Corkery

FBEOutThere! University of New South Wales