

Building on Boyer: Heeding Curriculum Scholarship to Answer Architecture's Global Call

The curriculum culture created by a liberal arts approach to design studio within an architectural professional education, as opposed to a technical approach, encourages the embodiment and enactment of leadership studies. Ways of working with leadership in the design studio, which is pivotal to an architectural education, are supported by the American theorist John Dewey's scholarship. I suggest that new architectural graduates must embody and enact a visionary and inspired leadership in order to have the ability to immediately impact the profession and potentially strengthen architecture's position in society while answering its global call to become a trans-disciplinary and trans-cultural design practice.

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CREATING A STUDIO CULTURE TO FOSTER LEADERSHIP LEARNING

The curriculum culture created by a liberal arts approach to design studio within an architectural professional education opposed to a technical focus encourages the embodiment and enactment of leadership studies. Ways of working with leadership in the design studio, which is pivotal to an architectural education, are supported by Dewey's scholarship. John Dewey, a foundational American pragmatist and educational theorist, strongly influenced teaching and understanding of democratic living (Henderson & Kesson, 2004; Parker, 1996; Westbrook, 1993). He offered thoughts and behaviors as an ever-growing manner of thinking for a moral advancement towards a deepening commitment to this personal way of living. The National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB) advocates the subject matter of leadership be taught in a lecture format professional practice course and I argue that transactional (Ryan, 2011) and experiential (Eisner, 1998) leadership learning in studio can advance architecture by providing its needed deep meaningful democratic self and social understanding. I suggest that new architectural graduates must embody and enact a visionary and inspired leadership in order to have the ability to immediately impact the profession and potentially strengthen architecture's position in society while answering its global call to become a trans-disciplinary and trans-cultural design practice.

Shifting into the design studio a form of leadership learning engaging "3S" foundations understanding (Henderson & Gornik, 2007) of subject matter, self and social ways of understanding to design studio invites reflective inquiries accompanied by a necessary degree of scholarly sophistication. Lecturing to *know* about leadership



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allows the learner to have knowledge of leadership facts and to respond when asked about what he or she knows to be verifiably true or false. Staging intellectual problems for students immersed in design studio for understanding complex situations through role playing (Author, 2012), however, goes beyond memorizing facts for knowledge of leadership. Instead it allows students to “grasp the meaning of a thing, an event, or a situation . . . to see it in its relations to other things; to see how it operates or functions, what consequences follow from it, what causes it” (Dewey, 1933, p 137). Opportunities for meaning-making of such situations might start with incorporating more group projects opposed to isolated design problems where students are challenged to assume leadership roles amongst their peers utilizing their individual strengths and skill sets to achieve a common goal emulating the ways in which most successful real-world project teams collaborate. Engaging students in more community outreach studio problems or design/build exercises could also offer alternative ways in which students work both in and out of the classroom not only with architecture students, but (as appropriate) with students across other disciplines (science, music, business etc.) to assume varying degrees of leadership responsibilities appropriate to their readiness. Faculty members facilitating these complex reflective practices also requires giving academia permission to embrace the messiness of the unknown of real-life circumstances and initial unidentified specific sets of learning variables recognizing the indisputable meaningful contextual learning that will take place and leadership lessons that will be learned. The advancement of student thinking as a result of these experiences can then be considered through student reflection, peer feedback and public review.

This liberal arts approach to leadership learning in studio also provides the potential to promote a stronger feel for the current hermeneutic heritage (Henderson & Hackney, 2013; Nancy, 2010; Schwandt, 2002) necessary to address the art of being human and not one at risk of focusing on the most recent technical trend(s) or standardized management which does not prepare future architects to be the leaders the architecture profession needs. Vedder, in a January 20, 2011, article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, quoted findings

Figure 1: *Learning to Lead with Global Vision*
(Photo courtesy of Latrice Harrison).

of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), “students . . . majoring in traditional liberal-arts fields . . . demonstrated significantly high gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning and writing skills over time than students in other fields of study.” The significance of this skill set is seconded by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education’s 2006 report on *A Test of Leadership* (Arum & Roksa, 2011). This liberal-arts approach provides “what we want” for a professional architecture education which “is a curriculum for being and, more importantly, a curriculum for becoming” (Henderson & Gornik, 2007, p. 136).

The Association of American Colleges and Universities proposes a strong definition of liberal education as:



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an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

A liberal arts education is intended “to be pursued as an end in itself” in comparison to a technical “education whose purpose is to be practical or useful” (Miller, 2007, p. 184). Architecture students need a liberal arts experience to cultivate understanding of diversity, worldviews, ethics, values, voice, and a commitment to democratic living. Studio provides socially rich environments for complex 3S problem-solving. Critical leadership learning exercises in the socially rich studio environments aligns with “the need for a liberal architecture curriculum” which is “particularly urgent for students who begin their professional programs directly from high school” (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996, p. 79).

Figure 2: *Moving Towards a Trans-cultural Practice*
(Photo courtesy of Latrice Harrison).

Architectural education reflects public opinion across our nation driven by a rational technical professional condition of a long line of obligatory standards,



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but must move beyond the dominant paradigm of the Tyler (1949) rationale in order to answer architecture's global call. No longer should we be asking the following institutional questions:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. How can learning experiences be selected that are likely to be useful in attain these objectives?
3. How can learning experiences be organized for effective instruction?
4. How can the effectiveness of learning experiences be evaluated?

The 1983 *Nation at Risk* has laid the way of standards and standardization as the means to evaluate individual students and teachers, not to mention schools and programs. Striving for high achievement on standardized test scores is not transformative curriculum (Henderson & Gornik, 2007), but lacks vision for the students, for schools, as well as for society. It is important to ignore the "anxiety in both architectural practice and education having to do with the emerging sense of design, with a correlative doubt about architecture's relevance to global and local issues. It is appropriate to look to liberal education as a basis for addressing these problems" (Gottfried, 1990).

The current NAAB required course distribution is 60% professional studies and 40% general studies. Starting in January 2015, the accredited program must have a minimum of 45 semester credit hours in coursework with no architectural content. These general credit hours could include art, humanities, and sciences. Physics and calculus fall into this general credit category and are prerequisites for the necessary structural course sequence of an accredited architectural education. A total requirement of 150 credit hours in a Bachelor of Architecture equaling 30% of the student's experience, 168 credit hours in a Master of Architecture program equaling 27% of the student's course experience, and 120 undergraduate plus 90 graduate level credits for a Doctoral of Architecture equaling 21% of the student's course experience. Yet, NAAB's *2009 Conditions for Accreditation* in

Figure 3: *Reflecting on the Need for Transdisciplinary Discourse* (Photo courtesy of Latrice Harrison).

which requirements for long-range planning to ensure five perspectives includes “Architectural Education and Public Good” described as follows:

That students enrolled in accredited degree program are prepared: to be active, engaged citizens; to be responsive to the needs of a changing world; to acquire the knowledge needed to address pressing environmental, social ethical implication of their decisions; to reconcile differences between the architect’s obligation to his/her client and the public; and to nurture a climate of civic engagement, including a commitment to professional and public service and leadership.

The studio, and not a lecture based course is the space where students have the “ability to develop voice, sustain passion and evoke response” (McElfresh-Spehler & Slattery, 1999). NAAB suggests an “understanding” of leadership, but a liberal-arts approach opposed to technical approach to a professional architecture education aligns with a deeper personification and learning by role playing (Author, 2012) leadership principles that is essential for future leaders in the architectural field. This is increasingly important as Boyer and Mitgang reported in *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice*, the architectural profession is

struggling both to fit in and if possible, to lead, within a social and economic context that in a number of crucial respects has been dramatically altered. We also found a profession whose faith in its own future has been shaken. What seems missing, we believe, is a sense of common purpose connecting the practice of architecture to the most consequential issues of society—and that same sense of unease permeates architecture education as well.

While, I agree with Sabini (2011) that a worthy purpose would be to see “architecture as a cultural act,” consider the implications of leadership studies as a curriculum aim for design studio within a professional architecture education. Providing learning conditions that involve trans-disciplinary student and real-world trans-cultural stakeholders while providing students with 1) a felt level of autonomy where they are directed (if need be) to assume 2) responsibility and ownership of progress in a design project with 3) a service and sense of making a difference in the world (Pink, 2009). Such progressive pedagogy would set the scene for students to practice evidence-based judgment and reflective decision-making to support architecture’s leadership role in this trans-disciplinary, trans-cultural act.

CREATING TRANS-DISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

While this paper suggests some studio options (community outreach and design/build) to introduce ways in which students can experience trans-disciplinary and trans-cultural design practices, I also suggest architects (A) should join curriculum studies scholars (CS) in our own trans-disciplinary discourse on the various subtexts contributing to the “complicated conversation” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995) to consider additional ways in which architectural education can frame additional new studio pedagogies to foster global leaders. The conversations in Discipline Professional Learning Communities (DPLC) promoted by the Transformative Curriculum Leadership of Henderson and Gornik (2007) align with a liberal arts approach to education built on a broad base of humanistic curriculum dedicated to “principles, aesthetics and fairness in educational judgments while being encouraged to question more deeply the meaningful learning experiences, knowledge and skills” which supports the growth of architectural students becoming leaders (McElfresh-Spehler & Slattery, 1999) who “inspire(s) others to



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attend to matters of great significance” and “to change the course of events” by having “an impact” while engaging “in the process of evoking vision in others” (McElfresh & Slattery, 1999, p. 18).

Joining educators in CS-A DPLCs can begin to reflect on an architectural education guided by guidelines or with “standards without standardization” (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996, p. 63) while challenging existing conditions and considering prospective educational “platforms” (Walker & Soltis, 2004, p. 60) to address global issues facing the future of architecture. Does a professional architecture program with a high percentage passage rate on the Architectural Registration Examination (ARE) signify that we value the ability of graduates to be good test takers? Does this high passage rate indicate that the institution is doing what is best for its learners? Are we as architectural educators confident that the kinds of experiences we are creating in studio prepare students with transferrable abilities and talents for our world of changing fiscal demands and increasing competition? Are these experiences fostering a deepening understanding of leadership? NAAB’s 2009 *Conditions for Accreditation* stated that

Annually, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards publishes pass rates for each section of the Architect Registration Examination by institution. This information is considered to be useful to parents and prospective students as part of their planning for higher/post-secondary education; therefore, programs are required to make this information available to current and prospective students and their parents either by publishing the annual results or by linking their website to the results (p. 30-1).

While the genesis of this publication aligns with the nation’s dominant paradigm that test scores equate to success, progressive architectural curriculum development must see beyond test score performance and strive instead toward leadership of our graduates in local and global societies as testimonies to success. CS-A DPLCs can assess through regular deliberative conversations how a holistic pedagogy involving 3S (self, subject and social) matters of understanding in studio can promote leadership role playing at varying degrees and conditions during

Figure 4: *Creating an Architectural Education for a Liberal Profession Based in Ethics* (Photo courtesy of Latrice Harrison).

a student's academic and professional growth.

LEADERSHIP FROM WITHIN NOT FROM WITHOUT

Finally, students will learn by example and professional architecture education must model leadership with educators as leaders of programs and departments. Curricular decisions made from above and from those who have not even been teaching "in the trenches" or practicing architectural scholarship do not have the sensibility necessary to answer architecture's global call, which begins with educational courses of action. "The one who wears the shoe," Dewey would say, "knows more about where it pinches" (Ryan, 2011, p. 70). Nel Noddings (2006) wrote about the notion of good leadership as it differs according to kinds of enterprises. The chief executive of a large product design company, inexperienced in defense, would not be a competent military leader. Occasionally, successful people from one field are enlisted to be in charge of a different venture with restricted assignments as figureheads. It is imperative, however, in academia where field-related decisions are being made leadership commands "both breadth and depth of knowledge about education. At the very least, an educational leader should have a defensible position on the aims of education, on a theory of motivation and on what constitutes ethical practice of education" (Noddings, 2006, p. 339). Architectural education leaders require a critical knowledge of *curriculum*, which has its roots in Latin meaning the course to be run (Eisner, 1994, p. 25) because:

Without direct consideration of what is worthwhile to know and its correlates of why and how, (all curriculum) activities are devoid of defensible meaning, purpose, and direction. When fundamental curriculum questions are not addressed by educators, economic or political caprice leads the way and educational practice is governed by default (Schubert, 1986, p. 1).

Boyer's *New York Times* obituary reports his statement, "It's disturbing to see university leaders chosen on the basis of their political strengths. A university president with strong academic credentials is a symbolic figure who can speak out on the great issues in a way that a political leader cannot" (Honan, 1995).

CONCLUSION

Architecture's global call to become trans-disciplinary and trans-cultural is beckoning the art of leadership be taught as an integral and prominent component of the design studio experience. Faculty members can best teach through enacting risk taking and when necessary addressing the marginalization of others. A liberal arts approach to studio will create "open curriculum spaces for a multiplicity of realities" (J. L. Miller, 2005, p. 47). Faculty members striving to embody a deepening understanding of democratic living in the studio context while enacting honest, visionary, and competent leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) will encourage students to find "his or her place in the world" by first opening "up a clearing for the individual's experience of purpose through participation in cultural institutions" (Pérez-Gómez, 2007, p. 121).

Encouraging meaningful learning and leading by providing opportunities to "get lost in limits" while working with and learning from students from across disciplines will cultivate the ability and willingness to let go of beyond preconceived beliefs and instead to "find what goes beyond what we know" (Lather, 2007, p. 13) while serving and learning across cultures. By posing these real-world design problems that generate a sense of purpose while helping those in need, we can attend to what "is perhaps the hardest job of education to produce people who

will think but not give up working rationally and passionately for a better life, a better world” (Noddings, 2006, pp. 196-197).

As Boyer and Mitgang concluded in their special report, *Building Community*, “many programs lack integration and leave inadequate time for electives or liberal studies.” “Most disappointingly, many design studios seem not to be living up to their vast potential as settings where integration of knowledge might be fostered” (1996, p. 67). The commitment to teaching leadership in studio will ground architectural education, from a Deweyan point of view promoting capacities of “self-awareness, creative thinking, reflective inquiry, collegiality, deliberation, negotiation, and inspiration” (Henderson & Hackney, 2013). As an Indianapolis architect told Boyer and Mitgang (1996), “You just don’t see it in our profession. We need to get the profession back to the status of community leaders” (p. 149). Starting with architectural education by providing students with real-world problem-solving in studio will allow these future architects to understand their responsibilities and take these leadership roles in our communities.

We must consider, “What has society, in fact entrusted to the profession of architecture and might that historic and legal mandate be enriched so that architects could be more effectively engaged in society’s most consequential problems? Most essentially, how might schools themselves add knowledge and clarity to that mission” (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996, p. 33)? Schools of architecture have a responsibility to “prepare students to develop their own analytical framework in which to envision a better society” and reaching this goal could be facilitated by emphasizing the “importance of ending the isolation of the architectural discipline both within the educational institutions and professional communities” (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996, p. 21). Let us begin to broaden curriculum conversations about architecture to learn and lead by example in CS-A DPLCs. For the sake of the global world, the architectural world must pay closer attention to “the social aspects of architecture” (Cuff, 1991, p. 108). CS-A DPLCs will begin to address Boyer and Mitgang’s October to December 1994 report with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching which surveyed students, faculty, alumni, deans, and department heads of 15 accredited United States’ schools of architecture concluding that “schools of architecture should evaluate themselves as *communities of learning*, places that foster connections rather than compartmentalization, cooperation along with productive competition” (p. 148).

The AIAS composed *The Redesign of Studio Culture: A Report of the AIAS Studio Culture* in 2002 and *Lessons Learned, Best Practices and Guidelines for an Effective Studio Culture Narrative* in 2008. These documents recognized the effectiveness of the studio for faculty to student and peer to peer communication, Socratic means of discussion, experiential learning, and visual literacy, but argued there were elements that were obsolete. NAAB’s Architecture Program Report (APR) in 2004 added a 13th condition for accreditation which requires schools to have a written policy that “demonstrate a positive and respectful learning environment” encouraging relationships of student body, faculty members, administration, and staff (Anthony, 2012, pp. 400-401).

It is with concerted effort that teachable moments about leadership can be identified since “each move is a local experiment which contributes to the global experiment of reframing the problem” (Schön, 1983, p. 94) while considering “what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place” (p. 14). Here the learner will not acquire a body of knowledge, but he or she will acquire leadership skills by participating in a “legitimate peripheral

ENDNOTES

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participation” process (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Then, CS-A DPLCs can considering important questions such as: Why do we employ certain kinds of learning? Why are these certain kinds of learning important? What are the central beliefs of the school? What does that mean? What is its vision? By establishing a *curriculum visionary platform* (Henderson & Gornik, 2007) we can talk about designing the platform, programs, courses, and lessons and appropriately unify curriculum and teaching. We can continue by asking questions about our decision making. Does this curriculum decision benefit everyone equally and not marginalize a group of people? Could this curriculum change contribute to the richness of the professional or local community? What is worth doing? Can our actions make the world a better place?

Approaching architecture curriculum holistically will consider the impact of shifting leadership studies to studio with goal setting, decision-making, and reflecting activities that facilitate students’ subject matter meaning making in a context of active democratic learning of “leading for a deepening democracy” that is “grounded in the principles and ideals of democracy and an individual and social consciousness” (Henderson & Hackney, 2013, p. 7). The studio will afford the opportunity to link theory and practice while stressing “collaborative knowing” in a setting where “knowledge is developed interactively among communities of inquirers and given conditions” (Seigfried, 1996, p. 4).

Greene (1995) cautioned, “one tendency in education today is to shape malleable young people to serve the needs of technology and the postindustrial society” (p. 132). Architecture education led by educators and scholars can continue to build on Boyer and gain strength by moving beyond memorization and standardized tests towards a liberal arts approach to studio that teaches necessary complex problem solving, critical researching and to avoid “the prospect of self-annihilation should we fail to integrate a humane view of science and technology with an experimental approach to values” (Ryan, 2011, p. 76) embodies and enacts a visionary architecture leadership with empathy for our global communities.

Architecture graduates need to make an immediate impact with the skills and sensibilities they have role played in studio and learned from architectural scholars and educators who have modeled by example in their institutional leadership positions. Building on Boyer, we can practice self-disciplined “critical reflection (that) leads to an understanding of what is beyond” (Aoki, 2005, p. 131) as we strive to answer architecture’s global call to become trans-disciplinary, trans-cultural leaders and “articulate parts in a community in the making” (Greene, 1995, p. 132).