Community Stewardship and the Hidden Curriculum: Transforming Architectural Education Through Involvement

STANLEY RUSSELL
University of South Florida

INTRODUCTION

The phrase "Hidden Curriculum" was first used by Philip Jackson in his book *Life in Classrooms* published in 1968. Jackson argued that schools are not simply a neutral ground for the transmission of knowledge but that education is also a socialization process. The concept of the hidden curriculum, refers to the fact that much of what students learn in school is not a part of a formal curriculum, but is implied by the organization of the learning process itself. According to Jackson "the crowds, the praise, and the power that combine to give a distinctive flavor to classroom life collectively form a hidden curriculum which each student [and teacher] must master if he is to make his way satisfactorily through the school."

In the US as early as the late colonial period, public education was urged as an antidote to the breakdown in the traditional, family centered socialization process. By the revolutionary war era of the mid 18th century nationalism was growing and public schools, in addition to their socializing function, were also called on to form a national character. After the civil war an influx of ethnic diversity in urban areas led public schools to pursue standardization, centralization, and homo-genization as ways of increasing efficiency and maintaining order and stability in the country. "The role of schools as a homogenous and regimented socializing force was well established by the turn of the century."[1] It was not until the rise of secondary education to meet demands for more diversified and technologically advanced occupational skills that a shift in emphasis occurred from social control toward individual development. At this point education's clearly stated goal of social control became hidden behind a new rhetoric focused on the individual and appropriate education in a democracy.[2] Ironically it was this very attention to individualized education that led researchers in the 60's and 70's like Jackson to discover the hidden curriculum.[3]

Fig 1 Public School Building

ARCHITECTURE EDUCATION

In order to examine contemporary American architecture education in terms of a hidden curriculum it is helpful to understand its origins. From the above discussion, it is clear that one source of

a potential hidden curriculum might be found in the American public school system. Another, perhaps more influential source, may be the lineage of Architecture education from the Italian Renaissance through France and then to the US. David Clark explains that during the Italian Renaissance the profession of Architecture was founded on the idea of separating the craftsman, who had hitherto been responsible for the entire act of building, from the new class of intellectual artists. According to Clark, "The incipient division between those whose activities were intellectual and those whose activities were mechanical began to be aggressively cleaved by those who stood to benefit most from it."[4] In De arte aedificatoria, the first and most influential architectural treatise of the renaissance, Alberti wrote that people who worked with their hands were the instruments of the architect.[5] Alberti's redefinition of the architect as a thinking man was in sharp contrast to the craftsman architect of the Middle Ages. Clarke writes that "by Michelangelo's time the Architect had "acquired an aura of divine genius"

Alberti's writings on theory inspired Lorenzo Demedici to form the Academia Platonica to counter what he perceived as the undesirable influence of the crafts guilds which had survived from the middle ages.[6] Although the Medici dynasty fell along with the Academia, the Italian renaissance and post renaissance academic models inspired the French and in 1671 Jean-Baptiste Colbert established the Academie Royal d'Architecture for Louis XIV. Geoffrey Broadbent explains that his purpose "like Lorenzo before him had been to attack the trade guilds… to raise architects from the status of craftsmen to that of philosopher."[7] The Academie became the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1819 and was later the model for the first American Architecture program At MIT in 1893. In the USA the Beaux-arts system was, by and large, the dominant model for Architecture Education. So much so that even the enormous influence of the craft and production oriented Bauhaus was translated into beaux-arts terms. [8]

It is clear even through this cursory analysis that the evolution of architecture education from its beginnings in the Renaissance through France and into the US is characterized by class consciousness, elitism and hegemonic practices. As in the case of public school education discussed earlier, these early deterministic and prejudicial foundations of architecture education have long since ceased to be the official curriculum but may remain hidden by a rhetoric which has changed with the social, economic and political climates of the times. There is a general perception among educators and professionals in this particularly demanding age that Architects have not been adept at keeping up with the demands of changing social patterns and the global environmental crisis. As Max Bond reflects "The world has seen enormous changes, yet our ideas about how architecture is done have remained very much the same, and is not really influenced by these changes"[9] The word "taught" could be substituted for the word "done" in Bonds statement without fear of exaggeration. In any case, Dutton con-tends that debates about architecture should be extended to architectural schooling. So what is it in our system of education that is acting as an obstacle to change? Is the answer somehow related to a curriculum passed down through the centuries that still lies hidden in our current practices?

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM AND THE DESIGN STUDIO

In addition to the public school system influence and the influence of the architecture education lineage outlined thus far, Thomas Dutton proposes a third possibility although the order in which they are presented is not meant to imply that one is more significant than another. Dutton maintains that the dominant interests of contemporary society are reinforced and sustained in a hidden curriculum in Architecture education. "Characteristics that have come to be common in modern workplaces also take form in some way in the design studio. These include sys-tems of hierarchy which require a strict division of labor, "rigorous obedience", and orientation to means rather than ends and the ethic of competition to ensure work compliance and intensity"[10]

According to Dutton, "Knowledge is never a neutral entity. Rather, as any commodity, it is a social construct, produced and distributed according to certain voices situated in relations to power for particular ends."[11] Dutton con-tends that "Architectural educators, in their critical appraisal of the interrelationship between architectural schooling, the profession, and the wider society, need to il-

luminate the political nature of recent currents in the profession, to render intelligible how recent trends in architecture have tended to serve dominant interests and institutions instead of overcoming them."[12] For Dutton the hidden curriculum is a filter that teachers can use to interpret the relationship between knowledge and power, and how classroom knowledge reinforces certain ideologies, values, and assumptions about social reality, sustaining the interests of some groups at the expense of others.[13]

Fig.2 Design Studio

The design studio model has many positive characteristics and it has been lauded by some educators as the best model for education in an array of other disciplines as well. Donald Schon sees the design studio as the best model for education in the professions like Law and Medicine that deal with "complexity, uncertainty, uniqueness and value conflict".[14] But despite its many merits the Design Studio also has flaws which may be inhibiting the pro-fession's ability to adjust to the rapidly changing world scenario. The following list of concerns is not a condemnation of individual instructors who have worked hard to overcome obstacles to good educational practice. Instead it is a kind of watch-list for faculty and administrators to be aware of the tacit learning that may be implied or even upheld by the structure of the traditional design studio model itself.

Isolationism

> "The architect is here to produce isolated objects, even if he does not like doing so. As soon as he goes beyond this vaguely defined domain, starts to question the objectives and seeks to influence the neighborhood and the program, he is put back in his place. Often he accepts this. What's more, he is well brought up and knows who holds the purse strings.
>
> This isolationism is already imposed in the teaching process: fragmentation of the subjects taught, rivalry among students, a closed list of research subjects and projects, the solitude of the academic world and so on. At best, it produces narcissistic objects; at worst, alien or autistic ones."[15] Lucien Kroll

In the traditional design studio model when Studio projects are given as individual assignments students are not introduced to building design as a collaborative process and are therefore encouraged to design according to their own whim [or that of the instructor]. Without input from other students, a client, consultants, a design review board or the community, a false sense of self importance often results.

When a design jury consists only of a panel of architects [the elite] the illusion that the architect has the most important opinion [or only opinion] pertaining to design is implied. The special language used by jurors on these occasions is adopted by students and perpetuates the sense of a closed community of Architects united by a common language. Regrettably, this language cannot be understood by those in other professions the general public, and a majority of the students! As a result, in the rare cases when individuals from other fields or the community attend juries, they often find it difficult to understand the student work.

The architecture media's depiction of the star architect as an individual rather than as a team of experts from different disciplines reinforces the fantasy of elitism and avant-garde individualism [what Clarke calls the re-naissance demi-urge][16] that the isolated studio environment nurtures. Upon graduation young architects are often disappointed, disillusioned and frustrated when confronted with the difficulty of communication and the array of conflicts and unpleasantries waiting in the real time world of the construction industry. According to Dana Buntrock "Isolation from

the field not only makes our designs more conservative and our profession less essential, it also prevents us from exploring the creative side of Architecture that first excited us."[17]

Hierarchy

> "The presence of hierarchy in studio organ-ization, though commonplace, is an experiential condition that cannot be taken lightly. Hierarchy is completely antithetical to dialogue." [18] Thomas Dutton

The design studio commonly consists of 10 to 20 students, of diverse gender, race, and cultural background and is therefore potentially a fertile ground for learning through dialogue and interaction between the members of the group. Dutton maintains that real learning can only happen as a result of uninhibited dialogue. But he points out that the traditional asymmetrical distribution of power between the professor and student results in a hierarchical relationship that serves to thwart meaningful dialogue. According to Dutton, "as a fundamental precondition, dialogue requires an equality of participants [an equal distribution of power] which by definition is lacking in any system of hierarchy."[19]

Hierarchy in the studio is reinforced by the convention of desk-crits where the professor's opinion is emphasized over others in the group. This situation discourages dialogue between students and promotes an ethic of elitism and individualism. "As teachers we should be breaking this down by setting up entirely different kinds of social relations in studio."[20] However, perhaps most instrumental in the asymmetrical power structure of the studio is the convention of the instructor assigning grades. In the final analysis, despite any efforts to redistribute power in the studio, as long as the teacher is solely responsible for the assignment of grades, that is, as long as the teacher is standing in final judgment of the students the hierarchical structure of design studio cannot effectively be reformed.

Competition

> "The social processes of most classrooms militate against students developing a sense of community. As in the larger societal order, competition and individual striving are at the core of American schooling. In ideological terms, collectivity and social solidarity repre-sent powerful structural threats to the ethos of capitalism." [21] Henry Giroux

Our market economy and the media emphasize material success and an "everyman for himself" mentality which, when coupled with the illusive nature of the advertised good life, has resulted in a high degree of competition in our society and our schools. Dutton contends that competition in the studio encourages students to work alone and "design in this view is legitimized as a self indulgent activity where co-operation and compromise, as possible vehicles for good design are actively negated."[22] In this environment commun-ication within the group is inhibited by the need for secrecy thus minimizing the potential for learning from each other. Colin Stansfield Smith writes "[Architecture] Education is not now a shared experience although we pretend it is. In the current mode of education it is about competition, having an edge on your rivals- exploiting ones talents because we are all competing for the same market. The consumerist model is purveyed with relish. We are told quality is customer orientated and if you have an advantage or privilege, you exploit it, you do not share it."[23]

Abstraction

> "One of the reasons students have such difficulty in understanding formal ideas is because they are given to them as though they have value in and of themselves. If you presented form and composition as having value because of meaning that is socially constructed, the students would understand the issues involved." [24] Max Bond

That architecture education is largely dependent on abstraction as a means of communication is a matter of necessity in many cases but, for the study and analysis of architecture, abstraction is a barrier. When we allow our students to only experience architecture through abstractions in the form of drawings, photographs, and written descriptions we are inadvertently encouraging the gulf between the architect and the physical reality of architecture. The traditional studio structure isolates its students from the reality of space, materials, and construction techniques, as well as client and community interaction. The hidden curriculum seems to reassure the student that it is natural to deal with abstractions and that there is no need for an architect to understand the physical realities of materials construction or society. Until recently the one connection that architects have maintained with other craftsmen has been through the craft of architecture. Exquisite hand made

models, drawings and renderings that won the admiration and respect of all professionals were the trademark of the architect. Ironically this is the area that architects are rushing to exchange for a new digital technology that threatens to make the profession obsolete. As teachers, we must be aware of what the addition of digital technology to the hidden curriculum of design studio means and, in turn, what that communicates to our students about the importance of techne in architectural practice. Dutton writes that "Traditionally an academic discipline tends to teach its special body of knowledge abstractly conservatively or narcissistically. The examples drawn in texts or lectures relate to no one's experience, or promote the experience of an elite, or else are simply couched within the disciplines own terminology. This prevents the study of any discipline from becoming a critical encounter with social life."[25]

Institutionalization

> "Inattention may have its roots not only in the content of the lesson per se nor in psychological deficiencies within the student but rather in the nature of the institutional experience called "going to School" Often it is school that is boring not just arithmetic or social studies. The school experience in other words is more than the sum of its parts." [26] Philip W. Jackson

When the studio experience becomes insti-tutionalized a sense of boredom and oppres-sion results as a conditioned response to the experience of "going to school". In this envir-onment creativity and the natural sense of excitement and anticipation at embarking on a challenge are subjugated. Institutionalization can be manifested by the characteristics of the physical meeting place and also by the structure of the activity that goes on there.

COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

> "Students and faculty alike should regard civic activism as an essential part of scholarship."[27] Ernest Boyer

Having identified the impediments to learning, inherent in the traditional design studio model, it is possible to evaluate other design studio models to gauge their performance in light of the hidden curriculum. As several of the per-ceived shortcomings of the conventional model involve the isolation of students from the people and environments they design with and for, an innovative pedagogy must involve interaction on many different levels. In the wake of Ernest Boyer's call to architects and architecture educators to become more in-volved in communities it is time for archi-tecture schools to re-evaluate their positions on community engagement and, in a broader sense, community stewardship, to become active players in the transition towards sustainable communities.

Fig. 3 Presentation to the Community

The design studio model has the opportunity to escape from its dead-end trajectory and redefine itself as a vital entity and link between the creative rigor of design school students and a community thirsty for relevant and innovative ideas. The hidden curriculum of the standard studio model can be reinvented in an enhanced curriculum that optimizes learning rather than inhibiting it.

But working in the community is not without dangers and impediments to education. As Jane Martin cautions "It is not just formal settings which have hidden curricula. Any setting can have one and most do. What is important to remember is that there is no good reason at all to suppose that the hidden curricula of these and kindred settings are significantly better than the one which is the target of school reforms"[28]

Engaging in an innovative pedagogy in an alternate location with a community entity will likely have its own set of issues that will challenge the teachers and students alike. Although the potential benefits are high so are the risks but this kind of bold step is necessary at a time when our profession finds itself at a cross-roads. With in-

creased interaction as an educational priority and community steward-ship as an institutional goal, community engagement in design studio can begin to be looked at creatively for it's educational merit as well as its benefit to the community. Although there are countless ways that a studio can be structured around community engagement the following discussion takes three representative models and evaluates their individual merits.

a. Community Engaged Design Studio Model
b. Community Design/Build Model and
c. Community Residency Model,

Community Engaged Design Studio Model

Within the context of the conventional design studio, the abstract nature of an imaginary design problem can be eliminated by seeking a real community project in the planning stages and approaching the client group to engage in a collaboration. The clients agree to donate their time to meet and interact with the students in meetings and pinups in return for a wealth of ideas about their project.

In this scenario Students get a visceral sense of engagement in a real project. The student is removed from a position of elitism and is encouraged to cooperate and compromise with the client. The asymmetrical power structure between professor and student is offset by the student's relationship to the client. The stu-dent is empowered by his direct contact with the community. A sense of responsibility to the client, rather than pressure from the professor, governs his work and decisions.

If students work individually it is important to have regular group meetings where there is discussion about everyone's ideas in an open forum. If students are encouraged to have a sense of ownership of the other projects they will develop interest in the others as well as their own and the tendency toward competition will be neutralized. Working in groups is an effective way to overcome the alienating influence of competition "Through group dialogue, the norms of cooperation and sociability offset the traditional hidden curriculum's emphasis on competition and excessive individualism."[29] The institutional malaise that results from meeting in a "classroom" is reduced when meeting at a community facility or an area establishment.

Fig. 4 Community Workshop

The advantage of the community engaged studio model is that it can be arranged without any additional commitment of funding or staffing and can be scheduled to fit within a standard M,W,F studio schedule. A group of students at the University of South Florida who worked with the community to design a new sanctuary and k-5 school for the St. John's Progressive Missionary Baptist Church in Tampa Florida wrote the following,

> "The community project was an invaluable experience. Studio/school is usually a time when one can exercise their personal fantasies about design only to be shocked by the reality of the real world and client input when thrust into the field of architecture. This project introduced the class to the actual architectural process, an experience usually reserved for after graduation."

> "I thought working with the community was very beneficial. It helped me to actually put a face on the "client" and their particular needs… I liked that some of the community members were on our jury - It gave us a chance, finally, to see how our "client" likes the project instead of only Faculty of other Architects. Sometimes a non-architect can critique things that we don't readily think about."

> "It provides the school with a very necessary dimension of interaction. Having 'reality' intrude on the cocoon we so often put up during studies is great. Especially having to find a way to make concepts and terms we take for granted legible to the community at large."

Community Design/Build Model

The design/build model has been used extensively in architecture schools around the world to teach building technology but less frequently as

an instrument of community engagement. The Community Design/ Build Model has all of the enhanced curriculum benefits of the Community Client Model as its base but moves beyond the abstraction of schematic design drawings and models to full scale mock-ups and, eventually, the construction of the actual building.

The enhanced curriculum of the design/build pedagogy maximizes dialogue and collaboration with clients, contractors and fellow students and gives everyone a sense of achievement and respect for teamwork. Individualism, hierarchy and competition are all reduced and a sense of community develops around the work at the site. The site becomes the classroom eliminating the sense of being in school and all forms of abstraction recede when the project reaches complete physical form. As Sergio Palleroni writes "The design/build pedagogical structure offers both technical and social skills, communication and compassion which equip students for professional practices that are truly connected with and relevant to the world around them."[30] A student of the University of Washington design/build program wrote.

"School is so insulated and architects have this jargon- it becomes a game speaking in cleaver ways to explain your design. It's really nice to get out in the community and see real-life issues and problems and how architecture and good design can play a part in addressing them- but just a part. When you participate in a project like this, you can appreciate that design is important, but so is being sensitive and open. It's common sense. There's no magic thing you do. Students learn that they aren't heroes, that they're part of a continuum of hand working activists."

Community Residency Model

This model involves students going to live in a community of special interest while doing a design project with a community client or a community design/build project. In either case other course work may be involved to support the particular topic of study and to provide a theoretical frame work for the experience. While this model offers all of the enhanced curriculum benefits of the other two models, [assuming that design/build is included] immersion in an unfamiliar community adds another opportunity for learning. In many

Fig. 5 Design/Build

cases students are forced to re-evaluate their values and to look at their own culture critically. Any sense of institutionalism that may linger in the other two models is completely eliminated by living in a community remote from the university. Thomas Dutton writes about the students in his residency program in the Over the Rhine community in Cincinnati Ohio. "For many of them, they came to see life differently. Poverty became real. Voting became relevant. They became amazed as to how the daily lives of ordinary people affected them. They learned from the homeless and their neighbors. They saw community, and experienced its strong bonds and responsibilities. For many, the tables turned, and they now have some inkling of what life is like as a 'minority."[31]

The community residency model requires the greatest amount of planning and support from the faculty, the community, the university, and other organizations. There are many risks involved in taking students to live in an unfamiliar environment or culture but as the following testimonials show the experience may change their lives in a very tangible and positive way.

> "My semester in Over-the-Rhine has had a profound impact on me. It has altered the direction of my future and most potently, on the way that I think. I plan to live and work in Over-the-Rhine after I graduate."

"I can make a thousand more connections of architecture to the world and the world to architecture and I can question ever one of them. I have found myself three times over and am waiting for more."

"Living in Over-the-Rhine has produced many shifts in my suburban-molded morals. These once familiar and concrete ideas of society and the government have been challenged and pushed through debates and first-hand experiences from living in OTR."

CONCLUSION

> *"One ineluctable fact has not been mentioned; the academic world is remote from day-to-day reality-at least as much as Marie Antoinette was. It is unaware of its own specialized reality, unaware of the mechanisms involved in the creation of buildings and, above all, out of touch with social reality (where do the people who live in my buildings spend their days!). It is not surprising that these schools-cummachine tools produce mercenaries of architecture. If, by chance, their graduates meet the "people" (within the context of urban struggles or not), they often manage to behave like nice visitors to the zoo."*[32] Lucien Kroll

A hidden curriculum as old as Alberti is draining architecture of its vitality while grand institutions of research stand like Japanese castles fortified against their burning cities. The uproar for sustainable design and the Boyer report's call for greater civic engagement are wakeup calls for architecture schools to bring relevance back to the practice of architecture. The tendency toward greater and greater separation between architectural education and physical reality must be reversed once and for all. Community Stewardship offers us an opportunity to come out of our safe castles and begin to help douse the flames of capitalism, politics and social indifference that are engulfing our communities. We have nothing to loose by getting involved and as members of a profession in crisis and citizens of a society in turmoil we have everything to gain.

ENDNOTES

1. Elizabeth Vance's article Hiding the Hidden Curriculum: in; Henry Giroux, David Purpel, "Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education" McCutchan Publishing Corporation, Berkley Ca. 1983. p 19.

2. Ibid. p.23

3. Ibid. p24

4. David Clarke, "The Architecture of Alienation", Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick and London 1994. p.88

5. Ibid. p.89

6. Geoffery Broadbent's Article "Architectural Education" in; Martin Pearce and Maggie Toy, "Educating Architects", Academy Editions: Great Britain, 1995 p.24

7. Ibid.

8. Bernard Tschumi's article "One, Two, Three, Jump" from, Martin Pearce and Maggie Toy, Educating Architects Academy Editions: Great Britain, 1995 p.24

9. Interview with Max Bond in; Thomas Dutton, "Voices in Architectural Education", Bergin & Garvey: New York, Westport Connecticut, London, 1991 p.165

10. Thomas Dutton, "Voices in Architectural Education", Bergin & Garvey: New York, Westport Connecticut, London, 1991 p.171

11. Ibid p.168

12. Ibid p.171

13. Ibid p.167

14. Donald Schon, "Design Studio", RIBA Publications Limited: London England, 1985 p.88

15. Lucien Kroll, Byron Mikellides "Can Architecture Be Taught?",JAE, Vol. 35, No. 1, With People in Mind: The Architect-Teacher at Work. (Autumn, 1981), p36

16. David Clarke, "The Architecture of Alienation"

17. Dana Buntrock, "Japanese Architecture as a Collaborative Process", London, New York: Spon Press 2002 p.175

18. Thomas Dutton, "Voices in Architectural Education" p.171

19. Ibid

20. Ibid

21. Henry Giroux, David Purpel, "Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education" McCutchan Publishing Corporation, Berkley Ca. 1983. p 19.

22. Thomas Dutton, "Voices in Architectural Education", p.172

23. Colin Stansfield Smith's article in; Martin Pearce and Maggie Toy, "Educating Architects", Academy Editions: Great Britain, 1995 p.40

24. Interview with Max Bond in; Thomas Dutton, "Voices in Architectural Education", p. 90

25. Thomas Dutton, "Voices in Architectural Education", p.218

26. Philip W. Jackson, "Life in Classrooms", Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.: New York p.111

27. Ernest L. Boyer, Lee D. Mitang, Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice, Jossey-Bass Inc. 1996

28. Jane Martin's Article "What Should We Do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One?" in; Henry Giroux, David Purpel, "Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education" p 134.

29. Henry Giroux, David Purpel, "Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education" p.116

30. Sergio Palleroni, "Studio at Large", University of Washington Press: Seattle and London, 2004. p.4

31. Thomas Dutton, Miami University Center for Community Engagement Website http://www.fna.muohio.edu/cce/

32. Lucien Kroll, Byron Mikellides "Can Architecture Be Taught?" p.36