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Special issue: *Re-Design Teaching Design*

Editorial

## Re-Design Teaching Design

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## Welcome

We welcome you to this special issue publication of *Architecture\_MPS* on design education. This effort finds us at the one-fifth mark on our collective way through the twenty-first century. We observe that, in the corporate world, business goals and fiscal expectations are re-evaluated quarterly. This allows for checking the pulse of the organization, tracking changes, collecting data, examining profits and losses, ensuring that actions and dealings are aligned with vision and mission, and better seeing responses (or influences) to the current economic and cultural conditions. Quarterly reviews offer an opportunity to reflect and, if necessary, course-correct. The articles compiled in this special issue publication embark on a similar mission. Collectively, the articles presented here serve as a call to examine and re-evaluate the way we teach design as we approach the quarterly mark of this century. If design education and pedagogy were to continue unaltered in the next five years, there shall arguably be countless missed opportunities within our represented environmental design professions and the way their models of education conduct their business as usual. Arguably, at the time of writing, approximately six months into the Covid-19 pandemic, we are already experiencing a new normal, and only just beginning to understand its implications on the constructed environment and the education of future designers and planners.<sup>1</sup>

### *Learning and Unlearning*

Futurist and author Alvin Toffler argued in his 1970 book, *Future Shock*, that ‘the illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.’<sup>2</sup> This quote may resonate with fellow educators who are confronted with unique and unprecedented challenges with regard to the development and delivery of educational content and pedagogy. Due to rapid technological advancements, our world has (metaphorically) shrunk, enlarged and torqued at the same time; smaller as we are instantly connected to people and information, larger due to our exponentially growing access to knowledge and ideas, and torqued in that distancing measures have placed us in some form of isolation from each other. Positioned at the threshold of constant change (environmental, cultural, technological), design education must be able to reflect on its hubris and be willing to reinvent itself, or ‘unlearn, and relearn’ how it engages with an ever-shifting world and a new generation of learners.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Fourth Revolution*

Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, describes this current era as the fourth industrial revolution, a ‘digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres.’<sup>4</sup> It is a shift from simple digitization ‘to innovation based on *combinations* of technologies’.<sup>5</sup> The learners of Generation Z are growing up in the midst of these exciting and unprecedented times.<sup>6</sup> As they enter higher education, this generation deserves a meaningful design education that takes into account this rapidly changing environment. As the physical, digital and biological frontiers continue to blur, this generation deserves (and the world needs) design educators who are responsive to the changing nature of *how* learners learn.

The authors of this special issue publication acknowledge that innovation in design education is needed. The business world has always had to be flexible and, in some cases, make profound transformations in response to changing contexts, including the economic, cultural and technological landscapes in which enterprise functions. If they do not, they likely lose profit or go out of business entirely. In the same way, design education must respond to the observed changes. All of these articles focus on tactical and strategic shifts that can be made, used or incorporated to innovate in design education, with some specific examples to challenge, inspire and inform the reader.

### *Arguments for Change*

In an article entitled ‘Design Pedagogy: The New Architectural Studio and Its Consequences’, Dr Peggy Deamer calls for the education of the ‘new architectural citizen’ – one who is well-equipped, aware of and ready to respond to our current societal problems of housing, climate, income inequality

and health.<sup>7</sup> In ‘Beyond Discipline: Evolving Design Practice and Design Education in the Twenty-First Century’, Dr Lara Furniss highlights a ‘disconnection between practice and education’.<sup>8</sup> The case is made for ‘existing pedagogic models to be challenged’ and the ‘need for policymakers, practitioners, and educators to work together to best prepare young designers to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century’.<sup>9</sup> In an article entitled ‘Fostering Innovative Entrepreneurial Design Students: Exploring the Relationship Between Innovation Characteristics and Attitudes towards Entrepreneurship in South African Design Students’, Denver Hendricks and Marina Meyer argue that design education:

should not exist in a vacuum, rather it should prepare students to respond as innovative contributors to a global economy. Curriculum planning in design requires constant reflection. These curriculum revisions require one hundred percent buy-in from colleagues and could contribute significantly to a larger cultural transformation in our design schools.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, it is both imperative and an opportunity that design education and design programmes accept the mantle to re-examine the way they conduct the business of educating emerging design professionals. As Schwab argued, ‘We need to (better) understand the changing environment, challenge the assumptions of our learners, and relentlessly and continuously innovate.’<sup>11</sup> Innovation in pedagogy is exemplified in the work of Dr Allan W. Shearer and his recent students in an article entitled ‘Roleplaying to Improve Resilience’. Shearer discusses their use of roleplay and gamification to make learning objectives both meaningful and potent. The guest editors of this present publication examine and arguably demonstrate examples of enhanced meaning and relevance in educational experiences in ‘Catena: Collaboration, Cohesion and Continuity in Design Thinking and Making’. Via a selection of shared testimony of student learners, the authors walk the reader through the creation of a connected series of design projects rather than a collection of disparate learning objectives as was typical in past design studios in the authors’ teaching experience.

The traditional enclosed or siloed focus on the intellectual property of individual environmental design disciplines is not a just practice when examining the challenges of today’s design education. As many of the authors here assert, design education should promote interdisciplinary collaboration to address and solve real-world problems and challenges. Beyond the academy, great design is being practised not in single tracks of knowledge but rather in interconnected networks of knowledge bases and fields. Among the disciplines, there must be a common belief that a systems-based approach to creating and delivering knowledge is needed, rather than a siloed approach. Positive change and innovation do not occur when compartmentalized. Scholars and learners land upon solutions, rather, when global problems are solved by multiple disciplines, fields and domains of knowledge working together towards a common goal. The editors argue for more opportunities to share and recognize innovative pedagogy and approaches in forums beyond discipline.

Much of the current focus of design education includes academic tasks that lead to expectations for course objectives. A new shift in design pedagogy should include evaluating problems from multiple perspectives, analysing methods to solve those problems, and presenting solutions through multiple modes. The editors pose the question: how do we educate designers of the future beyond the knowledge-based models of past years? For example, a typical pedagogy shared from the École des Beaux-Arts was the tracing of drawings to learn the specific principles and skills associated with scale, proportion and draughtsmanship.<sup>12</sup> An examination of Spier’s thorough description of teaching methods reveals practices still used today. What, then, shall be the learning frameworks for the twenty-first century learner who needs to adapt to the ever-changing global environment?

### *Looking Ahead*

This special issue’s contributing authors have presented a call to action. The method of preparing designers is lacking for our current global emergencies. In design studios around the world, education needs a pre-quarterly review. These writers have identified the need for innovation and collaboration on a higher level. There is a call for design education to stay nimble and flexible with the times. The design curriculum must be re-designed to meet the needs of not only today but, as Deamer writes, ‘to rehearse a positive future’.<sup>13</sup> We encourage the reader to consider the same.

## Declarations and Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests with this work.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> WHO, 'WHO timeline – COVID-19'.
- <sup>2</sup> Toffler, *Future Shock*, 367.
- <sup>3</sup> Toffler, *Future Shock*, 367.
- <sup>4</sup> Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*.
- <sup>5</sup> Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*.
- <sup>6</sup> Fry and Parker, 'Post-Millennial' Generation.
- <sup>7</sup> Deamer, 'Design Pedagogy', forthcoming.
- <sup>8</sup> Furniss, 'Beyond Discipline', forthcoming.
- <sup>9</sup> Furniss, 'Beyond Discipline', forthcoming.
- <sup>10</sup> Hendricks and Meyer, 'Fostering Innovative Entrepreneurial Design Students', forthcoming.
- <sup>11</sup> Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*.
- <sup>12</sup> Spiers. *Architectural Drawing*.
- <sup>13</sup> Deamer, 'Design Pedagogy', forthcoming.

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