

Rhetoric and Reality? Design Education as a Cross-cultural and Cross-disciplinary Experience

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The rhetoric of most universities now includes goals about internationalisation of the curriculum and the values that flow from that process. At first glance, such goals appear to support practice in the design professions, a significant amount of which is now international in flavour, with many students expecting to practise internationally during their working lives.

GIVEN THE LOCAL ORIENTATION of much landscape architectural education, can the academy educate graduates for such a life and, if so, how? As a way of responding to these issues, this paper describes the tripartite design teaching research programme under way currently between landscape architectural programmes from three continents: the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne, Ecole d'architecture et paysage, Bordeaux, France and the Faculty of Architecture at Kasetsart University, Bangkok.

This programme (known as BMB) builds on the previous informal bilateral relationships between participating institutions and converts them to a formalised teaching research programme, with coordinated field and studio activities of a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary nature around the shared theme of Water/Culture/City, and involving staff and students in each of the three cities over three consecutive years (2003, 2004, 2005).

Senior students in landscape architecture, urban design and architecture from each programme work jointly for an intensive 'workshop' in each city under the direction of staff in each discipline from each institution. Local professionals are also involved. A key component of the BMB programme is the teaching research that specifically identifies intended outcomes for student and staff experience and tracks whether and how these have been achieved through the life of the project. The first results of the research on student experience will be presented and discussed here to provide insight into the programme, and an example of how teaching research in landscape architectural education might assist in assessing whether institutional goals related to internationalisation can be assessed and are achieved.