Education, Design and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:
An Innovative Educational Practice: Flipping the Classroom in Urban Planning Courses

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• Abstract (300 words):
Several challenges are currently framing the educational practice of urbanism. Organizations from private, non-profit, and public sectors are calling for graduates prepared with the skills required in practice from day one. At the same time, there is a demand for more accountability regarding the education of these graduates. This context compels academic institutions not only to assess educational outcomes but also to adopt innovative practices in the classroom.

Educators in fields such as urbanism and/or urban planning have responded to these new challenges by implementing innovative pedagogical practices that allow the incorporation of experiential learning or hands-on activities.

Among those practices, the pedagogical strategy known as inverted instruction or flipping the classroom has gained the attention of educators. This active learning approach has been applied in higher education with some success in recent years. It involves dedicating less time to traditional lectures in the classroom and more time to
experiential learning activities. The regular content of lectures and assessment is managed through online resources.

The claim of this innovative practice is that students engage more effectively with the learning process and there is more time for experiential learning activities. Because of this strategy’s recent emergence, very little assessment on its adoption exists at the collegiate level.

Considering the above, and being that students are responsible for most of their content mastery with this practice, the goal of this research is to assess the students’ perception of the flipping the classroom strategy implemented in urban planning courses. The findings show that students have an overall positive perception toward a flipped classroom strategy. The results also allow framing of this strategy for implementation in the field of urbanism and planning. The results of this paper contribute to the search for successful innovative educational practices.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr. Luis Estevez is an associate professor of planning and community development in the Department of Geography & Planning at St. Cloud State University. His research and experience focus in master planning, affordable housing, land use regulations, and assessment of indexes. Recently, he has focused on strategies addressing the need of neighborhood indicators, specifically for the assessment of quality of housing. His research expands in areas of indexes of industry attraction, microfinance for housing, and indicators of land use regulatory stringency.

Previously, Dr. Estevez taught at Texas A&M’s College of Architecture, Dominican Republic and Mexico. Former experience includes coordinator and professor of a master program in urban planning in Dominican Republic and Mexico, and as a private planning consultant. He has also been involved with planning and housing projects in Mexico and Latin American countries. Dr. Estevez, a Fulbright scholar, earned his doctoral degree in urban and regional science from Texas A&M University, and his two master degrees in urban planning from Texas A&M University and the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (National Autonomous University of Mexico).