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

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Architecture Bachelor program revision: evolution or revolution? Strategic reconsideration of a Bachelor curriculum.

• Author(s) Name:
Ir. Maarten Willems

• University or Company Affiliation:
Eindhoven University of Technology, the Netherlands

• Abstract (300 words):
The first dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Joseph Hudnut, in the 1940’s, calculated the duration of an ideal solid academic training as an architect. Quantifying and accumulating all the subjects a future architect would need to know and translating that to a university program added up to 22 years. This anecdotal example implies that to compile a full architecture (BSc + MSc) program of 5 years one needs to carefully consider, compromise and prioritize its content.

Since the foundation of our Department at TU/e in 1967 one of the main distinguishing characteristics has always been a strong integral approach in the education of versatile professionals. That means a deliberate evasion of the classical and surprisingly persistent dichotomy between the ‘École Polytechnique’- and the ‘École des Beaux arts-approach’. Our department, hence the educational program, covers a wide area
from architectural and urban spatial design, urban planning, real estate, to the more civil engineering disciplines as structural design and building physics.

Recent developments on a national or even global level (financial crisis, technological developments, changing societal role of the architect) and a University level (introduction of the Bachelor College, fluctuating influx, revised financial model) induced our department to evaluate and rethink our Bachelor program. Surveys and interviews with a wide variety of stakeholders revealed a corresponding variety of perceived challenges and possible solutions.

This inevitably results in the strategic (re-)consideration of:

- scope of the educational program (generic <-> specific)
- extent of student freedom of choice (core program <-> electives)
- re-defining learning pathways (‘design’ – ‘process’ – ‘civil engineering’?)
- level(s) of implementation (course level <-> program level/structure level)
- pace of implementation (‘evolution’ <-> ‘revolution’)

Conclusions of the investigation phase and a draft of the optimization interventions and strategy are due early 2019 and will be presented at the conference.

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

In 1988 I graduated as an architect/engineer from the University of Technology in Eindhoven. Subsequently I worked for 11 years in leading architectural firms. In 2000 I returned to the University in Eindhoven as a lecturer and tutor at the chair Architectural Design and Engineering at the Department of the Built Environment, currently accommodating over 1400 BSc and MSc students.

I am primarily active in core lecture series, from 1st year to Master, and tutoring in projects and graduation studios. As a result of my involvement in many educational and organizational bodies in our Department I am recently appointed as project leader to optimize our Bachelor program.

I have presented my research activities at international conferences and in scientific journals. Besides this I have published in various professional magazines over the past 25 years. In my writing, my research as well as in my educational work my main area of interest is reflected; the realm where technology, practice and architectural design meet.