Case Study 2: Planning and teaching for effective learning

Contextual Background

In BA Interior Design courses, digital subjects are perceived as support for the development of the units' projects, and not as independent disciplines.
As a result, the programming of teaching software and digital processes does not follow a logical thread but an alternating flow that is counterproductive in student learning.

Evaluation

So far, the lesson planning during the unit is done focusing only on the final requirements for project delivery.
A schedule for the digital design lessons is made at the beginning of the year, which then undergoes various changes during the course, further compromising the correct logical flow of the teaching subject.
Often this plan is also executed by faculty members who have no knowledge of the digital subjects covered.

Taking the second year of both courses as an example, there are long interruptions (3 months or more) between the introduction of software and its use in an advanced way in a project, in order to prioritise marginal activities that can be taught later on.
This means that students, not using the software they have just learnt for 3 months, quickly forget what they have just learnt.
The consequences are that students do not reach the desired level of software knowledge and use, lacking technical skills in digital realisation for their final project.

Moving Forward

To address the challenges of teaching digital subjects in interior design courses, several strategies can be pursued:

Integrated curriculum design

The first, of course, is to develop a curriculum that integrates digital skills into core interior design projects. This approach ensures that students immediately apply software skills to relevant tasks, reinforcing their learning, and following a logical thread for digital subjects as well.
This option, however, cannot be put into practice immediately because it needs to go through several states of course approval and validation.
Already by next year, however, there will be changes that will facilitate a better running of the digital subject training programme.

Flipped learning

Provide access to self-paced learning materials that students can revisit as needed.
Adopting flipped learning would help create a continuity of learning by providing different resources during the academic year.
This would also give the possibility of increasing the learning material each year, giving students more opportunities to learn methods and processes that enhance their skills.

Project based learning

If the curriculum does not reflect the learning process of digital subjects, it is possible to incorporate project-based learning that requires the use of digital tools.
This approach helps students see the practical application of software skills in real-world scenarios.
The challenge in these cases is that these projects, not being assessed or taken into account in the unit's final evaluation, are hardly executed by the majority of students.

Industry partnership

Establish partnerships with industry professionals to provide guest lectures, workshops, and real-world projects. This exposes students to current digital practices in the field.

Faculty training

Ensuring that all faculty members are up-to-date with digital tools requires continuous professional development.
This practice would facilitate a better dialogue between the digital and studio teaching parts, thus being able to understand how to introduce digital subjects within the project execution.

By adopting these strategies, the goal is to create a more effective and engaging learning experience that better prepares students for the digital demands of the interior design industry.

Implementation of these strategies would lead to:

- Improved retention: Students demonstrate better retention of digital skills when they are applied consistently throughout the year.
- Improved quality of projects: Final projects show marked improvement in execution and digital presentation.
- Increased student engagement: Students report higher levels of motivation when digital skills are directly linked to their design projects.

References

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