



New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences



Issue 3 (2017) 131-136

ISSN 2421-8030

www.prosoc.eu

Selected paper of 5th Cyprus International Conference On Educational Research (Cyicer-2016) 31 March-02 April 2016,
University Of Kyrenia, Kyrenia North Cyprus

The Role and Importance of Workshops in the Architectural Design Education; Case of "Self Made Architecture I-II"

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Suggested Citation:

Orhan, M. (2017). The Role and Importance of Workshops in the Architectural Design Education; Case of "Self Made Architecture I-II. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*. [Online]. 03, pp 131-136. Available from: www.prosoc.eu

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Assist. Prof. Dr. Cigdem Hursen, Near East University
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Abstract

In formal education context, architectural education and methods, sometimes inadequate for architectural students who will take part in the architectural community which are rapidly evolving and changing, that reveals the necessity of informal education for vocational training of students for the completion of their developments and shortcomings. At present, the traditional education system, provide limited educational opportunities for students. In architecture education primary aim is to be able to broaden student's perspectives and design skills which are our primary aim is only possible by providing an independent medium of expression. Therefore, during the student's educational process, in order to gain the necessary skills and development with more innovative and entrepreneurial alternatives, it is necessary for the students to be encouraged and to benefit from the informal education such as workshops, seminars, conferences, contests and excavations. In the architectural educational process "formal-informal integrated education network" that will be formed and carried out each other as a complement enables students to develop personally and professionally by allowing them acquire the necessary skills. The subject of this study is necessity, importance and impact of the informal education, which plays a complementary role rather than support in the architectural design studios which is a backbone of architectural education. In this context, particularly in informal education, workshops will be focused and their contributions, results and student acquisitions will be evaluated.

Keywords: Architectural design education, formal-informal architectural education system, workshops, extracurricular education

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1. Introduction

In such a rapidly evolving and transforming world the architectural design education has also experienced many changes. Architectural design studio education is being diversified and made open to different experimental design, new opportunities are being created for students by providing them with flexibility. Also, for the other skills informal education qualifications are required to take their places on the field, so "formal-informal integrated education network" is being created.

In our country, many schools of architecture carry out workshops with several schools in national and/or international platforms offers students a dynamic work environment and in which they interact with different people. In this context, Atilim University and Bari Polytechnic University, Department of Architecture, held the international workshops of "Self-Made Architecture I and II" in 2013-2014 academic year. As a result of these studies, students gained the professional and personal acquisitions in architectural design that has a direct impact on the education process.

2. Informal Education and Workshops

Today, informal education is the main agenda of architectural education in many universities. A lot of national and international research has been done on "Adequacy of architectural education, processes, initiatives and implementation". Consequently each university uses the appropriate methods of informal education suitable to their curriculum and student profiles. Formal education is provided on the basis of a specific curriculum prepared by the university. On the other hand, Informal training is conducted outside the formal education framework, students participate voluntarily without worrying about the grades but the student can be credited such as a course having in mind that it is a contribution to the education report cards or is given as a diploma supplement. In formal education, traditional teaching methods are mainly based on information transfer only. Therefore, throughout the architectural education, remaining within the limits of theoretical and practical courses in the curriculum, only supplying information in their professional life after graduation are insufficient in terms of thinking ability of design.

"Workshop" is an applied teaching method to work, think, learn and a tool to create ideas and make decisions in a disciplined way. Especially in the academic environment, it is used as a tool for professional teaching and information transfer "with access to information" in terms of competence given to the student. It can be said that the most important part differentiating workshops from other studies is it triggers the imagination and creativity in a environment away from restrictions and formal processes (Ciravoglu, 2003). The task of education is to train and support our skills of imagination and empathy. However, the dominant value of our culture discourage fantasy, repress the senses and sharpens the boundary between people and the world (Pallasmaa, 1992). Therefore, the workshops ambience which allows students to work in an independent, confident and flexible way should be carried out parallel to architectural design studies.

3. Effects of Informal Education on Architectural Design Education

Today, the architectural education has gained its independence and has exceeded the boundaries of architecture. Stable systems which are valid in a world where the styles are dominant have to be replaced by the dynamic process. In other words, academic architecture whose rules and types are approved by the stable conditions and whose models have been designed has to be replaced by experimental architecture (Yurekli & Yurekli, 2004).

Architectural design studies done in a studio environment with the content of individual design approaches, also worries about the approval of design from educators and students only focus on whether or not they can pass the course. Perceiving architectural education as "formal curriculum education" and applying it in this way has negative effects on students. In many university's design studies which are done within the unbreakable walls of traditional methods and as a result of the

master-apprentice relationship are often far away from the original studies done via the student's creativity. According to Tanyeli (2009), lack the independence (and thus, the will to transform himself) both makes teaching approaches and programs strict and becomes the reason for inefficient internal operational mechanism.

The inadequate aspects of current architecture education has made it necessary to change in the education system. In 2002, UİA (International Union of Architects) -UNESCO partnership has created "UİA-UNESCO Architectural Education Charter" which will lead to establish a global architectural education network which will allow all the individual acquisitions to be shared by everybody and in 5th Article of this charter, the essential competencies that the students have to obtain in the architectural education are listed. These are identified such as "Design", "Knowledge" (Cultural and Artistic Studies, Social Studies, Environmental Studies, Technical Studies, Design Studies and Professional Studies), "Skill" (offering design, making, drawing, modelling, etc.). Document named "UİA - Architectural Education: Reflections and Recommendations" has been accepted in principle and documents about informal education has been attached to the content of architectural education in this document. In recent years, many universities have added a new dimension to their architectural education in accordance with this condition.

Gasset (1997), in his book, "The mission of the university" which evaluates the role of universities in terms of human life and of occupation the university is defined as institutions teaching ordinary people to be a cultured personality and an ideal member of his profession. It is indicated that universities should carry out studies aiming to decrease the cultural level of the society before the scientific studies. Considering this, we realized that external education methods work as a complement of professional education with the same aim. On this topic, Caglar (2009) states, "I identified the distinctive qualities which differentiates an architect from the other colleagues and determines his attitude and regard towards his profession. The most common and well-known method of acquiring professional skills is to attend an architectural school. However, there is neither a specific school nor a specific place and time to acquire the personal skills which is the basic quality which an architect builds with his creativity and passion. To be able to sustain professional development, the architect's philosophy, and the lessons he has from his environment and experience carry a great importance". Binding between theoretical information and professional practice skills are the important skills which are gained by the students during the informal education. The fact that architectural discipline and education is based on the skills is the main frame of this approach. A skill is the state of being satisfactory and qualified in order to be able to fulfill a certain task functions regarding specific skills, knowledge, attitude and behavior (Foque, 2009). The student of architecture, at the end of his professional training, should have to relevant acquisitions while working in these professional fields. Formal-informal integrated education process can make this acquisition possible.

4. Self-Made Architecture I-I

4.1. Objective

"Self-Made Architecture" workshop series held in Ankara and Bari with Italian and Turkish students' participation. According to study subjects which were determined by the both university's lecturers, the students made architectural design application in the urban space which is accessible to all according to study subjects which were determined by the both university's lecturers. Firstly, the theoretical information which is required for the application was given students and then the four day working process began. After work, cultural and architectural trips were organized to the city and region.

Workshops generally consist of 4 stages:

- Giving general theoretical information about the study and performing of academic meetings,

- Explaining the materials and the use to be used in the work place; making the specified application studies in groups,
- Making presentation of the ultimate workshop products to other groups,
- Organizing cultural and architectural trips to city and region.

45 students and 4 faculty members participated to workshop (25 from Atilim University, 20 from Polytechnic University of Bari) without prerequisite. The main aims of these works are to provide different cultural and social environments for students and to afford students an opportunity to experience the applicability of their architectural design which was created during the architectural design studies in formal education process.

4.2. Program and Context

Self-Made Architecture 1

The workshop held on 7-16 July 2013 in Bari, Italy hosted by Polytechnic University of Bari. The workshop whose main theme is "different materials and different experience in architecture" carried out in three different construction sites. The simultaneous application of these three different experiences and comparisons were done in this process. Consequently, "training environment based on working with material" was accrued.

Working themes are as follows:

- The Prefabricated Modular Building
- Stick Frame Construction (with bamboo)
- The "Saracena" Constructive System

Self-Made Architecture 2

Workshop held on 26-30 April 2014 in Hamamonu-Ankara hosted by Atilim University. The workshop whose main theme is "using wooden materials in architectural structure" carried out in a historical place in Hamamonu. The simultaneous application of three different experiences and comparisons were done in the same construction site. Students learned the technique of three timber frame construction system and how they are built. At the end of this work, students learnt construction techniques of these three different wooden frame systems and how they were built.

Working themes on "Wooden Frame System" are as follows:

- Traditional Houses of The Black Sea Region
- Anatolian Civil Architecture
- The Prefabricated Modular - Experimental Architecture

4.3. Evaluation and Acquisitions

In this study, the ultimate products whose applications are made by the students on their own. These products are the result of the work carried out with a common mind and common force. The students learnt to design, built and to read the architecture by knowing the materials with the help of realizing their own abilities and powers. The contents such as "international ambience", "group work", "cultural exchange", "different working areas" which occurred during the workshop helped the students gain various acquisitions and contributed to their general knowledge. The development and change of their architecture discipline and world approaches brought back self-confidence. The results of this have been seen with their impressive performance in design studios of formal education curriculum. At the end of workshop, asked to rate the acquisitions gained in this process to the

students of both universities (Table 1). Questionnaire responses proved clearly the contributions of workshop as an informal education in the architectural design education.

Table 1. Evaluation of Student Acquisitions After Workshop

| Acquisitions | 1 (less) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-------------|---|---|---|---|
| Conceptual thinking abilities assessment | | | | * | |
| Developments provided by different cultural, social and academic environment | | | | | |
| Developments provided by intercultural communication and interaction environment | | | | * | |
| Ability of doing individual and group work | | | | * | |
| Ability of creating alternative design | | | | * | |
| Ability of practical learning and self-learning | | | | * | |
| Ability of problem solving, analyzing-synthesizing | | | | * | |
| Professional and personal self-confidence | | | | * | |
| Contribution to the architectural design education (studio classes) | | | | * | |
| Contribution to the formal Architecture education process | | | | * | |
| Contribution to the professional work environment after university education (for students graduated after the workshop) | | | | * | |

5. Conclusion

In order to broaden students' perspectives and designing skills and to provide them with a free speaking environment, which are the main aim of architectural education, students should be offered complementary informal education environments to participate. At the same time, in order to be able to reinforce the theoretical information, presented in the university environment, with a method of application, "an integrated formal-informal education network" should be established and it should be carried out together in the same process. When we observe the contemporary world of architecture, we see that new designs, modern methods and materials are used each day. It is not possible for students to be master of all the development and change mentioned. Modern training methods, work to be done with the new identities to be brought to trainer-student relationship and informal training help students get familiar with the architectural design applications, the group work they will participate confidently and the reality of the pair of theory- application. At the end of the "Self-Made Architecture" workshop process sampled, the increase in the conceptual thinking skills of the

participating Turkish and Italian students and the success they achieved in the architectural design studios given them within formal education show us this analysis is true.

These studies which are carried out in intercultural cooperation, providing students with a free studying environment, reveal their creativity during designing process, improve their techniques of expressing themselves and have them gain short-term problem-solving and communication skills and communication skills.

All these acquisitions mentioned above, increasing the students' professional and personal self-confidence, make it easy for them to achieve success in their professional career after training. Training the candidates of architecture who can complete in national and international fields can be made possible by expanding the boundaries of architecture education model towards the studies outside universities, considering student acquisitions.

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