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Factors influencing function and form decisions of interior architectural design studio students

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Abstract

The design studio constitutes the core of interior architecture education. The purpose of this research is to discuss the factors influencing function and form decisions of students in design studio where the students encounter various obstacles in solution-seeking process for the design problem. The study primarily defines the educational approach of design studio and examines deductive and inductive design methods which guide students in their function and form decisions. The function and form decisions of students within two design studio case studies and a survey administered to these students are analyzed in order to discuss the factors influencing their decisions.

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1. Introduction

Interior architecture education is a studio-oriented type of training in which students become acquainted to and become skillful at solving technical, social, cultural and technological aspects of the problems of interior architectural design. Yet, the act of design is the problem of suggesting ideas on analysis, synthesis, evaluation and solution. Afacan (2012) points that each studio project consists of stages such as studying of previous examples, spatial analysis, form research, material selection and construction techniques decision, and preparation of presentation drawings and three-dimensional models. Interaction between the project coordinator and other project students in the studio provides a practice for real-life situations. As Uluoğlu (2000) suggests, the conscious facilitation of an experiment in design education prevents professional practices from being coincidentally taken

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place in the future. In this sense, the design studio is a substantially complex and formidable experience. In this demanding experience, students are expected to perform two tasks simultaneously: to design and learning to design. Sachs (1999) points that certain students meet expectations without facing any problems but a majority of the rest encounter a “stuckness” that may even result in cessation of the project in the decision stage. This “stuckness” occurs in the design stage, the most difficult stage of the project, where main decisions of the project are taken. Upon examination of the process of project development experienced in the interior architectural design studio, it has been observed that this process consists of three phases; namely, research-programming, design and presentation. Students choose their design methods in the “design” stage where they have got the most difficulty in reaching a solution, and have to make the main decisions about the project. These design methods offer a road map to the students and main decisions taken on the project are brought to maturity through dialogue with the project coordinator (Kvan & Yunyan, 2005). These decisions are about the principles of “utilitas, venustas, firmitas”, which are referred today as function, form and construction, suggested by the architectural theoretician Vitruvius (2005). The function and form decisions within these resolutions constitute the first and most important steps of the design stage. In this context, while the first part of the research defines the design studio training in the general sense, the second part studies the “deductive” and “inductive” design methods which can be practiced in the interior architectural design studio and can guide students in making decisions on function and form. The third part analyzes function and form decisions of students through a case study in two interior architectural design studios where the said design methods are practiced upon and it discusses the outcomes of a survey administered to these students in order to determine the factors which influence their decisions.

2. Interior architectural design studio

In most disciplines, classes in universities are the common environment for learning and teaching. Instructors teach by lecturing and assigning homework, and evaluate performance by exams. In design studio, contrary to these theoretical classes, students are expected to offer fitting solutions to hypothetical design problems assigned by the instructor and they learn by working on projects (Oh et al., 2012). Students develop their projects in design studio in parallel to criteria provided by the instructor and jury (Schön, 1985). As some theoreticians suggest, education in design studio is provided by jury’s critiques offered by multiple instructors while desk critique is offered by a single instructor and group critique (Dutton, 1987; Schön, 1984; Attoe & Mugerauer, 1991). While desk critique is considered as the main component of studio education and while it is the individual critique session executed by the student on their desk, group critique is that a small group of 5-10 students, gatherings together, comment on each others’ project. Roles of instructor and student can differentiate in these critiques. As Ciravoğlu (2003) indicates, instructor is the “master” and student is the “apprentice” in some studios. The instructor (master) passes their professional knowledge and experience to the student (apprentice) through critiques in the master-apprentice training. Another role undertaken by the instructor and student in the design studio is the “user-designer” role as claimed by Dutton (1991). In this design studio, the instructor (user) comments on the student’s (designer) project according to user perspective and orients project by user demands. Regardless of the aforementioned critique methods, instructors in design studio provide students with a design method that will guide them through developing solutions particularly for their initial projects. In that context, the latter part of the research examines the “deductive” and “inductive” methods which are among the methods that can act as a guide for interior architecture students in the freshman year.

3. A guiding method in design studio: deductive and inductive methods

The design problem consists of factors based on data consisting of various numbers and qualities based on an informational background. This problem is based on the same background with epistemology which is commonly analyzed in the discipline of philosophy. In this sense, Özer (1975) examines the design problem within philosophy and has developed a design methodology within this framework. According to this methodology; the deductio (deductive) and inductio (inductive) methods which have emerged as two different schools of thought in the philosophy discipline can be applied as reaching a singular solution through universal data (architectural shell) and a universal solution through singular data (functions). Özer (1975) divides the inductive method in architectural design process into three subcategories which are the methods of “induction through grouped primal functions”, “induction through primal functions” and “induction through partially primal functions”.

3.1. Deductive method in architectural design

Deduction is a method in philosophy which offers a way of theoretical thinking that begins in the general and ends in the particular and it narrows down from universal to singular (Manktelow, 2000). Similarly, in architectural design it is defined as the method of reaching singular forms of primal functions from a general form which

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