

The 5th Intercultural Arts Education Conference: Design Learning

Towards the Future Design and Development of Cities with Built Environment Education.

Experiences of Scale, Methods, and Outcomes.

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Abstract

Built environment education has produced various successful projects, in which children and youth develop and design visions on how their cities could become better places and in which the young citizen take responsibility and action to actually shape their environments. They demonstrate ways, to qualify the existing practice of public participation in architecture and urban planning. Research that based on positive experiences in practice shows short, intermediate and long-term changes and effects on participants, schools, the community and society at large or effects on the environment itself are missing.

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1. Introduction

The concept of built environment education (BEE) for children and youth has developed especially in the past 20 years with a rising public awareness nowadays. Built environment education aims at an intensive examination of the environment and the processes by which it is shaped. It bases on cooperation

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between architects, urban planners, designers, artists, teachers, schools, parents, education authorities and governments and uses cities, towns, villages, buildings, individual landmarks and public spaces as learning resources for all curriculum subjects (cf. Engaging Places network, 2012; UIA, 2008). Evidence of a rising awareness of BEE is the development of many groups and programs promoting built environment education all over the world. In the last decade a vivid international exchange between educators on aims and methods of built environment education has been installed, such as the International Union of Architects (UIA) Built Environment Education network (<http://uiabee.riai.ie/index-en.html>), PLAYCE, an international association of architecture education (www.playce.org) and the Engaging Places network which supports teaching and learning through buildings and places (<http://www.engagingplaces.org.uk/home>).

Having reached the age of majority it is time to reflect on practice and standing of BEE. What is the role of BEE within cultural education and its relation to design education? What scales and methods of BEE have been developed? What are outcomes and impacts of BEE? These questions will be touched by the following paper, which is written on the one hand from an activist's perspective (the author is educator herself in the field of built environment education), and on the other hand from the perspective of an academic researcher.

2. BEE as part of design education

Looking closely at the field of educational activities related to the built environment, it incorporates activities and programs in architectural education, design education, environmental education and (visual) arts education. The common ground of all these various types of learning activities for children and young people is the use of buildings, places and spaces as a context for learning. While there are some differences in the approach taken as well as in the focus by individual groups and programs there is much commonality in their missions and goals under the umbrella of cultural education.

2.1. Aims of built environment education

The UIA Built Environment Education Network, founded 1999, defines the objectives and teaching goals of built environment education for children and youth with the following points (UIA, 2008, 5):

- “Sensory awareness of the spaces – public/private, interior/exterior – that they move and live in
- Awareness of roles, rights and responsibilities in the creation of the built environment
- An appreciation of their architectural heritage and of contemporary architecture
- An understanding of the relationship between the built and natural environment and of the link between sustainable development and quality of life
- The vocabulary they need to discuss the qualities of buildings and places and how they relate to the life of a community.
- Experience of the analytical and problem-solving methods of the design process
- The capacity to work in a team, to observe, to identify problems and find creative solutions
- The opportunity to experiment with techniques, forms and materials
- The capacity to exercise sensitivity and imagination, taste and critical judgment
- The discovery that architecture is a creative intellectual task of research and design that draws on humanity, culture, heritage, nature and society.”

The terms of built environment education and architectural education are often used without much distinction. In practice built environment education takes a wider approach taught by an interdisciplinary team of educators with various backgrounds in planning, construction, design, art and education. They focus on the built environment as a whole including architecture, urban design, city and regional

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