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Is Gender Important On Understanding Construction Course In Architectural Education?

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Abstract

Architectural education has a different formation when compared with other profession educations. The first year of architectural education is specially difficult because, students directly start to architectural education after high school without any opinion about architecture. The first class construction course is given as Construction Knowledge I in Erciyes University Architecture Faculty. Construction Knowledge I course is given for familiarization for elements like foundation, floor, wall, column and joist of a building. In this study, it is aimed to determine the thoughts of students and their sensations for construction course in the first year of architectural education. It is tried to measure the effect of sex on understanding the construction course. It is tried to find out that which sex (male or female) has a positive/negative opinion for home works and studio studies. This study was done between the years 2003-2012 in a period of 9 years and 18 semesters, by performing a questionnaire to all students who are taking Construction Knowledge I course. By this study, we tried to find out that which systems for understanding the construction lesson may be better for students of different gender. We hope that this study will positively improve the construction education in the first year of architectural education.

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Key words: Construction course; Architectural education; gender differentiation;

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether gender has any effect on architecture education, with special emphasis on construction lessons. This study measures whether there is a difference between female and male students in the understanding and comprehension of lessons offered in architecture departments providing education for an important profession within the construction sector. The roles of men and women in male-dominant developing countries differentiate through some social functions, although the distinction is not sharp.

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The construction sector is densely populated by men in line with this understanding. There are many female architects in the Turkish construction sector. In architecture education, the number of female students sometimes exceeds that of men. Architecture education has a different formation than other professional education programs. Since students proceed to architecture education directly after high school in Turkey and they lack the basic information about the profession and professional education, the first year of the architecture education is difficult. It makes it difficult for the students to understand the new information in a field they are being introduced to for the first time. This is more evident in construction and design lessons in particular.

There are publications in literature about the role of gender in choice of profession or differences between men and women in terms of understanding the work in the construction sector (Gale, 1994). Also, research has been conducted on the definition and scope of “business ethics” in the last 20 years. However, the issue is not found among the concepts that are “illuminated” in the literature. Generally, men perceive moral issues in terms of “justice, rules and individual rights”, whereas women associate them with “relations, showing interest and mercy”. Research results have manifested the perceptual and behavioral differences of female employees. Although there is research (Schermer, 2001) in the literature warning instructors to have a better understanding of customer-oriented organizations in order to prepare architecture students better for their professional careers, no study was found about the effect of gender on understanding the lessons in architecture education except the study carried out by us that included a small number of students. Although efforts have been made in recent years aimed at reducing the gender difference among people working in the science field, women continue to be represented less in scientific branches such as engineering and technology (Brotman & Moore, 2008).

It is not wrong to say that architecture education has a different formation than other professional educations. However, instructors of our university’s Faculty of Architecture who try to provide architecture education have no training in formation. This brings along many problems in areas such as student-instructor, student-lesson understanding and similar fields. The role of student gender in understanding the lessons is studied. In this study, it was tried to identify the thoughts and perceptions of students about the basics of construction unit they encounter in the first year of architecture education. In the study, the Basics of Construction I unit was addressed. The construction unit, which teaches construction techniques and technologies, in the second term of first year of the Architecture Department of Erciyes University is Basics of Construction I. This course aims at introducing components such as foundation, flooring, columns, girders and massive and skeleton systems. Systems and subjects addressed in the Basics of Construction I unit are: Massive construction system, Skeleton construction system, Foundations, Walls, Floorings.

Students are divided into four to five groups depending on the number of students and whether it is fall or spring. Each group is headed by Construction Department Instructors who supervise and follows the application. This means one instructor per 10 to 15 students, depending on the term of the lesson. This system, which is not found in university departments other than architecture, includes the application of the course. In universities, where the system is based on passing the unit, students who cannot pass the unit on their first attempt repeat the unit in the following terms. For this reason, although the topics discussed are the same each year, applications and tasks differ. Also, in-class applications are graded and combined with mid-term and/or final test grades at certain ratios, which results in the term grade. Mid-term and final tests as measurement and evaluation methods are based on application projects. In the architecture departments of other universities, the same subjects are taught under different unit titles. Construction units in which the same topics are discussed and the same applications conducted are found all over Turkey. Male and female students in the Architecture Departments define the gender distribution of those who are thinking of entering into the profession. In the 19-year period that passed from the foundation of the Department of Architecture until today, the number of female students has always exceeded the number of male students. It is possible to see an increase in the number of female students and a decrease in the number of male students in just one year.

Society’s perception of whether a particular profession should be populated by men or women has affected channelization into certain professions. In this study, main pillars of the building site work, i.e. construction work, are considered to be part of a man’s profession. Therefore, gender of students and their levels of understanding and comprehension of the subjects discussed in class form the foundation of this study.

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