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Discussion on conservation education through restoration praxis in Turkey

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Abstract

Education is a field of science displaying differences with respect to the domain of teaching. Among these teaching fields, architecture has a unique position with regard to its content, methodology and the techniques used. Education in the field of architecture, which necessitates the use of knowledge and skills from a range of disciplines, relies notably on the teaching of a number of interrelated subjects. Conservation and restoration education with its cultural, social, technical, economical and legal, as well as historical, aspects in architectural training is a unique field requiring lifelong education. In this training numerous technical skills such as construction and structural design and social issues such as function and aesthetics are taught. Today, the safeguarding of historic buildings as world heritage sites in many countries by a number of international agreements and organizations has resulted in increased interest in the subject of conservation. Recently, both increasing economical interest and the gradual deterioration of cultural heritage due to ageing, climatic conditions, vandalism and insufficient care have encouraged awareness and trend for conservation in Turkey as was the case worldwide. However, it is a clear fact that interest and financial support alone are insufficient; conservation needs to be viewed as a major field of science requiring technical skills and knowledge coupled with extensive complementary laboratory studies. Indeed, the negative effects and irreversible devastation that conservation and restoration works have caused to historical monuments due to a lack of such technical skills and academic knowledge are unfortunately a matter of great concern in many countries. In this respect, the importance of conservation education is clear. In this paper, conservation education in Turkish universities will be presented using the case of the School of Architecture at Erciyes University; educational activity in the field of conservation will be demonstrated through its outcomes, and the problems resulting from the gap between education and praxis will be questioned through samples of restoration works representing the outcomes of the Turkish conservation education system.

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1. Introduction

Education is a field of science displaying differences with respect to the domain of teaching. Among these teaching fields, architecture has a unique position with regard to its content, methodology and the techniques used. Education in the field of architecture, which necessitates the use of knowledge and skills from a range of disciplines, relies notably on the teaching of a number of interrelated subjects. Conservation and restoration education with its cultural, social, technical, economical and legal, as well as historical, aspects in architectural training is a unique field requiring lifelong education. In this training numerous technical skills such as construction and structural design and social issues such as function and aesthetics are taught.

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However, when one examines the current state of education regarding historical and environmental conservation in our country, one can see that education in these subjects does not start at primary education level and at higher education level these subjects are taught only by certain faculties. Since these subjects are not taught in childhood, they are not internalized; even though these subjects are allocated 8 to 10 hours in the busy curriculum of higher education institutes - as there is no real integration with practice and other educational fields- these classes do not suffice and their practice does not yield the desired results.

Education, a sine qua non for development and advancement, has always been a significant problem in our country due to constantly changing laws and the lack of priority it enjoys in the eyes of the public. The difficulties we have faced for many years in this field in our country and the problems arising as a result of these difficulties are indeed applicable to many countries. It would be highly unrealistic to think that there is a single country in the world, which was able to solve all its education-related problems as of today.

2. Standardization in education-‘life-long’ learning

The activities and developments that have taken place in our country in the last decade, especially those in the field of higher education, are quite striking. Higher education itself is going through a major transformation worldwide in terms of quality and quantity. The urge to be able to create knowledge-based societies, which has perhaps become the most important focus of the last century, is encouraging higher education institutions to form partnerships so as to become more competitive and to keep up with certain standards and quality requirements. This process was reflected in European Union member states and candidate countries with the launch of the Bologna Process.

The Bologna Declaration, launched in 1999, aims at creating a common higher education area and the setting of basic targets. At present 47 countries are taking part in this process; Turkey has been involved since 2001. (Erdoğan A.(Ed.), 2010) The process, which is directed by the Republic of Turkey’s Council of Higher Education (YÖK), requires the evaluation of competencies expected to be acquired within the area of higher education and through lifelong learning (defined as the European Qualifications Framework) and the inclusion of activities that target the attainment of certain standards.

Within the area of European higher education there are two different qualifications frameworks: The Overarching Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. (Erdoğan A.(Ed.), 2010)

1- The Overarching Framework for Qualifications of EHEA- OF-EHEA is a framework which was defined in May 2005 in Bergen (Norway) by the representatives of the 47 countries included in the Bologna process, which covers learning outputs to be acquired by the end of each level of higher education .

2- European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning- EQF/LLL was formulated with a view to assessing the learning output of individuals and to ensuring the continuation of education and training in the next levels. In addition it covers all kinds of competencies and qualifications that are acquired at the end of formal, nonformal and informal training at primary, secondary and tertiary level education, academic and vocational training and apprenticeship training.

Within this context, Turkey has been a part of the system since 2005 with its National Qualifications Framework, which strives to help countries to establish the most accurate definitions in compliance with their own specific social, cultural and economic realities (Ünver, R. et al., 2011); the Committee on Higher Education Qualifications, established by YÖK, has already started its activities. In 2008 the committee was composed of members including academics and in 2010 the Committee started the process of creating a Turkish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education; since then it has exerted efforts to make the necessary definitions for different levels (associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree and doctorate) and to draw qualification profiles for each level.

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