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An educational tool the importance of informal studies/studios in architectural design education: A workshop summary

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Abstract

The controversial situation of the content of design studio, within the current conditions and the context of architectural education and the need for an idea to reorganize this studio by means of a structural rearrangement is the initial point of this study. The spreading idea in our country and across the world, is the possibility of giving an informal architectural education and its significant contribution to the formal education. Design education is the most important part of architectural education. Formal architectural education (training), followed by an architect in the candidate's training period, is a whole consisting of theoretical and practical courses. In spite of this programme package, in design education, student acquires to experience the design by his/her own and this is the only way to learn how to design. In this context, aside from formal architectural education informal studies such as workshops, seminars, conferences, exhibitions, competitions, excavation, etc. have an undeniable importance. In design education, "Informal Studies" have some outstanding results on developing design thinking skills, learning by doing, creating motivation, intuitive knowledge and self-confidence and at the same time these studies are a suitable tool for the LLP-lifelong learning programme. In this paper, as an informal study example Doğanbey town workshop will be discussed to evaluate the contributions of such informal studies on student's individual and collective learning styles, design thinking techniques and practices.

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1. Introduction

The roots of architectural design studios go back to the workshop and craftsmanship system of the Middle Ages. The design studios which were places for practice in such institutions that provide occupational formation are places of design simulations, radical changes, discussion over design methods and teachings today. The idea that is becoming widespread both in national and universal scale is investigating the occupation of architecture, architectural education, and in this respect the architectural design education, objectives, methods, environment, and the present state of management and structure in the architectural design education in accordance with the conditions of the present day.

Recently, in almost all areas of life, new changes and developments are experienced. Social events, technological innovations inspire new ideas and the human life and perspectives indicate more changes, and get more complex. All these developments affect the architecture as other social and science disciplines. While the architecture is defined by the academics, historians, theorists, and the critics again, architectural education, architectural practice, and the architects themselves are opened to debates and critics. High educational organizations are the places for a person to prepare himself for the professional life. Organizational units, which are highly evolved with the current requirements, and necessities of the era, also provide the architectural education and the students are prepared for their professional lives in these units.

Four-year formal educational education is an education aimed at introducing competences for realizing a product in a concrete form through design development and the creativity of the student. In this sense, while a foundation is laid for architecture by theoretical courses in architectural education, creativity comes to the forefront with applied courses. Formal education is employed as an education system that is based on a particular curriculum, it is mandatory and demands certain requirements and prerequisites. Informal education is regarded as short-term practices, undertaken on a voluntary basis where practitioner determines and directs the process and the process is completed without there being any pass-fail issue (Ciravoğlu, 2003).

Formal architectural education supported by informal education have been stated to be a contemporary application. Informal media within the content of architectural design experience can be achieved by workshops. Independent, undoubted, dense working media reached at the workshops are good samples for the studios. The making up of the defective parts of the formal education by workshops and the student's being on his own and making his decisions independently shall conclude in the student's arrogating his work to himself and approaching it with more responsibility. Supporting and developing the workshop structure, which can hardly be located in the formal education, finds a place much easily in the informal education, and forming of the workshop - studio coherence shall contribute for both students and tutors. The necessity for the studio that combines formal and informal should be supported by the authorities and should be applied. The advantages of workshops should be made heard by the tutors and students and those must be encouraged to organize and participate in such activities. Those activities shall bring the student from a passive state to a more active one, providing short period and dense projects where he can use his imagination and shall increase his knowledge and practice.

Vernacular architecture has an undeniable place in and importance for architectural education. Thus, it was here deemed appropriate to focus on vernacular architecture and to inform eighteen students within this practice-based project which was carried out within the scope of a winter school.

2. Meaning in Traditional and Vernacular Architecture

Architecture is survival of the mankind (Filarate, 1965). Need of shelter is one of the main issues in architecture even from Adam and Eve period. Therefore, need of shelter because of harshness and peculiarity of earth conditions, which are unbearable, is vital (Ozkan, 2006). Traditional architecture is a complex field of study with several components. Many scholars have studied the topic and classified the concepts and terms referred to in the discussions and studies concerning traditional architecture. The term 'traditional' is often referred to and discussed in the context of studies concerning the meaning and scope of 'vernacular architecture' (Bourdier, 1989; Oliver, 1989 and Rapoport,1989). In this respect some studies also focused on discussing what 'vernacular' is (Brunskill, 1970; Oliver, 1990 and 2003; Oliver, 1990; Stea, 1990 and Turan, 1990).