Chapter 13
Students as Partners in Architectural Design Education:
Towards the Typologies of Design Thinking

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ABSTRACT

Architectural design study is subjective. In order to aid a new pedagogy that welcomes the diversity of design approaches, the research project funded by Taylor's University incorporates teacher-learner partnerships in curriculum design. Engaging students as partners (SaP) in teaching and learning is an emerging yet contested topic in higher education. The research aims to offer learner-led pedagogy through engaging the SaP. Initially the research offers a critical discourse on various perspectives on design studio teaching pedagogy involving tools, teachers, and procedures. Later moves onto a series of studio observations and interviews with students, made for two consecutive semesters at Taylor's and University Malaya. By keeping the learners at the core, SaP, the subjectivity of designers brought to main focus. The contribution of the paper is a learner-led new pedagogy, on e-learning, for the emerging young learners. The significance is to offer tools for exploring originality in design and therefore to empower the budding designers, the learners in architecture.

INTRODUCTION

Architectural design is a subjective study discipline. In order to aid a new pedagogy that welcomes the diversity of design approaches, the research project funded by Taylor's University, incorporates Teacher-Learner Partnerships in Curriculum Design. Students as Partners in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (SaP) is a pedagogical approach that has been embraced recently by many higher education institutions primarily in the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia. SaP implies students and faculty/academic staff working in collaboration [,] as partners, to improve teaching and learning experiences (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

Whilst employability remains an integral part of the education of architects, we argue for a pedagogy that focuses on design thinking by students in architectural education, instead of merely meeting those prescribed learning outcomes set by professional bodies. Although there are many research works on studio environment and studio framework, only a very few focus on capturing evidence of the learners' creative thinking. This research is an attempt to fill this gap and keep students at the core of the analysis.

The research aims to offer learner-led pedagogy through SaP. It begins by exploring the generic literature that focuses on a range of instruments, approaches and actions and the tools that the designers deploy in order to steer specific thought processes in design. The theoretical study offers a critical discourse on various perspectives on design studio teaching pedagogy involving students. Later, it moves onto a series of studio observations, conducted over two consecutive semesters at Taylor's and University Malaya. By keeping the learners at the core via SaP, the subjectivity of designers was brought into focus here. Finally, the research attempts to compare the findings from the data collected with the theoretical discourse. The contribution of this paper is a new pedagogy on e-learning, for emerging young students . The significance is to offer tools for exploring originality in design and therefore, to empower budding designers and students of architectural design.

THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

The book, *Design Process as "episodes"* by Rowe (1986), takes an episodic structured approach in analysing the design process, focusing on the process of rationalization that occurs as a designer characterizes or frames an ambiguous, diverse situation in a particular way. Additionally, the author explores the limitations of various procedural models which depict design as a sequential process of creative problem solving and how normative positions guide design inquiry. Rowe goes on to highlight the consequences of design thinking on design practice - when architects take either positions of a) "naturalistic" interpretation of humanity and the world or b) an interpretation of architecture as a self-referential enterprise. The first position is based on a "naturalistic" interpretation of humanity and the world, while the alternative is concerned with architecture as a self-referential enterprise. At the risk of caricature, interpretation in the first realm can be described as tending to adhere to the hypothetical-deductive system of theory construction and empirical observation favored by the social sciences. Within the second realm of inquiry, there is a tendency to adhere to the rhetorical domain of architectural objects and organizing compositional principles. Therefore, the idea of 'self' and subjectivity needs to be taken to a conscious level whilst teaching budding architects in the design studio.

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