


Chapter 2

Cultural Consciousness in Heritage Architecture Education With a Problem– Based Learning Approach

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ABSTRACT

Heritage architecture education is important to develop contextual understanding and cultural consciousness among architecture students. Conventional teaching approaches are inadequate to cultivate students' cultural knowledge of specific places and community contexts. This chapter addresses this gap by evaluating how problem-based learning (PBL) as a teaching approach in a measured drawing module contributes to cultural consciousness among architecture students. It adopts quantitative survey research design to evaluate students' cultural consciousness based on knowledge of place identity, understanding of community social contexts, and recognition of community cultural contexts. Two student cohorts completing the module participated as respondents, providing insights into PBL's impact. The findings substantiate the adoption of PBL as an effective pedagogy to enhance students' cultural consciousness, by developing contextual and cultural sensitivity in design cognition. It is also useful in guiding the design of teaching approaches for culturally related subjects in other disciplines.

INTRODUCTION

Architecture plays a significant role in reflecting the cultural identity and history of a place and its community. This encompasses various aspects of building design which should consider local environmental factors and meet the needs of the people while respecting the values and traditions of the com-

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munity. The International Union of Architects (Union Internationale des Architectes) acknowledges this significance and envisions a diverse and inclusive architectural education that recognises human, social, cultural, urban, architectural, and environmental aspects as outlined in the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education (UIA, 2023). It is therefore crucial for architectural students to learn about the significance of each place and features of local socio-cultural importance. However, the current approach to architectural education tends to prioritise universal and global values, often neglecting local and regional significance (Gunewardene, 2016). Olweny (2020) suggests a shift of focus on local contexts when developing architectural education curriculum. Embaby (2014) argues that both the universal and local values of place and community should be comprehensively integrated, rather than being treated as separate entities. Recognising this, the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education emphasises the role of architectural heritage education in developing knowledge of sustainability, resilience, social contexts and sense of place in building design. This would nurture design thinking for creative approaches in addressing the transformation of cultural process (UIA, 2023, p3).

Although the significance of cultural heritage has been recognised in the architectural education framework (Clarke et al., 2020; Djabarouti & O'Flaherty, 2019; Jadresin Milic & Nikezic, 2018; Lapadula & Quiroga, 2012), related subjects such as architectural history receive little attention from educators, because they are separated from the architectural design domain (Li, 2018). Pasha (2020) reports that the role of culture in architectural education is over-simplified and reduced. Furthermore, current approaches to teaching architectural history remain limited in achieving the desired outcomes. Li (2016) asserts that architectural history courses have been marginalised compared to architectural design courses in academic institutions. Inadequate teaching time hinders the effective delivery of the course. In addition, an over-reliance on lectures as the primary teaching method leads to passive learning among students, reducing their engagement with the subject. Embaby (2014) argues that conventional teaching of architectural history often neglects its practical applications, overlooking the crucial link between cultural heritage and architectural education. This highlights the need for educators to recognise the importance of incorporating cultural heritage as an integral part of a holistic architectural curriculum, without discriminating against other aspects.

ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR A PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING APPROACH

As scholars generally agree that local values should be given equal respect in architecture education, it is considered important to adopt a place-based approach in understanding the contexts that constitute these values. Ng (2013) observes that placing emphasis on contexts enables students to cultivate sensitivity towards a place while also expanding design creativity. Similarly, Nikezić & Marković (2015) have highlighted the value of place-based learning in enhancing students' awareness of spatial-cultural contexts, thereby influencing their environmental literacy and developing a sense of responsibility. However, conventional teaching approaches towards heritage architecture education often adopt a generic learning scope that lacks real-world contexts involving specific places, communities, and cultural systems. This may not sufficiently engage students in developing a deeper cultural understanding of unique places and community contexts.

In response to this, Smith & Sobel (2004) suggest a learning process that emphasises the connections between place and society, allowing real issues affecting specific localities and communities to be addressed. Consequently, an effective educational approach in heritage architecture should integrate a

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