ITU A|Z
VOL:2, NO:1/2, 79-92, 2005-1/2

To begin…

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Received: September 2005 Final Acceptance: January 2006

Abstract:
Attending to a university program, is one of the most crucial changes that may happen in the life of a young person. In architectural education this transitional period can be even more complicated than many of the other branches. That's the reason behind the fact that beginning design education is one of the issues which has been discussed the most amongst the educators involved in the field. There are many different methods of introductory design education existing all over the world. The variation in these approaches mostly depends on what is believed to be the fundamentals in design and architecture. Still many of the basic design courses are planned to teach the fundamentals of visual organization, shared by all fields working in the visual domain within a closed system and apart from real concerns of architectural design. Although learning compositional issues are important for students of architecture, it should be kept in mind that architectural design is a social activity and there are many extrinsic factors which affect the decisions of designer rather than the formal relationships. Thus, it is believed that this approach should be enhanced by providing students with an insight about the complexity of architectural design and factors which influence decisions about forms and the most important of all the existence of human being.

The aim of this paper is to discuss a student-centered method of introductory design education developed in the Faculty of Architecture in Eastern Mediterranean University; which aims at achieving the mentioned goals, its structure, theoretical background and pedagogical considerations.

Keywords: *Basic design, introductory design education, architectural education*

Introduction

Beginnings are important. They are generally a transition from an already existing state to a new one, an in-between situation. The joy and excitement for the new goes often hand in hand with the pain and worries to leave the old. Attending to a university program, is one of the most crucial changes that may happen in the life of a young person. In architectural education this transitional period can be even more complicated than many of the other

branches. The students face with so many new things at the same time that it can be a real “shock of new”. On one hand, they should face with the fact that university education is much different from the education they have gone through in their secondary schools, based on one way of direct transmitting of information from the “teacher”, memorizing and giving back what they were taught; towards a more active way of learning with the help of “instructors”. On the other hand, they have to engage in a totally new environment of learning called design studio where they work on given problems which are generally “ill-defined” and there are no clues about what the end product should look like. The situation becomes even more dramatic as in this design studio the media they work with have nothing to do with what it used to be. They are asked to work with drawings and models rather than books and notebooks. They should learn to produce new ideas and communicate them within a totally new medium and language. Students who have already serious problems in self-expression even in verbal terms now are faced to develop visual means to demonstrate what they have in mind. Still these are just the beginning of the trip, the new terminology used in design, the way of assessment of the works, the new role of instructors are just some examples of new things which appear one after the other in the very beginning. Moreover, while students deal with so many things all together they begin to develop their first beliefs about their role in the future and their future career. Most of these beliefs and attitudes are everlasting and don’t change easily over the years. The fact is that much of what students learn in this first year is conveyed to them implicitly rather than explicitly. Dutton (1991) defines this hidden curriculum as those unstated values, attitudes, and norms that stem from the social relations of the school and classroom as well as the content of the course.

Thus, deciding about how to begin architectural education becomes one of the issues which has been discussed the most in the field. There are almost as many various approaches to how to begin architectural education as the number of schools! Although it is possible to classify these under several categories, still the variation is a demonstration of a rich collection of possible approaches mostly dependant on what is believed to be the fundamentals in design and architecture each with their own pros and cons. Thinking about planning of any design studio’s curriculum as a design problem itself explains the possibility of ending up with different solutions. On the other hand, it is the fact that the formulation of introductory design has been tremendously affected by the dominant theoretical ideas in the field of architecture.

The aim of this paper will be to discuss a method of beginning design education developed in Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus and used for the last few semesters, its theoretical background, the basic pedagogical approach and the achieved results. We hope that sharing these ideas with other colleagues interested in the issue will bring about possibilities for further challenging collaborations.

The Background

The aim in a student-centered university education is not only to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills in performing their future careers but also to help them in developing their personalities as independent, sensitive, critical persons with their own set of values. University education should address the whole person, and help in creating positive changes in patterns of behaviors of students in different dimensions.

In setting the objectives of an introductory design education not only decisions about the scope of knowledge and concepts to be learned, and the skills to be enhanced, but also decisions about the values gained as a sequence of the methods applied should be made consciously and carefully.

The methods of Basic Design applied in many of the schools of architecture are based on a positivist view which sees building as an objective reality with the fact that everybody observe and agree on it. Underlying this is the emphasis on the universal, general and common properties, general principles, and laws (Mazumdar, 1993). The basic design method developed in Bauhaus School, the precedent of many of the methods developed later was a demonstration of these ideas and as Colquhoun (1972) expresses based on two seemingly contradictory aspects of design. On one hand it was based on bio-technical determinism, and on the other hand on free expression. That is the reason why in this approach freeing students from all their preconceptions and aiming at making them return to a child-like state and creating a new common formal language goes hand in hand. In achieving this goal formal compositions of abstract nature were used as a means to teach fundamentals of design which were believed to be common in different branches of art and design.

Still in many of introductory design models the emphasis is on formal compositions. Stanton (1993) discusses that the models of basic design education which is based on compositional exercises make the armature for later architectural pursuits for which the ideology is put in place in the first years of education that the making of buildings continues to be a sculptural activity.

Basic design courses formulated according to this approach are planned to teach the fundamentals of visual organization, shared by all fields working in the visual domain. However, keeping in mind that architectural design is a social activity, and there are many extrinsic factors which affect the decisions of designer rather than the formal relationships, this approach should be enhanced by providing students with an insight about the complexity of architectural design and factors which influence decisions about forms and the most important of all the existence of human being.

Designers arrange basic visual elements according to complex formula. The aim is to create an order in the built-environment. The basic intention in formulation of most of beginning design courses has been to teach these elements of form and to improve the ability to grasp underlying relationships of these forms to create an orderly environment. However, the point is that these would mean little if they do not serve a significant human purpose. The meanings that these organizations have differ according to culture, historical experience, religion, etc. Thus, a holistic beginning design education should emphasis this humane side of formal organization rather than focusing on organization of forms in a closed system with its own rules and based on unchanging universal values.

Thiel (1981) describes the two misconceptions held by many beginning design students as well as many educators and professionals about design as that design is essentially a matter of "intuition", or merely the materialization of a form following a tête-à-tête with one's muse on one hand and on the other hand that the chief characteristic of a good design is its "originality", or lack of an apparent precedent. It can be claimed that these

attitudes are a legacy of the influence of the competitive educational system practiced at the Beaux-Arts (Thiel, 1981). This emphasis on originality preserved its importance in many other approaches developed later. This could sound when the main task of education was to prepare future architects for designing monuments and buildings of significant importance, but in the modern times the architects do not design only buildings with special social functions or monuments. Today the range of architectural works is much wider than this. Architects have to design many "ordinary" built environments which in their design originality is not a prior criteria.

On the other hand, Koberg and Bagnall (1972: 8) define creativity as "both the art and the science of thinking and behaving with subjectivity and objectivity". Therefore, subjectivity, or feelings are important in creative design, but are not sufficient. It should be based also on what one knows, thus the role of knowledge cannot be ignored. The type of creativity which is the subject of many of basic design methods ignores the role of external knowledge in creativity.

Stanton (1993: 218) explains the necessary condition for creativity as: “The rich process of interpretation and invention that constitutes the creative act cannot occur in a vacuum. There must be material, and the gathering of that material is largely a process of inquiry, of learning in the most ordinary of senses occurring simultaneously with the most extraordinary of critical actions, combining as the design act”.

Many of the methods of basic design education begin with exercises in two dimensional medium related to basic elements of formal compositions such as points and lines, continuing with three-dimensional abstract compositions in the further steps. This method is based on a linear and analytic approach to design which believes that students should first learn the basics before they go to more elaborated complex designs. One problem which arises is that what is the basic in architectural design? The implicit implication of this approach is that rich formal composition alone is the main aim of architectural design.

This approach began to be criticized vastly. A review of the collections of best beginning design projects (1979, 1984, 1988, 1993) shows a shift from the Bauhaus model towards more “architectural” problems. Although in these collections the whole program can not be reviewed but it is obvious that new methods using “real” architectural projects have emerged. But these new approaches can also be criticized for several reasons. Saleh Uddin (1993) describes the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of approaching introductory design education as: “In introductory design education abstract problems may help students to organize their thoughts and their design ideas but these can easily turn to geometric puzzles and become ends in themselves forgetting that the realm of space design has responsibilities beyond formal attributes. Moreover, these kinds of formal compositions are not suitable to make students feel the space they design. On the other hand, without exercises in formal organization, students get the misconception that in design "anything goes". He summarizes his observations about the implications of these methods as that students who had little or no exposure to formal and compositional basic design concerns produced unsophisticated designs with poor arrangements of spaces in the upper classes and since compositional skill is nonexistent, whatever the idea or concept behind the design, it never produces an efficient, exciting

arrangement of spaces. It seems that a method of introductory design education which can combine both of these aspects may end up with more successful results.

Furthermore, many of our preconceptions about introductory design courses are just beliefs rather than facts. They should be questioned and new challenging approaches based on realistic observations and clear statements should be developed. In AIAS Report (2000: 24) students declare the need for innovative approaches to design studios as: “We feel a culture of innovation must be embraced in order to create alternative teaching and learning models. To create a healthier and more successful studio culture, architecture schools will need to rethink existing practices and develop creative alternatives”.

This is what we tried to do in our faculty. The method which was used before was based on a linear approach of creating two and three dimensional formal compositions (in sequence) first and at the end students were asked to design a building with simple functions. The problem of applying what students had learnt about compositional aspects to “real” architectural designs was observed clearly. Thus, we tried to develop a method of introductory design education which on one hand enhances the awareness of students about the formal compositional principles and on the other hand do not emphasize these as the main and the only aim of design. While our students think about how to produce a composition with a high visual quality at the same time they should think about the quality of space, ease of use, etc. at short what is related to human being.

The proposed method is a result of many years of experience and a gradual improvement based on evaluation and improvement of it after each semester. It should be mentioned that although the basic approach is the same in each semester, the problems given generally are changed to make the journey more challenging both for the students as well as instructors. Besides, the problems are organized in a way that neither the students nor the instructors have a clear preconception about how the solution should be. The possible solutions are developed in the process through interactive discussions and general critiques. In the following part the general description of this method and some examples of problems given in various stages are presented.

The Structure of the Course

Schön (1984: 6) sates that: “The beginning student does not know what he needs most to learn, yet he must seek it out for himself. How, as Plato asked long ago in the Meno, is one to search for what he does not know? How will he recognize it when he finds it? The design master cannot at first tell the student what the student needs to learn, because the student has at first no way of understanding what the design master means. Only as he or she immerses him or herself in the studio experience, the experience of trying to design, can he or she create the conditions in which to begin to understand what the studio master says and does.”

The method of introductory design course that we have proposed aims at immersing students smoothly to the process of design through a set of well-structured exercises with increasing complexity (in relation to variables to deal with) in each step. Through these exercises students learn some concepts and terminology related to design, new ways of communication

and presentation of their ideas and at the same time they learn to in Ledewitz (1985) words “think architecturally”.

The contents of two consequent introductory design courses (Basic Design and Introduction to Architectural Design) are structured as a whole. While in the first semester, the emphasis is more on the design principles, elements, tools and ordering systems in the second semester, the impacts of environmental factors, structure, context, etc on architectural forms are studied.

In order to conduct the attention of the students to the basics of compositions in architectural design, the contents of first semester design course proceeds from the series of assignments beginning with the questioning of the most familiar space defining elements in architecture to a series of 3D and some times 2D assignments emphasizing order, unity and design principles. Consequently, design problems are enriched by the introduction of human scale, function, circulation, etc. The final assignment of the first semester aiming at designing of series of spaces for simple activities covers all the concepts discussed during the semester.

The important point to emphasize here is that the compositional practices begin with short-term design problems questioning those aspects of architecture which students are the most familiar with. The first problem given in a semester was to design a **wall**. To design a single wall students had to question a concept they “knew” the best. A general discussion in the class about the designed walls aimed at understanding what a wall is, what is its purpose, etc. (to connect or to separate, connecting or separating what to/from what? Why and then how?) Discussion about formal compositional aspects in this way goes hand in hand with discussions about purpose, differences and the reasons behind. The set of problems continued with adding openings to the wall. The same method was followed. So the formal considerations were never separated from the life, the purpose, the function, etc. A research asking to find examples of walls and openings (from their own living environments as well as from the books) in addition to descriptions of characteristics, purposes, materials, etc. enhanced the learning process. The second stage came with making a composition of three walls. Then the students discovered how walls define spaces and how they affect each other. The concepts related to definition of space, scale and proportion, and the formal relationships began to appear. The sequence continued with using different sizes of 2D projections of these compositions of three walls as units (after revision) to make 2D compositions. Concepts of unity, balance, harmony, and contrast came to scene. After playing a while with these two dimensional compositions and trying to create an order based on a concept in mind, students were asked to change this 2D composition to a 3D one (Figure 1). The rules for composition in this new medium discovered to be not different from the 2D composition. At the same time issues related to spatial relationships were discussed. Dominance and hierarchy were discovered. The game continued with adding possibility of changing the angle of the planes to add the 3 dimensional quality of the composition and to define the spaces more strongly (Figure 2). Use of texture and color as important attributes of form (following a lecture about color schemes) was encouraged.

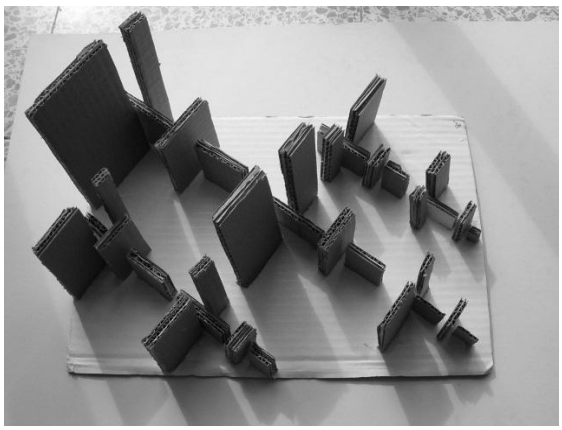

Figure 1: *3D composition using units*

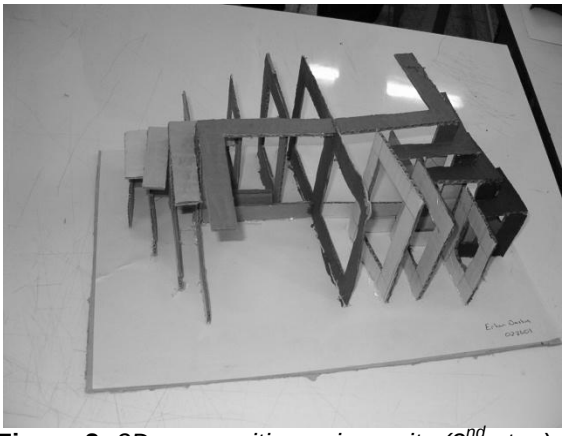

Figure 2: *3D composition using units (2nd step)*

These exercises generally last about a month. With the last composition the period for short practices are closed. These are followed generally by a new and longer problem in relation to space design (but still with an almost abstract nature). For instance, once students were asked to design a small existing space in between their studios as an exhibition area for their own 2D and 3D projects. To limit the number of variations to work with, a well defined closed space was chosen as the site. In addition it was asked from students to decompose a 1x1x1m solid cube to create elements which when put together created a 3D modular unit. Then they arranged these units in an order to form the exhibition (Figure 3). Attention to human scale, definition of sub-spaces with different qualities and solving circulation problems were new variables students dealt with in this problem.

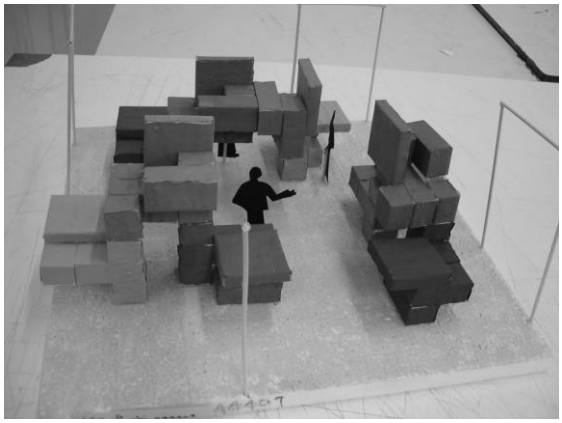

Figure 3: *Design of an exhibition area*

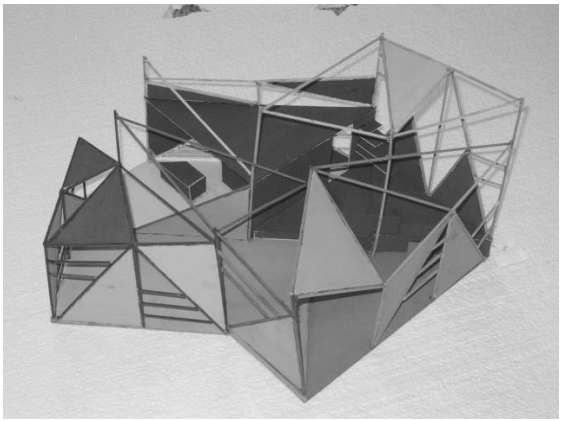

Figure 4: *Stand for a student club*

After this problem students become ready to begin the last problem of the semester. In this last problem students are asked to deal with designing a series of spaces with different qualities for a series of functions. An example of the final problem was designing a stand in a given area for a student club of their choice to be used in spring festival which is organized every year in EMU. The designed stand had to serve the proposed functions such as registration, storage and exhibition of activity and it had to be made of modular demountable linear, planar, and volumetric elements. Control of circulation, definition of entrance, definition of different kinds of spaces (open, semi-open and closed), privacy, and usage of different means such as level differences, color and textures for differentiation of spaces were

some of the requirements (Figure 4). All through the semester students work with models, the improvement in model making skills can be observed in each step. In final project they should also use drawing as a means of presentation.

In the second semester, the impacts of environmental factors, structure and other aspects on architectural design are studied. While students reinforce their knowledge about the various topics they experienced in the first semester, at the same time they experience and learn about more concrete subjects related to architectural design such as structure, control and usage of environmental factors, and topography.

In second semester, students deal with relatively longer projects with more variables and degree of complexity. It should be mentioned that in this semester research is even a more important part of the work. Furthermore, as students all have improved their drawing skills in the previous semester, now they begin to use them in the design courses more often. This means that beside models of various qualities (that is always a requirement) they use sketches and other kinds of drawings as well to present their ideas.

As an example one semester began with a warming up project about designing an announcement board for the Faculty. The design had to be one that could be made in reality by students with available materials such as cardboard and wooden sticks. In this way it was aimed to let students face with structural problems and how the limitations of materials affect their designs. From that point a series of assignments in relation to structure was given. At the first stage students made group researches and presentations on different structure types in the class. Meanwhile, as a sketch problem they were asked to make a tensegrity structure using wooden sticks and string. In this way they experienced how compression and tension forces act. Following this assignment they were asked to design a tensile structure for a

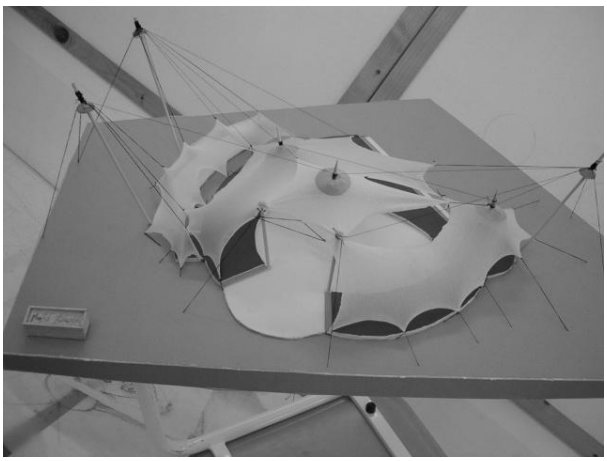

Figure 5: *Disco-tent*

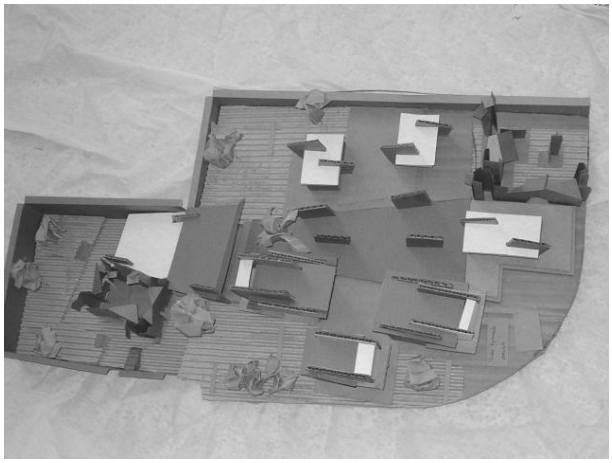

Figure 6: *Workshop area in Famagusta*

Figure 7: *The Mid-term Jury*

discothèque space with a series of functions in the beach close to the university (Figure 5). In this problem students experienced the relation of architectural form and organization of spaces with the structure they use. As the last problem of the semester (Workshops for Artists) students dealt with a problem involving all concepts covered before, such as space typologies, zoning, functional relationships-vertical and horizontal circulation, ergonomics, etc., plus form-space-structure-light relationships, perception of space, topography (slope), approach, entrance-exit, integration of exterior spaces and landscape into the project, orientation and sun light control. The site given was a site in the old city of Famagusta (Gazimagusa) with two small historical buildings on it. One of the buildings was half ruined down creating a well-defined semi-open space. As the site was a preserved historic one, students were asked to design spaces with light temporary structures which do not need excavations and could be moved easily when necessary. They were asked to design the site and required “buildings” in 1/100 scale and the workshops (with the functions of their choice) in 1/50 showing the structure used and the interior organizations (Figures 6). It was a very complex problem and students were asked to deal with many variables at the same time. Visits to the site were organized when necessary and students did observations in the site in relation to its characteristics, relation to surrounding roads and buildings, etc.

Despite the complex nature of the problem students showed a high performance in dealing with all the requirements and we had more than satisfactory results concerning their ability in not only developing concepts and ideas but also in dealing with tangible issues such as circulation, functional properties and structure. A very important point to be emphasized about this method is that students had no difficulty to relate formal organizational concerns with the more functional ones.

Our Students

The body of students in our faculty has quite divergent characteristic. While a big part of students are generally from Turkey and North Cyprus, we have also many students coming from non-Turkish spoken countries such as Iran, Nigeria, Lebanon, etc.. This diversity creates a rich multi-cultural environment in the studio.

Moreover, the secondary education, by no way, prepares students for a field such as architecture in which independent, creative and visually sensitive people with critical approaches are needed. Students have generally gone through a secondary education that elaborates memorizing and answering multiply choice questions which have only one correct answer. This education does not prepare students for research and evaluating the information received. A critical view is often found to be lacking. There is no place for thinking deeply and creating alternative solutions. In this system of education students have been studying in a highly competitive environment with no place for making mistakes.

On the other hand, because of the current system of choosing their department in university exam, many of the beginning students may have not sufficient information about the context of architectural design and their future roles, have none of the skills necessary to design and to present it, and no information about how they should approach to design.

Last but not the least students have different personalities, cultural backgrounds, levels of motivation and learning styles. As Mc Ginty (in Cappleman and Jordan, 1993) also mentions students represent a variety of learning types, both abstract and concrete. We teach both, and surprisingly, both are valid modes.

Managing all this diversity is the main role of the instructor in an introductory design studio. Neglecting differences in backgrounds of students can result in privileging those who have a richer cultural capital because of living in big cities or coming from well to do families and so on.

Our method had to be based on all these facts. Thus, it would let students of all different backgrounds and learning styles to improve their own designs without getting bored or overwhelmed. We try to achieve this through the sequence of the problems as well as group and one to one critiques. The problems begin from a point where all students despite their backgrounds can participate and enjoy doing them. Each student is encouraged to develop his or her design to a further step from where it is, the important thing is that he/she shows the ability to understand the points mentioned in the critiques and to develop his/her design accordingly. The critiques are not direct instructions about what to do, but about the weak and strong points of different designs. The students do think about these and develop their own solutions. So they take the full responsibility of their own works and can describe about what they have in their minds, their concepts, the method they use and the way they develop answers to the problems. The following part will describe more in detail the pedagogical concerns in formulating this approach.

Some Pedagogical Considerations

In this approach the aim is to design a student-centered program of introductory design education. Lasada and Hines (1993: 312) describe the purposes of such a program as: “Students would be led to discover a personal way of working using their own history and individual ways of comprehending and imagining the world; to construct a set of principles serving as a basis to make decisions; to articulate a concept of quality; and to develop an approach to self-education”. In the proposed program it is believed that these aims have been fulfilled to a great extant. Besides, it is believed that in this method of approaching foundation education students not only learn some knowledge and skills related to architecture but also they develop a conceptual understanding of environmental design.

As McGinty (1979a: 213) also states “three problems block skill development in conceptualizing; the first block deals with problems of communication, the second with inexperience, and the third with the problems of generating hierarchies”. In this method it is tried to deal with theses problems step by step in a conscious manner.

The basic idea behind organization of these courses is to let students learn through a process of inquiry and discovery. In each phase they face with new problems and discover ways to deal with them. In the first stages generally instead of one to one critiques, general discussions about all the projects in the studio is chosen as a method of instruction. Later with the increase in complexity and the time devoted to the problems, some personal on desk or small group discussions are used as well.

In this point it should be mentioned that the line of discussions in the studio are developed according to what is produced by students and what they mention about their designs as well as the others' in general discussions which are realized in an interactive manner. The instructors act in these discussions more as coaches rather than "teachers". They take the points out of what students make and say to lead the discussions to a certain direction. Usually there are more than one or two instructors in the studio to let students expose to different ideas and approaches. It also reduces the possibility of being instructor-dependent for students which helps them to find their own way of approaching to the problem.

As Kuhn (1990) has also mentioned "human beings are born with the intrinsic motivation to learn, to improve, to take pride in one's work, to experiment. Research suggests that learning and grading actually work at cross-purposes because the best motivation for learning comes from a student's intrinsic level of interest and not from the extrinsic force of grades". (quoted in AIAS Report:16). But unfortunately according to the regulations of our university we have to evaluate the students' performances with some grades. To decrease the negative effects of a competitive learning environment especially in the first phase of the semester no grade is given to projects, but students have to submit the assignments to be able to pass this initial stage. When jury evaluation is used as the method of assessment for the projects in the following phases, these are not organized as the classic juries but the students organize their studio as an exhibition (Figure 7) and the jury members walk around and speak with group of students about their projects in a much less formal manner. Generally as it is believed that the process is more important than the end product, the final grades are given as a result of instructors' and jury evaluation together.

A very important aspect of our approach is that students learn from their mistakes more than they learn from any other thing. Thus, the approach of instructors in general discussions becomes very important. It should be taken in mind that students in these ages are very sensitive and fragile; they should not feel that their mistakes are signs of disability in producing solutions. Just in contrary these should be emphasized as important means in finding their own personal way of approaching to problems. Instructors are not there to show the correct answers to problems, but are there to help students to find their own ways of dealing with the problematic situations.

A method of concept-test model similar to what is suggested by Ledewitz (1985) with cyclic nature is used in organization of the problems, students are asked to develop conceptual ideas in the very beginning and test them in each stage rather than following a linear approach from analysis to synthesis. In this way it is believed that students become much more successful in developing conceptual ideas.

Importance of research in design is emphasized all through the semester by asking students to do search about general aspects related to architecture as well as issues related to their own design problems. The notion that decisions on formal aspects in architecture are related to many other factors is tried to be emphasized from the very beginning. Design is not approached as an intuitive act but as a conscious attitude.

To make students less anxious about what they will face in the semester a syllabus summarizing the issues to deal with and the problems to be given is

handled to them in the very beginning of each semester. At the same time the design studio is supported by theoretical related courses. The discussions in studio are enriched giving reference to discussions in these courses frequently.

Last Words:

As was mentioned before we have been using this method of introductory design education in the last few years. It is obvious that the success of any program is related to many factors, first of all to instructors who have clearly understood the method, and its pedagogical implications. This program has been developed as a result of a team work of a core group of instructors and assistants working on it [(1)]. All the members of the group have had profound roles in developing this program. The program is then enriched by the valuable suggestions and contributions of other friends joining to the group.

We believe that this method of introductory design education has merits which deserve some attention. That's why we chose to publicize and share it with our other colleagues.

(1) The core group was consisted of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Can Kumbaracıbaşı, Assist. Prof. Dr. Guita Farivarsadri, Assist Prof. Dr. Hıfsiye Pulhan, and our research assistants: Esra Can, Kamil Güley, Cemil Atakara and Ali Tanrıkul.

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Başlamak...

Başlangıçlar her zaman önemlidir. Başlangıçlar var olan bir düzenden yeni bir düzene geçişi, bir ara dönemi temsil ederler. Yeniye başlama heyecanı eskiyi bırakma korkusu ile bir arada yaşanır. Üniversite eğitimine başlamak genç bir bireyin hayatındaki en önemli dönüm noktalarından birisidir. Mimari eğitiminde geçiş dönemi bir çok başka eğitim dalından daha karmaşık olabilir. Bu eğitimi başlarken öğrenci yalnız lisede alıştığı ezbere ve test doldurmaya dayalı bir eğitim modelinden üniversite eğitiminin temelini oluşturan daha aktif bir eğitim modeline geçmekle kalmaz aynı anda bir çok başka yenilikle de karşı karşıya kalır. Bunların en önemlisi tasarım atölyesi adında çok farklı bir eğitim ortamına dahil olmaktır. Bu yeni ortamda öğrenci hiç alışık olmadığı araçlarla (çizimler ve maketler) çalışmak, çok yeni bir dili ve yepyeni bir terminolojiyi öğrenmek ve onun aracılığı ile kendini ifade etmek zorunda kalır. Daha yolun başında olan öğrenci tüm bu yeniliklerle bocalarken bir yandan da verilen tasarım problemlerinin kapsamı, biçimi ve atölye yürütücülerinin tavrı gibi bir çok değişkenin etkisinde gelecekteki mesleği, rolü ve sorumlulukları ile ilgili ilk yargılarını oluşturmaya başlar.

Bu nedenlerden dolayı tasarım eğitimi nasıl başlanmalı konusu tüm tasarım dallarında çalışan eğitimciler arasında en çok tartışılan konulardan birisi olmuştur. Bu konuda farklı yaklaşımlar neredeyse tasarım okullarının sayısı kadar çoktur! Bu çeşitlilik aynı zamanda mimari ve tasarımda temel nedir sorusuna dayalı zengin bir olası yöntemler yelpazesinin göstergesidir.

Bir çok Temel Tasarım dersinin amacı tüm görsel sanatlar ve tasarım dallarında ortak olan ve evrensel olduğuna inanılan görsel kompozisyon temellerini öğretmektir. Genellikle bu ilkeler kapalı bir sistem içerisinde ve gerçek mimari tasarımın sorunlarından uzak bir şekilde ele alınmaktadır.

Öte yandan mimari tasarım sosyal bir aktivite olup, biçimsel ilişkilerin yanı sıra tasarım kararlarını etkileyen bir çok başka etkeni de barındırdığı bir gerçektir. Dolayısıyla bu yaklaşımın öğrencilere mimari tasarımın karmaşıklığı ve biçimsel kararlarını etkileyen faktörler hakkında (ki bunların en önemlisi insanın bireyselliğidir) bir görüş oluşturacak şekilde geliştirilmesi gerektiğini inanmaktayız. Bütüncül bir Mimari Tasarıma Giriş eğitiminde formların kendi kuralları ve değişmez evrensel değerler üstünde inşa edilmiş kapalı bir sistem içinde düzenlenmesi yerine biçimsel organizasyonun insani yönünün vurgulanması gerekmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesinde bu amaçlar doğrultusunda geliştirilen tasarıma başlama yaklaşımlardan birinin teorik temelini, pedagojik eksenini ve sonuçlarını tartışmaktır.

Geliştirdiğimiz birinci yıl tasarım dersleri öğrencileri çok iyi kurgulanmış ve adım adım karmaşıklaşan bir dizi tasarım çalışması yoluyla tasarım sürecine dahil etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmaların aracıyla öğrenciler tasarımla ilgili olan kavramlar ve terimleri, iletişimin ve düşüncelerini sunmanın yeni yollarını ve aynı zamanda Ledewitz'in (1985) dediği gibi 'mimarca düşünmeyi' öğrenirler.

İlk yıldaki tasarım dersleri bir bütün olarak kurgulanmaktadır. Birinci dönemin vurgusu daha çok tasarım ilkeleri, elemanları, araçları ve düzen kurma yöntemleri; ikinci dönemin vurgusu ise çevre faktörleri, strüktür, yer, ve benzeri faktörlerin mimari forma olan etkisi üstündedir. Tüm bu konuları ele alırken hep mekan tasarımı, mekansal nitelikler ve insan faktörü ön planda tutulur.

Öğrencilerin dikkatini mimari kompozisyonun temellerine yönlendirmek için birinci dönem, mimarideki en tanıdık mekan tanımlayıcı elemanlarını sorgulayan bir dizi çalışma ile başlayarak düzen, bütünlük ve tasarım kurallarını vurgulayan 3 (ve bazen 2) boyutlu çalışmalar ile devam etmektedir. Aşamalı olarak tasarım problemleri insan ölçeği, dolaşım, mekansal farklılıkları vs. girmesi ile zenginleşmektedir. Dönemin final problemi genellikle dönem boyunca tartışılan tüm kavramları kapsar ve basit bir dizi aktivite için mekan dizisi tasarımını amaçlar.

İkinci dönemde öğrenciler bir yandan birinci dönemde öğrendiklerini pekiştirirken diğer yandan çevresel faktörler, strüktür ve diğer etmenlerin mimari tasarımın üstündeki etkisini irdelerler. Araştırma, bu dönemin projelerinde daha da önemli bir yer alır. Genellikle bu dönem çok kapsamlı, çok işlevli; çevre, topografı, işlev, strüktür, biçim ilişkisini vurgulayan bir proje ile bitmektedir. Bu yöntem öğrencilerin tasarımı bir bütün olarak algılamalarını ve gelecekteki sorumluluklarının kapsamı hakkında doğru bir görüş edinmelerine yardımcı olmaya hedeflemektedir.

Pedagojik olarak bu yaklaşımın amacı bir öğrenci-merkezli tasarıma giriş programı geliştirmektir. Böyle bir yaklaşımın amacı öğrencileri daha bağımsız, kendi çalışma biçimlerini bulabilen ve kararlarının sorumluluğunu alabilen bireyler olarak yetiştirmektir. Uyguladığımız programın bunu büyük ölçekte başardığını inanmaktayız.