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The impact of architectural education on children

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Abstract

Architectural education as a design education always encourages the creativity. The case studies realized with children shows that facing architecture in early ages when their brain has not formatted has a great potential both for architectural milieu and for consciousness of the children related to their surroundings. Being conscious in early age might bring an opportunity to shape more meaningful environments. For example, there is no need to be an architect to behave responsible with their environment; such as ecological problems, sustainability, traffic problems which are the tools for educating more responsible generations with their environment. They can perceive the world in different ways and constitute a conscious understanding of built environment. These meetings have double sided effect both on their mind and the milieu of architecture. This article will discuss mentioned thoughts above by means of workshops held abroad.

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1. Introduction

Architectural education as a design education always encourages the creativity. To meet with the concept of creativity in early ages makes the people more conscious with their living environment. Guilford (1950) stated that “a creative act is an instance of learning” and “a comprehensive learning theory must take into account both insight and creative activity.” (p:446)

The built environment could get shaped by the responsible people. If every person could get chance to meet with architectural education in his/her childhood, he or she could easily take position when producing a decision related with his/her built environment. Architectural education which contains the creativity could be given to child to make the world more liveable place. This kind of attempt has a potential to juxtapose both culture of child and culture of architecture. Thus, this attempt could provide new approaches which are useful and could be innovative for both sides; for culture of child and of architecture. It has opportunities to feed both sides.

With the help of creativity education;

Every child improves his (her) personal perception with built environment. It is witnessed that **way of seeing** is radically changed. Children become open to new kind of perceptions. They develop **ecological consciousness** easily in architectural education. They become aware what is happening in their environment.

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Children learn to define the world with their own bodies. They improve the concepts of scale and proportion. To conceptualize **scale and proportion** is useful for mathematical conceptualization.

Learning by playing and acting in the fields of art and crafts are the main aim during the process. While playing, children always feel themselves in fun. Architectural education is formed by the postulate of **children participation**. Creativity education takes its power from the child; it is a kind of process sourced by child. That's why teacher loose his power over children. Participation of children is the basic principle at creativity education; it is not one sided from teacher to children, it works bidirectional; both from children to teacher and from teacher to children.

Ability to be creative in every situation brings to be **innovative** in the future. Children improve their **problem solving ability**. Creativity improves their entrepreneurship, and makes them quickly give response against hard situations.

2. Case Studies

Three cases will be shared to open the discussion and to show different methods. First Workshop is Soundings for Architecture 5, made on August 2004, in Finland. Second Workshop is Liliput versus Brobdingnag, made on May 2005, in North Cyprus. Third Workshop is Dialogue with Surroundings, made on September 2006, in Poland. The first and the third workshops organized by Playce International Association. (www.playce.org) Second workshop was organized and constructed by me in the context of a festival.

2.1. First Workshop: Soundings for Architecture 5, August 2004, Finland

The first workshop was held in the context of "Soundings for Architecture" at Jyvaskyla in Finland on August 2004. Twenty adults from different countries, twenty children, aged at twelve to fifteen, from Finland and a professor from UK were participated. The workshop and the methods which were used during the process were not planned before; each group made discussions about the methods and strategies the day before the workshop starts and during the workshop. It is a kind of interactive process which was fed from the behaviours of children.

The aim of the workshop was to design street furniture. The objectives were to reveal the differences both in humans and in environment, to make discussions on the qualities of both urban environment and the natural environment, and to make the children more aware with nature.

On the first day, after name game, children showed the sites on a walk tour and told their opinion related with city. A nearby hill gave views of the whole town and the surrounding lakes. After taking photos, every participant chose a photo to discuss on about. Secondly an image game was played: Image Game- could a rock be a seat? It is asked to the children to be creative what street furniture to be in natural environment. Instead of using well-known street furniture; they searched for natural-street furniture.

For building up the city on children's eyes; a mapping game was constructed. A city tour guided by children was arranged for discovering the places which needed improvement and the chosen places marked on the map. This game is a team work; children's voices were heard, their own thoughts about their city were listened. Their critical skills were exercised. The place which had the most negative auras was chosen to make new suggestions to improve it.

The second day passed with analysing of the site. Building a collective sculpture: a sculpture was made collectively to reflect the genius loci of the site. This activity is also very creative to see how the children perceive their environment and acknowledge on it. After the decision on river site as final site, a new tour made in river site for adding new qualities by sketching. At this activity whole the children and adults made sketch for constructing a new liveable environment; more peaceful space, more clean space etc.

Third day is the final day to make a design for a site. For finding the final design a quick generation was made; every participant suggests 5 ideas by drawing them in five minutes and then three designs were chosen by voting; they were a swing, a swinging light and a pier. For fulfilling the design in a short amount of time, a child and an adult began to work in pairs. Four groups were formed; one is focused on the design itself, one modelled the site, the other is worked on materials and the last group let the people know about the last installation. As a last design,

the photo of the site used for model's background, a swing made by a bagel is attached to that photo and a pier was installed in site model.



Figure 1: Name Game



Figure 2: Image Game



Figure 3: Collective Sculpture



Figure 4: Mapping



Figure 5-6: Model of pier and Swing



2.2. Second Workshop: *Liliput versus Brobdingnag, May 2005, North Cyprus*

In the context of the “Body” art festival, a workshop titled “Liliput Versus Brobdingnag” was realised to discuss the concepts of “scale and proportion” with children on May 2005. Liliput and Brobdingnag are two fictional lands in the adventures of Gulliver; one is land of gnomes and the other is the land of giants. Whole the construction of the workshop is for defining and introducing children their bodies and for notifying the nets between their bodies and living environments. The aim of the workshop to show that every creature creates (or designs) its own environment related with its own body.

Twelve children at the ages of 9 to 10 and 4 university students participated to the workshop. University students attended every step of the workshop with children; they behave like participant, not like facilitators. It is one of the important points that semi-adults like university students have to communicate with the children.

First day: Introducing game, game with words and a city discovery tour had done during the first day. Introducing game is for learning every child's name. Every child made a body movement and tell his or her name, then next child made the previous movement and add his or her own. Thus, an array constructed with body movements and names.

Word Game is a kind of puzzle to make children ready for the workshop. Some words were chosen from the book, the *Adventures of Gulliver* to open children's mind to the land of imagination and creativity. The words chosen from the book were the names of fictional spaces (countries) like Liliput (land of gnomes), Brobdingnag (land of giants), Mildendo (the capital city of land of gnomes), Lorbrulgrud (the capital city of land of giants), Quinbus Flestrin (man-mountain, Liliputians calls Gulliver) ve Grildrig (small human). The game is that to guess (make an estimation) the meaning of the words. This game is a kind of performance to show how language is constructed with hidden codes. Participants had to give answers from their memory and imagination, because no one knew the meanings of those words. This game was constructed for increasing their creative thinking.

Here are some examples from the answers; Liliput: Purple, Lollypop /Brobdingnag: ding dong- ringing, Broccoli, power /Mildendo: Harry Potter, virtual game / Lorbrulgrud: Robin Hood, a kind of illness /Quinbus Flestrin: small elephant, philosophy/ Grildrig: a kind of monkey, city. The last activity of the day is the city discovery tour. Participants divided to three groups and try to answer the questions below while travelling.

1. What are the biggest and the smallest spaces in the city?
2. Is there any place in the city that only your body could be fit in it?
3. Is there any place in the city for a body which is 10 times bigger than your body?
4. Is there any place in the city for bodies which are smaller than a baby?

It is expected from the participant that a new definition between their body proportions and city via the questions. It is important to see that they can only use their body to find the answers of the questions.

On second day, first day activities were evaluated. It is mentioned that who is Gulliver and the adventures of him in the Liliput and Brobdingnag. It is discussed that what the “proportion” is; it is a comparison between two different things with one unit. The body of every participant turns into a unit for making comparisons in the city. With making paintings every participant represents one unit and two different lands from the book; Liliput and Brobdingnag were painted on one paper.

On the third and the last day; participants made a giant man with balloons. To find the proportion of the every part of the balloon man, participants had to use their own body as scale unit. At the end of the day a non-structured balloon man was ready for the exhibition.

This workshop could be evaluated how a mathematical concept could be explained to children via creative games and architectural education. Also it is an expression that every creature used its body to construct its own built environment, and scale has an importance while designing living environment.



Figure 7-8-9-10: Changing scales in city



Figure 11: Drawing Gulliver’s travel

Figure 12-13: Making Balloon Man

Figure 14: Balloon Man

2.3. Third Workshop: Dialogue with Surroundings, September 2006, Poland

The third workshop was made in the Osieck Primary School in Lucznica in Poland. All the participants attended three thematic groups which were School Environment, Osieck Explorers and Market Square. In the group of Market Square, how that region of the city could be more liveable place was searched with creative activities.

The first day, after name game, a brainstorming session was made to reveal the potentialities of the place and how that place took place in the memories of children. It is very interesting to hear that, “Market Square” was marked as an empty place in children’s mind. Thus, making a model of market square was chosen as a method to

open the discussion in the second day. Both adults and children reveal their creative suggestions to make square more peaceful and liveable place. It is suggested that sport facilities, an open-air cinema and a fountain where the children could rest near it when they have a break during the play. With creating models, whole square area examined.

Third day was the final day to state what their suggestions. To express their suggestions, children chose to play a small theatre performance. For that theatre performance, children found some creative materials, like fabric sheets, balls, timber sticks. With using those materials, the whole group exhibits a performance which expresses the function of that place; like playing basketball, like a small shelter to show where they would rest, like a screen where people sit in front of it and watch a film. At the end of day, they made a small urban walk around the market square to announce what they want from the city managers. According to adults, it was the first urban walk performed by a group, after the “Berlin Wall” was broken down in that town, Osieck.



Figure 15-16:Modelling



Figure 17: Model of Market Square



Figure 18-19: Theatre Performance



Figure 20: End of Urban Walk

3. Conclusion

Finally, these case studies are shown the importance of the creativity in architectural education. Every creative approach mentioned above used as method in education, make the children more conscious with their environment. They can perceive the world in different ways and constitute a conscious understanding with their built environment. This kind of workshops- architectural educations- make them responsible with their environment and make them take responsibilities in the future about their environment. They get ability to scrutinize what the city managers do the places where they live. This awareness brings them a new perception to understand what is happening in their surroundings. Creative education opens them to the world to express their selves and to give us possibility to hear their voices.

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