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## **CREATING AWARENESS IN INTERIOR DESIGN EDUCATION**

### **Abstract**

Interior designers are space coach of the new century. Innovative and progressive spaces designed by interior designers constitute a foresight and infrastructure for new life styles in society. Designers guide, even force, users to innovation. They have responsibility forming and transforming of the society as well as increasing the quality and comfort conditions of individuals. Therefore, in interior design education, it is aimed to rising the awareness of students and to be acquiring this approach to students by using the creative methods

In interior design education, the most important problem about awareness is that it is given design briefs different from daily life, usually. Designers don't have opportunity to work and manage together with users as in the disciplines of industrial design, architecture or graphic design. However, maybe only interior designers have the chance to work with the user and to manage design process together.

Especially, the design briefs which are given in interior design studio and having fiction in story, users, and spaces alienate interior designers from reality and real user typology. However, this situation causes a problem about awareness in education and having trouble of designers, especially in their professional life.

In this study, it is aimed to make a study motivation and awareness of problems in Interior design studio courses. Some solutions are offered about design briefs' reality and applicable faced real life, in order to create professional awareness through the interior design studio courses in interior design education. Consequently, it is made interviews with 85 graduates of interior design department. It is proposed some suggestions about problem, as well.

**Keywords:** Interior design education, Interior design studio, Awareness, Study motivation

### **1. Introduction**

The 20th century went down in history as "information age" or "productivity age" for someone. However the 21st century will be the age of "exchanges and informatics because big and important

changes in many fields and subjects are expected in this century. The future of the countries will be determined by their capabilities to adopt these changes. The main goal of this change is to create safer, more successful, more comfortable and happier society. The most important source of the countries which work on this topic will undoubtedly be the well educated professionals. (Duzgun, 2004)

The organizations which give design education have great responsibilities for educating the designers of the future. Interior designers have the responsibility for mastering the new user profile and analyzing the new changed/ transformed life styles correctly in this new era where accessing to information became faster, the comfort level increased, technology and material offer limitless opportunities when compared with previous century. This responsibility have importance not only for solving the relation between the user and the space correctly but also for providing cultural continuity. Interior designers who can be regarded or described as the space coaches, should answer the new life styles and problems with the innovative and progressive spaces they designed, they should also be sensitive to the social life and changing transforming structure of the culture besides the creative solutions.

## **2. A survey of Interior design education**

The design is peculiar as well as it is general and it is subjective as well as it is objective. The characteristics of the design concept which covers all these complexities also reflect into the design education. The information and the techniques aimed to be given during interior design education should be evaluated in two groups as the information about design and the auxiliary information. The students are prepared for interior designing profession by developing their design abilities with the help of the courses such as seeing, perceiving, examining, developing ideas, application types, research and comparing techniques, analyzing-synthesis methods, theoretical expositions and experimental practical applications.

The essence of design education in interior design discipline is to help the students gain their abilities and experiences in an intellectual environment. This intellectual environment is the design studios for interior design students. Interior design studio classes are the chain of classes which are based on learner and instructor

relation and critique system which aims at developing creative urge and problem solving abilities of the student at the same time. These classes also include an application based period and they are the core of interior design education.

The qualitative criteria expected from the student to be gained in the scope of this class are:

- 1- The ability of bringing imagination, creative thinking, innovativeness and the leadership of design group.
- 2- The ability of collecting information, determining the problem, analytic and critical evaluation and formulizing action strategies.
- 3- Three dimensional thinking during the design seeking and the ability of discovering the design.
- 4- Bringing divergent elements together harmoniously, integrating the information and the ability of using s kill while creating design solutions.

Although the content, project conductors and studio arrangements changed today, the importance of negotiations with the students and the interaction between the learner and the instructor remained same. In this approach which has been conducted based on conventional education system, the experiments of the student have been conducted in an hierarchical system from the top to the bottom. Dewey lists the opinions which form the base of conventional education concept in his book named "Experience and Education" as follow:

- 1- The topic and the content of education consist of the knowledge and skills which were benefited in the past; because of this reason, the main function of the school is to convey these to the new generations.
- 2- Behavioral standards and rules were also developed in the past. The aim of education is to form habitual behaviors consistent with these rules.
- 3- The organization of the school is very different from the other organizations in the society.

Briefly, the point emphasized by Dewey is that the aim in conventional education approach is to make the young get the knowledge integrals organized as education materials and get the prepared skill types. Thus, the young will overcome their responsibilities and will be successful in their future lives. Conveying the knowledge and the skills is provided by the teachers

(Dewey, 2007). When we look from this point of view, we can see that there is a structuring from the top to the bottom in conventional structuring. Furthermore, the topics expected to be learned by the students are usually over the skills of the young or out of their interests.

However in the new education system the following opinions are suggested (Dewey, 2007);

- 1- The expression and development of individualism instead of top to bottom structuring.
- 2- Learning by experiences instead of learning from the texts or from the teachers.
- 3- Learning skills and techniques by means of direct applications instead of learning by exercising.
- 4- Maximum benefiting from the opportunities suggested by today's life instead of preparing for the distant future.
- 5- The opinion of meeting with the changing world against the stable materials.

Designing and teaching how to design are very different concepts. The main goal here is to prepare an environment for learning how to design instead of teaching how to design as suggested in student centered education approach. When learner centered education opinion is accepted widely instead of teacher centered education opinion, this approach will be benefited better.

### **3. Creating awareness in interior design education**

When design disciplines compared, it can be seen that the relation between the designer and the user is the strongest in interior design. May be because of this reason, only interior designers have a chance to work with the users, to make the designing process come alive and to direct it.

Unfortunately interior designers who have a chance to work with the users and to direct the design project have not this kind of chance in their interior design studio classes during their education. In studio classes usually the plans belong to existing spaces are given to the students and they are asked to re-functionalize it or to solve the interior design problem of the given space with the same function.

In the scope of this study, 24 design brief which have been given to the students at the Interior Design Department of Anadolu University, Eskisehir were examined and it was determined that there are generally three tendencies. These are:

- 1- Creating the design brief with a different function by preserving the relations of the space with the current neighborhood and the city (50%),
- 2- Creating the design brief with a different function by changing /without preserving the relations of the space with the current neighborhood and the city (40%),
- 3- Creating the design brief with a different space solving suggestion by preserving the current functions of the space (10%).

Although the plans are usually given from the neighborhood according to the functions of the determined space, the student can not examine the real space since the problem has metamorphosed. Another important problem of this approach is that interior design students can never meet with the real users. Because of this reason, the students should just dream a lot of sociological, psychological and economic data. This approach which is used in Interior design studio classes appear as a basic problem when creating professional awareness and it is seen as an important problem which weakens the professional awareness.

Interior designers have responsibilities for shaping and orienting the society, solving the problems and being innovative with their designer identities in addition to their duty to increase the life comfort and quality. Because of these reasons, academical education of the interior designers gain importance and especially the contents and application types of the studio classes which are the cores of interior design education become much more important.

We meet with a lot of events in our daily lives. We are aware or unaware of these events. We can usually understand these events when their results effect us negatively but it is usually too late at that point. It is nearly the same in professional education. Professional awareness starts after the beginning of professional life. During the academical education, the experiences disconnected or different from the real life are given to the students and the students become late for facing with the realities of the life.

In the scope of this study, 85 interior designers were interviewed too and it was also determined that the students gain professional awareness after graduation and after starting professional life. When the reasons of this problem was questioned, the interior designers expressed that they were far from professional awareness during their educations as they were not given a chance

to do the real application projects (92 %). This approach which takes place in traditional education insight destroys the experimentation opportunity of the interior designer candidate and it tries to develop creative dimension just by dreaming. However, professional awareness appears as an important concept today and it drastically supports the experimental dimension of interior design education.

Awareness is the main concept of Gestalt's theory. Consciousness and awareness include all aspects of our lives, our emotions and thoughts, our relations with the events around us (Cücelo•lu, 1993). Awareness means knowing the reality about ourselves, it means seeing, feeling and understanding our talents, skills, our limitless potential and the barriers created by ourselves. Especially the design education should increase the awareness of students by forcing the borders of creativeness and by providing the opportunities for experimental studies. However, the existing situation is the opposite of this. We all know that designing can not be learned from the educational books. The project topics and the methods of project classes are the main factors that provide professional awareness and unique style to the students in interior design classes. At this point, it is possible to evaluate Rowe's architectural design description. Rowe regards architectural designs as questioning and seeking tools which shape and realize the ideas related with the buildings and accommodations where people live in. At this point, the "space" concept has already left its place to the "place" concept which also include the human being. After this description, solving problem in architectural design is only possible by determining the problem properly.

The important point in interior design education is to provide a connection between the interior designer and the real user during the introduction of the problem process. The identity of the place appears as an important problem in connection with the identity of the user. Creating professional awareness especially in the interior design studio classes during the education period also brings the importance of interior design at the cultural sustainability point. Thus the students will have the opportunity to face up to the real user profile during their education process instead of suggesting creative solutions to the imaginary users' problems. Perhaps they will be the guides in the society with the innovative and experimental places they design.

#### **4- Conclusion**

It is the truth that interior design education can not be learned from the books. However, the new century brought the new opportunities and probabilities. The new student type can reach the information easily, can control the new communication and visualization tools and equipments, they are creative and impassioned. Because of these reasons conventional design education concept should be revised, learner centered education techniques should be followed instead of teacher centered techniques, the students should provide opportunities for creative problem solving with the real spaces and real users in order to increase professional awareness as the main education concept in interior design education. The main goal should be preparing an atmosphere for learning how to design as in the student centered approach.

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