

Architectural Education in Turkey

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Architectural education is a vast and complicated field of study and architectural education in Turkey is also very critical and fragile. At the panel the focus of the discussion was on the relations of “formal” and “informal” education in architecture and the future of architectural education in Turkey considering its “formal” and “informal” applications.

The aim of the discussion was not to find solutions for the education system but to have a debate on the situation and to understand the different attitudes of different academics from different institutions and different backgrounds in this country.

If we try to describe the situation in Turkey maybe some figures can enlighten the present condition. In 1990 there were only 11 schools of architecture in this country. In the order of their foundation dates, Mimar Sinan University, Istanbul Technical University, Yıldız Technical University, Middle East Technical University, Karadeniz Technical University, Selçuk University, Dokuz Eylül University, Gazi University, Trakya University, Anadolu University, Dicle University were universities which had schools of architecture. And if the ratio of students/faculty is studied at these schools of architecture it varies between 8-11. Within these universities the Dicle University, School of Architecture had a critical position with a very poor faculty. (1) There are many new architectural schools that started as state schools after that date in the small cities of the country and there are also some private universities in our country today mainly in Istanbul and Ankara that offer architectural education.

There are about 38 schools of architecture today, and few other ones that will start to function in due course. Which means that there were 27 new schools founded in one decade. Our topic won't be related with the problems of the new schools (third generation), which are recently founded. They have severe problems of infra structure, books, computers etc, and most important the faculty. With their situation the problem is more political than academic and must be solved and discussed at different platforms.

All these schools are approved by the board of education and they give a diploma that gives the students a license to profess.

The discussion in the panel was therefore not related with these problems but the themes below were discussed by the panelists who have different backgrounds and different positions:

The reader can find the different views of the panelists on the three themes printed in bold; in each of the panelist's own discussion paper presented in this book. Here you will find the situation at the Istanbul Technical University and the ideas of the moderator related with the themes below, and also a general conclusion of the moderator,

The first theme of discussion was related with “how the panelists critically view the institutionalized education system at their schools: The aim of their school in shaping

the profile of their students, their curriculum, the structure and relations of the studio and lectures and their relations with the architectural praxis”.

Having a European, mainly German base of education system, the school of architecture of ITU had a faculty that had distinguished German scholars who were very effective in the foundation of the school of architecture in 1944. The 1970's were a critical time for the school, the new ideas shook the basis of the education system and the students built a big pressure on the system for radical changes.

The aim of the school from the 1970's to recently was: To try to teach everything that existed as architectural knowledge. This was also the general idea before the 70's, but as specialization was the new trend, a specialization of architectural knowledge was being introduced. For a better relation and understanding of architecture the fields of specializations were to be covered by architects. For this reason it was not the engineers but architects that were encouraged to specialize on different topics, lighting, acoustics even structural engineering at the school of architecture.

Within this context, to have a multi discipliner studio there was an attempt to bring different disciplines to the studio by the specialized studio teacher. Being that every specialist's knowledge was heavily defined with his/her field of study and being that all the specialists were architects at the same time, this system did not work. And consequently the design studio was again one of the various fields of study.

The recent change (the first students are being graduated this year) in the curriculum aims to give a choice for the students, considering them as individuals that have different abilities. Now with the credit system, main areas such as humanities, professional topics, electives and general subjects are defined. Fewer amounts of courses with longer hours per week and combined topics are planned. And a fairly big amount of credits are devoted to electives. In theory only one studio is introduced for each semester in the new curriculum. But the students cannot use most of their spare times in the studio, because of different reasons. And in practice the studio is again one of the courses of the curriculum for most of the students.

In the education system there are two important things that have to be constantly discussed in relation with the changing world, worldview, technologies and so forth.

The one is the legitimacy and the consistency of knowledge in architecture and how the students can encounter this knowledge.

The other is the role of the studio in architectural education and how can the studio be planned and equipped to perform in an efficient way.

The second theme of discussion was devoted to the informal part of architectural education for example students' personal studies, summer workshops, student meetings, excursions and student competitions. The panelists debated on the impact, importance or necessity of these kinds of activities in the architectural education.

Each student is a unique personality, and he or she has qualities that can develop in very different ways, resultantly possessing different architectural attitudes. Therefore the aim of the architectural education system should be to develop a rich profile of architects that are aware of their situation in the universe, the world and towards different architectural trends or situations and have the ability to gain a position and have an attitude towards them. This can only be obtained by having an ever-lasting intellectual curiosity and constantly expanding architectural knowledge.

On the other hand the formal education in the universities is more or less a stable situation. Because it is an institutionalization and being it gives a license for the profession (this is the situation in our country) it has certain routines such as programs etc., a certain population, faculty and students and certain functions which it has to fulfill and its most important aim is to raise the students' professional architectural qualifications to a certain standard. Generally the faculties' different architectural attitudes gives the different colors, makes the variations in this education. But it is the situation where everybody is mostly **inside** the system. Here a monologue is common, a dialogue can be exceptional.

The informal education (international workshops, competitions with various subjects and different organization patterns) which has no boundaries, cultural, educational etc. gives the freedom to architectural students to be young architects and to understand the very complicated and intrigue layers of their inner selves, their own world that they exist in, which is usually accepted and not looked at critically and the world around themselves which is unknown or known with some common patterns or preconceptions which can also be biased. Most importantly these kinds of informal encounters, debates and cooperative design studies or competitions give the students and the tutors involved, the opportunity to look from the **outside** to all these very rich and complicated situations.

The two exhibitions, Archiprix-Türkiye and Coast Wise Europe that took place in the ACSA conference in Istanbul are two examples that reflect the importance and the value of the informal or extra curricular activities. Archiprix-Türkiye is a yearly national student competition. The best final projects of each school are submitted and all the designs are evaluated by a jury consisted of practicing architects. This competition is held for five years, and it is agreed that the quality of the projects are improving since then.

Coast Wise Europe was a project created by The Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and ITU, School of Architecture. It was mainly sponsored by the Academy. There were 22 participating schools of architecture. The Ephesus workshop in Turkey was the first of the three pioneering workshops. The project ended at Porto with a workshop being a part of the Expo at Lisbon. The exhibition at the ACSA conference consists of ITU students' works in the studio before and after the workshop, and the works of the students that participated in the international workshop in Ephesus. These two exhibitions show the enthusiasm of the students and the challenge and joy of these informal encounters.

The third theme was devoted to the future of architectural education; The future trends at the institutions of each panelist, their view on the changes that will or should occur at their institutions and generally in architectural education.

Here I would like to emphasize on the design studio. My idea is that the studio is not a place where you have the best ingredients and you bake a perfect cake, so it is not a process that ends with a frozen situation (Figure 1).

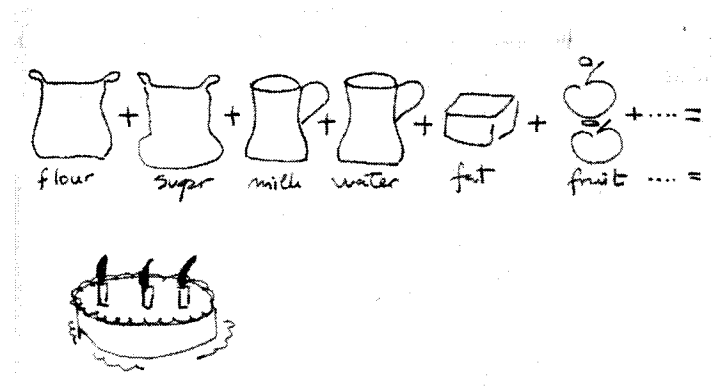


Fig. 1. How can we bake a design

On the contrary the studio is a milieu where there is an ongoing whirlpool, or an ongoing boiling thing, or a black hole, that things enter so fast you can not even realize it, in a way it creates itself, but on the other hand it is a place where things come out from it, important things, ideas; a whirlpool constantly splashing out (Figure 2) (2).



Fig. 2. Messier 100 indicates the design studio much better. Courtesy Anglo-Australian Observatory. Photograph by David Malin

So the first touches on structure, light, acoustics, they must all be tested, felt in the studio, students must be aware of the importance of history, theory, acoustics because of the studio, by the studio, through the studio. They must try to express their ideas in the studio. And they must have the will to understand things because they need it. They must be willing to learn the more structured knowledge about it. So it must be a place to be aware and critical. And it must also be a place to build up confidence.

As a last word, within the globalizing world and with the main stream of the flow of information from the global to the local, the international and informal encounters in architecture will allow ideas to flow from the local towards the global as well. And this will help to create a new naturalistic approach, as a new interpretation of humanism.

NOTES

¹Dogan Hasol, *Herseyin Mimari Var (Everything Has an Architect)*, Istanbul: Yapi Endüstri Merkezi Yayini, 1998

²Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot*, New York: Random House, 1994