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Upgrading Education Architecture by Redefining Critique Session in Design Studio

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Abstract

Architecture education with apprenticeship based training method has existed from long time ago. This type of education was based of practice and imitation. But today according to the design issue and open ended problems it is changed to transmitting the concept and idea of design. In this educating system which is based on critique all the efforts are to increase student's self criticizing ability by continuous criticisms to able to manage their own projects. Design is one of the most complex types of problem solving that involves several aspects and components. Its cognitive processes and procedures should be transmitted to the students through lectures and critique sessions. The current model in studios is based on ancient model that must be redefined and be made clearer in order to improve both learning and teaching ways. There is no unreasonable action in the world and all are perusing a prominent target, especially in educating system that in fact it is the base of all forward steps in community around us. This paper analyses architectural studios in order to find the weak and strength points and also to identify procedures and tools that can be used to support the studio based pedagogy in architecture. First we take a look on what is going on in design studios and then by classifying the critique methods in different type of studios and explaining each will explore the reasons of dissatisfactions and at the end will give some suggestions to upgrade the existing system.

Keywords: education, architecture, critique, design, studio.

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1. Introduction

Since the teaching of architecture has been carried into the studios of architecture on beaux-art, teaching of design is realized in many different ways, with the critique session as the backbone of its assessment, in spite of this the assessment system has rarely been subjected to serious critical analysis. Many architectural schools do not establish clear goals or objectives for design juries. And till the domain of design is described as requiring creative thinking more than other abilities, the criteria used in assessment have been ambiguous.

Well designed assessment leads to clear expectations and provides opportunities for students to self-monitor and practice and receive feedbacks. Also understanding of the process of criticism would also allow the students to make demand of the critic instead of being content as a recipient.

Designing is a praxis that requires a controlled conduct and the Knowledge of design will transmit to the student through the critiques in the studio so, critique is not a simple lecture given in the class because students listen and imitate the teachers.

What happens within an individual's mind and what happens between two people may lead to different results. [1] asserts that the used framework for criticism would "move criticism beyond personal preference and I like this/I don't like this and subjective statements". The instructors communicate design knowledge within certain frames that can be further classified into specific categories depending on the purpose of the message.

In this paper first we take a look on what is going on in design studios and then by classifying the critique methods in different type of studios and explaining each will explore the reasons of dissatisfactions and at the end will give some suggestions to upgrade the existing assessment system.

2. Classification of the Design Studio Practice

In current academic courses, design studio education is reflected in homework revision practice. Students and teachers collaboratively develop a design theme, share objectives, ideas, issues and solutions. At the beginning of a semester, a design problem is given to solve till end or in part of the semester. The design problem is given in the form of a brief or program that contains client goals, user requirements, site conditions and other technical information. During the early stages of the design project, students may be asked to participate in doing research on the general issues related to the design problem to be shared with the whole studio class. Also, some lectures from the instructors on various aspects of the problem are often given to the studio class in which a number of design precedents are reviewed and criticized. The studio instructor suggests some revisions in the design that he or she feels will be better in solving a particular aspect of the problem. Following the desk crit, the student is expected to more fully explore and test these options and suggestions by revisiting his or her solution. The studio instructor will then review the outcome of the student's revised solution suggesting further changes. Concurrent with the formal studio desk critique, students will informally critique each other's work throughout the semester, and learn various design skills and drawing and model construction techniques from each other. The solution will present in various evolving forms from sketches to fully developed drawings and models, dimensions and scales of the design problem.

There are different types of design studio applications which can be implemented by the supervisor of design studio. These applications are categorized into four groups according to the critic style and/or given possibilities to the student to be creative and productive.

Figure 1 shows crit types (a) crit type 1, there are eight or twelve students in each group. Students are obliged to take crit from studio supervisor for their design work which studied outside of the studio environment. They sit around a big desk as seen in figure. Frequently the professor manages the discussion so the participation of the students is limited; the communication is under the control of the supervisor. (b) crit type 2, There are eight or twelve students in each group. Students are obliged to take crit from the studio supervisor for their design work studied inside and outside of the studio environment. They are supposed to study their own desks. The studio supervisor gives desk critics, answers questions individually. No discussion takes place in the studio.
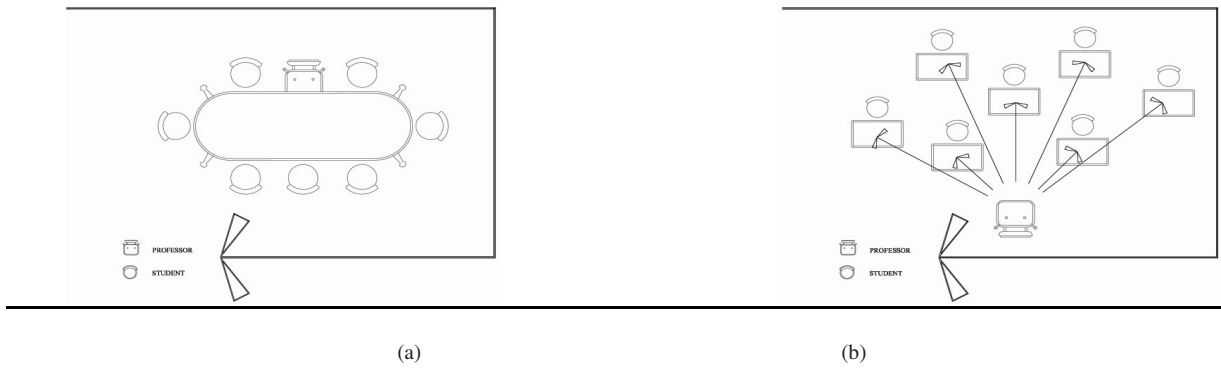
(a)   (b)

Fig. 1: (a) Crit type 1 (b) Crit type 2

Figure 2 (a) shows crit type 3 that the studio work has to be done by a group of students under the supervision of a group of professors. Each professor gives advice to a different student at his/her desk. Thus each student can have different point of view by taking crits from different professors. Generally, there can't be any class discussion. Each student has to construct his/her own solution to the specific design problem according to the given advice and recommendations, (b) there is a "frequent jury" system in the studio teaching. A group of professors who are responsible for different student groups come together regularly in the juries. Common jury discussions will be held.
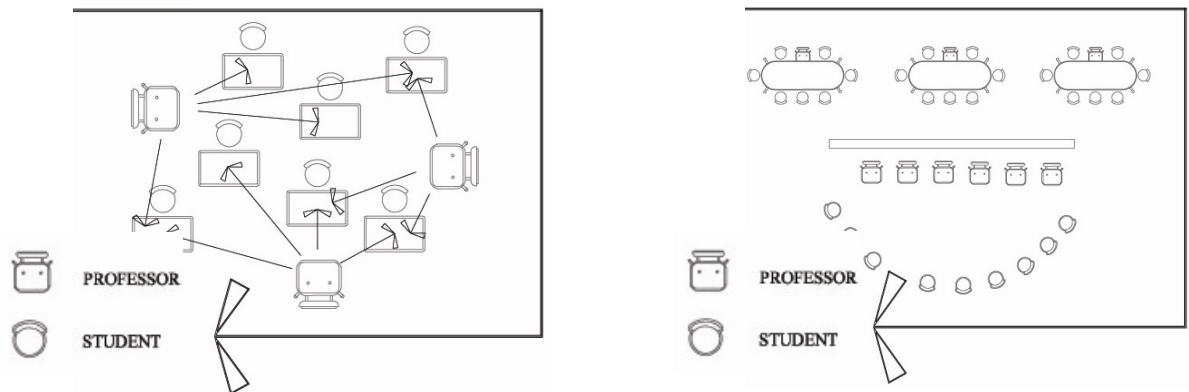

Figu. 2: (a) Crit type 3 (b) Crit type 4

3. Assesment in Architectural Education

Analyzing the different written ideas of criticism from philosophers, architects and design professors, has lead to classification of the assessment tools in architectural design studios in nine categories:

1. Individual Critique :
   One to one discussion tutor and students
2. Formative Critique (Interim Crit):
   Crits which usually take place at some interim stage during a project/module before work is submitted for summative assessment. This is the most common form of crit giving students feedback which can allow them

to learn to critically evaluate and move forward with their work. It will stop students taking more care to grades

3. Summative Critique (Final Crit):

    Critique sessions where grade is given for the work. Researches shows that students often find these crits frustrating as they are not able t act on any feedback given in order to improve the project art/design work. Tutors state that the crit is to teach students how to evaluate and reflect on their work and develop their own critical judgment, not be told what is wrong or right. The purpose of the crit needs to be made clear to students.

4. Peer Critique:

    These are crits run by the students group with the tutor acting as a facilitator. Usually the student group is divided into smaller groups and the group critiques the work of those in their own group or those in another group. Students need to be given agreed criteria to critique against. The tutor as facilitator feeds into the discussion where there may be questions. Peers then may give feedback to the group verbally or often through written comments given to the individual student through nameless sheets. Peers crit can be feedback given by members of the same project/ module group or invited students from higher level of the course.

5. Group Critique (Expert Crits):

    It is the most common form of crit sessions. Group of students take part in a crit by one or more tutors. These can range in time from a series of short half hour session with a small group of students and tutor to all day session for a large group of students and tutors. Usually students will present their work in front of their tutors and peers and receive feedback which can be from tutors only. These crits are usually tutor led. Students can see that teachers have variety of perspectives and can have apparently contradictory positions and show disagreement between teachers in crits. This is important since this shows there is not just one true way.

6. Public Critique:

    Where an invited professional from industry or other department is part of the crit panel. Students can give external experiences from external perspective and feedback.

7. Seminars:

    These types of crit sessions usually take place around a table in a non-hierarchy situation and this will lead to more participation from shy students and quieter members

8. Written critique: (May be Online Form):

    The criteria for comments have to discuss before criticizing. This type makes chance to give more explanation on each comment and also makes it easier to think about feedbacks. This can be use in peer's crit and they will give their idea more honest when they are not in face to face situation. All comments can only be accessed by the individual student and tutor.

9. Panel Discussion:

    The panel is employed by discussing the projects which are selected randomly or intentionally by the instructors without knowing which student it belongs to. These discussions, which are carried out in a participatory atmosphere, are effective mediums of learning. This format provides feedback to the students indirectly, and avoids the critic to be taken personally. It is preferred at the first stages of the design process in the upper levels of education, which then leaves its place to formal jury. The function of this type of review is specifically important in the beginning of design education since the objective of design studio for beginning students is not limited with experiencing the design, but also providing basic terminology and notions of design. It is necessary to note that panels also provide instructors to follow the general development of the studio, success or weakness of the design problems that are formulated by faculty [2].

5. Discution and Suggestion

Meyer [3] believes that employing criticism in practice has three important contributions to the discipline of architecture:

1- It helps to foster a precision of design language. Through describing, comparing, and use of terminology, criticism narrows the possibility for ambiguous interpretations.

2- Criticism creates new ways to think and evaluate. By employing existing theories, which reflect past values, new values and ideas are likely to emerge. Thus, practice as criticism can lead to new directions for approaching design.

3- Contribution criticism can have for the discipline is to motivate for changes.

But all done researches show that students feel so frustrated and frightened to present their designs in crit sessions in front of looking eyes. And they are worry to belittled and slighted by the peers and jurors. Bringing these senses to crit sessions makes students to just look for the acceptance from the instructors and if it doesn't happened they feel disappointed and loose other statements and suggestions coming after and just want to know what the exact solution is. Beside this teachers are also unsatisfied by this and they believe that students don't grasp what they told and act different from what expected. When the jurors find the discourse fascinating the discussion is only between the jurors and "the students didn't know what the hell was going on. It was entirely uninteresting to them". On the other hand, juries that appear interesting to the students seem boring to jurors, "because it was going over things that may have been old hat to the people on the review, but were new to the students. Remember, each year we have new students. It's very hard to repeat things year after year, but some things may need repeating"

Indeed the evaluating systems in architectural education never had classified to teachers and introduced to students and despite of using mentioned methods we can see many unsolved problems. Because of this the satisfaction of these two groups will never be coincidental. Well designed assessment leads to clear expectations and provide opportunities for students to self-monitor and practice and receive feedbacks .

By asserting the strength and weak points of available crit methods we can help to make some effective changes to upgrade the existing system. There are some of the suggestions:

▪ Generally in every crit type, the design process is an educator-centered one. Conversely, the design process should be changed into a student-centered process. Because educator-centered activities inhibit students' creativity and prevent them from doing practice freely

▪ In every crit type there is limited participation and collaboration between students. There is not enough group study to motivate students to be creative and socially satisfied

▪ Start with positive critique instead of negative to avoid of some bad effect on students. And don't use of shock tactics

▪ Implementing dialogic feedback make the students this opportunity to ask questions about meaning of the feedbacks.

▪ Using constant jury system in the studio teaching. Spread Studio, 2-3 professors manage the studio operations. The students who are in different academic level and responsible for different project assignment.

▪ Using a 'model only' review. That the presentations are limited to models only, with no drawings permitted, to encouraging students to explore a wider range of model-making techniques in order to describe their ideas.

▪ The studio has to focus on design process rather than end product. Students are supported to perform reflections on action. Developed product is recognized as the representative of the process. In evaluating students' success, the steps taken from the beginning of the process until the end is very important.

6. Conclusion

Architectural design education can be said to fit into the authentic assessment tool rather than the standardized. authentic assessment does not focus on the factual knowledge as end itself. Rather, it focuses on the ability to use relevant knowledge, skills, and process for solving open ended problems. Another key factor that distinguishes authentic assessment from traditional one is that it provides opportunity for students to integrate many kinds of learning. Some design studio teachers already utilize many of the steps in this process, but without the placement of a label upon the behavior. If a structure and consistency were applied to the criticism they receive, students would be better prepared to give and receive criticism.

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