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Authentic Assessments or Standardized Assessment
New Attitude to Architecture Assessment

Badiossadat Hassanpour a *, Nangkula Utaberta a , N.Abdullah a , Spalie a , M.Tahir a

*University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Department of Architecture, Bangi 43600, Malaysia

Abstract

To know about an educational system, we must look to its assessment procedures. Assessment is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where they are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. Assessment should not be seen separable from instruction, but also as a powerful tool for promoting deep learning activities. Assessment culture refers to educational evaluation practices that are compatible with current ideologies, social expectations, attitudes and values so the emergence of assessment cultures needs to be discussed with reference to current views on learning and education. The target of this paper is to understand whether same methods in architectural pedagogy can satisfy different learning styles, different backgrounds and cultures or not.

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1. Introduction

Architecture education with apprenticeship based training method has existed from long ago. This type of education was based on 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. This method is based on reminding the learned issue, data analysis and creativity in re-employing experienced and knowledge. Upgrade or end of a level of training in this system is depends on the student’s ability to achieve a unique and creative responses. Certainly in achieving to this ability environment, background and talent has an effective role. In today’s global village that art and science are developing all around the world, and all people with any race and gender and colour, in different places but simultaneously are trying to learn or teach and ultimately what is taught is approximately same, is it fair to consider that the result of architecture education process same as what is going on in hundred or even thousands international commercial products which are mass producing?! Once a technology is developed in a certain country, it’s know- how can be instantly spread out all over the world, neglecting the cultural aspects of

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +60-16-619-1224
E-mail address: badieh.hassanpour@gmail.com
countries to or from which it propagates. On the contrary the spiritual and cultural aspects of human life, namely, how to enrich men’s day by day life, cannot easily be communicated. The interchange of man’s cultural aspects is not as easy as that of materialistic ones. There are numerous ways of defining culture, it is often perceived as referring to the shared ways of thinking and behaving, to common attitudes and beliefs that a social community shares, and to the products the social community has created. The concept of culture is currently applied broadly to refer to, characterize sets of shared beliefs and modes of practice in diverse areas, including in the sphere of education. For instance learning cultures, school culture and educational assessment. If we wish to know the reality about an educational system, we must first look to its assessment procedures. Assessment currently perceives as a means to promote learning rather than monitor it, hence assessment is for learning. Assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. Assessment should not seen as something separable from instruction, administered at the end of the learning process, but also as a powerful tool for promoting deep learning activities. Each of the assessments is important, those that are occur in daily classroom interactions, those set by teachers at the end of particular phase in the work, and those developed and administered by external jurors. Architecture because of the nature of its education, is ideally suited to exercise and maintain overall management of the project and all its’ path has a frequent part, called assessment. Critique sessions are the backbone of its assessment with an ambiguous structure which is the result of its requiring to creative thinking more than other abilities. So the used framework for criticism should move criticism beyond personal preference such as, I like this/I don’t like this and subjective statements. (Hopkins, 1994) Well designed assessment leads to clear expectations and provides opportunities for students to self-monitor and practice and receive feedbacks (Anthony, 1991). It is very important to choose a suitable style toward the target of criticism to prevent of converting criticism to threatening and intimidating tool and making defensive behavior (Cikis, 2009). 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 (Kurt, 2009).

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.

In this paper by introducing the relatively similar implemented methods in crit sessions in architecture studios in Malaysia and Canada, we will compare the different effects of these methods on students in Malaysia as a multi-cultural country with the result of same done survey on Canadian students in 2003 by Elizabeth Marie Graham (Graham 2001). These surveys are based on distributed questionnaire among students that investigates the students’ feelings and expectations from crit sessions.

2. Assessment in Architecture Education

The most important points in assessment of architectural projects are when the critique should add to the process of design and what the best type of critique is for each session, to have best control mechanisms over the design process. Because whenever the critique has imported to the final product of design, designers such as students or architects will show the Defensive behaviour so no effective influence will achieve. Analyzing the different implemented critique methods in, architectural schools lead to classification of the assessment tools in architectural design studios in nine categories: 1-Individual Critique, 2-Formative Critique, 3-Summative Critique, 4-Peer Critique, 5-Group Critique, 6-Public Critique, 7-Written Critique, 8-Seminars, 9-Panel Discussion. (Further discussion on the assessment methods could refer to Utaberta et.al.2010).
3. Research Methods and Findings

To study the effect of these implemented methods on students, we formulated a survey consisting of 20 questions as an initial part of our research. Except for the first seven and last four open-ended questions asking their thoughts on the issue, all the questions in the survey have a likert-type attitude measurement items having five levels. The questions in the survey can be categorized as follows:

Q1: how often your instructor(s) explain about the purpose of design juries / panels etc?
Q2: show your satisfaction level in desk crit, informal class pinups, final juries
Q3: show your agreement level on the named goals of instructors. (18 items asked in questionnaire)
Q4: how often the desk crit cause you to show these reaction (Encouraged, confused, nervous, inspired, etc (14 items asked in questionnaire))
Q5: how often the panel presentation cause you to show these reaction (Encouraged, confused, nervous, inspired, etc (14 items asked in questionnaire))

The data to be presented in this study were gathered during the second year class from convenience sample 23 undergraduate students (9 male, 14 female) of the department of architecture at university Kebangsaan Malaysia.

The initial evaluations show that 100 percent of students believe that more over student who present his/her project, other students in the class observing the jury, can benefit from the jury or panel. But they also mentioned that in current way the presenter is one who just benefits. This phenomenon may route in lack of good and sufficient explanation and lack of enough communication between instructors and students about the target and structure of criticizing in design studio classes, as we can see in Fig.1 this explanation and encouragement to attend in this type of discussions took place sometimes or rarely.

![Figure 1. How often instructors explained about the target and structure of crit sessions and encouraged you](image1)

Done research shows that students feel so frustrated and frightened to present their designs in front of looking eyes. They are worry to belittled and slighted by the peers and jurors. Bringing these senses to crit sessions makes students, just look for the acceptance from the instructors and if it doesn’t happen they feel disappointed and loose other statements and suggestions coming after and just want to know the exact solution is. (Fig.2).

![Figure 2. How often do the desk crit causes students feel different feelings?](image2)
In this survey we asked students to mark their learning levels in different types of crit sessions and in different types of comments. As we can see in Fig. 3 the learning level of students are minimum in negative crit sessions and they learn more in desk crits. Martha Schwartz, professor at Harvard states that the final jury is almost always going to be anti-climatic. You’ve already done 90% of the learning during the design process. You’ve already been through your struggle, and it’s over by the time you present.

![Figure 3: How much do students usually learn from each of crit types](image)

The real learning process has already happened. Students often think that they’re going to get this big kick at the end of all this, but I think they’re looking at juries in the wrong way. The jury’s job is not to tell students whether or not their work is good or bad. Instead, their job is to raise issues and make the student think. Rather than evaluation, Schwartz’s ideas of a jury include the purpose of discussion and teaching. Students to be critical and constantly question existing conventions, experiment, and explore their design ideas. Self-criticism is a behavior a student enacts while creating a design to explore possibilities, and debate ideas inside their own mind (Dozois, 2001).

Fig. 4 shows student’s satisfaction amount in desk crit and informal pinups and final juries. It can be seen that the total average amount of desk crit is the maximum and final jury is the least. When we asked students about whom should benefit in juries around half of students responded that both Students presenting a project and the students in the class observing the jury should benefit from the jury process.

![Figure 4: The percentage of student’s satisfaction](image)

Whereas, 17 percent of all students thought everyone observing the jury should benefit, including the jurors. Fig. 5. Based on observations and the survey it could be understood that students are aware about the used structures in the evaluating process. The grade will be given to the students in evaluation sheet format included list of objectives but about the comments the reality is that the type of the given comments to them is quite spontaneous for each project. The students’ responses to whom they think benefits from the way juries are currently conducted are illustrated in
The most common response from students at fifty six percent was that students believe only the student presenting a project benefits from jury discussions.  

As we can in Fig5. Students believe that students in current system benefit more. And the amount of all is just 17 percent (Utaberta et al., 2010). Comparison between who students think should benefit from juries and who they think currently does benefit shows that there exists an inconsistency. The inconsistency may imply that students think juries, as a learning experience may not be as effective as they have the potential to be.

We compared the results of UKM student’s data with done survey by Marie Graham in 2003, which was done in LSU Canada to know how students feel in same condition like crit sessions and juries to find out the similarities and differences and to know what are the best methods to implement in studio classes. In data analyzing we found that same as UKM, in LSU studio classes, most of the students(55%) believe that just some times the instructors talk about the crit and its target and just 11 percent believed never. This shows that there is not enough communication between instructors and students. But in LSU students mentioned that their instructors encourage them to attend in discourses and discussions a lot (60 percent) while in UKM most of the students assert this happens just sometimes. Despite of higher amount of encouragement, the observations in UKM and LSU illustrated that students do not attend in jury discussions much. If the students feel the jury discussion influences the evaluation of their project, the discourse may be limited rather than the discussion flourishing the idea issue.

The comparison of student reactions to desk crits and juries which is shown in Table.1, illustrates that Overall, students react more positively to desk crits than juries. Desk crits also allow a closer physical distance between the teacher and student where they physically are on the same eye level, which probably allows the student to feel more comfortable talking about ideas, as we can see, students in UKM found out the juries good situation to get the ideas and believe that it can encourage them, while LSU students encouragement level decreases in juries.
UKM’s students feel more nervous in crit sessions and this amount is more than same position in LSU instead they feel more relax on juries rather than LSU students. And about the feedbacks the LSU students shows more react on the comments and feedbacks and they are more ready to try new things.

4. conclusion

The results shows that all the outside factors will influence on students reactions and their design process. Getting dissapointed or getting confident in personal design process, getting confused or inspired or even getting nervous are completely depend on the background and different cultures as we can see in all diagrams and tables. But the important thing is that the variation of the datas in each country is similar. the difference between desk crit percent and juries percent is similar in 2 universities this shows that we can’t give standardized model for assessment, instead we can check the implemented methods with authentic criteria which could be satisfy students with different cultures and back grounds, different talent and even different learning style. because in authentic assessment method we do not focus on the factual knowledge as end itself. Rather, we focus 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 styles.

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