



RESEARCH PAPER

Sharing Lives in Architecture Design Studio Culture: Dialogue on Experimental Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

The studio pedagogy of architectural aura bears a lot of weight on the relationships amongst University students as studio mates and between faculties, since this contract develops into a potential culture of cognitive settings, where standards set by the task force of AIAS, 2008); American Institute of Architecture Students, "Towards an evolution of Studio Culture" that a vision of design studio culture is proposed. Architecture design studios are run on emotional energy of student's interaction and contemplations on design work produced in studios, since current change in design environment through digital media influence has evolved the nature of design approach, gradually diminishing the concepts of sharing and collaborative work. To reconcile, a case study on experimental design studio environment is considered which investigates an alternate perspective for students to grow in a vigorous and creative learning atmosphere. An experimental study was conducted at a University premises in the Department of Architecture, signifying efforts in setting standards of design studio environment and envisioning the impacts of collaborative work for enduring learning expectancy, as per the observations and analytical benchmarks defined by the AIAS task force in multiple conference research agendas.

KEYWORDS Design Studio Culture, Design Space/Environment, Design Ethics, Design Collaboration, Pedagogy

Introduction

Ghosts of unforgiving paths and moments who have lived and projected their images onto a short lifespan have become a part of a transition. Architectural design students as transitional complicated creatures who are subject to their production in work environments, sharing each other, feeding of each other and absorbing from their surroundings mostly at an unconscious level, where architecture demons feed of their lungs, brains and every possible organ of their body to be creative. (Husserl.2012), contemplates that natural knowledge is reciprocal and is contributed by personal experiences, not differentiating in spirit to the factual knowledge and is focused by phenomenological aspects of senses and personal thoughts and ideals. Darker sides to the profession of Architecture and wiser and holistic nature of to becoming a saint are few innuendos which occur in a non or deliberate attempt, expressing the structure of what goes on in a design studio environment from chasing deadlines to procrastination; waiting for a miracle to happen and ideas begin to develop when push comes to shove

or a shovel. Although miracles do tend to happen in a form of an accident suggesting hints or design resolutions in a subtle manner, such accidents will bring about the most interesting design solutions throughout the creative process.

In a rowdy cold manner comprising of calculative measures of what to do and what not do, is this gesture more appropriate than the next one? Questions of never-ending answers are bombarded to have self-belief and begin a commitment of an architectural student to bond him or herself with an 'Idea' that will prolong for the rest of the masochistic process of designing. In 'Voices of Architectural Education' by (Dutton, 1991) reflects that qualitative education must focus on critical thinking and foster students coming from multiple cultural origins through means of mutual admiration, introspection to understanding with teachers, where architectural education needs to acknowledge the complexity and contradiction of an individual and the subject matter. Design Studios play an integral role in developing environment for critical inquiry to nurture the abstract thinking abilities of students (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996), how critical thinking and problem solving in design environment are reciprocal and complement each other in defining and fostering analytical thinking skills as the book proclaims in its critical inquiry.

As a student learning to be a critical analyst or artist of precarious observations, taking his first dive and not knowing how to swim one tends to ask too many questions which can be of any IQ level, well the question is? Is there such thing as a thoughtless question? Fear of the unknown creates questions and doubts in the mind of a designer, such paranoia is justifiable due to the nature of architecture. A long process of research and its methodology brings about limitless questions, but the motto is 'that it is ok to make mistakes' as long as students make an effort on their own and comprise consciousness through enigmatic process and ideas to produce intriguing problem-solving designs. Studio culture in its progressive evolution over centuries has defined the livelihood of studio environment and have repeatedly foster the concepts of mutual team work and emotional to intellectual nurturing of students in competitive stressful studio work dispositions.

Literature Review

Dying Culture Argument

The atmosphere of studio working environment can be relevant to a given situation as per student ratio, nature of studio objectives and cultural fractions. The role of studios functioning as a collaborative effort between students and instructors is fading over a period due to more focus on feeble communication illusion with social media and its overindulgence. The idea of working as a team even on individual based projects which formulates a healthy competition amongst students, since everyone has an eye on each other's work, bubbles a curiosity to resurrect a student's work. The concept of peer evaluation brings about individuality in students' work and personality to create better than the next. (Koolhaas 1991) elaborates that design studios should empower students to discover multiple creative solutions and have the freedom to interpret and be a subdivision of a metamorphosis process, rather than to be just a capable and skilled draftsman; merely to "create within them more or less a masterful building". It is imperative based on statement above that students will struggle in their studios as individuals but must be given the tools by instructors to self-analyze and become critical abstract thinkers. According to (AIAS, 2002), "students work side by side, but alone, often guarding their ideas from each other, competing for the attention of studio

critique". As some or most at an individual struggle period prefer to work in isolation, not to be disturbed either out of fear of being imitated or just to be distant from all in this aura of inflicting self-belief to be resistant is consequential but to be realistic there are mega outer influences which are proposing to this hard shelled structure of imaginative world. (Salama, 2005) suggests integrating knowledge and generating everyday design ideas from other sources and fields should be practiced in studio environment. Influences from personal associations and cultural backgrounds, design aspirations and inspirations are a production matter for the designers, as some students have stronger design inspirations to others depending on individual intellectual capacity and knowledge; sharing concepts amongst students can be a revelation for generating design ideas for revival of a wholesome studio environment.

In any personal human relationship arises complexity, to an extent that blurs the vision for many prospects that are unforeseen and hard to realize due to the possessive attachments related to the subjects, sometimes an outer influence or a third party not involved in a relationship can suggest sometimes a better understanding and vision towards a complexity of a subject. Similarly in design solutions where a student is more involved personally to his or her projects; classmates can give better clarity to others than compared to themselves in design solutions since one is more possessive or attached to his or her own project. Unable to go beyond a particular concept is the 'most common knots' as per (Beinart, 1981), in the studio design process particular in early foundation students as well as mid studio cultures. Also precisely put and expressed as a 'fixation' (Jansson and Smith, 1991) with an obstacle, self-inflicted by the student as an obsession in problem solving design strategy and not given a conclusive solution. The reasons for getting in a fix in design process is consequential to reasons of having preconceived notions and design evolution which is grasped at a shallow level without clarity or in-depth analysis, understanding of a problem which can have multiple perspectives rather than a singular solution. It is not easy to let go of so many partialities that are reeking for so many prolong hours of heartaches and backaches that some things that matter are not relevant or do not apply to the cause; as painful as it sounds it can be hurtful for some to comply to change only if touched by the hand of a guardians light, in a sense that students in order to overcome their insecurities they require a certain amount of certainty, assurance and encouragement from a teacher (Schon, 1985). Motivation through exercise in abstraction of multitude ideas repeatedly can be emphasized to get clarity, an exercise he refers as teaching through process of 'reflection - in action'.

Work ethics are toned in a competitive work environment, without the ethics it is impossible to survive and be able to have self believe to be creative, the individual nature of the subject demands students to have freedom of self-expression suggesting genuine ideas that would promote exciting venues for design projects. Studio environment based on the principles of sharing and respect can bring about trust amongst students and teachers, as (Quayle, 1985) expresses that changing or adjusting attitudes towards students can gain a more constructive method in design teachings referring to teachers/instructor as three main characters of display for students, one instructor as authority, second as a facilitator and lastly as a buddy. These reflections of an instructor are of inquisitive nature since it justifies that instructors to develop a healthy relation with students adapts a persona of a character that can be significant in different categories of student's personalities highlighting their work ethics in studio environment. Trust within oneself as student can establish strong work ethics for a production-based design where encouragement is induced in individuals by personification of instructors which can work wonders by a learning productive culture

where students intermingle on ideas in a controlled environment where process of design is effective by trusting the process rather than just the final product.

As defined in the Report of the (AIAS Studio Culture Task Force, 2002) on shared value of the American Institute of Architectural Students; "Redesign of Studio Culture" mentions the understanding of taking new steps towards architectural studio environment. The values are mentioned as to design a healthy studio culture, there are five essential values of optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation. Collaborative values suggest that; "No true leader works in isolation, no true leader would not listen before showing the way, and no true leader imposes his or her own individual dreams." (AIAS, 2002). Every Institute tries to proclaim its own academic school of thought in bringing an ideology that promotes an agenda for a specialized pedagogy and its thematic essence such as concepts of shared values are nourished on behalf of the faculty and staff members to drive an environment of a joint effort reflecting on students, creating a greater sense of understanding of the studio issues faced by the students and academia.

The generosity of expanding the architecture thinking to a positive level has been examined to realize and devalue myths that are constantly diminishing the studio culture, such as notions that collaborative work experience will produce less imaginative or genuine students work. This notion also has given birth to ideas that some students are protective of their work to an extent of non-sharing general ideas in fear of being copied due to the competitive nature of the subject, a selfish or more masculine or alpha approach towards design thinking is producing less optimistic and experimental innovative designs and more design thinking that is being produced in isolation giving harm or less fruitful results to students emotional and creative thinking ability.

Material and Methods

To witness and understand the culture of sharing and learning between Instructors and students of Architecture Design Studio, an experiment was conducted to design temporary studio workspace installations and conducting surveys from instructors and students.

Defining Studio Culture (Workstation Installation)

Experimentation in studio space design was adapted for creating space installations project, subject titled as Interior Spaces and Design of Batch IV at the Department of Architecture, University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, Abbottabad campus, Pakistan. As the design studio Instructor of subject my inclination was to expand on the shared value ideas as mentioned above and to discover individual efforts of each five groups of students to manifest a positive environment for studio by designing temporary workstation installations, manifested and executed by students for a single studio space. Each workstation would host five to four students with necessary studio functional requirements. After completion of the project two surveys were conducted regarding design space installations including both students and Instructors.

A detail analysis was conducted on how and why individual group workspaces of students are designed which in response reflected on studio culture installation as an environment which develops over a period and contained the essence of students work and personality, inner and outer life. It reflects on their work ethics and life pattern, habits and how a space is charged and surrounded by energy of individual students

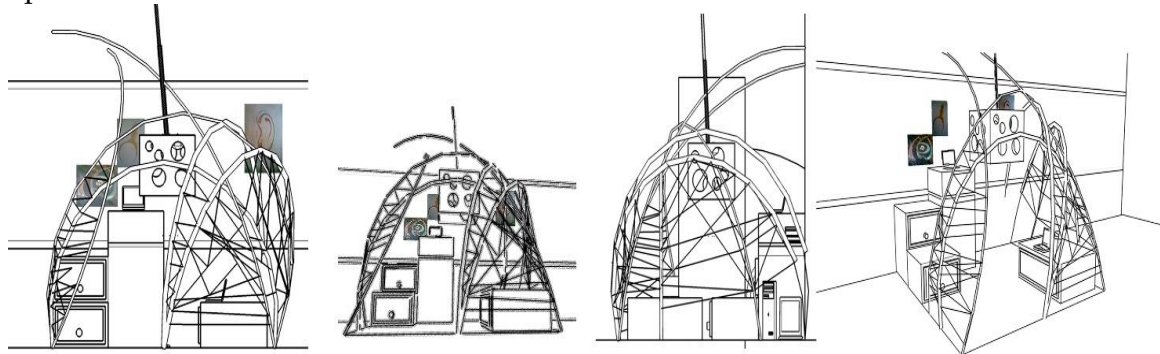
defining not only their creative design process but also their individual nature and expression as a human first and then as an architectural student. Sharing values from multiple sources of students from diverse backgrounds, race or history gives balance and an enlightening new challenge towards the vision of creative thinking.

Students of each group began the design process after sharing the source motives and arguments regarding each other's individual group projects. Conclusive statements or views on space installations were developed and adapted by series of drawings and expressive narratives that defined each group's work. Following were the guidelines for the students for designing of the workstation space by each group.

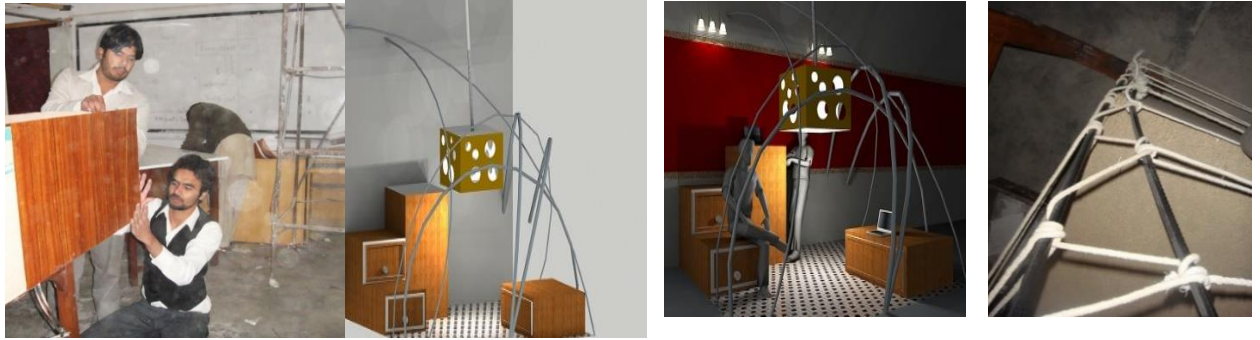
- Installation is a temporary design structure, projecting student's concepts and process of design strategy and methodology based on studio culture analysis.
- Panels for display of work or presentations will be designed, which is also reflection of group's space, its concept and individuality.
- Materials used for designing the installation are recycled materials preferably, considering project to be economically feasible.
- While designing the installation, students of each group must consider and understand the space and design of its neighbor, so there is a mutual understanding of not disturbing each other's group's workability and design. This process will be to achieve a successful coherent design studio structure.
- Students will consider their existing pattern of studio learning and interactive environment based on four years of design studio associations during the thought process and finalization of design. The design of each group must be according to their design vision and concepts reflecting essence of studio culture and how they desire it to be as per their aspirations and remorse.
- Installation design must be workable and completely functional, and structurally strong and stable, which are not a health hazard and a danger in any ways to fellow students. As the famous saying of Roman architect Vitruvius Polio goes: 'Basic fundamentals of design comprise of Commodity, Firmness and Delight (De Architectura by Vitruvius edited by Perrault, 1684).

Installation Design Process of Students Groups

Space workstation – 1:



1. Conceptual perspectives.



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Figure # 1-5. Title: 'Poetic Transparency'. PC: Author. Physical Implementation of design and conceptualization on space syntax, communicates with its studio configuration and emotional environment which gives a personal expression of how a workspace should correlate with the creative thought process of students, claiming ownership of space. The materials execution of metal bars, rope texture and wooden panel for the temporary structure works as a cocoon for a workable 'Think tank space station' for design work.



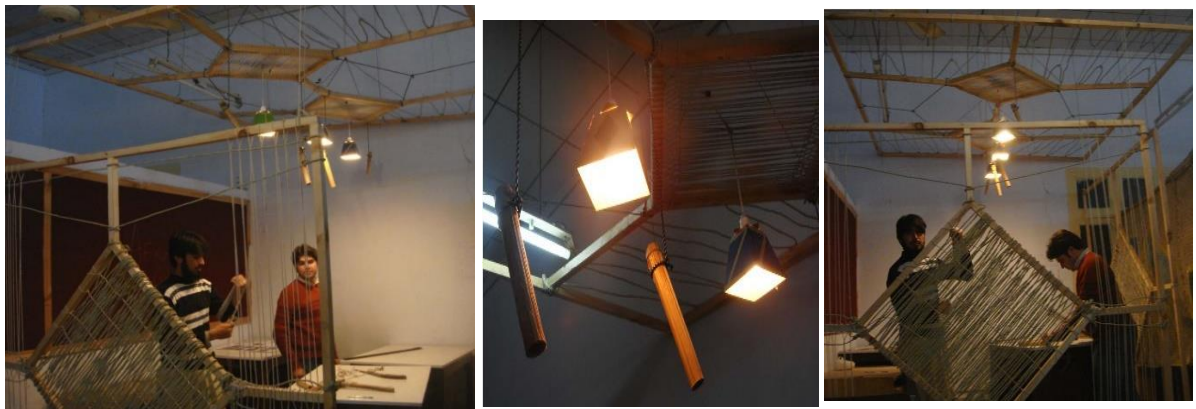
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Figure # 6-8. Title: 'Poetic Transparency'. PC: Author. Transparency of ideas and visual graphics are encouraged based on shared value concept. Students interpreting each other's work in a physical proclaimed environment that tries to resist any thinking constraints becomes an attempt of physical boundaries that are boundless to imaginary limitation.

Space workstation - 2:



9.

10.

11.

Figure # 9-11. Title: 'Serene Gesture of buoyancy'. PC: Author. Setting a paradigm of a culture which breaks the myths of a studio that it is not a solo artistic effort but a mutual respect of sharing a realm, bringing multiple tasks of joint studio work where students are bringing a sense of belonging through personal emotional reference of reminiscence in shape of wooden frame, jute weaving and bamboo lighting reflections.

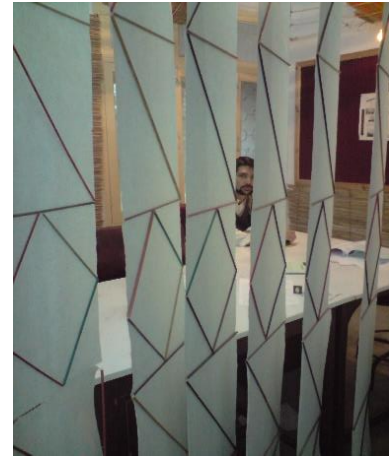
Space workstation – 3:



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14.

Figure# 12-14. Title: 'Voyeuristic spatial experimentation through materials'. PC: Author. Voyeuristic element of quality is experimented through paper/ wood rolling blinds on to a bamboo frame structure that can give complete openness or partial closeness in a sense of peaky blinders for workstation, depending on the mood preference of the student's nurturing nature of workability at studio environment.

Space workstation – 4:



15.



16.

Figure# 15-16. Title: 'Cultural expression of traditional materials'. PC: Author. A color and texture play outcome created a vision of space defining cultural/traditional gesture through frames of wooden chicks' blinds and bamboo weaved (Cane mats) and traditional lighting fixtures.

Space workstation – 5:



17.



18.



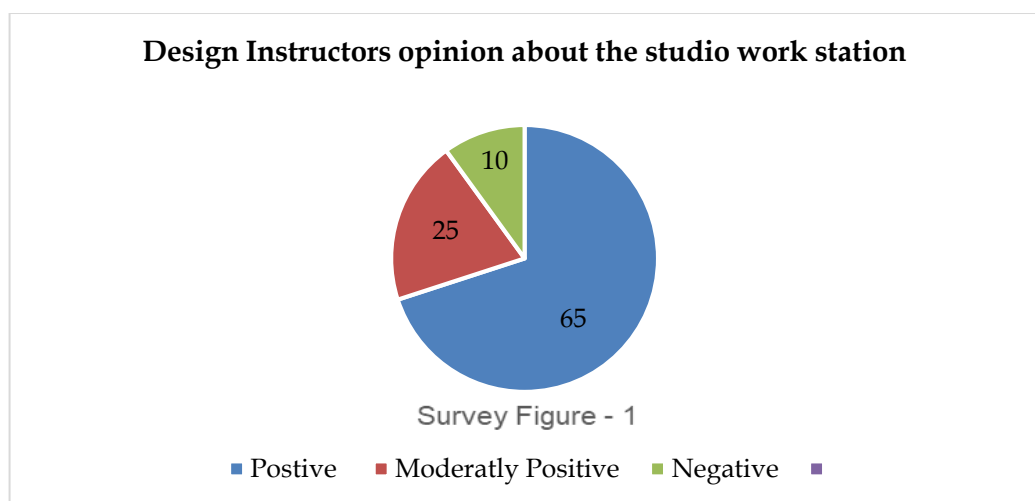
19.

Figure# 17-19: Title: 'Adaptation to weaving cultural trend' PC: Author. Weaving display frames experimented with light play creating an ambiance of serenity, hope by traditional means of jute rope weaving intricate process of minimalist yet prolific approach to design with a false ceiling and display walls.

Findings related to workstation by design studio instructors and general faculty members of the Department

After the completion of the experimental studio culture installation a general survey was conducted after 16 weeks of observations and analysis amongst the students and faculty to get feedback on the studio cultural environment. Findings of the survey questionnaires was based on a studio mutual work /cultural environment amongst students, concepts of sharing and ownership creating better design and work ethics, experimentation with materials creating design solutions that work in benefit for developing visual transparencies and display of work giving identity to students belonging of space.

According to the findings of the survey 65% of the faculty gave a positive response to studio installations, 25% were given as moderately positive and 10% responded in negative reaction. The following results were accumulated at the Department of Architecture.



Survey Figure# 1: Opinion of General Faculty and Instructors.

Positive remarks as per reviews of the instructors and faculty

- Students were more communicative about sharing their design ideas.

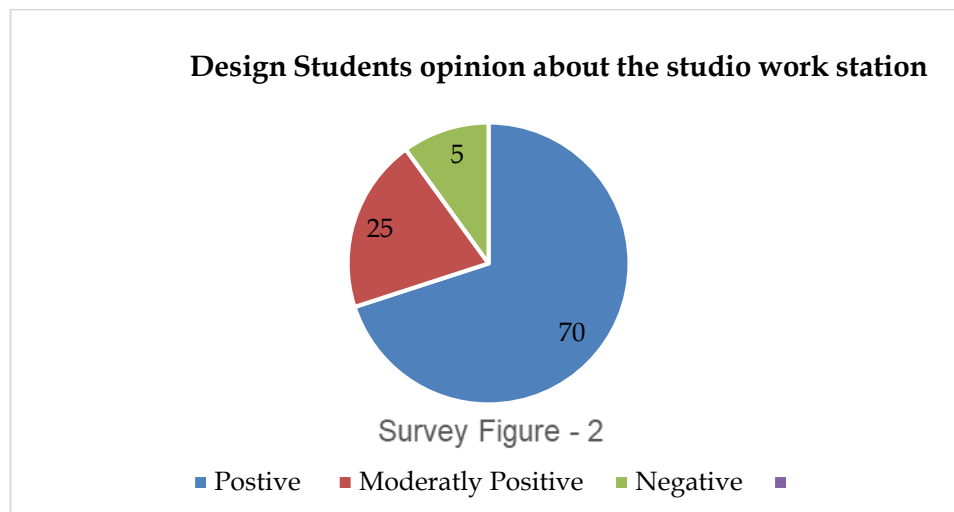
- Students developed a self-belief and a sense of responsibility for each other's ideas and work development in general.
- Space Installation design created an environment of enjoying the design process and studio environment.
- Developed a sense of ownership and belonging amongst students as they felt proud of their design and cocoon of work communication.
- Students were happier in general and didn't feel forced to work in a studio.
- Design studio was livelier and engaging as students from other studios were also participating in design process.
- Improvement in productivity of students work and time management due to flexible and interactive nature of the spaces.
- Concepts of passive learning by interaction with other students' work and faculty of other studios was enlightening.

Negative remarks and some suggestions as per reviews of Instructors and Faculty:

- The design studio seemed claustrophobic and overwhelming.
- Some students didn't feel comfortable in a new space adjustment since being used to a more formal disposition of space.
- Design installations (workspaces could have a similar design feature rather than being too eclectic).
- Workspaces created circulation constraints due to a limited overall room space and display panels were less practical.
- Partitions of some of the workstation designs were causing blockage of natural light and views.
- Some instructors were more acceptable to active course of learning rather than a passive learning of practice amongst faculty and students.

Findings related to workstation by design studio students of the Department

According to the findings of the survey 70% of the students gave positive response to studio installations, 25% were given as moderately positive and 5% responded in negative reaction.



Survey Figure# 2: Opinion of Design Studio Students.

Positive remarks as per reviews of Design Studio students:

- Students felt a strong sense of identity and belonging in the design studio.
- They perceive the space to be more interactive and happening.
- Workstation design process gave them an opportunity to be more expressive in design as an individual.
- Working in studios as in groups was less stressful and more beneficial from a learning perspective.
- Students did not feel forced to be in the design studios and developed a liking for the work environment.
- Improves their communication skills with each other and faculty members.
- Improved design process of students due to sharing concept and ownership of space value.

Negative remarks as per reviews of Design Studio students:

- Space design was confusing and created a lack of focus for some students.
- Spaces created intimacy not preferred by individuals with private or conservative nature.
- Fear of studio work being copied.
- Uncomfortable with the idea of spaces juxtaposed creating suffocation.
- Natural light is not sufficient, as partitions created blockage of daylight.
- Too much involvement of teachers/ instructors and students.

Conclusions

Installations design and visual expressions along with an emotional response experimentations paved an outlet of inventive ideas becoming intangible in a sense of having open discussion on multiplicity of project being flexible to options and opinions rather than to be rigid in thought. It encouraged no hidden agendas between each group of students and individuals ultimately bringing out the conclusions of mutual design efforts since each student's work can reflect on others and vice versa. (Gallagher 1992) suggests that to redefine educational paradigms and create innovative means of teaching institutes must delve into the unknown, experimenting in pedagogy to explore oblivion. A similar adaptation was created to experiment with a new vision of space vocabulary which students developed in a sense of how their workspace will function and how it expresses the group's student's freedom and individuality. This individual group workspace reflected the student's potential and desire to express their group space with a strong creative statement hence projecting an effort to redefine the studio culture.

Students expressed emotional experiences, which has formulated their life pattern or habits for the past three to four years, linking their associations with the work environment. These interpreted associations reflected into an actual workspace and a collaborated effort which concluded as an intensified introspection on their existence as being self-critical about their own identity as designers and as individuals working as a team. Students to be critical and constantly question existing conventions, experiment and explore their design ideas with self-criticism is a behavior a student enacts while creating a design to explore possibilities, creating debate ideas inside their own mind (Dozois, 2001).

Recommendations

Belonging and Longing

A Sense of Ownership gives way to freedom of ideas exploration and developing self-confidence in creative experimentation, taking responsibility of design and not blames shifting for flaws and unresolved design issues, raising questions like if we are producing designers and visionaries in architectural studios? Or depreciate personalities to an extent of distortion that manifests over five years of period that succumb the students to a level which contrastingly disorients their nature. To create thinkers and leaders a health-conscious environment is required for faculty and students in an atmosphere of studio strategies that support a developmental program which conducts a happy and prosperous individual rather than to isolate towards a degenerate medium.

Work ethics and empowerment to students

Architecture is not a selfish act nor it can perform miracles and save the world, a lot of students consider it to be either one of them due to the reason how in a studio environment they are raised to be conceited to a level of introspection in search of expressionistic answers to provoke more relevant and unique ideas, only to realize that originality is rare and like reinventing the wheel with your label on it; this self-induced exercise can force students to think of art and architectural process as a personal or private act with means of communicating ideas. Joint ventures can also fuse admirable artistic and creative work, designed based on involvement and intellectually contributing design parallels as experimented to foresee multiple options in design studios. If only on the contrary if students could realize as thinkers who are constantly designing for others and some third-party reference in most cases and not only for personal satisfaction or nor for self-admiration, but the notion of self-expression can also sometimes disarray students to think of design process as selfish act. One must realize that it is a social act; an act of creating and innovating as a social worker for multiple range of users and societies, so in other words architects are social workers and in many painful memorable times working as a philanthropist or a community worker, defined as pro bono architect.

If the idea of expanding studio context and decreasing limitations of students, to specifically create in the studio space gives notions to how we evaluate them as faculty members. Restricting to studio space only exemplifies hard earned hours, on the other hand, environment can be created for students to question and freely re-establish his or her domain as per her mood and intellectual needs defining a personal realm for expression. Basics of a studio demands virtue of good architectural knowledge and production of work showing not only excellence of design but also efforts and creative thoughts, if left to exile will these students run away or be willingly explore multiple ideas to be handsome and more evolve in their design interventions. Empowerment is resolved physically and mentally both to give freedom of speech and thought, to be free thinkers and confident in their words and beliefs than studio space of enclosure is meaningless unless this physical space has a sense of ownership for them and a sense of pride to be critical free explorers and thinkers evolving as design practitioners, who are designing multiple niches of thoughts. A building is defined by its occupation and its patterns, only than a memory is recognizable and comprehended otherwise a space with no occupation or meaning will seize to have memories and thoughts that are consistently consuming the artist, architects' energy into spatial vibes of tantrums and cheers as memory receptors.

Another fraction of self-annihilation in students also occurs where students tend to be so isolated in their own design dilemma that they cannot foresee multiple venues. On the contrary mental empowerment can sometimes project realization of consciousness that anything, anywhere is possible to be inclusive and rediscover themselves to wonder and question their being in reference to others; as the outer self-influences the desire and be desired. Nihilism in the existential paradigms is a tendency adapted by students, where they negate the entire factual and moral compass in studio reflections, as per metaphysical philosophy of German Philosopher Martin Heidegger; Nihilism suggests encompassing oneself to nothingness, an act of consciousness which is the origin of negation in facticity (Heidegger, 2022).

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