A Proposal For The First Year Design Education in Interior Design

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ABSTRACT

Our contemporary social environment is made up of the sum of isolated, individual lives. In such an environment, survival as individuals is difficult and the concept of communication assumes a new importance. A number of problems related to communication arise during the first year of interior design education, mostly stemming from the unfamiliarity of the realm with which the student is newly confronted. Technical jargon, the complexity of the profession and the unknown procedure of the design process are the basic components of this unfamiliar realm. In this case-study, carried out by the staff of the design studio of the first-year bachelor program of TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Department of Interior Design, we use practical as well as theoretical tools to address this multifaceted issue. Theory and practice are two important spheres, and whilst it is critical that each sphere communicate with the other we know that in practice this does not always happen. In the present study, we attempt to compensate for this lack by using and applying theoretical as well as practical methodologies in the form of simulation game rules. The aim of this paper is to discuss the importance of beginning by converging theory and practice in the form of a simulation game, and to support interior design competence through the application of theoretical courses, the result of which is played out in the studio setting.

A PROPOSAL FOR FIRST-YEAR DESIGN EDUCATION IN INTERIOR DESIGN

The phenomenon of gradual isolation and individualization resulting from the rapid development of technology has recently opened up a new field of research. Criticism focuses on the fact that technology creates new cultures with which we were previously unfamiliar. Many technological innovations with which we are all now familiar can have a profound effect on our lives. In recent years, the internet, e-mail, e-diaries, Google, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and so on have changed the way in which we write, study, analyze material, interact and establish relations on a fundamental level[1]. As is the case in all fields, design education has been necessarily affected by these developments. There is a need for teaching personnel who are familiar with the learning styles of students who have been trained in this environment, and who study interior design. Mere pretense at using the new environments introduces new problems. There is a great probable danger that these environments may send the education away from original content and remain only as visual richness. Our current era, in which new technological advances are emerging, might be referred to as a 'show era', or indeed as, 'an era when ideology replaces cosmetics, reality is beaten by image, everything is presented in an entertaining manner and cleaned out, a terrible bombardment of information disintegrates people and makes them non-reacting, memory is lost, perception and the ability of reasoning decreases'[2].

On the one hand, discussions continue unabated on the relative merits and drawbacks of children watching television. On the other hand, however, we now live in what might be termed a 'pop era', when every child and adult can achieve instant fame through uploading images or videos to social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Vimeo. This apparent 'interaction' does not necessarily make users anything other than passive recipients of online information, because very little of what is produced or shared in these online zones can actually be considered as proper information. In short, the individuals of the digital age remain as passive users and recipients.

The active role of the individual in his or her own learning process is, nonetheless, considered to be an indispensible factor for development in the modern age. The critical role played by the learning environment in reinforcing this notion is repeatedly stated in many contemporary theories of learning. Students' prolific use of digital tools and the online world, coupled with the increasing speed and capacity of digital communication poses a new question: can the means of mass communication and online sharing forums be used to positive effect in the learning process?

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[1] Beatriz Colomina "Privacy and Publicity, Modern Architecture as Mass Media" Metis Publications. Istanbul. 2011 P.xvi
[2] Neil Postman "Television, the Killing Entertainment" translated by Osman Akınbay. Ayrıntı Publications Istanbul, 1994.

Design education is one of the areas where the conflicts discussed above are at their sharpest. In an era of social media and communication, visual quality is not only one of the ways of communicating a concept to the world, but is also a determinant in the entire process of production and consumption. Thus, not only the location itself but also the workshops where the design of location is learnt are under great pressure. Almost all schools, academies, workshops and design offices are developing new methods, tools and implementation strategies in order to alleviate this pressure, and to compete with one another.

In design schools, the workshops that make up the backbone of education bring different trainers and students together and create a space for discussion, thought, implementation and review. The function of the workshops is to understand design, to reconfigure design problems and to research solution proposals. This approach may be used to provide the workshops with a dynamic structure that fosters inquiry, criticism and research rather than being static and monotonous. Basic design education, which is the first workshop experience in design education, is a significant process as it is the students' first project experience. In order to investigate this, the present study discusses the student-centered understanding of education in theoretical and practical workshops employed at TOBB University's Course in Basic Design, through the example of a game. Because the workshop is composed of trainers and students with different levels of knowledge and understanding, it is considered to be an efficient experiment environment for both groups. Although the process and products of this environment are predetermined, design problems that would be discussed over a given academic period and sporadic studies that would provide the solution/discussion of the same problem may change within that period. The sporadic studies are used as a design tool in order to convey the student to the resulting end-product, and to create and maintain a lively discussion environment in the interim. Effort is made to ensure that the design workshop is a process wherein the participants question themselves via design, rather than an environment in which their thoughts are developed and improved.

In order to make the workshop an active learning experience, trainer-student relations are reconfigured, and organizational format and design problems are reworked in each session. In the workshop environment, considerable effort is paid to eliminate trainer-student discrimination as much as possible and "student centered education"[3] is preferred. The presumptions of student-centered education determine the organizational format of the design workshop. These presumptions may be summarized as follows:

1: Learning how to learn is a guiding principle.
2: Every student can learn.
3: Every student establishes unique connections between former and new information while learning.
4: Learning how to think develops critical inquiry and creative thought.
5: The feeling of success provides internal motivation.
6: When learning is inhibited by negative experiences, it becomes more difficult.
7: Interest in the topic and projects that foster creativity and complex thinking motivate the student to succeed in more difficult tasks.
8: Every student develops by progressing in different ways and at a different speed.
9: The interaction of students with different characteristics facilitates learning.
10: Positive relationships amongst students contribute to learning.
11: Every student has different learning abilities and tendencies.
12: Every student comprehends new information according to his/her own patterns and creates a unique understanding of it.

Traditional methods and new technologies are used together in the name of student-centered education and, with the features given here of such an education in mind, the role of game playing is very significant. New technologies, besides the traditional methods of reading, listening and learning by playing, need to be incorporated into education strategies. Simulation games have been used in design workshops for a long time, in a bid to encourage the genesis of new designs. Are they, however, enough to cultivate a sensitive approach to design? What is clear is that a passive student in the class participates amusedly in a project that keeps her/him fully active throughout the process. One of the main objectives of the studio is that this first

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[3]For details see,.Oğuz Erbil "Student Centered Education I." http://uretim.meb.gov.tr/egitekhaber/s83/ Date of Access: 01.03.201

project positively affects the student and that it creates an atmosphere of unforgettable memories. Game playing fosters good motivation to learn, and participants enjoy the experience. Game playing is not an age-related activity but is universal, bringing together a multiplicity of different views and approaches. When there are fewer rules, those views and approaches become more creative.

Games imitate determined process and allow actors to stand in as the process's creator, to contribute to the creative act and therefore to understand the process more clearly. The methods of 'playing' and 'imitating' are used in workshop studies as significant learning tools. The atmosphere is one of a homogeneous group composed of trained architects rather than trainers and students, and the physical environment is evocative of a design office. Within this environment, each individual assumes a certain role. Those roles may change when desired and most importantly, the environment remains active and dynamic. The game designed has the opportunity to change and develop automatically. Many studies suggest that if this potential could be transferred to design education, the field of design would benefit greatly.[4]

The game includes the following aspects of the design process: imitation, reinterpretation, order, dominance, rules, requirements and strategies.[5] It is one of the most effective tools for learning because of its inherent freedom, and it can help participants to improve their understanding of design. A scenario that determines the game is always necessary. This is an agreement on how the game will develop; it is a way of designing preliminary actions and the alternatives. Involvement in the game means that participants design those actions and alternatives at the very beginning. The game itself is transformed into a design object. The course the game takes may vary and is influenced by time and external factors, as is the case with design. There is one major lesson to be learnt in both the game and in design, which is that the process is never static. The game, like the design, must be repeated from the beginning every time. The transformation of thoughts and ideas into action is perhaps the most difficult part of the process, and only succeeds to enliven the discursive environment. Naturally each student group is different, and the process must be approached accordingly in light of the particular student and teacher profiles.

So-called 'simulation games', "provide faster learning which is more difficult to forget".[6] With a design problem approached through the guise of a fictionalized game, "it becomes easier to understand design inputs, reveal the social and technological inputs, to perceive problems that may not always be perceived."[7] Since the students of design education are familiar particularly with simulation games prepared on the computer, the use of different tools, materials and techniques in the workshops within the framework of simulation games offer them an environment with which they are familiar. Although one of the main purposes of the design course is to reveal the errancy of "pretending", the ease of learning through "pretending" and the pleasure of comprehending by imitating cannot be rejected. Simulation games are therefore still used as a significant tool also in industry, science and technology researches.[8]

There are many different views on the methodology of simulation games.[9] The process and criteria must be pre-defined, and roles defined and distributed. The student's trainer should guide them through issues surrounding time and place. However, it is important that the trainer avoid imposing his or her own solutions on the student, and instead ask questions that lead the student to think independently and formulate his or her own answers. The role of the trainer cannot be limited to curriculum design or predetermined teaching methods, but should be a fluid and adaptable role in every new situation.

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[4] For details see, Dorn, D,S,. "Simulation Games; onemoretool on thepedagogicalshelf" TeachingSociology. No.17 1989.

[5] For details see, Roger Caillos. Man play and games. The free press of Glencoe Inc.New York USA.1961.

[6] Boocock S., Schild, E, O,(edt) "simulation Games in Learning" Beverly hills CA; Sage Publications. 1968

[7] Dorn, D,S,. "Simulation Games; onemoretool on thepedagogicalshelf" TeachingSociology. No.17 1989.,pp.1-18.

[8] For details see, Crookall, D. , Arai K., Simulation and Gaming Across Disciplines and Cultures, 1995

[9] Cumming,M,G,. Genzel, R,B. "Simulation Game, Design and Adaptation" D. Crookall, R.L.OxfordEdt. SimulationGaming,andlanguage Learning. New York;Newbury House.1990, pp.67-72.

Simulation games are used in different fields of education because of the efficacy of role-playing.[10] Since the subject is of primary importance in simulation games, it is required of the student to research and improve his or her knowledge. The three stages of simulation games have been determined as: designing the game; the game; and discussion.[11] The process of designing the game provides an experience of independent learning for the student. Thus, the student should transform the knowledge he or she accumulates and become a part of the game, learning how to learn in this process. Since no subjective assessments are made, and the student is not graded, an inclusive learning environment is created. Since the knowledge gained by the students as a result of research builds upon existing knowledge, connections are inevitably made between the old and new information. This process provides the student with the means of thinking, observing, planning and assessing, and fosters skills in creative thinking. This process enables the student with creative thinking skills as it provides him/her with the opportunities of thinking, observing, and planning and evaluation. Since the game is a visible process available to everybody, the student's motivation is at the highest level. This motivation is the most important factor leading to a sensation of success, which has a positive effect on subsequent personal motivation. The very act of participating in the game serves to renew the student's self-confidence, and the chances of success are increased by the demonstration of individual differences. Thus the possibility of a negative learning outcome is almost eliminated, and challenges to successful learning are healthily increased. Curiosity surrounding the outcome of the game motivates the students to think in more complex ways, and inspires them to succeed at more tasks otherwise considered very difficult.

Learning is strengthened during the game by the exercise of social relations, namely through students' assisting each other and approaching the problem together. Diverse activities and the different technologies used during the game process reveal students' different capacities and learning styles. Reading-research studies are carried out which may create a theoretical background, either during the game process or the transition periods between the games. The texts are selected from works on the nature of design and its future trajectories. Studies that explain how significant designers are interested in the intellectuell content behind the form, rather than the form itself, are discussed. The study of similar approaches from significant designers in the historical process strengthens the idea of "meaning behind the form", with which the student should become familiar. The basic design workshop tries to ground its studies in how general design concepts are taught, but at the same time how those concepts are personalized in time. Because the subject or function is not the aim, discussions in the studio are carried out via the design problems. The subject is only used as a tool for understanding, configuring and discussing the problem.

The students enter into a unique creation process by filtering new ideas at the end of game in the section called discussion and review. This might be referred to as the process of measurement and assessment of meaning. In the assessment of the results, the developmental progress of the student should be one of the most significant criteria. Awards demonstrating the recognition of achievement made from time to time have potentially positive effects on student development. For the sake of rewarding students, projects that are based on elimination of projects until the selection of winning projects may be organized, thereby bringing the real-life competitive atmosphere to the studio.

The game is realized according to the above-mentioned three stages of development, and each student learns something different from each stage. This student-centered learning process suits the needs of the students, taking into account different learning styles and speeds. The variety of interactions between students also facilitates learning by bringing together different personalities, backgrounds, and cultures. The following guidelines for the successful execution of the simulation game have been devised:

- A thorough preparation stage is necessary. Scenarios should be designed, and roles defined and allocated, well in advance.
- The instructor should refrain from directing the game.
- Workshop participants who are not players in the game should be encouraged to engage with it as observers.
- Students should be arranged in appropriate groupings, in order to facilitate optimum scope for good communication.

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[10]Inbarr,M, Stoll, C,S.. Simulation and Gaming in Social Science. New York;TheFree Press.1972,

[11]Greenblat C.,S, Designing Games andSimulations; an İlustratedHandbook, Newbury Park, CA.Sage Publications.1988

- The continuity of the game is important. The interest of the students should be sustained, and if it wanes then the game should be terminated.
- Depending on how the game unfolds, there should be certain intervals at which the proceedings are summarized, analyzed and discussed.

Simulation games can be used to good effect in every theoretical and practical area related to design education. Topics ranging from the integrity of the cityscape to object design can be approached through the educational tool of fictionalization in the workshop setting. Efforts are made for the students to work as freely as possible, and to facilitate their use of basic techniques (sketching, drawing, model-design, use of video and so on), and a wide variety of materials (paper, cardboard, wire, rope and so on). It is intended that the students think through how to work with particular materials, and demonstrate their learning through incorporating the materials into patterned formats of their own design. The main axis of discussion in the workshop might be termed, 'transforming thought into form', and models are used as the primary tool in facilitating this transformation.

Personal experience and creativity are nurtured in the design workshop, and the simulation game offers a way for this nurturing to take place in an environment where the participation of others is also encouraged. Producers, users and designers all contribute to the game. Students are therefore quickly familiarized with a wide variety of different views, and the realities and methods of a diverse range of actors. They also begin to make independent inquiry into these matters themselves. What is significant in this inquiry is the participation of the student in the broader project. The active or passive nature of this participation is not relevant, rather, the opportunity to experience this inquiry process. Stimulation of creativity is directly related with the stimulation of students. Efforts are made to ensure that the design process is free from the influence of a given time or place, and that students may engage with it with a measure of impartiality.

In the workshop process, students are encouraged to think freely, and to fictionalize and then personalize the problem in order to address it according to their own level of skill. This is made possible by requiring that the students learn by doing. The performance of an individual student is understood to reflect his or her own experience, for there is no definitive relationship between concept and form: a single concept may be expressed through many forms, and likewise a single form may refer to many concepts. In performance, form and the thought that underpins it are not approached as two different structures supporting each other, but instead as a single structure that exists with continuous intersections. It is therefore encouraged that thought and form be created simultaneously. Performing, in direct relation with the selected material, is arranged through the nature and the needs of the material.

The purpose of the workshop process is to foster an experience whereby the student may learn independently within a collaborative setting. It seeks to instill a love of the subject in new students, and to demonstrate that design should be a way of life and a continuous adventure. This is best understood by participation in the game. The process offers students a sound preparation for higher-level projects, when simulation games can also be used as design tools. Students are trained to reject design processes in which they do not participate or experience directly. For this reason, any tools that help the students to engage with their environment should be available in the workshop (freehand, technical drawing, computer CAD). These elements serve merely as tools, and do not affect the process of assessing the student's performance. The important issue is to focus attention on the thought processes that lie behind the design.

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Proceedings 19-21 April 2012 – **www.icaud.epoka.edu.al**