

Socialisation in Architecture Education

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Introduction

Architecture education is an engaging process; long hours in the design studio, a high level of one-on-one instruction, and intense peer review. The process, which extends over the years of formal education, is instrumental in the transformation of students into architects. This transformation, or more appropriately 'socialisation', defined by Bragg as "... that process by which individuals acquire the values, attitudes, norms, knowledge, and skills needed to perform their roles acceptably in the group or groups in which they are, or seek to be, members."¹ Through this process, in addition to garnering the knowledge and skills required of them (explicit curriculum), students are initiated into the [cultural] norms of the profession; norms that are not explicitly stated in the curriculum, but are nevertheless important for anyone seeking to participate as a member of the profession (implicit curriculum). With architecture education having no defined pedagogy, no specific curriculum and no instructional manual, it can be hypothesised that the implicit aspects of architecture education may be significantly influential in the transformation of students into architects.

This paper presents on some of the findings of a study that investigated the nature of socialisation within architecture education in East Africa. The lack of any significant research on architecture education in the region, necessitated a broad based study, undertaken through a mixed methods approach, including: a review of published information on the programmes; visits to schools of architecture, to conduct interviews with students and faculty; a review of validation documents (where available); and, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) through which qualitative data could be gathered, providing descriptive experiences of participants. The findings of the FGDs are the focus of the current paper.

Socialisation in Architecture Education

According to Strickfaden and Heylighen, architecture education is where "... students gradually take on language codes, stylistic preferences and rituals of architects, while becoming increasingly remote from the way laypeople describe and prioritise architecture."² In effect, they are socialised into the profession, taking on codes, preferences and rituals, associated with the knowledge, skills and experience of faculty, and to a lesser extent, fellow students.³ For Stevens (1998) socialisation is "... an integral part of architectural education,"⁴ given it is through education that the culture of the profession is "... slowly absorbed from those who are already cultivated."⁵ Socialisation, to an extent, also provides an historic link to the origins of the profession, providing a "... sense of kinship with centuries of traditions, thoughts, and personalities [...] the true tie that binds those who practice architecture with those who teach it and study it."⁶

Attention to the nature of socialisation in the education of architects has been made necessary as part of efforts to understand architecture education, which has been described it as '*a black box*', whose inner operation many have failed to decipher. These inner workings are so elusive that Banham (1996) states, "Anthropologists have already gone a long way in penetrating the inner workings of societies far more remote than the tribe of architecture."⁷ The transformation that occurs has formed the basis of a number of studies on: Design Studio Pedagogy and Studio Culture⁸; the Setting and Programme⁹; and, the Context¹⁰.

Dutton (1987), among the first to seek to quantify socialisation within architecture education, based his work on the concept of the hidden curriculum put forward by Jackson (1968).¹¹ Dutton (re)defined socialisation as, "... those unstated values, attitudes, and norms which stem tacitly from the social relations of the school and classroom as well as the content of the course."¹² This definition acknowledged that not all that is taught is, or can be explicitly stated. Further, education is not only learning about 'things' (gaining explicit knowledge), but is also about our participation in society, garnered through observation and learning how to learn (implicit knowledge).

While generally positive, socialisation can take on sinister qualities, as pointed out by Till (2005), citing Jacques Lucan, in reference to Miroslav Sik's atelier at the ETH Zurich, "... whose members 'black uniforms and deliberate isolation bore overtones of a clan' ..."¹³. This invites comparison with more extreme notions of socialisation, such as indoctrination, as presented by Bobel (2006),¹⁴ or even [cultural] cloning, described by Essed and Goldberg (2002) as the "... systematic reproduction of sameness."¹⁵ At the extreme, socialisation can be dangerous, creating sub cultures and creating social injustices that could impact negatively on society, as depicted in the 1981 Todd Strasser novel, *The Wave*.

With socialisation commonly linked to professional education, Bess (1978) emphasises

the distinction between 'socialisation' and 'professionalisation', the latter defined as "... the process by which students learn the skills, values, and norms of the occupation or profession ..."¹⁶ Socialisation, on the other hand, is the acquisition of elements that make an individual a part of a professional group. While socialisation and professionalisation can occur together, the distinction is significant: professionalisation is about 'learning', while socialisation, is about 'acquiring'; an acknowledgement that in education, there are some aspects that are 'taught' and others that are 'caught'.¹⁷ Socialisation thus addresses those aspects of the curriculum that cannot be conveyed or garnered through books or lectures, but through experience and immersion in specific activities.

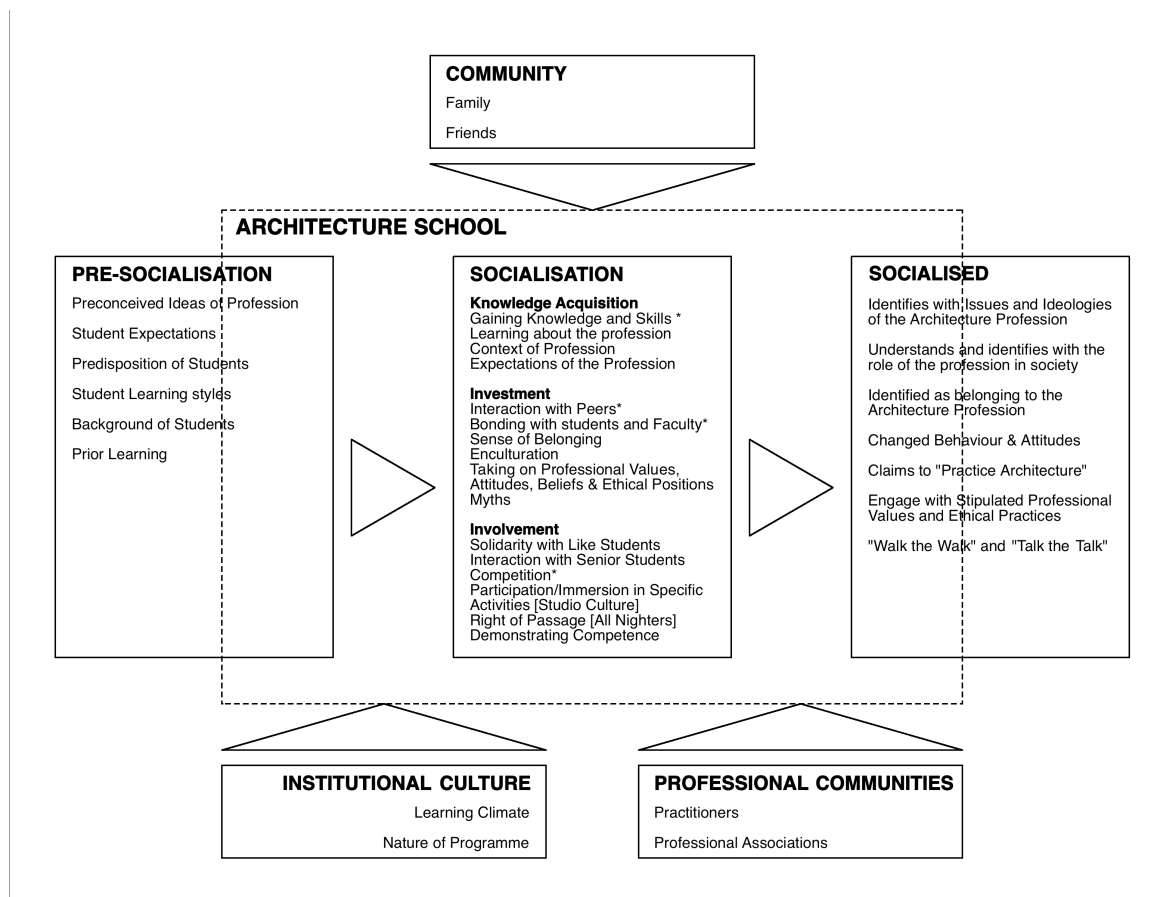


Fig. 1. Aspects of Socialisation in Architecture Education

It is evident that the contribution of faculty to socialisation of students in professional education is particularly significant, acknowledging that education is a social process, and does not occur in a vacuum.¹⁸ Indeed, in architecture education, as "... educators are already encultured into design, they logically represent a major contributing force towards enculturating new designers-to-be."¹⁹ This suggests that architecture education is not so much an insulated 'black box' but may be viewed as a process so intertwined with its specific social and cultural setting that the two are difficult (or at times impossible) to separate. Indeed, as Lloyd (1983) suggests "... it is extremely difficult to teach without cultural reference ..."²⁰ As such, understanding the nature of socialisation may give us clues of the nuances specific to architecture education in particular settings.

For Weidman et al. (2001)²¹ the process of socialisation comprises of four stages: Anticipatory; Formal; Informal; and, Personal, each stage relating to the transformation that occurs in individuals. Sang et al. (2009)²², who look at Anticipatory Socialisation in relation to the bridge between formal architecture education and entry into architecture practice. For this paper, the concern is for the nature of socialisation as and how it occurs within the institutional setting of the architecture school, presented by Weidman et al. (2001)²³ as incorporating: Knowledge Acquisitions (learning about the profession); Investment (taking on elements of the profession); and Involvement (participating in activities related to the profession), as presented in Figure 1 above.

Socialisation in Architecture Education in East Africa

This study sought to understand the nature of socialisation in the context of architecture education in East Africa. It was prompted by anecdotal evidence and experience that suggested socialisation in the context of East Africa was having negative impact on the education process.

Five schools of architecture were included in the study: two in Kenya - Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and University of Nairobi; two in Uganda - Makerere University, and Uganda Martyrs University; and one in Tanzania - Ardhi University. Two schools have a

two-tier curriculum, incorporating a pre-architecture undergraduate programme and a graduate entry professional programme. The Uganda Martyrs University is the only private university offering a professional programme in architecture.

More than 65 students and faculty participated in the FGDs, documented in more than 15 hours of audio recording, which were analysed using Template Analysis as used by Sang et al. (2009)²⁴ Specific highlights that reveal elements of socialisation were identified through this process, beginning with an initial template based on the open ended questions, and adding to this as part of the analysis process.

This paper presents key findings related to three areas that emerged in relation to socialisation in architecture education in East Africa: the place of the design studio; how students relate to faculty; and, how contemporary issues are dealt with in architecture education. These serve to highlight how socialisation is manifested in architecture education in East Africa.

Place of the [D]esign studio

The design studio, and its connection to support courses, is particularly significant, given that the design studio is regarded as a quintessential part of architecture education. This is where students tend to spend much of their time, regardless of the credit weighting of course, dedicating far greater time to design studio project work than for support courses:

FG2_4 - A maximum of 8 hours a week of theory, the rest is design portfolio and graphics.

FG6_2 – [...] Truth be told, um, the theory and the studio don't quite relate, yea, don't quite relate. If, if, if they do, it's on a very small scale, yea, there's not much relationship [...]

Separation of design studio and support courses, was the norm across the region, a bias that relegating support courses to the periphery of what is perceived to be architecture. Design in architecture was thus presented as an activity in space planning, and façade design and to a lesser extent about design integration of aspects of design, building performance, theoretical agendas, structural adequacy and delight. In effect, this focus appears to socialise students

into a belief that architecture design is more about imagery, than about the process.

Student - faculty relations

An important part of architecture education, is the privileged relationship between students and faculty. Discussants in the FGDs were aware of the importance of this relationship, and the potential impact this could have on student progress, growth and outcomes:

FG3_2 – [...] in School A it's still the same old traditional kind of institution like arrangement, where there are gods and servants, subjects and slaves, you know, masters and slaves. [...]

FG3_1 – [...] you find that, ... there's an air of, ... the atmosphere is very thick, it's, ... people are very tense, especially the person presenting. It takes of course a lot of time to get used to, after some time you get used to that kind of environment, and maybe find ways to counter it. But the mood is, is, is a very tense one, it is not relaxed, as such it limits the creativity. [...]

The description of faculty - students' relations as a 'master-slave' relationship, suggests a power relationship in which instructors wield power, inculcating their values onto (unquestioning) students. This inkling of enforced socialisation was hinted at in a separate discussion:

FG2_1 - The only thing I would want to add on to that, is that the rigidity of the tutors [...] at times shuts our innovative, [...] at times you get to fear them so much, that you fear that they can mess up your marks, so you end up having to take their suggestions.

FG4_3 – [...] we had a lecturer, ok an ex soldier or something [...] sincerely this is a guy, who, ... it was like you were competing with him [...] of course you don't know, he knows, he is the instructor. And they're pumping their own ideas into your head [...].

FG5_6 – [...] you identify which of your tutors is the boss, because even though there are four of them, there is one whose opinion matters [...] So when you are given a crit and they conflict, you listen more to the person who you know will have a bigger say in awarding you marks. And you do what it is they are telling you.

These statements highlight the extent of the teacher-centred approach to education in East

Africa, which negates collegiality, a primary element of contemporary architecture education.

Digital divide: Computers in architecture education

Engagement with contemporary issues in architecture and architecture education was a further area where socialisation was particularly prominent. It had been established that computers were rarely used beyond drafting and computer enhanced presentation. While two schools did make use of the building performance simulation and analysis tools, Autodesk Ecotect, this was only a recent addition. Further, there was little evidence of the use of computers as *design tools*. For the most part, computers were not considered as part of the architecture curriculum.

FG3_2 – CAD is taboo, despite CAD being taught as a course unit for the first three years, using it for an assignment or anything is taboo.

FG1_1 – [...] Whereas I was born in a generation where everyone is carrying an iPod, my lecturer was born in the 1960s, and all they could do is hand draw [...]

FG2-4 – [...] there was a person who did use CAD and they were disqualified as well. If one way or another the school caught up, it opened its eyes to what is happening out there, maybe, maybe it could be considered a change [...]

Lack of knowledge and experience with computer packages was a primary factor in the low penetration of computers in architecture education, with few faculty having been exposed to computers as part of their own education, and therefore not engaging with it as part of their practice or teaching. Faculty were therefore unable to offer needed instruction, thereby dissuading students from using them. This problem is no doubt set to continue given computers, and other contemporary issues are, effectively barred from the design studio environment, as strongly stated by one faculty member:

FG10_4 - ZERO! Ok, Zero in the sense that, even when I want, ok, even when the students what, sometimes the academic, fellow academic staff can be the obstacle, ok. [...] these people are not interested in sustainable building design.

The relegation of contemporary issues to the periphery of architecture education could relate back to the broader dislocation of support courses from the Design Studio, highlighting the traditional boundaries in architecture education, as presented by Piotrowski and Robinson.²⁵ This no doubt has consequences for graduates, and the profession; socialising students into what may be a false reality of what constitutes architecture.

Discussion

The findings suggest a teacher centred approach; reinforced by seniority traditions, giving instructors significant authority over students. This indicates a high level of 'enforced' socialisation that negates the experiences and memories of students to the background. It is therefore firmly established that the dominant view prevails, not because it is a better option or approach, but solely as a more influential proponent has put it forward.²⁶

The nature of architecture education is such that, it is perceived to be 'studying about' rather than 'participating in' the profession. Students, therefore, come into architecture education to learn all they can to make them experts in their chosen field.²⁷ The educational process thus tends to cast the learner as if they were *tabula rasa*,²⁸ with education effected as " [...] the transmission of packaged, or pre-digested, information - education as instruction administered to the 'ignorant' by experts [...]"²⁹

In this regard, socialisation in the context of architecture education in East Africa may be akin to inculcation, serving to reinforce the a particular view of architecture, which appears to concentrate on current, rather than future requirements of the profession. Socialisation therefore it seems is a means by which the establishment reinforces the prevailing state of affairs, a finding that supports Dutton's thesis that the 'socialisation' can be 'corrosive' to faculty-student relationships, and affect the growth of architecture discourse, by reinforcing and entrenching the status quo.³⁰

Conclusion

This research study explored socialisation in the context of architecture education in East Africa. The findings suggest that socialisation is a significant aspect of architecture education in

East Africa, and particularly significant in the formulation of ideals of students in architecture education.

Although a key purpose of architectural education is to ensure that those entering the profession understand and appreciate the contemporary and potential directions of the architecture profession, it is evident from this study that this is not always the case, with students socialised into only dealing with 'tried and tested' approaches.

Understanding the nature of socialisation reveals that implicit aspects of professional education may be of greater significance in the educational process than often acknowledged. This could have a significant bearing on the evaluation of teaching and learning in architecture education, and may suggest a rethink of the current approach that reviews content (knowledge criteria), and not teaching, which is at times presumed to be a neutral factor in the education process.

While this paper has reported only on the findings of the socialisation process in architecture education, further details relating to pre-socialisation and the socialised stages gathered as part of the wider study could not be presented in this forum. These are to be presented in separate publications.

Notes

¹ Bragg, Ann Kieffer. "Socialization Process in Higher Education. Eric/Higher Education Research Report No. 7." Washington, D.C.: Publications Department, American Association for Higher Education, 1976, p6.

² Strickfaden, Megan, and Ann Heylighen. "Cultural Capital: A Thesaurus for Teaching Design." *Journal of Art and Design Education* 29, no. 2 (2010): p122.

³ See Anthony, Kathryn H. *Design Juries on Trial: The Renaissance of the Design Studio*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991.

⁴ Stevens, Garry. *The Favored Circle: Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998; p196.

⁵ Ibid. p196.

⁶ Boyer, Ernest L., and Lee D. Mitgang. *Building Community: A New Future for Architectural Education and Practice*. Princeton, New Jersey: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1996; p4.

- ⁷ Banham, Reyner. "A Black Box: The Secret Profession of Architecture." In *A Critic Writes: Selected Essays by Reyner Banham*, edited by Mary Banham, Paul Barker, Sutherland Lyall and Cedric Price, 292-99. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996; p299.
- ⁸ See Dutton, Thomas A. "Design and Studio Pedagogy." *Journal of Architectural Education* 41, no. 1 (1987): 16-25; Anthony, op cit.; Shannon, Susan. "The Studio Critique in Architectural Education." University of Adelaide, 1995; and, Wilson, Margaret A. "The Socialization of Architectural Preference." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 16 (1996): 33-44.
- ⁹ See Stevens, op cit.
- ¹⁰ See Roberts, Andrew, Martin Pearce, Oren Lieberman, and Walter Matsika. "The Development of Values in the Studio: A Hidden Curriculum?" In *Changing Trends in Architectural Design Education, The International Conference of the Center for the Study of Architecture in the Arab Region*, edited by Jamal Al-Qawasmi and Guillermo Vasquez de Velasco, 469-82. Rabat, Morocco: CSAAR - The Centre for the Study of Architecture in the Arab Region, 2006; and, Webster, Helena. "Architecture Education after Schön: Cracks, Blurs, Boundaries and Beyond." *Journal for Education in the Built Environment* 3, no. 2 (2008): 63-74.
- ¹¹ Jackson, Philip Wesley. *Life in Classrooms: Teachers* College Press, 1968.
- ¹² Dutton, op cit. p16.
- ¹³ Till, Jeremy. "Lost Judgement." In *Writings in Architecture Education: Eaae Prize 2003-2005*, edited by Ebbe Harder, 164-81. Copenhagen: European Association for Architectural Education (EAAE), 2005, p165.
- ¹⁴ Bobel, Chris. "'Take This Class If You Like to Be Brainwashed': Walking the Knife's Edge between Education and Indoctrination." *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 4, no. 3 (2006): 359-64.
- ¹⁵ Essed, Philomena, and David Theo Goldberg. "Cloning Cultures: The Social Injustices of Sameness." *Ethics and racial studies* 25, no. 6 (2002): p1067.
- ¹⁶ Bess, James. "Anticipatory Socialization of Graduate Students." *Research in Higher Education* 8, no. 4 (1978): p292.
- ¹⁷ Kibor, Jacob, Gregg A. Okesson, and Kimberly Okesson. "Shaping the 'Hidden' Curriculum for Engaging Power, Poverty and Wealth in Africa: A Case Study from Scott Theological College, Kenya." In *Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization*. Cape Town: The Lausanne Movement, 2010, p6.
- ¹⁸ Bragg, op cit.
- ¹⁹ Strickfaden and Heylighen op cit.
- ²⁰ Lloyd, Michael. "Design Education in the Third World." *Habitat International* 7, no. 5/6 (1983): p368.
- ²¹ Weidman, Twale and Stein, op cit.
- ²² Sang, Katherine, Stephen Ison, Andrew Dainty, and Abigail Powell. "Anticipatory Socialisation Amongst Architects: A Qualitative Examination." *Education + Training* 51, no. 4 (2009): 309-21.
- ²³ Weidman, Twale and Stein, op cit.
- ²⁴ Sang, Ison, Dainty and Powell, op cit.
- ²⁵ Piotrowski, Andrzej, and Julia Williams Robinson. *The Discipline of Architecture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- ²⁶ See Webster, Helena. "Facilitating Critically Reflective Learning: Excavating the Role of the Design Tutor in Architectural Education." *Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education* 2, no. 3 (2004): p111. See also Dutton, Thomas A. "Design and Studio Pedagogy." *Journal of Architectural Education* 41, no. 1 (1987): 16-25; See also Inkarojrit, Vorapat. "Developing a Problem-Based Learning Course for First-Year Architecture Students: A Perspective from Thailand." In *ConnectED 2007 International Conference on Design Education*, edited by Robert Zehner and Cark Reidsema. Sydney, Australia: The University of New South Wales, 2007.
- ²⁷ See Olweny, Mark R.O., and Connie V. Nshemereirwe. "Educating Built Environment Professionals: Perspectives from Uganda." In *Built Environment education Annual Conference (BEECON)*. London, 2006.
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- ³⁰ Dutton, op cit.