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Visual Environments for Visual Thinkers

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Abstract

The paper explores the fundamentals of microenvironment as essential for learning visual thinking in Architectural Schools dealing only with visual thinkers. The admission to the architecture constitutes screening the candidates to ensure 100% visual thinkers. They use visual images and vocabulary in design thinking. The research talks about the environmental and behavioral impact of an advertisement on achieving a specific objective. The similar media are experimented with the methodical use of the visuals as tools for creating a behavioral environment influencing the quality learning for visual thinkers in an architectural education institute. The visual medias are methodologically used to map the impact of environmental factors on the quality learning for visual thinkers in an architectural education institute.

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Keywords: Educational environment; learning environment; environmental stimulus; visual learning

1. Introduction

Cognition is the unique phenomena that have brought the development in a particular direction influenced by the surrounding environment. Thinking is a cognitive process in response to the learning environment. It is a complex phenomenon that draws the relevant database from memory. Thinking is defined as a set of mental abilities based on various factors like knowledge, judgment, reasoning evaluation and visuals generated from the environmental behavior. Thinking is further categorized as critical, analytical, higher order thinking, lateral to vertical thinking, positive – negative thinking, conscious or unconscious, creative thinking - linguistic thinking, visual thinking. The

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paper also recommends improvisation of the environment and its visuals in the surrounding built and unbuilt spaces and information to improve the cognition. The pace of technology change for better quality of life is far ahead of the educational pedagogy. Thus arise the need for including innovative, high impact environmental approach for visual thinking methods in architectural education through its inherent built and unbuilt spaces.

2. Visual thinking

Visual thinking is termed as - spatial thinking/ pictorial/ right brain thinking and learning that happens with visual information processing. The visual memory is based on analysed visuals and the memorised information as visuals, graphics, pictures etc.. The brain thinks in a set cognitive patterns and needs to be stimulated to make it work defiantly / efficiently / creatively. The entrance exams for various creative and design courses screen the visual thinkers. If the group is of visual thinkers then enhancing visual thinking ability and capacity is to be enhanced. There are two types of visual thinking 1) Generated by memory 2) Generated by abstraction. (Anaheim 1993). The subjective experiments and explanations from stated the daily thinking is based on the formation and transformation of visual images (Ferguson 1977, Cooper 1990, Arnheim 1969, McKim 1980 & Shepard 1986). There are three examples to explain the role of the environment where visuals make a strong impact.

Example 1 - (Visual + sound + story) – India with its diversities of culture, tradition, taste and most importantly, food (spices) from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, likes Maggi [instant noodles] as an instant snack which is not as exotic as the regional dishes. Liking for Maggie is purely due to the impact through visuals and sound made by advertisements in the brain that makes it a national snack.

Example 2 - (Visual + Different Sound / Teacher's Voice). There is a general observation that most students look outside the classrooms when the teacher is teaching. This is also observed while reading uninterested contents, contents to understand or to memories. But this does not happen when the inputs are visual with sound to enhance the message and voice to specify the contents and the message, i.e. a virtual experience from the real-time input resulting in more depth and out of the box, unconscious thinking, which would not have been possible in a conscious way. Detailed studies done by Scientists (Koestler 1964, Miller 1984, and Shepard 1978, 1988) stated the role of mental imagery as an essential way to key discovery or insight.

Example 3 - (Visual graphic and a short memory with long-term impact) – The increasing business competition, there is an increase in propagation / promotions through advertisements. The advertisement media like hoarding, street light poles, bus stops, monopole display, digital display, vehicle display contribute to the general environment with strong visuals having a different contact exposure. Even though, the contact exposure is minimum due to various factors the impact factor is high to keep the industry operative and grow (Ogilvy 1985). The impact factor of these visuals could be a source for the educative purpose also, which is unexplored.

3. Visual environment

The Environment is shaped by the proximity of living and nonliving belongings, and then the individual is then shaped by the Environment (Khandwalla - 2008). Numerous researches in physiology are undertaken to identify the impact factor of the environment for learning. Observation is the basic teacher, for an individual, and he keeps evolving from the number of observations he makes. Approach to the physical environment plays the role of the third teacher in early childhood days. (Reggio Emilia -1998). At childhood days, individuals are more creative. Hence, to nurture creativity even in adolescence and adult environment will play a strong role of teacher for visual thinkers. The variation starts from the factors affecting our imagery in terms of size and shape of the surrounding enclosures, openings & voids, comforts, visual of space and visuals in space.

4. Visualization tools at institutes

Visualization could be developed on two levels at an individual work level and institutional level. The input can vary depending on every individual, based on exposure and personal interest, hence biased. Whereas at institute level the serving could be qualitative, quantitative and focused is restricted to teaching hours only. The various learning tools incorporated for teaching hours are the lectures, writing boards, projectors, interactive multimedia