

The Open Studio as a Better Educational and Social Setting: The International University for Science and Technology Experience*

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Abstract

Most colleges of architecture in the Arab countries use the closed studio system where students of one level work separately with their instructor in one studio. Also known is the open studio where a number of design levels share the same space. Students in such a studio benefit socially and academically where they can share and exchange information and ideas. With all its benefits, this type of studio is not well known in the Arab countries. The International University for Science and Technology was moved to Damascus as a result of the current affairs, and the Architecture Department is now using the conference room of the Information Building in the Eastern Park.

A number of studios use this space at the same time; thus, the Department was forced to utilize the open studio system. This was an opportunity to evaluate this experience especially after a full year of utilization. A questionnaire which was answered by 64 students and 4 faculty members shows that the subjects questioned believe that the open studio allowed more social interaction among students, better social relationships with faculty, more academic cooperation among students, and better chances to benefit from faculty. A large majority of subjects asked wished that the official campus of the University would accommodate similar arrangement.

Based on this study, it was clear that social and human relations among students got better, and professional interaction increased. Therefore, the study recommends that programs of architecture would adopt the idea of open studio at least in one studio during any student's education. It also recommends the development of a studio culture document which guides the relationship among students themselves and among students and faculty. A main objective of such a statement would be to put into practice the concept of team work and professional cooperation.

Key words: architectural education, open studio, closed studio, studio culture

* For the paper in Arabic see pages (73-86)

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