

# Joint-Studio as an Alternative Method to Enhance Student's Learning Experience

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## **Introduction**

The core of an architectural education curriculum is based on the design studio model which focuses on learning by doing and the processes and procedures of problem solving are transmitted through lectures and critique sessions. This paper tries to unfold issues and problems behind the Joint-Studio Program (JSP), which is one of the methods to enhance the pedagogical process of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year architectural studio at the Architecture Department, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). The discussion will consist of four parts which are the general understanding of design studio in architecture, JSP as part of learning process in studio, critical analysis of JSP at 3<sup>rd</sup> year between UPM and Islamic State University of Malang (UIN), Indonesia and some recommendations for future JSP. It is expected that this paper can start more critical discussions on the pedagogical output of JSP as part of student's learning experience in the architecture design studio.

Education is linked by spiritual and mental aspects and has direct effect on thoughts and ideas; even it can make patterns and line behaviours for humans' life. Since education as a first stage of attitude and effect on future can play an important role, we ought to pay more attention to education phenomenon (Hassanpour 2011). The studio learning in the architectural education system is a new experience for the students. The expectation of facing routine professional critiques and the concerns on what happens within an individual's mind and between two people that lead to different results makes the design studio more important (Utaberta 2011). In same condition once a technology

is developed in a certain country, it's "know-how" can be instantly spread out all over the world, neglecting the cultural aspects of countries to or from which it propagates. On the contrary the spiritual and cultural aspects of human life, namely, how to enrich man's day by day life, cannot be easily communicated (Utaberta 2010).

## **Studio Based Learning in Architecture Education**

Architectural education is based primarily around the design studio as a pivot and gathering point of all knowledge and skill accumulated throughout the curriculum (Mostafa & Mostafa, 2010, p. 310). Design studios learning style are remarkably similar across the industrialised world (Crowther, 2010). Design studios universally apply the semi-structured learning strategy of experiential learning; in particular, the project (Delahaye, 2005). For this study it was found that the aspects of design studios like studio pedagogy, culture, and technology are limited. In terms of the future, a more comprehensive approach is needed. For instance, Bender and Vredevoogd (2006) believe that more research about the impact of the online environment in architecture education is necessary due to rapid global changes in design process and architectural practice; so joint-studio offers a new framework for design studios in a more comprehensive and holistic way.

## **Joint-Studio as Part of Learning Process in Architecture Studio**

Definition of Design Studio has been discussed previously, however joint studio in word means a workplace for the teaching

or practice of an art and the phrase joint-studio happens when you combined two work-places, sharing a common working area or mainly working task. In this case the joint-studio is between different people from different countries and different cultural background to engage more ideas, talents and knowledge. There are several types of joint studio, some are web, short course and long course joint studio.

**Critical Analysis of Join Studio at 3<sup>rd</sup> year between UPM and UIN, Malang, Indonesia**

This joint studio involves the 3<sup>rd</sup> year architecture design studio of UPM and 3<sup>rd</sup> year architecture design studio of UIN for one semester with total number of 72 students which are 35 from UPM and 37 from UIN. Typically, students will attend the studio where the lecturers give instruction to each student in their own countries. Each studio worked on two inter-related projects which are the Senior Health Care which is located in Junrejo Indonesia and a Retirement Centre at Taman Tun Dr Ismail, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

At the first stage, both of the studios will do a "parallel" site analysis and a precedent study where each of them needs to present in front of panels of lecturers from both universities. After that the analysis is finalized and sent to the other respective university.



Figure 1: Site visit by students from both universities.

For students, that are not in the same country as the site is, they have to depend on the information given by the local students' site analysis report. They have to accept the challenge of understanding the site from distance and do their best to comprehend the local architectural principles, cultural behaviors and etc. Based on the given information, both studios are given a chance to apply their design approaches and produce designs based on the existing information.

Facebook group and web discussion were used as the media to synchronize data and medium of communication while input lectures were conducted by individual studio, based on the needs of each studios. In the middle of the semester both universities conducted joint-seminar as a medium for additional input lecture and discussion for both universities.



Figure 2: Joint seminar as a medium for additional input lecture and discussion for both university

At the end of the studio exercise, there was a joint-presentation and exhibition in front of the panels (consisted of both UPM and UIN lecturers) in Indonesia and Malaysia in the middle and end of the semester.



Figure 3: Joint Presentation and Exhibition

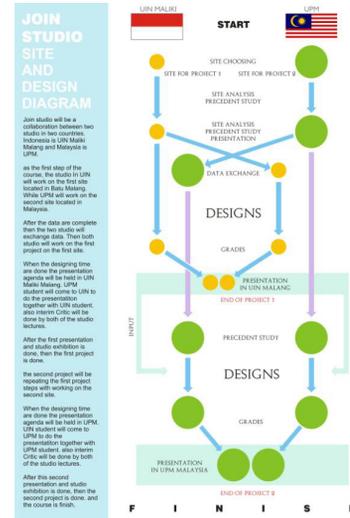


Diagram and Flow Chart of the Overall Joint Studio

Through-out the semester, we can observe some lessons and advantages from this activity, first there has been an interaction of cross cultural activity. Even though Malaysia and Indonesia is a very close neighbouring country but their cultures are quite different and the JSP has proven to be a good medium for social and cultural interaction for both groups of students. Second, this exercise prepared students for the global market. This exercise has enhanced the confidence level of students to be internationally employed and recognized. Third, this exercise can uplift and upgrade the working approaches and methods of students in both studios (Figure 4).



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Figure 4: Some students' designs from the UPM-UIN joint studio program.

### Recommendation for Future JSP

At the end of the Semester a post-mortem discussion was held in UPM by inviting external advisors to give reflections, comments and inputs for future improvements. Among the important comments given are:

Designing a project without going to the site is very difficult, so the panels advised that in the future the site visit to both sites is compulsory. Even though there is a social media like *Facebook* to communicate, the students need the first-hand experience of the site atmosphere.

Too many coordination activities will affect students learning time and also giving an extra burden to the students, it is advised that the JSP is to be implemented in a year duration, not in one semester so that the coordination and the preparation time do not consume learning hours of the students.

### Conclusion

Architecture as profession spans across both the arts and the sciences. Students must have an understanding of the arts and humanities, as well as a basic technical understanding of structures and construction. Skills in communication, both visual and verbal, are essential. While knowledge and skills must be developed, design is ultimately a process of critical thinking, analysis, and creative activity. The best way to face the global challenges of the 21st century is with a well-rounded education that establishes a foundation for lifelong learning and we should be opened to new changes and frameworks. JSP can be one of the effective methods in enhancing students learning experience. With the advantages and consideration based on the UPM-UIN experience we can learn and frame a new type of JSP to be implemented in the future.

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