

Introduction

The workshop was broadly divided into three thematic sessions titled “Thrust areas in teaching Landscape Architecture”, “Teaching methods and techniques Landscape Architecture” and “Practical Concerns of teachers”. These sessions were presided by the session chairs viz.: Dr. Shishir Raval, Dr. Sridevi Rao and Mr. Samir Mathur respectively. Dr. Abhijit Natu was the convener of the workshop.

Prof. M. Shaheer delivered the introductory talk giving an overview of the workshop and his views on the subject. The papers of Prof. Shaheer and the session chairs and the abstracts of the presentations of the participating teachers are attached herewith.

Based upon the discussions in the workshop and also on the written feedback received from the participants in form of questionnaires following summary of the three sessions is prepared.

Practical Concerns of Teachers

Some of the architecture schools in the country have Landscape Architecture only as an elective subject and not a compulsory subject in the curriculum. This issue is of concern, as sensitivity to the site and the environmental setting are of prime importance, which need emphatic attention in architecture curriculum. Exposure to landscape architecture widens the scale of understanding of “space” and larger concerns beyond the site.

The amount of time and weightage in terms of marks allotted to the subject in the entire architectural curriculum is just 5% to 7% of the total time. Hence the perception of this subject tends to be a “peripheral” or “an ancillary” subject. But the time and marks allotment is inevitable considering the array of subjects in the architecture curriculum.

To retain interest of the students the pedagogy of the subject and its integration in the process of architectural design both are very important. The tendency of compartmentalizing the subjects and lack of integration of the learning of various subjects with architectural design was observed by most of the participants. Hence, a coordinated effort to integrate landscape architecture with the architectural design is required.

Syllabus preparation process of the subject of landscape architecture should involve teachers of various subjects of the architectural curriculum to bring about integrated thinking and effort at the syllabus level. This can also help in identifying the thrust areas to be taught in the subject.

Lack of teachers with formal education in landscape architecture is a problem faced by many colleges. Training courses / workshops for non landscape architect teachers is required for their orientation.



One Day Workshop

Teaching of Landscape Architecture at UG Level in Architecture

Organized by Indian Society of Landscape Architects | November 19, 2011

At Rachana Sansad's Academy of Architecture, Mumbai.

Thrust Areas in Teaching Landscape Architecture

Syllabus is often cited as a limitation or hindrance in teaching of the subject. The teachers should go by the “spirit of the syllabus” rather than the “letter” of the syllabus. The participants also felt that the syllabi tend to be comprehensive and too many aspects of the subject are expected in limited time.

The ratio of “theory” and “studio” has to be worked out considering the objective of the subject, which is to sensitize the undergraduate students towards the site and its context when an architectural project is conceived. Differentiation between “theory” and “history” is required as history is many times taught as theory.

This subject should expose the students to various concepts alike the subject of “theory of design” rather than expecting too many technicalities, botanical knowledge and so on. Teaching should be aimed at imbibing “landscape literacy” not mastering the subject.

The presentations brought forth different areas of concern in Landscape Architecture which the teachers felt necessary to be included in the UG curriculum.

- Landscape Elements and outdoor space design.
- Urban environment deterioration and landscape concerns.
- Town Planning & Urban Design and landscape.
- Sustainability in Design.

Landscape Graphics is an important area which needs to be nurtured.

Techniques and Methods of Teaching Landscape Architecture

Teaching methods should be related to the topic. Participants shared the models of teaching they had adapted which are described in the following section.

- Exercises like identifying “places” in day to day landscapes and presenting them in form of sketches, verbal descriptions can help the students to identify the spatial characteristics which contribute in place making.
- Syllabus can be divided in smaller modules and / or series of thematic lectures to initiate understanding and learning of various aspects of Landscape Architecture.
- Behavioral approach to arrive at outdoor space program and design idea can be employed using techniques like activity mapping, mind maps, people maps.
- Hands on experiments such as contour modeling; sand models helped the students to understand the terrain.



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- Time bound short term workshops were found to be bringing out more output by the students as compared to the extended long term design projects.
- Use of visuals and power point presentations were found to be effective tools for teaching.

The Way Ahead

- Survey of teaching methods and value systems promoted by various schools.
- Identify models of teaching appropriate with regard to the content and time schedule. Evaluation of the models / teaching methods is also required.
- Documentation and tracking of the work of the students and the faculty.
- Teachers training workshops for the teachers of Landscape Architecture and also orientation workshops for teachers in architecture about this subject.

The ISOLA Education board can take up the initiative to conduct training workshops for the teachers by involving senior teachers and professionals.

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