

THE DESIGN PROJECT AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING ARCHITECTURAL IMAGINATION AT THE INITIAL STAGE OF TRAINING

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Abstract. The article examines the problem of developing architectural imagination among first-year students of architectural specialities. It analyses the essence of a project task as a pedagogical tool and its distinction from a traditional assignment. The author analyses the types of project tasks used in the disciplines «Fundamentals of Architectural Design», «Fundamentals of Composition and Colour Studies», «Architectural Composition» and their impact on the formation of students' spatial and figurative thinking. A typology of project tasks for the initial stage of education is proposed, and their influence on the development of figurative-spatial thinking, abstraction, and compositional boldness is substantiated.

Keywords: architectural education, design task, architectural imagination, spatial thinking, initial stage of education, design methodology.

The first year of study in an architectural speciality is critical in terms of shaping the basic professional qualities of a future specialist. It is during this period that the primary skills of design thinking are laid down - the ability to translate an abstract idea into a spatial form, to sense scale, and to anticipate the functional and aesthetic consequences of decisions. The key challenge of initial architectural education is the student's transition from school-based reproductive thinking («I know the right answer») to design thinking («I find many possible solutions»). Traditional methodologies in the first years are often overloaded with graphic exercises (hatching, wash rendering, orthogonal projections), which develop technique but do not activate architectural imagination – the ability to create new, aesthetically and functionally meaningful spatial images. There is a need for a tool that combines rational knowledge with an intuitive search for form. Such a tool can be the project task.

In the educational context, a project task is not merely an assignment to be completed, but a pedagogical tool that models the conditions of creative search and stimulates the development of specific competencies. Therefore, the quality of the task's formulation, its structure, and degree of openness directly affect the learning outcome.

The concept of the project task in pedagogy was used by H. Vashchenko and J. Dewey as a method of learning through action. The issue of forming design thinking in architectural education has been examined in the works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers. In particular, the organisation of the educational process in the first year has been studied in the context of the studio-based learning system, which involves interim and final reviews of works as a compulsory element of professional training

[3]. Researchers from the Kharkiv School of Architectural Education (Zhmurko, Yu. V., Panova, L. P.) emphasise the importance of compositional and analytical exercises in initial training [5].

In foreign architectural pedagogy, the typology of educational tasks is examined in relation to the theory of problem-based learning and the concept of «wicked problems» (Rittel, Webber), which describes open-ended tasks without a single correct solution – which is precisely the nature of most architectural problems [4]. Research shows that open-ended tasks develop creative thinking more effectively than tasks with a predetermined outcome [1].

The study is based on an analysis of pedagogical experience in teaching the disciplines «Fundamentals of Architectural Design», «Fundamentals of Composition and Colour Studies», «Architectural Composition and Graphics» in the first and second years, a comparative analysis of educational and methodological materials, and observation of the learning process. To classify the tasks, the method of structural analysis is applied according to the following parameters: degree of openness of the condition; presence of a prototype or analogue; level of abstraction of the task; expected type of outcome – formal, conceptual, or functional.

Based on the analysis of pedagogical practice, it is proposed to distinguish three basic types of educational project tasks for the first and second years of architectural specialities.

1. Reproductive task involves reproducing a given form or structure according to a description or sample. The student performs a precisely defined amount of work with a predetermined result. Its advantage is the controllability of the learning process and ease of assessment; its disadvantage is the limited development of creative potential. Examples include tasks such as «Architectural portico in masses», «Wash rendering of an architectural monument façade», «Model of an architectural monument».

2. Analogical task guides the student to study and reinterpret an existing architectural precedent. The task is structured according to the scheme «study → analyse → adapt». This type of task is well-suited for teaching first-year students because it relies on a specific example while leaving room for their own interpretation. An example is the task «Study a building based on a selected analogue and develop your own version of the façade solution within the same plastic system».

3. Open-ended (conceptual) task formulates a problem situation without a predetermined answer. The student must independently choose the methods of solution, formulate a concept, and justify the decision. This type of task is the most effective for developing architectural imagination, but it requires first-year students to have a certain level of basic knowledge and confidence. Examples include tasks such as «Harmonisation of a body of revolution», «Flat composition on a given theme», «Facade architecture. Corner plasticity», «Transformation of a cube».

An open-ended design task necessarily contains a «zone of indeterminacy» - a condition that is impossible without the active engagement of the imagination.

Observation of first-year students' work over several academic semesters has revealed a characteristic pattern: when performing reproductive tasks, students demonstrate technically accurate but formally poor results; open-ended tasks, on the

contrary, generate significantly greater variability of ideas, but are often accompanied by anxiety and blocking due to the fear of a «wrong» solution.

In view of this, a strategy of gradual complication proves effective: at the beginning of the semester, it is advisable to use reproductive tasks to develop basic technical skills, gradually move on to analogical tasks, and finally introduce elements of conceptual tasks with a softly formulated condition. This approach ensures students' psychological safety and gradually expands their creative range.

Variants of open project tasks:

1. Transformation (a «what if...» task)

Example: «Given a cube with a 10x10 cm hole. By transforming a face (bending, cutting, shifting), obtain three different forms for a specific function. Material – plasticine.»

Develops: the ability to modify a prototype.

2. Constraint (a task with defined material or functional limitations)

Example: «Design a shelter for a bus stop using specified materials with certain structural constraints.»

Develops: imagination through rigid constructive frameworks (the paradox of «less means more»).

3. Analogy (a task on transferring properties)

Example: «Planar composition based on a specific sound.»

Develops: metaphorical thinking, which is key to the architectural image.

4. Scenario (a «what happens here?» task)

Example: «Propose variants of house plans and a façade sketch under a given scenario - functional, lighting, temperature, etc.»

Develops: detachment from the stereotypes of everyday architecture.

An analysis of project tasks completed by students showed that the critical factors are:

- Time limit (from 20 minutes to 2 hours). An excessively long task kills the spontaneity of the imagination.
- Prohibition of computer modelling at the initial idea stage (hand and paper activate the sensorimotor channels of imagination).
- Public discussion of 3-5 boldest solutions in each class (fosters a culture of courage).

The expected outcomes of applying open project tasks include an increase in the variability of initial sketches and the disappearance of the «blank sheet syndrome» - that is, starting to solve the task by generating ideas rather than by searching for a reference.

The project task is not only an organisational element of the educational process but also a powerful pedagogical tool that shapes the thinking style of the future architect. The proposed typology – reproductive, analogical, and open tasks - allows the teacher to consciously select tasks according to the current level of students' preparation and the set educational goals.

Practical experience confirms that the most effective model is the gradual complication of tasks throughout the semester: from reproductive to analogical and

conceptual. At the same time, the quality of the formulation of the condition - in particular, the presence of an imaginative or metaphorical component - significantly affects the creative potential of the response.

A perspective for further research is the development of a specific methodological system of educational tasks for the first year, as well as studying the impact of distance learning on the effectiveness of different types of project tasks in the context of wartime architectural education.

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COLORISTIC FEATURES OF UKRAINIAN ART NOUVEAU IN THE HISTORIC CENTER OF POLTAVA

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Ukrainian Architectural Art Nouveau, which emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, represents a unique phenomenon in the history of Ukrainian architecture. This style arose in the context of national revival and the aspiration to create a distinctive architectural identity, combining European modernist trends with the rich traditions of Ukrainian folk art.

Ukrainian architectural Art Nouveau originated in Poltava in 1903, driven by the initiative of the local zemstvo and the active involvement of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. This style became an expression of national identity and the pursuit of cultural revival. Poltava became one of the earliest centers of Ukrainian Art Nouveau, alongside Lviv (from 1904), Kyiv (from 1907), and Kharkiv (from 1909).