PhD Title:
A study on the learning development of interior design students in designing interior spaces

Keywords:
Interior space, learning development, learning environment

Research Abstract:
While the profession of interior design is constantly evolving and changing, the field of education is striving to respond to those rapid changes. Amidst the intersection of theory and practice, the question that remains is how students interpret what is taught and learn to design. In particular, how they learn to comprehend the concept of space and make it explicit in their designs. How the technological and socio-cultural environments as an additional influence in shaping their learning development needs to be continued as an area of research. Based on the research interest mentioned before, the research question(s) is:
- How do interior design students learn to design interior spaces?
- How does their learning develop from designing spaces as abstract solutions to pragmatic ones?

Supporting questions include:
- What is the influence of the socio-cultural and technological environments on their learning development?
- How do their conceptions of interior space change from education to practice?

Research Methodology:
An interpretive qualitative approach is chosen appropriate for this study, and employs a multiple range of inter-connected perspectives and methods to understand the subject matter. The framework elements of the research design include:
- Epistemology – Constructivism, symbolic interactionism
- Strategies of inquiry – Phenomenology, hermeneutics, grounded theory, reflexivity
- Methods – Observation, interviewing, quasi-experimentation, document analysis

The study will be conducted in three stages to cover the key transition periods of student learning in the Environment and Interior Design (BA) programme in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Tutors and practitioners will also be participants in the study.

Results / outcomes:
1. This study follows a learner-centric approach that will aid students in understanding and reflecting on their learning process in acquiring knowledge in readiness for their professional practice.
2. It may provide insights for tutors to reflect on their own teaching style, teaching strategies and teaching methods. Likewise, design practitioners might want to reflect on how to share their expertise with the students.
3. This study might help clarify the distinct way in which interior designers treat and design spaces vis-à-vis the approach of designers in other closely related disciplines, thereby there is intent to contribute to the interior design body of knowledge.

Key Publications: