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Esra ARI ÇOKYÜRÜR*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0092-9920>

Eposta: esra.ari.91@gmail.com

Konya Teknik Üniversitesi
Mimarlık ve Tasarım Fakültesi
Mimarlık Anabilim Dalı
Konya/Türkiye

Murat ORAL

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4848-5417>

Eposta: moral@ktun.edu.tr

Konya Teknik Üniversitesi
Mimarlık ve Tasarım Fakültesi
İçmimarlık Bölümü
Konya/Türkiye

* Sorumlu yazar
(Corresponding author)

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İÇ MİMARLIK EĞİTİMİNDE SANAYİ İŞ BİRLİĞİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZET

Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde ortaya çıkan çağdaş eğitim anlayışı, öğrenci olarak tanımlanan tüm bireylere eşit eğitim hakları ve koşulları sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu kalıcı eğitim modelinin yalnızca teoride kalmaması için, özellikle insan yaşamını ve yaşam standartlarını doğrudan etkileyen alanlarda, yerinde ve doğrudan öğrenmeye dayalı uygulama odaklı eğitim yöntemleri geliştirilmiştir.

İç mimarlık eğitiminde bu yaklaşım; teorik derslerin yanı sıra stajlar, atölyeler, fuarlar ve seminerler gibi uygulamalı bileşenlerle sürdürülmekte, öğrencilerin mezuniyet sonrası meslek yaşamına daha kolay uyum sağlamaları hedeflenmektedir. Öğrencilerin sektör temsilcileriyle etkileşim kurmaları, tasarım sürecinin tüm aşamalarını gözlemlemeleri ve farklı ölçeklerdeki üretim süreçlerini takip etmeleri büyük önem taşımaktadır. Tüm bu deneyimlerin ötesinde, üreticiler, tasarımcılar ve ticari paydaşlar arasında erken iletişim kurulması, öğrencilerin eğitim süreci sonunda piyasada kendilerine yer bulabilmeleri açısından kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu bağlamda üniversite-sanayi iş birliği başlığı altında yürütülen çalışma, mevcut eksiklikleri ortaya koymayı ve çözüm önerileri sunmayı amaçlamakta; elde edilen bulguların bu alandaki gelecekteki iş birliklerine zemin oluşturması hedeflenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İç Mekân Tasarımı Eğitimi, Mesleki Gelişim, Sektörel İş Birliği, Uygulamalı Eğitim

A STUDY ON THE POTENTIAL VALUE OF INDUSTRY COLLABORATION IN INTERIOR DESIGN EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The contemporary education process that emerged during the Republican Era aims to provide equal educational rights and conditions to all individuals defined as students. In order for this permanent education model not to remain merely theoretical, practice-oriented learning methods—particularly on-site and firsthand learning—have been developed, especially in fields that directly affect human life and living standards.

In interior architecture education, this approach is sustained through a combination of theoretical courses and practical components such as internships, workshops, fairs, and seminars, enabling students to adapt more easily to professional life after graduation. It is essential for students to engage with industry leaders, observe all stages of the design process, and follow production at various scales. Beyond these experiences, establishing early communication among producers, designers, and commercial stakeholders is crucial in helping students position themselves within the market.

Within this framework, the study on university-industry collaboration aims to identify existing shortcomings and propose solutions, providing a foundation for future collaborations in this field.

Keywords: Industry Collaboration, Interior Design Education, Practical Education, Professional Development

1. THE CONCEPT OF INTERIOR DESIGN AND INTERIOR DESIGN EDUCATION

Interior design is regarded as an interdisciplinary field of design that redefines the physical, functional and aesthetic qualities of a space in accordance with human needs. The discipline of interior design, which interacts with fields such as architecture, industrial design, psychology, sociology and art, has the capacity to reshape the relationship between the individual and their living space within a spatial context. In this context, interior design can be regarded as a profession that extends beyond the domain of visual arrangement. Instead, it signifies a comprehensive design process that encompasses parameters such as user experience, ergonomics, sustainability, environmental awareness, and aesthetic integrity.

The contemporary milieu is characterised by evolving social, technological and environmental dynamics, which are collectively precipitating a transformation in the functional requirements of spaces and user expectations. This, in turn, is resulting in a redefinition of the role of interior design. The evolution of digital design technologies, the propagation of flexible space concepts, the utilisation of sustainable materials, and the integration of universal design principles have served to fortify the identities of interior designers as both designers and researchers. In this process, interior design has evolved into a professional field that goes beyond the production of physical environments, aiming for social sustainability and user well-being.

This multidimensional professional structure is also directly reflected in educational processes. In order to facilitate the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills for interior design, education in this field must be experiential and research-oriented, integrating theoretical knowledge transfer with application-based learning methods. Studio-based design courses have been developed to provide students with the skills required to solve problems, think critically, make aesthetic decisions and collaborate in the production process. Furthermore, applied projects, workshops, field research, seminars, and internship programmes are designed to reinforce students' professional knowledge base. Consequently, the educational process guarantees that students are not only endowed with design knowledge but also with professional values such as user-centred thinking, technical expertise, cultural awareness, and ethical responsibility.

Consequently, the concept of interior architecture has evolved beyond the confines of spatial design; it has transformed into a design practice shaped by social sensitivity, capable of managing the interaction between individuals, the environment, and technology. This transformation necessitates the adoption of a dynamic, innovative, and multidisciplinary approach in interior design education, thereby enabling the development of well-equipped interior designers who can shape the future of the profession.

1.1. Definition of the Interior Design Profession

Interior design is defined as the interdisciplinary field of organising the interior spaces of buildings in an aesthetically pleasing, functional and technically sound manner, according to the needs of the users. In this context, an interior designer is a professional who considers not only decorative elements, but also the technical, structural and psychological dimensions of a space. The International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI) defines interior design as 'the functional, technical, and aesthetic design and implementation of a space in line with user requirements' (IFI, 2011). Similarly, the professional definition provided by the Chamber of Interior Architects in Turkey states that an interior architect manages design and implementation

processes in line with a space's intended use and user expectations (Chamber of Interior Architects, 2004). Thus, the professional role of interior designers is not limited to aesthetic preferences, but encompasses a comprehensive process that enhances quality of life, develops functional solutions and regulates human–space interaction. Aiming to touch every aspect of users' lives and make them easier, interior designers also take on the roles of consultants and supporters, guiding every moment of the process from design to post-delivery.

1.2. Professional Discipline in the Current Process

In the contemporary context, the significance of interior design is progressively rising on both social and environmental fronts. This rise is precipitated by a combination of factors, including the rapid increase in urbanisation, evolving lifestyles, and the emergence of sustainable design principles. The field of interior design has evolved beyond the realm of mere spatial aesthetics, metamorphosing into a discipline that has the capacity to enhance the quality of life of individuals and strengthen the emotional and functional bonds they have with their environment. At this juncture, a comprehensive evaluation of the professional requirements of interior designers can be conducted across four principal domains. Firstly, it is the responsibility of interior designers to ensure that spaces are designed not only aesthetically, but also to meet ergonomic, functional and psychological requirements. This is achieved through the implementation of a user-centred design approach (Pile, 2007). This approach has been demonstrated to enhance user satisfaction and elevate the quality of spatial experience by focusing on human-space interaction.

Secondly, the expertise of interior designers in technical areas such as materials, lighting, acoustics, colour theory and spatial organisation is instrumental in ensuring the accurate, safe and feasible implementation of designs (Kavasogulları, 2021). In this context, interior design is regarded as a field of practice that straddles the disciplines of engineering and aesthetics.

Thirdly, the development of energy efficiency, environmentally friendly material use and long-lasting spatial solutions in accordance with sustainability principles contributes to both social welfare and environmental awareness (Gürel & Anthony, 2006). In this regard, interior design has evolved into a professional discipline that encompasses not only individual comfort but also ecological balance and the efficient utilisation of resources.

Fourthly, interior designers interpret the lifestyles, tastes and cultural values of users, with a view to producing spaces that meet personal expectations. In so doing, they also guide these expectations in line with aesthetic, functional and contemporary design principles. In this context, the interior designer's role encompasses not only that of a designer but also that of a consultant, interpreter, and innovative problem solver.

In the contemporary era, the field of interior design is undergoing a period of rapid transformation, largely influenced by advancements in digital technologies, sustainable production methodologies, and the increasing prevalence of interdisciplinary collaborations. The integration of computer-aided design (CAD), three-dimensional modelling (3D), augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies into education and application processes has rendered design processes more interactive and user-focused. Moreover, issues such as social equality, accessibility, preservation of cultural heritage, and environmental sustainability are expanding the ethical and professional responsibilities of the profession.

Consequently, contemporary interior designers are no longer merely specialists who design spaces; they are design professionals who can blend technological, social and ecological contexts, with a view to improving quality of life. They are also sensitive to the needs of the times and embrace a culture of continuous learning.

1.3. Interior Design Education Programme

Interior design education is structured to enable students to acquire theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The process begins with fundamental art and design principles, progressing to courses in spatial design, building science, materials, computer-aided design (CAD/BIM), ergonomics and environmental psychology. In Turkey, undergraduate interior design education generally takes the form of four-year programmes, with a studio-focused approach to course content. Studio courses are considered the most important part of the practical training, developing students' project development, spatial problem-solving, and critical thinking skills (YÖK, 2020). In our country, all schools that accept students through special aptitude tests and/or university entrance exams expect students to produce not only abstract and concrete products related to technical subjects, but also products pointing to different fields of art. This enables them to develop a multifaceted perspective on all demands throughout their professional lives. Prospective colleagues are also expected to develop their perspectives by participating in workshops, competitions, training and reading publications — activities that can be managed individually — and to develop themselves and establish their design lines. It should be noted that theoretical education alone is insufficient for students to earn the title of interior designer. At this stage, a competent perspective is necessary to have a competent perspective.

Throughout their education, students prepare for professional life through compulsory internships, workshops and industry collaborations, as well as national and international projects (Karaçalı, 2018). According to international standards, the criteria set by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) emphasise that students must be equipped with competencies such as sustainable design, ethical responsibility, a user-centred approach and the effective use of digital technologies (CIDA, 2018). In this context, interior design education shows that practical experience enabling direct interaction with the sector, as well as technical and artistic skills, is indispensable for student development.

1.3.1. Project Course-Related Assignments

In the domain of interior design education, project courses represent a pivotal element at the core of professional development, facilitating the evolution of students' identities as designers. Within the scope of project courses, students work on projects of varying scales, such as residential, office, public spaces or exhibition areas, gaining the opportunity to experience all stages of the design process. This process encompasses a wide range of activities, from problem definition to concept development, spatial organisation to material selection, and three-dimensional presentation techniques (Özkan, 2016).

In project courses, students are also expected to analyse user needs, ensure spatial functionality, and integrate current technologies into their designs. In this context, project courses can be regarded not only as a design practice but also as a holistic learning environment that combines research, analysis, creativity, and technical knowledge (Gürsoy, 2021). The projects included in students' portfolios are considered to be among

the most significant outputs that will demonstrate their professional competence upon graduation.

Project sheets prepared during different educational periods and works prepared within the scope of project courses form the foundation of interior architecture education. It is evident that the aforementioned courses facilitate students in the development of solutions to design problems, in addition to the acquisition of critical thinking, research, problem-solving, and alternative scenario development skills. Moreover, project courses can be regarded as a domain in which the foundations of collaboration between interior design education and industry are established. Students frequently encounter contemporary materials and learn new production techniques, and are able to develop their projects in line with real market conditions in workshops and project studios, which are often conducted with the contribution of industry representatives (Özkan, 2016). Consequently, project courses represent the initial point of interaction between students and the industry, thereby accelerating the process of professional adaptation post-graduation.

The project course is not merely an independent course that must be completed within the term. The project course is defined as a process in itself, and students are required to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the various topics and phenomena that have been addressed in previous years and terms. They are expected to incorporate these elements into the project in a manner that reflects their accumulated knowledge. The fact that each student undertaking the same project on the same topic approaches the subject from different angles, progresses through different details and scenarios, and reaches a conclusion highlights the diversity of design at this very point.

In this context, it can be argued that the work prepared within the scope of the project course constitutes not only an academic obligation but also one of the most significant components of the professional portfolio. Portfolios have been shown to play a critical role in post-graduation job applications in terms of enabling students to tangibly demonstrate their creativity, design vision, and problem-solving capabilities (Karaçalı, 2018). Consequently, the experiential learning opportunities offered by project courses assume a pivotal role in the academic development of interior architecture students and their professional preparation.

1.3.2. Technical Tours, Workshops and Trade Fair Participation

A fundamental aspect of applied learning methodologies in interior design education is the incorporation of technical tours, workshop activities and participation in professional fairs into the curriculum. These activities provide students with the opportunity to observe and experience the theoretical knowledge they acquire during their education first-hand; at the same time, they enable them to develop their creativity, problem-solving skills and teamwork abilities (Demir, 2019).

The technical visits offered to students provide them with the opportunity to observe production processes directly, in addition to material properties and spatial organisation. Visits to furniture factories, building materials production facilities, interior application construction sites, and design workshops allow students to learn about current industry technologies and innovative applications (Acar, 2017). At these stages, it is expected that participating students will become more interested in the process, pay attention to points of interest, and perhaps make observations that will contribute to their decision-making regarding future field of study choices. Consequently, students are able to experience not

only the conceptual dimension of design but also the dimensions of production, application, and sustainability.

Workshop activities provide intensive and short-term production processes on a specific theme or design problem, with the aim of developing students' creativity and technical skills. Conducted in collaboration with academics and industry professionals, these activities facilitate interdisciplinary interactions and professional networking opportunities for students (Yıldırım, 2020). At this stage, students' competencies in crisis resolution, rapid and analytical thinking, and aptitude for group work are also evaluated. It is expected that participants will demonstrate advancement in accordance with these criteria and produce a tangible outcome.

Furthermore, engagement in professional fairs enables students to remain informed about prevailing trends, materials and technologies within the sector. Participation in national and international interior design, furniture, and design fairs enables students to familiarise themselves with the professional world and provides them with the opportunity to observe and evaluate their own projects on sectoral platforms. These events have been shown to contribute to the enrichment of students' portfolios, the development of their creative ideas, and the enhancement of their adaptability to the sector following graduation (Demir, 2019; Acar, 2017). It is also possible for all members of this profession, which is undergoing constant evolution and requires all stakeholders, including professionals in their careers, to develop themselves, to acquire new stakeholders and customers in these areas of interaction that appeal to their fields of work and target audiences. As Kolb's experiential learning theory emphasises, students' direct access to knowledge through experience strengthens lasting learning and professional development (Kolb, 1984). In this context, technical tours, workshops, and trade fair participation are fundamental learning tools that prevent interior design education from being limited to classroom-based theoretical lessons. These tools increase students' professional awareness, support their creativity, and help them establish strong connections with professional life.

Consequently, technical visits, workshops, and participation in professional trade fairs are critical learning tools in interior design education that enable students to translate their theoretical knowledge into practice. Through these activities, students can directly experience not only the conceptual dimension of the design process but also its professional dimensions, such as production processes, material selection, application techniques, and sustainability principles. It is asserted that students will increase their professional awareness and problem-solving capacities by coming face-to-face with current technologies and innovative solutions in the sector.

Furthermore, participation in workshops and trade fairs has been demonstrated to contribute to the development of competencies that are critical to professional life, including creativity, teamwork, interdisciplinary communication, and time management (Smith, 2021). Moreover, attendance at national and international trade fairs enables students to follow sectoral trends, expand their professional networks, and evaluate their own projects on different scales. These experiences facilitate students' more rapid and effective adaptation to the sector following graduation. Furthermore, technical visits, workshops and trade fair participation have been demonstrated to play a role in the professional development of students, increasing their confidence and aiding in the establishment of their professional identity. By observing real production and design environments, students contextualise their theoretical knowledge within a concrete framework; thus, they become prepared to face the challenges they will encounter in their

professional lives after graduation. Consequently, these practical activities can be regarded as a fundamental learning strategy in interior architecture education. This is because they not only support the learning process but also enable students to establish strong and sustainable connections with professional life.

1.3.3. Project and Design Competitions

In the domain of interior design education, project and design competitions are recognised as a pivotal learning instrument for students to actualise their creative potential, cultivate distinctive design methodologies, and accrue professional experience. These competitions function not only as activities that support individual creativity, but also as application-based learning environments in which students are able to relate their theoretical knowledge to real-world conditions. Consequently, competitive environments provide students with the opportunity to develop a critical perspective on design processes, cultivate problem-solving strategies, and evaluate the efficacy of their design decisions within tangible contexts (Özkan, 2016).

Design competitions offer students the opportunity to produce an original product, as well as the experience of playing an active role in all stages of the design process. It is evident that a multifaceted approach is integral to the educational process, encompassing activities such as problem definition, concept development, sketch production, three-dimensional modelling, visualisation, and presentation. This approach is conducive to the simultaneous development of analytical thinking, aesthetic decision-making, and technical skills in students. In this process, the presentation of projects to a jury, the receipt of critical evaluation and feedback, constitutes a significant educational stage that fosters students' capacity to be receptive to design criticism, effect revisions and enhance their abilities (Gürsoy, 2021). It is therefore argued that such competitions serve as an 'experiential learning space' that complements studio practice in interior architecture education.

Moreover, engagement in competitive pursuits is of paramount importance in fostering students' professional communication networks, familiarising them with the intricacies of their chosen sector, and enhancing their self-assurance. Interaction with jury members, industry representatives, and academics serves to strengthen students' awareness of their professional life. These interactions are valuable not only for winning awards but also for participating in a culture of critical production and becoming part of the design community.

The increasing visibility of project and design competitions at national and international levels in the present age has also resulted in an expansion of opportunities for interior architecture students with regard to accessing and sharing information. Competition announcements, evaluation processes and results are regularly publicised through academic journals, online platforms and sectoral publications. This enables students to disseminate their designs to a broad audience, garner recognition within professional circles, and be evaluated from diverse vantage points. Moreover, access to projects from participants from different institutions and countries through these channels contributes to students' comparative analysis of design approaches and their ability to follow current design trends and technological developments (Demir, 2019).

Access to competition projects and the sharing of these projects not only serves students' individual production but also helps them develop a collective learning culture. By comparing their own work with that of other projects, students can develop their critical evaluation skills, question the cause-and-effect relationships of design decisions, and thus

gain the ability to develop original, innovative, and socially relevant design solutions. In this respect, project competitions can be regarded as a means of facilitating the dissemination of knowledge beyond the individual level, thereby becoming an active part of the academic and sectoral knowledge network.

The sharing of national and international competitions on different platforms enables students to enhance their portfolios, strengthen their professional identities, and accelerate their career development. Participation in such events offers students the opportunity to develop both aesthetic and technical skills, as well as to acquire competencies in interdisciplinary thinking, collaboration, and developing sectoral awareness. This directly supports the process of transforming theoretical knowledge into practice, which is one of the contemporary goals of interior architecture education (Karaçalı, 2018; Yıldırım, 2020).

Consequently, design competitions have become an integral component of interior design education; they are positioned as an important educational strategy that reinforces students' creativity, originality, and professional competence, while also preparing them for the real dynamics of professional life. The culture of production that has been cultivated through these competitions engenders a sustainable learning environment that fosters both individual development and the innovative orientations of the discipline.

2. EDUCATION-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION

In the contemporary higher education system, there is a growing emphasis on providing students with a learning experience that is integrated with the business world and application-oriented, as opposed to merely a theoretical education process. In this context, education-industry collaboration is regarded as a strategic element that exerts a direct influence on the quality of academic education and the sectoral adaptation capacity of graduates, particularly in applied and design-based disciplines. In this regard, the field of interior architecture education is distinguished by its multidimensional nature, with the primary objective of cultivating students' professional competencies, fostering comprehension of the intricacies of the sector, and equipping them with the requisite instruments to function efficaciously within professional settings.

The integration of the education process with the transition to professional life serves to facilitate the assimilation of theoretical knowledge within concrete production processes, thereby enhancing sectoral awareness and supporting the formation of professional identity. In consideration of the fact that, within the framework of the Bologna Process, higher education institutions are obligated to equip students with the knowledge, skills and competences that will increase their employability (YÖK, 2018), the necessity of this integrated approach becomes even more apparent. It is evident that through the implementation of compulsory internships, sectoral workshops, technical visits, workshops, and project-based courses, students are presented with the opportunity to evaluate design decisions in terms of production, cost, sustainability, and user requirements. In this process, they are afforded the opportunity to directly observe the practical reflections of academic knowledge (Demirarslan, 2017; Özsoy, 2015).

As demonstrated in the works of Demirarslan (2017) and Özsoy (2015), there is a clear correlation between the practical application of academic knowledge and its relevance in real-world settings.

The development of professional competencies among students is enhanced by university-industry collaborations in the domain of interior architecture. Moreover, these partnerships ensure the contemporary relevance of educational programmes by

integrating industry-specific requirements and technological advancement processes within the academic milieu. These collaborations have been shown to promote both knowledge sharing and innovative thinking through a variety of means, including joint projects, R&D studies, and sector-focused seminars carried out with production facilities, material manufacturers, design offices, and professional organisations (Aykut, 2020; Öztürk & Yılmaz, 2019). Consequently, students are required to produce designs at a conceptual level, whilst also internalising the technical, economic and ethical dimensions of production processes. This dual approach fosters the development of a holistic professional vision.

Such collaborations also offer a sustainable education strategy for academic institutions. Through interactions with industry representatives, universities can directly observe market trends, user behaviour, and technological innovations. This, in turn, enables them to update their curricula in line with industry expectations. From the sector's perspective, university-industry interaction is considered a dynamic collaboration model where innovative ideas are generated, qualified human resources are trained, and knowledge transfer is facilitated (Karaçalı, 2018). This symbiotic relationship has been demonstrated to enhance the quality of education and strengthen the sector's capacity for innovation.

In conclusion, education-industry collaboration in interior architecture education is a holistic learning approach that combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience. It supports students' effective preparation for professional life and contributes directly to the development of the sector. This pedagogical approach has been shown to foster students' creativity, problem-solving skills, and sectoral awareness. Furthermore, it enables universities to produce graduates who are equipped with the necessary competencies for the production and design understanding that is required by the current era. It is evident that education-industry interaction is not merely a form of cooperation; rather, it occupies a strategic position as one of the fundamental determinants of quality, innovation, and sustainability in interior architecture education.

2.1. The Relationship Between the Education Process and Transition to Professional Life

The correlation between the educational process and subsequent professional life is of critical importance, particularly in applied fields. The education of interior design is characterised by an interdisciplinary structure, necessitating the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical application. This field demands continuous development and monitoring of evolving materials, techniques and data intensity, which are of significant importance within the sector. It is therefore imperative for students to acquire professional experience prior to graduation, as this not only fosters individual skill development but also ensures adherence to industry standards and cultivates professionals who embody ethical values. Within this paradigm, compulsory internships emerge as a pivotal instrument, facilitating students' exposure to authentic production and design environments. Internship processes enable students to evaluate their design decisions in terms of feasibility, cost, and production techniques, in addition to abstract concepts, thereby bridging the gap between academic knowledge and industry practices (Demirarслан, 2017). During this process, students are instructed in the dynamics of the business world and professional disciplines by observing each stage of a project, from the design phase to implementation.

Furthermore, workshops conducted with industry representatives equip students with interdisciplinary collaboration, problem-solving, and innovative design development

skills. Workshops have been shown to provide an ideal environment for students to work in teams, evaluate different perspectives, and generate creative solutions (Smith, 2019). Moreover, such events provide a valuable opportunity to observe the viewpoints and design languages of different designers in close proximity. They also facilitate interaction among prospective colleagues who have gained work experience with various trainers at different institutions. Participation in national and international fairs and seminars allows students to closely follow current trends, technological innovations, and industry application standards. Consequently, students are able to comprehend both the aesthetic dimension of design and professional requirements such as functionality, sustainability, and user-centred approaches (Karaçalı, 2018).

In accordance with the Bologna Process, higher education institutions are obligated to furnish students with the knowledge, skills and competencies that will enhance their employability (YÖK, 2018). The interaction of interior architecture students with colleagues and industry stakeholders prior to graduation not only provides them with professional experience but also contributes to their learning about industry expectations, work processes, professional standards, and work ethics. These experiences have been shown to facilitate more rapid and effective adaptation to the professional world upon graduation, thereby supporting students' development as problem-solving, creative, and innovative designers (Demirarslan, 2017; Özsoy, 2015).

The integration of the educational process with the transition to professional life is a strategic approach that strengthens the interaction between theoretical and practical knowledge in interior architecture education. It prepares students for the process, supports them in developing different perspectives, and increases their professional competence and sectoral awareness. This pedagogical approach is designed to ensure that students acquire the necessary design knowledge and to provide them with a holistic educational experience that prepares them for the requirements of professional life.

2.2. Interior Design-Industry Cooperation

Interior design education is not merely a process based on the transfer of theoretical knowledge; it requires a multi-layered educational model that aims to enable students to transform design thinking into practical skills. In this context, collaborations established with production units are considered a critical strategic tool that enables students to gain practical experience and develop professional competencies that respond to the current needs of the sector. This interaction process, defined as industrial collaboration, enables students to relate the theoretical knowledge they acquire at school to concrete production conditions, thereby internalising not only the conceptual but also the technical, economic, and ethical dimensions of design (Özsoy, 2015).

The scope of university-industry collaborations is extensive, encompassing a variety of application forms. These include, but are not limited to, joint research projects, R&D studies, material and technology presentations, sectoral workshops, technical tours, production facility visits, and mentoring programmes. In the course of these processes, students are able to observe all stages of the design process, from the conception stage to the production stage, thereby developing a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional nature of interior design. In particular, the experience gained in areas such as the workability of material types, the applicability of production techniques, cost optimisation, and the integration of user expectations into the design contributes to shaping students' design decisions in a more realistic, sustainable, and applicable manner (Aykut, 2020). In this respect, industry collaborations engender a learning environment

that serves to bridge the gap between abstract knowledge and practical experience in design education.

Interactions with industry are conducive to the development of students' design and production skills, as well as facilitating the acquisition of contemporary workplace competencies, including professional communication, teamwork, time management, project coordination, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Project-based courses, internships, and sector-specific workshops enable students to actively participate in all stages of the design process, allowing them to prepare for professional life in a more equipped manner. This pedagogical approach is designed to nurture students who are not merely consumers of knowledge, but also capable of its transformation and production (Demirarslan, 2017).

Another salient aspect of industry collaborations pertains to the provision of a sustainable development model for academic institutions. Through close relationships with industry representatives, universities gain the opportunity to directly observe market dynamics, user trends, and technological innovations. This, in turn, enables them to update their educational programmes to align with current industry needs (Öztürk & Yılmaz, 2019). This enables both academic curricula to adapt to contemporary requirements and graduates' employability to be enhanced. Concurrently, universities are empowered to cultivate knowledge transfer and innovation-oriented collaborations in domains such as innovative materials, sustainable design, and production technologies, thereby enhancing the industry's production capacity.

When evaluated specifically for Turkey, the furniture, interior fittings, building materials and decoration industries are among the areas with the strongest interaction with interior architecture education. University-industry collaborations in these areas have been observed to enhance students' professional competence, cultivate their practical skills, and directly contribute to the sector's production of innovative design solutions (Özsoy, 2015; Aykut, 2020). In this two-way interaction, students are able to align design decisions with production conditions, cost parameters, and user requirements, while industrial organisations increase their own competitive strength by gaining access to creative, innovative, and research-oriented human resources.

Consequently, industry collaboration in interior architecture education is a two-way interaction-based educational model that enables the transfer of theoretical knowledge to the application environment, strengthens the innovation capacity of the sector, and supports students' professional identity acquisition processes. The systematic, planned and sustainable implementation of these collaborations enhances academic quality and increases the potential of the interior architecture discipline to generate social and economic value. Consequently, this interaction between industry and academia is regarded not solely as an educational strategy, but also as a dynamic knowledge production mechanism that contributes to the transformation of design culture and the institutionalisation of professional innovation.

3. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

The field of interior design is not confined to the aesthetic dimension; it also encompasses the responsibility of producing functional, ergonomic and quality-of-life-enhancing solutions that exert a direct or indirect influence on the daily lives of all users. The role of the interior designer is to translate the abstract concept of a design plan into a tangible reality, with the objective of addressing both the physical and psychological requirements of the occupants. The end goal is to create living spaces that are not only aesthetically

pleasing, but also safe and functional. In this context, interior design, as a people-centred profession, makes significant contributions to raising living standards and deepening individuals' relationship with space. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that spaces are not merely areas with specific boundaries. It is evident that any point within the purview of a specific user group can be regarded as a space. Consequently, any open, closed or semi-open area with the potential to serve people is evaluated as "space".

The interior design education process represents a critical period in the professional development of students, during which they develop their professional identity and gain a sense of professional awareness as they prepare for their future careers. Education is not confined to theoretical courses; it is enriched with practical learning tools such as project studios, technical visits, workshops, fair participation, internship applications, and design competitions. Project courses facilitate students' engagement with the design process in its entirety, thereby enabling the development of creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Özkan, 2016; Gürsoy, 2021). The integration of technical visits and workshops within the curriculum facilitates the practical application of theoretical knowledge, allowing students to observe materials, production techniques, and application processes directly (Demir, 2019; Yıldırım, 2020).

The active involvement of interior design students in professional fairs and project competitions provides a significant platform for learning and interaction, which is instrumental in their professional development. Such events enable students to closely follow current trends and innovative design approaches in the sector. Furthermore, they provide students with access to dynamic platforms where they can exhibit their own designs on a national and international scale. In addition, they have the opportunity to receive professional feedback and to have their designs evaluated. In this process, the publication of the results of project competitions and fair events in academic journals, sectoral newsletters and digital environments enables students to analyse the design approaches of participants from different universities and countries. This, in turn, allows for the comparison of different cultural and pedagogical perspectives. This facilitates access to areas where prospective colleagues can develop not only their formal design skills but also their critical thinking, analytical evaluation, and original idea generation abilities.

Such professional experiences have been shown to support students in realising their creative potential, developing their own unique design language and strengthening their professional identity. Moreover, the experiences gained in competitive and exhibition environments contribute to the consolidation of students' professional self-confidence, the development of their communication and presentation skills, and their ability to adapt more quickly and effectively to the expectations of the business world post-graduation. Consequently, these events can be regarded not only as competitive arenas but also as educational processes that accelerate students' professional development, encourage creative thinking, and foster sectoral awareness.

Collaborations established with industrial and commercial units during the education process enable students to experience real production environments, learn about materials and technology in a timely manner, and evaluate the feasibility of their designs (Özsoy, 2015; Aykut, 2020). Such collaborations have been shown to develop students' technical knowledge and practical skills ((Razali, Zulkifli, & Mohamad, 2024)) and to enable them to acquire competencies that are critical in professional life, such as professional communication, teamwork, project management, and interdisciplinary collaboration (Smith, 2021). These processes facilitate the integration of theoretical

knowledge with practical application by enabling students to work in real production environments. Furthermore, they assist in the development of problem-solving and decision-making skills through interaction with individuals specialising in diverse areas of expertise. From the perspective of academic institutions, such collaborations have the potential to influence the content of education programmes, enabling them to be adapted to current sectoral requirements, technological innovations, and market dynamics. Consequently, universities are transitioning from education and training processes that are exclusively knowledge transfer-based to a learning model that is supported by practical experience. This shift enables students to seamlessly integrate into the sector. Moreover, these partnerships facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise between academia and industry, enhancing the employability of graduates and contributing to their participation in the business world as more adaptable and productive individuals. Consequently, such partnerships function as a strategic instrument, not only for the individual development of students, but also for enhancing the educational quality and sectoral effectiveness of higher education institutions.

It is therefore vital that interior design education incorporates a balanced integration of theoretical knowledge, practical experience and industry collaborations. This is a fundamental strategy that strengthens students' professional identities and transforms them into creative, critical thinkers and problem-solving designers. The incorporation of technical visits, workshops, participation in fairs and competitions, and industry collaborations is instrumental in enabling students to experience the demands of professional life at an early stage and prepare them for entry into the sector. This process not only ensures individual skill development but also establishes a sustainable learning network through academic and sectoral knowledge sharing, thereby increasing the sector's innovative capacity.

Consequently, the role of the interior design profession in human life, in conjunction with the supportive nature of educational processes, directly contributes to the development of a human-centred, applicable, and aesthetic design approach. The holistic approach, supported by educational and industry collaborations, has been shown to transform students into professional interior designers. These designers are able to shape spaces aesthetically whilst also contributing to social and individual quality of life by producing sustainable and functional solutions. Consequently, all graduates of interior design programmes will be endowed with professional competence and social responsibility awareness as they commence their professional careers.

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