ABSTRACT

This study identifies classroom as the fundamental unit where teachers and students spent most of their time. Therefore, its planning should not be neglected. Section 1 looks into the hidden meanings of conventional classroom architecture since the late eighteenth century. Their implications are questioned in the contemporary context in Section 2. Four secondary schools in Singapore of different academic achievements were surveyed. 200 students of different academic levels and 41 teachers of different subject levels were surveyed in the form of questionnaires. Section 3 attempts to question the relevancy of the 'Turf' and the 'Open Classroom' concepts in the contemporary context.

From the research and the survey, it is found that:

(1) Conventional classroom architecture is detrimental to the active and innovative learning of students and do not meet the changing educational need and teaching pedagogy. The present educational system encourages passivity and rote behaviour of students, as well as instruction learning from the teachers. The main purpose of its existence is only to meet functional, economic and even political needs.

(2) 91.8% of the students opted for open classroom learning if they were given the choice. They suggested outdoor learning and utilising the City Resources for active learning of certain subjects. They also recognised the importance of well-equipped spacious rooms for project based discussion and problem solving in small groups.

(3) Only 12% of the teachers surveyed heard of the Open Classroom concept whilst the rest were unsure. 50% of those who knew, voiced out its impracticality because of the extensive time the programme takes up and the control of decision-making in school planning. No experimental spaces are allowed at the moment for secondary levels.

To conclude, the end-users should be allowed to at least participate in classroom planning, if not in school planning. There is an urgent need to break away from passive learning and innovative classroom space can help to fulfill such needs.