ABSTRACT

Public concern for the disabled person and the responsibility of the architect to provide for the users' welfare have led to the design for accessible environment. Many works that deal with implementation of new standards or codes are studied but they focus more on the area of barrier-free movement for the physically handicapped. Very few research projects were undertaken to identify the issue of sensory loss in the appreciation of architectural aesthetics and its implication, especially in the case of blindness.

The scope of the work here is to incorporate the current architectural theory to the concept of blindness for re-evaluation of a new architectural model and in the process, lay the foundation for integration of both society and visually-handicapped people.

During the process of the findings, the author interviewed 4 of their representatives, generally categorised by the type and origin of their blindness: adventitious total blind, adventitious partial-sighted, congenital partial-sighted and congenital total blind.

This dissertation then analyses the physical make-up of these persons without useful sight and the development of their awareness of the environment through 3 aspects, namely perceptual, cognitive and behavioural awareness. Each of them displays the ability to assimilate appropriate environmental cues albeit at a quantitatively different level (topological-specific and sequentially) from the sighted person and with a slower response time. Thus, the design for the sight-impaired person's understanding of architectural spatial structure experience should, arguably, precede the limitations set by his visual handicap. The architect has the role to order that space for this person suffering from blindness to conceive the surrounding with his remaining senses (chiefly the haptic-touch sense).

The conclusion is for the integrative approach to architectural design which includes the non-visual aspect and the planning of a formal structure appreciable to the blind person.