Study of the Bauhaus Ideas “bauen” in Periods of Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, and Mies van der Rohe

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Abstract
The Bauhaus School in Germany had an important role in the evolution of the art and design school by uniting art, technology and industry. Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, and Mies van der Rohe were three architects who in charge as Bauhaus directors from 1919 to 1933. The idea of Bauhaus education made by each director influenced the form of educational activities and artifacts of the work produced in the Bauhaus. The paper aims to study the Bauhaus ideas bauen that made up the education methodology in Bauhaus schools which are divided according to the period of the three Bauhaus directors. The research method is a literary approach by utilizing documentation about the Bauhaus as analysis material. The ideas of a person are formed by the help of memory and imagination which are closely related to most of their actions. The analysis of the Bauhaus idea bauen is an explanation of the thoughts of each Bauhaus director in forming the education methodology at the Bauhaus school. The results of the study present data on the comparison of the Bauhaus ideas bauen among directors to develop a Bauhaus educational methodology.

Keywords: bauen; Bauhaus idea; Hannes Meyer; Mies van der Rohe; Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar; Walter Gropius.

1 Introduction
Bauhaus is the name of a design school in Germany which officially operated from 12 April 1919 until closed on 20 July 1933. This school is an amalgamation of Großherzogliche Sächsische Hochschule für bildende Kunst (Grand-Ducal Saxony Academy of Fine Art) and Großherzogliche Sächsische Kunstgewerbeschule (Grand-Ducal Saxony School of Arts and Crafts), which was renamed Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar. During the period of the Bauhaus, there were three directors who led the Bauhaus school: Walter (Adolph Georg) Gropius since April 1919, (Hans Emil) Hannes Meyer since April 1928, and (Ludwig) Mies van der Rohe since August 1930. The closure of the Bauhaus school caused spread of the Bauhaus model and influenced the form of design education around the world.

Staatliches Bauhaus became the first design school which applies the combining method of imaginative design and technical proficiency [1]. The school has the view that the difference between the creative imagination in crafts and the technical aspects of industry lies in the different properties of the equipment used. Therefore, Bauhaus does not classify art and design work, but combines creative artists and the industrial world to be studied in an academic sphere. In its running for fourteen years, the Bauhaus school has documented various activities. The legacy
of the Bauhaus becomes a cultural manifestation in the field of education that can be learned through its ideas, activities and artifacts. Referring to the notion of culture pattern according to Honigmann [2], the thoughts of Bauhaus personnel become Bauhaus ideas, standards related to actions in Bauhaus schools become Bauhaus activities, and the artificial environment in Bauhaus become Bauhaus artifacts.

Various literatures documenting the Bauhaus school show some ideas and thoughts that are the same even though come from different Bauhaus personnel. One of them is the term bauen. The word bauen can be translated as building or to build, and there is also the word baukunst which is translated as building art. The term bauen appears in writings describing the ideas of Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer and Mies van der Rohe about the Staatliches Bauhaus, but each has its own meaning. Gropius has mentioned the concept of bauen in the initial idea of establishing the Bauhaus, and Meyer described the concept of bauen in a magazine published by the Bauhaus school, while Mies has written about the concept of bauen before becoming the director of Bauhaus.

The difference in the descriptions of each Bauhaus director regarding the term bauen turned out to have an effect on the formulation of educational strategies and policies carried out at the Bauhaus school. This can be found in the literature that explains, among others, the Bauhaus curriculum, the learning methods of Bauhaus teachers, workshops at Bauhaus schools, etc. The focus of this paper is to study the term bauen according to Gropius, Meyer, and Mies as a Bauhaus idea applied to the Staatliches Bauhaus, because the idea of bauen can be assumed that have influenced the current form of design education, particularly design education in Indonesia.

2 Method

This study is a part of research on the Bauhaus idea, Bauhaus activity, and Bauhaus artifact, therefore this research method is literature study. The understanding of the term bauen is explained by the definition of the word bauen according to the philosopher Martin Heidegger [3]. The literature study was carried out to understand the term bauen as a Bauhaus idea on the thoughts of Gropius, Meyer, and Mies in translating bauen based on their respective ideas and their implementation of Bauhaus education. The next analysis is to find the similarity of the concept bauen according the three directors of Bauhaus, which result the conclusion of the term bauen as Bauhaus idea. The last is an assumption on the implementation of the bauen concept in design education in Indonesia.

3 Result and Discussion

The definition of the word bauen can be read in Vorträge und Aufsätze, Teil II [4]. The word bauen comes from the ancient German language buan and means wohnen or to live. The notion of bauen as life provides an understanding, that if the life can be owned then the building can be done properly. Heidegger reverses the relationship between the purpose of building and the purpose of life: the life is not caused by the building, but the building occurs throughout the life. Thus, the term bauen can be understood as an experience in everyday life that has become a habit.

3.1 The term bauen and die Kunst zu Bauen according to Walter Gropius

In the book Idee und Aufbau des Staatlichen Bauhauses, the term bauen appears in the statement „Das heutigen Bauen ist aus einer allumfassenden Gestaltungskunst zu einem Studium herabgesunken,
… “[5]. This states the need for bauen to become a place that can unite all fields of artistic work. The concept of bauen aims to combine all parts of the art work, so that no part of the art is omitted, then the togetherness gives harmony and enthusiasm in building life. This explanation of the term bauen is emphasized in the main idea of the establishment of the Bauhaus school, which is written in Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar: Das Endziel aller bildnerischen Tätigkeit ist der Bau! [6]. Gropius clearly opposed the separation of art groups as happened in the past.

The understanding of the term bauen according to Gropius is also expressed as Kunst zu Bauen in the sentence „Die Kunst zu Bauen is an die Möglichkeit zu gemeinsamer Arbeit einer Vielheit von Schaffenden gebunden, …“ [7]. This terminology emphasizes the difference between the bauen artwork and the single or partial art, namely the work of bauen is highly dependent on the work of various designers. Gropius describes bauen as an orchestra, where the expertise of many people is required through harmonious cooperation. The case about Kunst zu Bauen are for Gropius such the problems of people life, because the building has social, intellectual and symbolic activities [8].

The interpretation of the term bauen emphasizes the togetherness and harmony needed in art and design work. The concept of bauen in the Bauhaus idea according to Gropius, is the place where all the disciplines of art and design are united, so that a single artistic part can not be eliminated. The final goal that Bauhaus wants to achieve through this bauen concept is to gather all art groups into one by combining imaginative design and technical skills, to be able presenting integrated works of art. Thus, the Bauhaus became a place to express the intellectual abilities of its students through a combination of various kinds of art and design work.

3.2 The term bauen according to Hannes Meyer

The term bauen was written by Hannes Meyer in 1928 in Bauhaus Zeitschrift für Gestaltung, 2. Jahrgang, Nr. 4. Meyer states the term bauen as a biological process in human life to fulfill their mental and physical needs [9]. The shape of a human residential building, along with the color and texture of the material, was designed by the architect based on the needs of human activity. Meyer describes architecture as a life process involving the social, engineering, economic, and ergonomic organization of human biology. The term bauen according to Meyer also explains that the implementation of development is filled with individual problems to collective problems of the people, so that building becomes a collaborative work between the working people and the designer.

Under Director Meyer, the architecture department became the center of the Bauhaus school. The purpose of architectural education taught by Meyer is for the welfare of the people, so it is necessary to consider the whole totality of human existence. Therefore, Meyer set design parameters in Bauhaus education with regard to the complex life of building users. Meyer takes a holistic approach by integrating psychological and subjective aspects into a variety of different physical factors, ranging from materials and ecology to infrastructure and urban planning [10].

The interpretation of the word bauen illustrates the need for a thorough understanding of design issues as a teaching basis for creative activities. The concept of bauen in the Bauhaus idea according to Meyer is a life process in building that can meet the mental and physical needs of humans. The design parameters must be initiated by the user with respect to complex life forms. Meyer expanded the conceptual framework of architect and design in learning at the Bauhaus school by inviting the experts in psychology, philosophy, ethics, and ecology. Thus, Bauhaus students receive education from various aspects to be able to understand the complex of life.
3.3 The term bauen and Baukunst according to Mies van der Rohe

Mies van der Rohe conveyed the term bauen through his writing in G, No. 2, in 1923 [11], which explains that making buildings should be free from the aesthetic speculation, in the form and style of the building. Mies’s view is contrary to the architectural habits of the previous period which always emphasized the importance of aesthetics through decorative roles. In Mies’s writing, the translation of bauen is building. The literature study in this research did not find the implementation of the bauen concept directly in the Bauhaus school, but the concept of bauen was different in the use of the language: What Meyer calls bauen, is for Mies Baukunst [12].

The term Baukunst according to Mies is written in Der Querschnitt 4, No. 1 which is published in 1924. Mies states that architectural achievements are not seen as individual works, but as baukunst that emerged from his era and his ability to manifest themselves in handling their duties [13]. Baukunst is the basic characteristic of Mies architecture which is referred to as flowing space or dynamic space. Baukunst provides physical and metaphysical considerations to spatial design and is defined as the architectural concept of framing or the concept of skin and bone structure [14]. Through the architecture department which is the center of the Bauhaus, Mies has turned the Bauhaus school into an architectural school.

The interpretation of the term baukunst describes building architecture that contains important humanistic values and components. The concept contained in the term Baukunst in the Bauhaus idea according to Mies is architecture that fulfills its duties by keeping up with the times. Thus, Bauhaus education reaches all levels of the architectural field, namely small scale needs such as apartments to large scale needs such as planning a city.

4 Conclusion

The term bauen, which is implemented continuously by Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, and Mies van der Rohe, clearly confirms bauen as a Bauhaus idea. The concept contained in the term bauen embodies the goal of the Staatliches Bauhaus, which educates designers to produce works that are oriented towards the goodness of human life. In the implementation of Bauhaus education, the term bauen is not translated as a building noun or a verb to build, but rather conveys the meaning of a harmonious composition. In line with Heidegger’s definition of the term bauen which describes the activities of life, the harmonious composition in the Bauhaus idea also describes the complexity of human life: design work can reach the needs of all levels, so design work requires a holistic approach, because design works deals with the lives of many people. The bauen concept of the Bauhaus idea can also be found in the implementation of design education in Indonesia, where design learning has been led to produce design work aimed at the good of human life.

5 References


The office of Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus art and architecture school, in Weimar, Germany, the institution’s first home when it was established in 1919. The desk, armchair, sofa and ceiling lamp were originally by Gropius, the table lamp is by Wilhelm Wagenfeld and the carpet is by Benita Koch-Otte. When Gropius introduced an architecture course led by Hannes Meyer in 1927, women were steered away from taking it, and overall, they were largely segregated in the textile classes. As my successor you have had Mies van der Rohe prescribed for you by Gropius and not according to the statutes on the advice of the Masters. In the final phase under Mies van der Rohe, when architecture and interior design became the focus of the curriculum, the Vorkurs became optional and the school more conventionally academic. According to Bergdoll’s catalogue essay, instituting written examinations for the first time, for example. The abortive tenure of Hannes Meyer, a committed Marxist who polemically attempted to link the school’s production to a vision of social and political transformation and who from the distance of the Soviet Union in 1931 would denounce the irreconcilable opposition between working-class art and the reigning bourgeois ideology in Germany was exceptional, and it is no surprise that it aroused. The idea of the conquest of the substructure, the earthbound, can be extended even Gropius stepped down as director of the Bauhaus in 1928, succeeded by the architect Hannes Meyer (1889-1954). Meyer maintained the emphasis on mass-producible design and eliminated parts of the curriculum he felt were overly formalist in nature. Additionally, he stressed the social function of architecture and design, favoring concern for the public good rather than private luxury. He was replaced by architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969). Mies once again reconfigured the curriculum, with an increased emphasis on architecture. Lilly Reich (1885-1947), who collaborated with Mies on a number of his private commissions, assumed control of the new interior design department. Other departments included weaving, photography, the fine arts, and building. Although Bauhaus members had been involved in architectural work from 1919 (notably, the construction in Dessau of administrative, educational, and residential quarters designed by Gropius), the department of architecture, central to Gropius’s program in founding this unique school, was not established until 1927; Hannes Meyer, a Swiss architect, was appointed chairman. Upon Gropius’s resignation the following year, Meyer became director of the Bauhaus until 1930. He was asked to resign because of his left-wing political views, which brought him into conflict with Dessau authorities. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe became the new director until the Nazi regime forced the school to close in 1933. The Bauhaus had far-reaching influence. While Gropius declared that the Bauhaus was entirely apolitical, it was nevertheless a product of its time. With old regimes in ruins, the Russian Revolution changing thinking to the near East, and all the advances in production processes and materials that develop at times of major conflicts, ideas of starting anew and remaking the world were strong. One of these new philosophies was Modernism, a school of thought closely linked with and developed by the Bauhaus. Architects and designers included Marcel Breur, as well as the two latter directors, Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who disagreed so fundamentally that van der Rohe would not allow any of Meyer’s supporters to attend the school, when he took over in 1930. Collectivity vs populism.