Design Quality in Schools: Identifying Suitable Procurement and Briefing Processes

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Abstract

The UK government are increasingly emphasising the importance of improving the school built environment. Recent studies have demonstrated the influence school architectural design factors have on pupils’ achievement. Yet, the procuring mentality continues to be influenced by the legacy of short term decisions based on cost. The long term implications of the designed solutions are not fully appreciated. Procurement strategies exclude the real experiences and needs of the users of the buildings. The briefing process is failing to capitalise on the wealth of design talent that unarguably exists. New procurement methods are presented as means of coming to terms with some of these problems. Yet, these procurement routes have generated a great deal of debate and have received mixed responses. Initial evaluations have been less than conclusive as to their potential benefits. This paper reports on the preliminary findings from a research project exploring the potential for changed practices in the design stage in these new procurement methods. Particular interest is given to the correlation between the design intent and the design outcome. Including how the chosen briefing and delivery methods allows for sufficient exchange of skills and expertise to produce designs in line with client needs.

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