

Architecture Students' Attitudes towards Creative Drama Teaching Method

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Abstract

The study aims to determine the effect of using creative drama as a teaching method on architecture students' attitudes towards creative drama method in architectural education process containing theoretical and applied lessons. Applications were conducted in the lessons "Environmental Behavioral Knowledge" and "Basic Design" in Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Karadeniz Technical University. In the study, semi-structured focus group interview form was used as a data collection tool. The student opinions obtained here were analysed through content analysis method. The results indicate that creative drama is responded positively by the students. It is also under consideration that creative drama method, which enables learning process to be turned into an attractive, participative, interactive and educational environment, can be mainstreamed in architectural education.

Keywords: architectural education, creative drama, attitude, qualitative research

1. Introduction

Involved in architectural education, individuals who intend to make contributions to both personal and professional development are supposed to enhance their occupational qualifications by means of the experiences that they have gained in the process. It is also suggested that knowledge not only be obtained at pure cognitive level but assessed through affective concepts after undergoing mental processes as well in architectural education. In this regard, it is so important to raise individuals who learn to research, think, and design by their own experiences in the architectural education process that puts students in the center. Yürekli and Yürekli (2002) suggest that teachers direct their students rather than show them a particular way, which is a confirmative opinion for the situation mentioned above.

In teaching, it is more important to prevent students from being passive listeners and to freshen up and impersonate course subjects. Thus, students become active learners in learning process by using body and sense organs. It is reasonable to say that creative drama method acts according to targets of teaching together with the aforementioned qualities. Students who are used to teacher-centred learning norms are required to wrap up a role based on creativity, think in an unusual way and release the thought in similar ways within architectural education process. The situation which students are not accustomed to causes them to have difficulties such as adaptation or finding the environment odd. Students who have completed their developments by means of traditional education process based on teacher-learner construct are bewildered when they come face to face with the process which triggers interactive, participative and creative impulses that they are introduced in design education process. Dikmen (2011), who has a similar opinion, expresses that the situation makes it difficult for students to take part in the process of architectural education.

Active teaching methods that attach importance to student participation play a critical role in making easier to switch to the aforementioned interactive methods within the process of architectural education. It is believed that creative drama, one of the methods mentioned above, enables students who are centred on to go through the process of learning by experience and think creatively because creative drama is a method that such concepts as perception, intelligence, attitude, motivation, and creativity in contemporary architectural education can be easily associated to and that benefits from these concepts.

Attitudes are emotional and mental preparations that develop as a result of experiences and both lead and influence behaviors which individuals exhibit towards someone or in the face of events (Senemoğlu, 2005). Kağıtçıbaşı (2004) having a similar opinion states that attitudes are relevant to thoughts, emotions and behaviors, and bring about some visible behaviors. Accordingly, it can be said that emotional features such as attention, willing and internal motivation are significant in an individual's learning process. That a student describes a lesson as interesting or worth-learning has impact on willingness and perceptions towards the lesson Learning experiences, different personality characteristics, environmental parameters, previous experiences, self-conception and being in good condition physically are factors closely associated with motivation. Motivation and attitudes that are developed towards learning and course subjects have an impact on the success of learning (Barrett et al., 2005; McDonough et al., 2003). Beside this, motivation is an important element of creativity. Exogenous motivation following creative period throughout the design process has a part in evaluation and application phases (Alder, 2004).

Creative drama activities improve knowledge, ability, tendencies and senses through interaction and cooperation with others. The qualities, in time, change into special thoughts, private behaviors and a shared



conscious (Pinciotti, 2010). The studies conducted concerning to the subject indicate that creative drama has an impact on students' ability to develop empathy and solve problems and their social development (Anderson and Berry, 2015; Freeman et al., 2010; O'Toole et al., 2009). Through creative drama process, allowing cognitive aspect of learning as well as emotional and kinesthetic aspects enhances students' social skills. Individual becomes aware of himself and those around him and improves his ability to cooperate with community and participation. It can be said that creative drama method can be influential for students to adapt to a different discipline and education environment, to understand architectural language and thought, and to get over the difficulties in expressing themselves. In this way, students' design and creativity process, adaptation, and their design skills can be enhanced. When students learn by practicing within the design process, they can pass their obtained knowledge down to next generations by making them more efficient and permanent.

As is seen, it is required to try new methods containing and utilizing design/creation activities in order that the learning process based on teacher-learner relation is conducted in a more active, participative and critical atmosphere. From this point of view, testing the practicality of creative drama in architectural education as a teaching method makes a new way of solving specific problems.

In the light of all this information, it is believed that creative drama, an effective method for the learning process, can be efficient on architecture students' abilities of sight, perception, interpretation and self-expression. In this regard, utilizing creative drama as an alternative method within theoretical and applied lessons will develop a significant point of view.

The study aims to determine students' opinions and attitudes towards creative drama that is used as a teaching method in architectural education. In accordance with this purpose, some solutions for the following sub problems are searched.

- 1. What are the opinions and attitudes towards the method of the students who have taken the lesson, "Environment Behavior Knowledge", through creative drama?
- 2. What are the opinions and attitudes towards the method of the students who have taken the lesson, "Basic Design", through creative drama?

2. Method

2.1 Search Model

In this study, a qualitative research method was used. Determination of the students' opinions towards the process in which creative drama was applied as part of the lessons "Environment Behavior Knowledge" and "Basic Design" was carried out through the method of focus group interview. According to Karasar (2014), the interview is one of the most common data collection methods that are used to learn individuals' knowledge, opinions, attitudes and behaviors together with reasons towards various subjects. Interview is described as a predetermined mutual and conversational communication process which is based on asking and answering questions and conducted for a significant purpose (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Focus group discussion is a method based on listening to people and learning their opinions (Kitzinger, 1995). Interviews are classified into 2 types as individual and group depending on the number of participants. In group interviews, group members finding a common ground in case of a problem seek an answer interacting mutually for questions asked by interviewer. Each group member expresses their own opinion and also learns others' (Karasar, 2014). According to Kuş (2009), the criterion of focus group interviews is that they are for comprehension of data produced as a result of interaction which appears among participants. The original purpose of these interviews is to reveal participants' attitudes, emotions, beliefs, experiences, and their reactions that cannot be found out by means of other methods.

2.2 Study Group

The study was conducted with 13 students, 10 female and 3 male, who took the lesson "Environment Behavior Knowledge" through creative drama method and 24 students, 14 female and 10 male, who took the lesson "Basic Design" through creative drama method in Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Karadeniz Technical University.

2.3 Data Collection Tool

The interview form used as part of the study includes 7 open-ended questions that were prepared so as to lead the students to come up with an explanation and discuss elaborately. The questions were prepared by taking account of sample forms available in the literature (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). In order to provide the content validity of the interview questions prepared by the researcher, they were broached to 2 academic members, domain experts. The required revisions were made in line with suggestions for the questions that were examined in terms of purpose, content, expression and writing techniques.



2.4 Data Collection Process

The lessons "Environment Behavior Knowledge" (10-week period, spring semester, 2011-2012 academic calendars) and "Basic Design" (6-week period, fall semester, 2012-2013 academic calendars) were conducted with creative drama activities prepared by the researcher. The researcher also developed the schedule of creative drama activities which was followed during the period when the lesson subjects were taught through creative drama method. The aforesaid schedule includes 3 main stages; warm-up/preparation, impersonation, evaluation-discussion. The subject-oriented theoretical information was presented as part of creative drama events that were prepared in accordance with the subject contents. Among the events were warm-up exercises, plays, improvisations and evaluations that were oriented towards the lesson subjects.

It was agreed on that the groups who got involved in the focus group interviews would consist of 7 people on average. Correspondingly the students of "Environment Behavior Knowledge" were randomly divided into 2 groups, and the students of "Basic Design" were into 3 groups. The places where the interviews were conducted had been prepared by the researcher before the interview sessions so that the interviews were efficiently maintained without being interrupted. The group members got to sit around the table so as to interact with each other during the interview. In order to prevent data loss, sound recording was made while the group was in session.

2.4 Data analysis

The data obtained from the focus group interview was analyzed through content analysis in 3 stages; putting on paper the data collected from semi-structured interview form, coding the obtained data, evaluating the data by making thematic. In the process of data analysis, the data obtained from the interviews that were conducted with the students was read once and again. As a result of reading again and again, it was found out that some of the student opinions seemed to be the same or similar and they were classified under the same code. The student opinions, the coding process of which was over, were evaluated by making thematic.

For the analysis of the results of the interviews, the obtained data was originally used and some parts were quoted from the student statements. In the process of releasing the analysis, the students' real names were not used. The codes S1, S2, S3, etc. were representatively given to them, instead. The thematic student opinions were exemplified going through no revision.

3. Findings

As a result of examining the data obtained from the focus group interviews through content analysis, the student opinions are made thematic as follows and the results are presented under the same themes;

- "Attitude Towards Creative Drama Method",
- "Personal Development",
- "Professional Development",
- "Communication",
- "Suggestions".

3.1 Findings Relevant to Focus Group Interviews of Environment Behavior Knowledge

The students stated that they attended the lessons willingly, felt responsible for and in need of attending the lesson, and also that being active during the lesson prevented them from losing attention to the lesson. Besides this, they emphasized that the evaluation stage of creative drama process allowed for relaxation and so the attendance to the lesson was more effective as compared to a traditional lesson. They also declared that they could perceive the subjects better as a result of learning by experience and being active during the lesson. Moreover they expressed that the performed activities and visuals used in the applications allowed them to keep the subjects in memory longer, to give more creative samples concerning the subjects, to both teach and learn the lesson, and to recall instantly the knowledge when the topic title was associated with the performed activities. Accordingly they said that creative drama method shortened the period of studying the lesson notes and allowed them to learn but not by rote. On the other hand, they declared that they shared the activities conducted during the lesson period with their classmates who took the lesson through a traditional teaching method and tried to introduce the method to them. They also stated that owing to the lesson, they faced creative drama method for the first time and experienced an unbelievable period. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Attitude towards Creative Drama Method" are as follows:

- "It prevents us from wandering off. It orients us more to the lessons." (S, 7)
- "This method is so different. It is not a traditional teaching way. Therefore it seems more interesting to us and we willingly are attending the lesson." (S, 10)
 - "I feel more responsible for the lesson." (S, 1)
 - "It was so nice to enter into the spirit of the subject while learning." (S, 2)
 - "We taught the lesson each other. We did not learn by listening to a single voice. Not also did we teach



ourselves, but also learned by ourselves." (S, 12)

"It also shortens the period of studying for exams. We study, understand and learn in class. In other words, we study daily." (S, 4)

"It was an unforgettable semester for us. We encountered drama for the first time at the university. We recalled our childhood a little bit. It was highly enjoyable." (S, 6)

The students stated that creative drama method gave a different point of view, and enabled to find a solution soon for the problems encountered and consider a matter from a different angle. Furthermore, they said that the method allowed them to know themselves better, discover their own talents, think creatively as a result of enhanced imagination and broadened horizon, express themselves better and gain/improve their self-confidence. They also reflected that the performed activities made easier to come into prominence by improving diction and the ability to take a role. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Personal Development" are as follows:

"Not only did it introduce the lesson "Environment Behavior Knowledge" to us but also enabled us to know ourselves better. For example I didn't know what my walking style was like. After the lesson, I realized my behaviors. We didn't know that we had some talents. We discovered these talents." (S, 12)

"The method enhanced our imagination and broadened our horizon. We today could look around us more deliberatively." (S, 5)

"It allows us to think creatively." (S, 2)

"Impersonation enhances our self-confidence and the ability to express ourselves. We are more and more willing in every lesson. We say "Let me do that!" (S, 2)

"It was helpful for us to improve diction and come into prominence. I could come into prominence sharing my own thoughts and expressing myself while I am speaking to communities or carrying out a workshop." (S, 6) The students stated that owing to creative drama method, they could associate architecture discipline to life and take an observational look at the environment more deliberatively. Thus, they could recognize that what they saw in daily life was associated with architecture. Beside this, they mentioned that architectural occupations seemed more and more attractive to them as a result of increasing interest in architecture. They also declared that they took part in the process of creative drama with their own observations and experiences, and the conducted group activities had an impact on their preparations for career including shared decision-making and collaboration. They indicated that they could utilize theoretical information they were taught and correlate it with their life and thus, learn how to look at and evaluate visuals and architectural structures from a different point of view. In other words, they could more easily perceive and envisage spaces or areas. Beside this, they stated that creative drama method enabled them to comprehend easily what they read, and contributed to their architectural projects and design process. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Professional Development" are as follows:

"We could recognize that whatever we see around us in daily life is actually linked to architecture. We make more observations." (S, 1)

"The method has enhanced our imagination and broadened our horizon. We today look around more deliberatively." (S, 5)

"We have taken an extra interest in our profession. It has made us feel closer to architecture." (S, 6)

"It enables us to feel spaces better. It allows us to perceive spaces better considering age groups." (S, 7)

"We have learned not only ours but also our friends' opinions about the structures. Our perspective for architectural structures has changed." (S, 9)

"I could today associate concepts and terms with my life because we perform a drama with professional terms. In theoretical lessons, we learn terms for that lesson hour. However, we have started to use these terms also in our life as we use them in drama process. What we learn in class serves a purpose for real." (S, 4)

The students declared that thanks to the roles they played within impersonation activities a part of creative drama process, they could see each other's different aspects and get the chances to meet each other in many aspects, and the communication and intimacy increased. They also verbalized that the group actions stimulated them, which allowed for seeing the possibility of several solutions for a problem and it was more educatory and enjoyable to make a decision together. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Communication" are as follows:

"Our dialogues with people are progressing. Our dialogues with friends are progressing and thus, we get closer to each other. If this lesson were not available, I don't think we could develop such a relationship among us." (S, 12)

"Existing in a group made us be closer friends because we told and learned something from each other. Thanks to the roles we played, we found out our new aspects." (S, 12)

"We continuously triggered each other. For example, what doesn't come into our mind is recalled by a friend of ours. At that moment, we picture a new idea in our mind." (S, 6)

"We learn more than one opinion about the same topic. You learn all: Not only do you share your own



opinion but learn others' as well." (S, 12)

"It was so nice to do something together because a human feels a load on his shoulders when alone. However we feel more comfortable while learning all together." (S, 2)

The students suggested that creative drama be applied through optional lessons considering the fact that it is catchier and more enjoyable. According to them, the method is considerably different from a traditional lesson and also similar group actions should also be conducted in other lessons. Beside this, what they suggest is that creative drama activities be integrated with architectural education due to the fact that architecture discipline contains a lot of subjects that must be pictured in mind. In this regard, they stated that several applications could be conducted in places relevant to a subject designed as part of architectural project lessons. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Suggestions" are as follows:

- "We want it to be applied in other lessons, too." (S, 12)
- "We wish you had an optional lesson and we could take." (S, 3)
- "It would be nice to allow for such group actions in other lessons, too." (S, 10)
- "I want it to be available in Architectural Project, too. Let's go wherever we design. Let's pretend as if it were. Let's take a staff's place and behave like him/her." (S, 4)

"I recalled the lesson, Architectural Project. I wish we had been able to do - in the project - what we have done now so that it would have been possible for us to assess and evaluate the spaces together with their users which we designed in our projects." (S, 9)

3.2 Findings Relevant to Focus Group Interviews of Basic Design

The students declared that they attended the lesson willingly, got rid of stress and relaxed due to the lesson, became active learners during the lesson, and learned the subjects by experience. They also expressed that they went through a mysterious, colorful and enjoyable learning process which was full of surprises, and looked forward to the following action during the lesson hours. They shared the opinion that performing continuously new activities and generating something new during the lesson hours had them keep their motivation at high level. They asserted that their obtained knowledge became more permanent as they learned by experience, and by this way they studied without rote learning. They stressed that the method contributed to improving their ability to understand the subjects and integrating the subjects with the design. The students said that they encountered creative drama for the first time owing to this lesson, felt luckier than others in the class because they enjoyed the lesson, and got sad when the lesson finished. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Attitude towards Creative Drama Method" are as follows:

"Drama was a field I had never heard of before. When I encountered it, I became so happy. I really feel happy. I can get rid of my stress by this way. I attended the lesson without getting bored, which made me relaxed." (S, 1)

"We all together learn the lesson in this way. Only if we listen to a teacher, we feel that lesson is of the teacher's. However, this is a lesson which we conduct, teach and make an effort to learn." (S, 12)

"After a while, we get bored in a traditional lesson. Here we are continuously on the move. Even while we are performing an application, we look forward to the next one. We all think of "I wonder... What is the next one?" Just after performing an application, we could establish a correlation with theoretical knowledge." (S, 11)

"I think that we by experience assimilate what we learn. I feel that the lesson was conducted directly centering on us. For this reason, it was more helpful and more information stuck in mind. I easily remember all things we have done here, even the sentences we have said here." (S, 15)

"It is required to take note of and often review theoretical information. However, the information sticks in our mind at once as we learn by experience. Thus, information-recall process is not required anymore." (S, 20)

"I have realized that something can be learned not only by reading or writing but also by this way." (S, 4)

"I have no idea about what we will go through in 4 years. But I think here is the milestone of the 4-year period. It was really so unique. We developed so different an intimate atmosphere and shared nice things." (S, 20) The students informed that creative drama made a contribution to improving the abilities of creative thinking, practical thinking, and fast decision-making. The students also said that thanks to the method, they found out their other talents and could look at events in many aspects as a result of developing a different point of view. Beside this, they stressed that impersonation actions in the creative drama process helped them to improve their acting skills, to use their voice and body language effectively, to get rid of timid behaviors, to express themselves in a more comfortable way, and to gain self-confidence. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Personal Development" are as follows:

"We learn through our own experiences differently from the traditional method, which improves creative thinking." (S, 21)

"While designing on my own, I do something in accordance with an idea that I have. However in group actions, I see others' ideas and afterwards I take advantages of this situation while conducting another work



because our point of view is enlarged as a consequence of having new ideas." (S, 11)

"We learned to control ourselves. We learned how to control our body, hands, and arms. "You saw me using hand gestures while speaking. Was it suitable? Can I express what I think or feel? My sound is suitable for what I am trying to express?" It contributed to controlling all. It improved my self-confidence." (S, 10)

"I trust myself more. I believe that I can express myself easily. I used to get too nervous. It was so influential on my self-confidence." (S, 16)

The students stated that group actions could contribute to the lessons of Architecture Project suggesting that creative drama method was useful in sharing ideas and asking questions. They pointed out that they could air their grievances concerning architecture by means of plays in the process of creative drama. The students shared the opinion that they found enough courage to come into prominence and became skillful at presenting and exhibiting what they designed owing to the method. They said that impersonations in creative drama process had an effect on learning and picturing theoretical information in mind and thus, they could easily incorporate what they learned into the design process. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Professional Development" are as follows:

"When we study here, the subjects become observable as we utilize the space and our bodies. We simply understand the subject because our mind perceives more easily in this way. This is -I think- the advantage of this lesson." (S, 18)

"Because we here impersonate the theoretical information, we learn in the lesson, I believe it is more permanent. I think we could put it down on paper or into a model by visualizing the subjects. Learning this by experience is more efficient than listening to someone teaching." (S, 17)

"We have realized that everything is not only on paper but in life as well. We have learned basic design items. But they are not only on paper. They are also available in life. People live together with them. We learned and passed on this, and I think we have succeeded." (S, 10)

"Group actions are sort of preparation for our future architectural projects or works. In works we conduct ourselves, we can trust ourselves more." (S, 6)

"Architecture is not only to erect a building. Our aim is to generate new and different things. All these works we do are promotive. They give you enough courage to exhibit and present what you think." (S, 9)

The students declared that they went through a more efficient learning process cooperating with the group and producing in this lesson unlike other lessons in which they separately acted. They stated that the group actions enabled them to gain new perspectives allowing for exchange of ideas. In addition, they said that the group actions also made contributions to individual works motivating each other. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Communication" are as follows:

"This method increases intimacy much more. The groups here continuously change. You do something applicable. You know people better and feel friendlier. You take a liking to people. You do something together. Dialogue and intimacy increase." (S, 20)

"It was also so useful in terms of friendship, conversation and socialization. Unlike other lessons in which we individually do, we together listen to the teacher and try to do something together. In other words, we have a more social environment." (S, 7)

"As a matter of fact, it is essential for an architecture student to carry out a group action and this is a good pattern for group actions." (S, 1)

"In group actions, we see suggested ideas and people's view of life. We have another point of views other than ours. For this reason, group actions have advantages. It starts to trigger individual works." (S, 9)

The students emphasized that it would be useful to integrate foreign language lessons and numeric lessons, notably Architecture Project with creative drama process. Furthermore, they verbalized that teaching the theoretical lessons with the help of drama would make contributions to architectural design process. Sample statements of the students coded under the theme "Suggestions" are as follows:

"It must be also applied in other lessons because it enables us to express ourselves, understand a lesson more easily and take a pleasurable lesson. It prevents a lesson from becoming monotonous." (S, 6)

"We more simply learn. I wish we took numeric lessons in this way." (S, 1)

"Come to think of it, for instance the lesson Architecture Project. We could understand better seeing by means of such a method. It also could be applied for the Project lesson." (S, 22)

"No doubt it must be utilized for the foreign language lesson. We learn it by writing. We do not ever speak. Therefore we cannot learn. Very different results can be achieved if it is conducted through speaking and drama." (S, 10)

"What we learned from the lesson together with you -even if it wasn't relevant to the subject- could be useful in designing because we did not forget what we learned." (S, 16)

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The obtained conclusions relevant to the opinions and attitudes towards creative drama method of students who



have taken the lesson Environment Behavior Knowledge are as follows:

- It increases students' motivation to learn the lesson and learning by experience makes obtained knowledge become permanent,
 - It contributes to improving the abilities of problem solving and self-expression,
- It increases more and more interest in the profession of Architecture and contributes to Project Design Process.
 - Group actions and shared decision making makes the learning process easier.

The obtained conclusions relevant to the students' opinions and attitudes towards creative drama method, who have taken the lesson Basic Design, are as follows:

- Being active during the lesson increases the attention and therefore makes the information permanent,
- It has an impact on gaining different perspectives and self-expression as a result of enhancing self-confidence,
- It provides awareness for the profession of Architecture, makes easier to envisage the concepts, and improves the ability of designing,
 - It provides intimacy with the group and working together increases the efficiency.

The results obtained from the focus group interviews indicate that creative drama method enabled learning process to be an attractive, participative, interactive, and educational environment. That learning process was actualized with the group experiences provided benefits for the students in terms of both personality and profession. It is concluded that the method makes it easy to link theoretical information to architecture discipline and therefore has an impact on increasing interest in the profession. From this point of view, it can be said that creative drama method has also an effect on the abilities of awareness, environmental observation and semantically looking at architectural structures that it is intended to provide students with during architectural education period.

This student-centered learning process helped the students to know themselves, find out their other aspects, and improve their ability of self-expression. In the process, the information was not only obtained at a cognitive level but also underwent mental processes and was evaluated by means of emotional concepts. When considered from this point of view, learning by experience enabled the students' obtained knowledge to be more efficient and permanent. If we take into account all of these factors, we can say that creative drama method played a significant role in keeping the students' emotional qualities such as attention, attitudes, motivation at a high level.

The findings from the study indicate that due to creative drama method, the students have achieved several implicit gains notably personal development. The applications enabled the students to encounter creative drama method and have opinion about the method. It can be said that creative drama, effectiveness of which was confirmed within the study, is a teaching and information conveyance method that must be utilized in order to achieve the architectural education targets.

Creative drama process bears several resemblances in many aspects to architectural education containing creativity and design processes that are predicated on students' skills such as perception, evaluation, and assessment. Today many studies have been conducted in the field of creative drama (Hendrix et al., 2012; Jindal-Snape et al., 2011; Křivková, 2011; Nicholas and Ng, 2008; Sutton, 2012; Toepfer, 2008). However such studies within the scope of architectural education do not so often emerge. This study is confined to 13 of the students who have taken the course "Environment-Behavior Knowledge" in the spring semester, 2011-2012 academic year and 24 of the students who have taken the course "Basic Design" in the fall semester, 2012-2013 academic year at the department of architecture, faculty of architecture, Karadeniz Technical University. The study consists of experimental researches on the improvement of continuing courses and evaluation of these researches. On the other hand, the effects of the method on students' personal development and behavior pattern can be discussed at a more conceptual level by means of the studies that will be conducted afterwards.

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Note

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