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Addressing the Relationship between Creativity and Stress in Design Education: Innovative Approaches for Future Architects

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Abstract:

In architectural education, creativity is the cornerstone of learning, while stress is an inherent challenge. Architecture students face high demands due to the nature of studio culture, which often involves long hours, strict deadlines, and intense critique sessions. The design process itself, requiring continuous innovation and problem-solving, can be mentally and emotionally taxing. Research consistently shows that stress can either enhance or hinder creativity depending on how it is managed. However, excessive and prolonged stress negatively impacts mental well-being, leading to burnout, reduced creativity, and diminished learning outcomes.

Architecture schools around the world have traditionally embraced a high-pressure, competitive environment, with the belief that such an atmosphere fosters creative breakthroughs. However, this conventional wisdom is increasingly being questioned, as studies in educational psychology and design pedagogy highlight the negative consequences of chronic stress on students' cognitive functions and creative abilities. According to research, high levels of stress impair divergent thinking, a key component of creativity, and hinder students' ability to explore novel solutions in their designs. Furthermore, many students report experiencing anxiety, sleep deprivation, and decreased motivation, which further compounds their creative struggles.

Recognizing the growing need to support student well-being in design education, architecture schools are starting to re-evaluate their teaching models. Leading institutions are experimenting with interventions to address the stress-creativity relationship. These efforts are part of a broader movement in education to prioritize student mental health and resilience alongside academic rigor. However, despite these promising initiatives, there remains a gap in understanding how architecture students can effectively manage stress without compromising their creative potential.

This project seeks to bridge that gap by investigating the relationship between stress and creativity in architectural design studios. The aim is to develop and implement innovative pedagogical strategies that help students harness the positive aspects of stress while mitigating its detrimental effects. Through integrating research-based, innovative teaching practices, the project will identify the key factors that contribute to stress in design education and explore best practices for enhancing student creativity through supportive, low-stress learning environments.

By addressing the balance between stress and creativity, this project not only seeks to improve students' educational experiences but also prepares them for the professional realities of architecture, where creative problem-solving under pressure is essential. The project will contribute to the evolving



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discourse on architecture education and provide a model for integrating well-being into the design studio culture. Its outcomes will offer valuable insights to educators, students, and teaching institutions on fostering a healthier, more productive, and creatively fulfilling approach to teaching architecture.