waldorf educational buildings fostering of childhood powers

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Eight year-old Maya's school is surrounded by a high fence. The large building at the center of the site is three to four storeys high. On one side is a paved courtyard, and on the other, a path, which leads to the entrance, and from there to corridors of classrooms. Each class has three rows of two-seat benches, facing the board behind the teacher. There are high windows so only the sky is seen to prevent students concentration from straying to the scenery outside. How does Maya feel during her stay in school? Do the building's design, courtyard location, the classroom, colors and decorations, have any impact on her learning, progress, feelings, thoughts or her future as a human being?

The Anthropomorphic answer will of course be positive, but the question remains how exactly should this be done?

Various studies have long indicated the close relationship between the school's design and students' behavior, state of mind and, consequently, their academic achievements. Studies in the UK, Australia and the US, for instance, address the effect of wall color, lighting, air quality, furniture, and acoustic comfort on students' moods, general feeling, and academic achievements. Other studies show that student levels of violence and vandalism are significantly affected by their experiencing their school as "beautiful", "pleasant" or "ugly". Studies in Germany address the physiological effects of the building on sensations of stress or relaxation, blood pressure, eye movements, moods, and even their tendency to certain diseases. Likewise, a correlation has also been found between the quality of finishing materials, natural or artificial light, proximity to nature in general, and factors that affect heart pulse, blood pressure, a sense of comfort, and ADHD.

The most basic component of the classroom is the arrangement of benches. This affects the form of the classroom and, in turn, the building and its spatial organization as well as the number of buildings, their relationship to each other and their environment.

Sitting on heavy two-seat benches that are organized in rows facing the board has been the acceptable way for thousands of years. This was the prevailing method until the

first half of the 20th century, when modern pedagogy was introduced, mainly influenced by the educational psychologist, John Dewey - who preached progressive, creative thinking rather than learning informational facts by heart, in the spirit of Aristotelian functional psychology.

From the early fifties, American educational experts began to demand the provision of light, mobile benches for students in order to enable other forms of seating, such as in pairs or small work groups.

Some educators believe that this change in turn dismissed the traditional practice of rising each time a teacher entered the classroom. While massive, heavy furniture enabled a silent and dignified rising, the light furniture made a racket, causing anarchy and disrespect. This indirectly affected student / teacher relations, bringing about a more open learning atmosphere.

According to Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the initiator of Anthroposophy, education should be based on children's needs, rather than

