

REDEFINING READING SPACES TYPOLOGY  
FOR STREET CHILDREN OF CHOW KIT

ZIYAN RAZALLI

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation discussed a research in redefining the typology of the reading spaces for the children of urban in Chow Kit area, among the street children and the local children. Reading spaces shall be provided as a space not only for learning and teaching process, but also for socialize and gathering through reading activities. Children of Cho Kit have different opinion and perspective toward 'reading', which influenced by their different background lifestyle and the environment of learning spaces provided. Reading is one of the fundamental necessities in life, there are many poor and underprivileged urban children in Chow Kit who grow up in dysfunctional families where adult members possess minimum to no literacy skills. They are unable to experience the joy of being able to attend school and give themselves a chance at creating a better future. In relation to the encouragement and giving opportunities to these children, architecture plays its important role as to provide reading space with better environment based on the behaviour and the needs of these children, with according to their right as a children of this nation. Formal and informal reading spaces have to meets certain criteria, which is more fun to be used by the children and more children-oriented in safer condition, in order to improve the interest and chances towards education. Hence, a methodology of identify typology of reading spaces and relating it to the children of Chow Kit movement pattern and behaviour using scientific analysis of space syntax and case studies are carried out. Literature reviews and interviews are also being carried out as to strengthen the findings in order to identify the architectural elements that meets the needs of the children and enhancing the social environment in urban context.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengenai menentukan semula jenis-jenis ruang membaca untuk kanak-kanak dalam konteks bandar di kawasan Chow Kit, dalam kalangan kanak-kanak jalanan dan kanak-kanak setempat. Ruang membaca seharusnya disediakan bukan sekadar ruang bagi proses pembelajaran semata-mata, bahkan ianya haruslah dijadikan sebagai ruang bersosial dan berhimpun melalui aktiviti membaca. Kanak-kanak di Chow Kit mempunyai pendapat dan persepsi yang berbeza terhadap maksud 'membaca' itu sendiri, dimana ianya dipengaruhi oleh latarbelakang kehidupan yang berbeza dan keadaan ruang belajar yang disediakan. Membaca merupakan salah satu asas keperluan dalam kehidupan, dimana ramai golongan kanak-kanak miskin dan kurang bernasib baik di bandar Chow Kit yang membesar dalam keluarga yang mempunyai minima kemahiran celik huruf. Mereka tidak berpeluang merasakan keseronokan menghadiri kelas di sekolah dan peluang untuk membentuk masa depan yang lebih baik. Berhubung dengan penggalakkan dan pemberian peluang kepada kanak-kanak ini, seni bina memainkan peranan yang sangat penting dalam menyediakan ruang membaca yang mempunyai keadaan yang lebih baik dengan mengikut tingkahlaku dan keperluan kanak-kanak tersebut, berdasarkan hak kanak-kanak di negara ini. Ruang membaca yang formal mahupun tidak formal haruslah menepati beberapa kriteria, dimana ianya seharusnya mempunyai lebih banyak unsur yang menyeronokkan bagi kanak-kanak yang menggunakan ruang tersebut dan lebih berorientasikan kanak-kanak dalam keadaan yang selamat, ke arah meningkatkan minat dan peluang kanak-kanak tersebut dalam pendidikan. Oleh itu, kaedah mengenal pasti jenis-jenis ruang membaca berdasarkan corak pergerakan dan tingkahlaku kanak-kanak Chow Kit menggunakan analisis saintifik ruang sintaks dan kajian kes dijalankan. Kaedah kajian literatur dan temubual turut dijalankan bagi memperkukuhkan dapatan kajian dalam mencari elemen seni bina yang memenuhi keperluan kanak-kanak tersebut dan ia memainkan peranan yang besar dalam meningkatkan persekitaran sosial dalam konteks bandar.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Research**

The loss of interest towards education among the urban children of Kuala Lumpur, especially the street children in Chow Kit district, due to the environment factors and the rigidity and formality of school environment causing majority of them are unable to read and focus in learning. Due to the lack of knowledge and awareness through education, these street children are exposed to negative influences around Chow Kit and unable to identify their own self-strength. The study revealed that most of the street children are not in school, because they either dropped out or have not been to school since birth. Furthermore, most of them were living in the street selling candies and cigarettes, and roaming about as beggars or scavengers. They cannot read nor recognized letters in the alphabet.

The study also disclosed that they are educable and willing to learn, provided proper attention and intervention should be given to them. The study concluded that street children need proper care by encouraging them to value-laden education that will develop their potential in the academe and making them functional literate. Therefore, quality education should be afforded to children for they are the hope of our country.

Education through reading is the action of cultivating knowledge and consuming information in learning process through written texts. However, the street children of Chow Kit are prefer to enjoy physical activities rather than sit and read books. What they did not know is that reading activity can actually go through not only by books, but also through kinaesthetic methods (play, painting, sculpturing, dancing, music, and etc). These children should be introduced with the method of learning through fun and interesting spaces and environment. One of the place that provide a lot of choices of reading sources and promotes the culture of reading is actually the library. However, studies shows that library in Kuala Lumpur are not children-friendly.

There are a few of library that were designed specifically for the children, by following the anthropometric and the needs of the children. The understanding of the children's nature and habits are the most crucial factors that actually needed in designing the children's reading space. Children would not sit and read for a long period of time at the same spot for hours, they would move around and looking for something fun and inspire them. The environment of fun and adventure should be introduced to the reading area for the children in the library, where children would not only read to learn, but also read to play and play to read.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Library is one of the platform for learning and gaining information. Libraries usually have several consistent departments. However, children tend to be overlooked by libraries with their needs and wants. Children have specific characteristics that should be reflected in interior space planning and design in libraries. When creating special spaces where children can experience joy in learning and investigation, public and school libraries often are inclined to produce primary-colour themed spaces that may appear on the surface to be kid-friendly. These spaces, however, can be a flat experience for children. Children appreciate good design, subtlety, and nuance.

By considering the behaviour and emotion of the children, libraries can create children's areas that provide a layered experience that works for youngsters of many ages and that provides multiple ways for children to learn, interact with other children or their caregivers, and achieve a sense of accomplishment. Therefore, the implementation and promotion of the architectural spaces that promote fun reading environment and encourage learning activities while playing is vital. Thus, by redefining the concept of library with the integration of play and learn will enhance the interest towards education among the children of Chow Kit.

### **1.3 Research Aim**

The research aims to redefine the typology of reading spaces commonly found in libraries through the elements of street and play environment, as a new approach in encouraging better interest towards reading for Chow Kit street children.

### **1.4 Research Objective**

- i. To identify the typology of children's reading spaces with informal learning environment in order to increase the children's interests towards reading activity.
- ii. To explore suitable street environment for reading space with the concept of play-based learning for children in Chow Kit area.
- iii. To suggest the kinaesthetic learning activity approach in order to motivate reading interest of the children through architecture.



## **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What are the appropriate criteria of children's reading space that enable to increase children's interest towards reading habits?
2. What are the suitable street environment for reading space that influenced by the behaviour and characters of the children in Chow Kit?
3. What are the kinesthetic learning approach enable to motivate reading interest of the children through architecture?

## **1.6 Scope of Research**

Reading space is widely used as place for education and exploration of knowledge through books and reading sources. This research would focuses on the reading spaces only for the children in urban context of Kuala Lumpur based on their characters and behaviour and also their needs according to the children's right. In addition, the research shall be deepen analyzed specifically based on the behaviour of the street children of Chow Kit, as these group of children are facing the crisis of unable to be sent to school for education due to the family poverty. The study of this research will be focus on 500metre radius of Chow Kit, where there are many primary and secondary schools and street children's spots available in the area.

## **1.7 Significance of Research**

The significance of study is to express the typology of reading spaces for the use of the street children in order to create the awareness of the importance of education and encourage them the culture of reading at young age. The research would respond to their psychological and physiological condition. The study also would benefits the users in proposing new approach as the model of education setting for children in Kuala Lumpur. As part of collaboration between the Design Dissertation and Design Thesis, the result and outcome of the research will be utilized in the Design Thesis.

## **1.8 Research Methodology**

The method used in this research is based on mixed method. According to (Creswell, 2003), mixed method consists of three general strategies which are sequential procedures, concurrent procedures and transformative procedures. However, this research will fully use of sequential procedures in which this procedures will combine the method of qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative method consists of comparison data collected from site analysis and observation. On the other hand, for qualitative method consist of data from structured interviews and case studies. Hence, the data collected will be divided into primary and secondary data. The primary data will consists of data collected from mixed method while secondary data were to be collected from books, magazines, journals, publications and even internet. In-depth, informally structured interviews were also conducted with 20 of the street children themselves, independent of their caretakers or guardians. The interviews took place within the children's own setting, in the centre as well as on the street of Chow Kit.

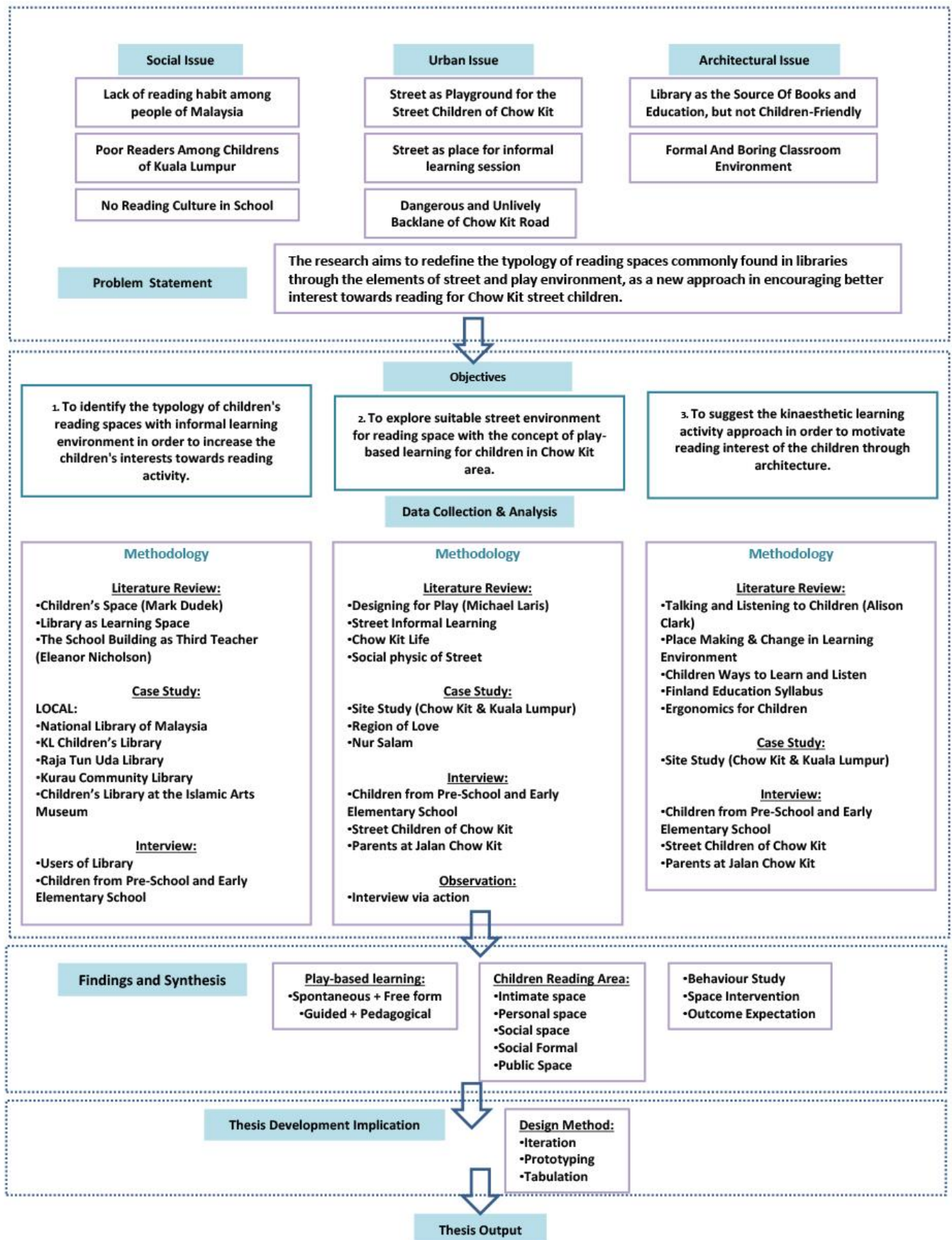


Figure 1.0: Dissertation Framework  
(source: Author)

## **1.9 Expected Findings**

From this research, it is expected that various typology of reading space for the children of Chow Kit within urban context of Kuala Lumpur by using a methodology generated. The function of reading space typologies used within the urban context is studied in order to extract and translated it into one proper building for design thesis. Hence, design approaches and strategies of reading spaces in Kuala Lumpur context will be formulated.

## **1.10 Structure of Thesis**

This research is divided into 6 main chapter. Chapter 1 will discuss on an overview of the research. This contain the background study, problem statement, research aim, research objectives, research questions, scope of research, research methodologies, and expected findings.

Chapter 2 discuss on the broad background of the general design of the libraries for children in the urban context. Firstly, the understanding of the urban children perspective towards public libraries and their school libraries that effect their interest in reading activities. Besides that, concept of play and kinaesthetic also being discussed as new method in learning and act as new approach into the reading space environment.

Chapter 3 discuss on the methodology chosen in conducting this research. This chapter explain the quantitative and qualitative methods in order to collect all the data needed.

Chapter 4 is the chapter of discussion that explain the analysed data and synthesise the data to archive final evaluation for the research. Data from observation and interviews will be compared and discussed together with the local case studies. The analysed data will be used in order to determine the relevant design approaches or strategies by achieving research objectives.

Lastly, Chapter 5 summarizes the research and significant of this dissertation. Plus, it will elaborate the limitation and plan the potential further study regarding this subject matter.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

This study intended to establish a new typology for the reading spaces for the use of children in urban context in order to increase the interest towards reading culture and improving the learning environment for the better development of the children skill, mentally and physically. This research shall give new perspective towards ways of learning and teaching, in order to design better reading space, which should not be used only for reading activities but also offers more experiences that expand the creativity towards children of Kuala Lumpur.

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