DIDACTIC OPPORTUNITIES AND SCIENTIFIC-THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF VIRTUAL AND AUGMENTED REALITY TECHNOLOGIES IN ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract. *This article examines the scientific and theoretical foundations of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies and analyzes their didactic opportunities in architectural education. The study highlights the close relationship between VR and AR technologies and the principles of constructivism, experiential learning, and the competency-based approach. Furthermore, based on scientific literature, the pedagogical potential of these technologies for developing students' spatial thinking, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical activities, creating an interactive learning environment, and improving educational effectiveness is substantiated.*

Keywords: *Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, VR, AR, architectural education, didactic opportunities, immersive technologies, spatial thinking, digital education, pedagogical technologies.*

Introduction. The processes of digital transformation require the effective integration of modern information and communication technologies into all levels of the education system. In particular, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies are increasingly being employed as innovative pedagogical tools in higher education. These technologies significantly enhance students' cognitive engagement, facilitate the visualization of complex objects and processes, and strengthen the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience.

The significance of VR and AR technologies is particularly evident in architectural education, where they contribute to the development of students' three-dimensional spatial thinking, enable the simulation of design processes in environments that closely resemble real-world conditions, and support the comprehensive analysis of architectural and structural solutions. Therefore, investigating the scientific and theoretical foundations and didactic opportunities of these technologies has become one of the priority directions of contemporary educational research.

Scientific-Theoretical Foundations of VR and AR Technologies. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies represent one of the most promising areas of modern information and communication technologies, creating new pedagogical opportunities for organizing the educational process. These technologies differ in the way they facilitate interaction between users and digital environments. While Virtual Reality immerses users completely in a computer-generated artificial environment, Augmented Reality enriches the real-world environment by overlaying it with virtual objects and digital information.

The theoretical foundations of VR and AR technologies are closely associated with the scientific contributions of researchers such as Ivan Sutherland, Myron Krueger, Paul Milgram, Fumio Kishino, and Ronald Azuma. In particular, the Reality–Virtuality Continuum proposed by P. Milgram and F. Kishino provided a scientific framework for understanding the relationship between real and virtual environments. Likewise, R. Azuma identified three essential characteristics of augmented reality systems: the integration of real and virtual objects, real-time interaction, and accurate three-dimensional registration. These theoretical concepts continue to serve as the methodological foundation for the development and application of VR and AR technologies.

From a pedagogical perspective, VR and AR technologies are closely related to the theories of constructivism, experiential learning, situated learning, and multimedia learning. According to these educational approaches, knowledge is not simply transmitted to learners but is actively constructed through participation, practical experience, and independent problem-solving. In this regard, VR and AR technologies function as effective pedagogical tools that enhance students' cognitive engagement and transform them into active participants in the learning process.

Didactic Opportunities of VR and AR Technologies in Architectural Education

Architectural education differs from many other academic disciplines because of its strong integration of theoretical knowledge with practical design activities. Future architects are expected not only to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to develop three-dimensional spatial thinking, visual analysis skills, design thinking, and the ability to make informed structural decisions. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for educational technologies capable of presenting complex architectural objects through interactive and highly visual learning environments.

Virtual Reality technology enables students to explore architectural projects within immersive virtual environments that closely resemble real-world conditions. Learners can freely navigate both the interior and exterior spaces of buildings and compare alternative design solutions before construction. In contrast, Augmented Reality technology enriches physical architectural models and construction sites by superimposing digital models and additional information, thereby facilitating a deeper analysis of design solutions. Such an approach effectively integrates theoretical knowledge with practical experience and significantly improves learning outcomes.

From a didactic perspective, VR and AR technologies provide extensive opportunities for visualization, interactivity, independent learning, collaborative learning, and project-based education. These technologies allow students to test complex architectural projects within safe virtual environments, evaluate alternative design solutions, and identify potential design deficiencies before implementation. As a result, the educational process becomes more closely aligned with real professional practice, substantially improving students' practical competencies and professional readiness.

Discussion. An analysis of previous studies on the application of VR and AR technologies in education indicates that these technologies significantly improve the visualization, interactivity, and practice-oriented nature of the learning process.

International researchers emphasize that Virtual Reality effectively develops students' spatial thinking, facilitates the understanding of complex objects, and strengthens the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application. Similarly, Augmented Reality enhances learning by combining real-world environments with digital information, making educational content more understandable, engaging, and meaningful.

However, the review of the existing literature also reveals that most previous studies primarily focus on the technical characteristics of VR and AR technologies or their application in individual learning activities. In architectural education, insufficient attention has been paid to implementing these technologies as an integrated didactic system for professional training, incorporating them into the educational process through a competency-based approach, and developing reliable criteria for evaluating their pedagogical effectiveness. This indicates the need for further research in this field.

A distinctive characteristic of architectural education is that students are expected not only to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to apply it effectively in real design practice. Therefore, VR and AR technologies should not be regarded merely as visualization tools but as integral didactic components closely connected with educational content, teaching methods, and assessment strategies. Such an approach contributes to the comprehensive development of students' spatial thinking, design thinking, analytical abilities, and independent decision-making competencies.

In the author's opinion, the effective implementation of VR and AR technologies requires their systematic integration into curricula, practical training, project-based courses, and digital learning environments. Simply providing technical equipment is not sufficient to improve educational quality. Meaningful educational outcomes can only be achieved through a scientifically grounded methodological framework for integrating these technologies into teaching and learning. Such an approach will significantly enhance the professional preparation of future architects.

Conclusion. The findings of this study demonstrate that Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies represent one of the key drivers of modernization in architectural education. These technologies serve as effective didactic tools for visualizing complex architectural objects within three-dimensional environments, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical activities, and developing students' spatial thinking and professional design competencies.

The analysis confirms that the didactic potential of VR and AR technologies is determined by their capabilities for visualization, interactivity, immersion, independent learning, and collaborative learning. Through these technologies, the educational process can be organized according to a student-centered approach, creating favorable conditions for a deeper understanding of educational content and the development of practical professional competencies.

Although the existing body of research demonstrates considerable experience in applying VR and AR technologies in architectural education, additional studies are still required to establish an integrated methodological framework for their implementation,

develop comprehensive criteria for evaluating their pedagogical effectiveness, and adapt these technologies to the context of the national education system.

Therefore, the development of digital learning environments based on VR and AR technologies, the establishment of virtual laboratories and design studios, and the enhancement of university instructors' digital pedagogical competencies should be considered among the strategic priorities for improving the quality of architectural education.

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