

UNIVERSAL DESIGN



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UNIVERSAL DESIGN

PHILOSOPHY AND SELECTED APPLICATIONS IN
MALAYSIA

EDITORS

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3 The concept of barrier free in health care spaces

Norwina Hj. Nawawi

INTRODUCTION

"There shall be no infliction of harm on oneself or others" hadith

Many new terms and terminologies were made almost on daily basis by connoisseurs or people-on the move as highlights and spotlights to give widespread picture on what is trendy and what should be the one to follow in various field and interest for whatever purported purposes. Combination of creativity and communication information technology in the industry had led to many allege "barriers" being no longer an excuse. In the construction industry and architecture per se, the meaning of the word "vernacular" that addresses the effectiveness of the local construction, technology and material of the built environment with a dash of culture to give it a meaningful representation, has then be termed and relook as a "sustainable" built environment which new technologies has coined it as the real "Green" architecture. Barrier free environment which was developed from the process of providing facilities for the disable-persons too has not been spared. Although it started as a dutiful requirement for designers as stated in the building by-laws for all building types, the actual provision of this requirement had been side-lined for so long. Social ignorance and lack of awareness led us to provide only for the normal able-bodied person as the norm. Quest for design excellence had always been with superlative and trendy undertones disregarding certain section of the society to share its enthusiasm. The United Nation declared 1980 as UN "Decade of Disabled Persons" was followed by many other declarations. Awareness on the provision for people-with-disabilities with the revision and launching of guidelines were even felt in little Malaysia. Since current IPAD IPOD generation loves "in-thing" out of the web, the need for "barrier free" designs and "barrier free" environment has been re-hatched from designs for the handicap for the disable - bodied person as a design requirement. The requirements is no longer an inclusive clause but should be naturally embedded in the design process as a second nature, hence the coining of the term "Universal Design" or UD.

Healthcare environment, on another hand has been noted for its intricacies and complexities that deal with handling of illnesses and diseases since ancient times. The care of the ill was and still is imbued with spiritual and intangible explanation although the advent of science had proven the cause and effect of health on a person. In the provision of a caring environment for the ill person, through evolution brought about through nursing care, medical technology, clinical research and evidence based healthcare design, details and consideration of "barrier free" for the "disable" is naturally taken on