

Changes in the architectural profession

The fact that the architectural profession is changing is undeniable. Changes happen at all levels.

The world is getting smaller as exchanges among countries increase. In response to that, our profession has to face cultural changes in order to be able to work in contexts that may not be the one in which we were raised.

The technology is being developed very fast, and we, architects, have to keep pace and get constantly updated about those technological changes in order to perform accordingly and offer state of the art services.

Moreover, all our countries are trying to ensure that the result of our work is increasingly responsible towards the societies we serve. For that, our building codes are changed, our liability may be altered and even the urban regulations modified. We have to keep track of all those legal changes and adapt our practice to them.

As a consequence of all the previous, the complexity of the building process is increasing and new agents appear and participate at it. Our role within that team is hence also changing and that implies that the perception the society has of our profession is changing with it. Our social role is not anymore what it once was.

I will certainly not go through all of those changes as there is no time for that. Being a representative of the organisation that gathers the architects from around the world, the International Union of Architects, and having been invited by the organisation that represents the architectural profession in Turkey, I will concentrate in those changes for which our professional organisations can play a significant role and bring some help to the architects we serve.

I am referring here to changes that basically relate to the link between Education and Professional practice at different stages of our activity as this link becomes key in ensuring that our profession can cope with those changes.

It is often considered that the graduates from our universities are not necessarily prepared to get into the daily practice of the architectural profession. In fact, the University prepares us to know what quality architecture means and to be good designers, but not necessarily to face the needs that arise from managing a practice, tendering documents or administrating a building contract. Quite often, this gap is filled by some internship period or a complimentary exam by an authority different to the academic, before being allowed to get into practice.

Today, around 70 percent of the countries researched* have some **internship** system. In 80 percent of these countries, internship is compulsory, which does not necessarily mean that internship is structured and recorded.

* See "Architectural Practice around the World", Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya, COAC, 2005, a research carried out by the Architects' Institute of Catalonia under the auspices of the Professional Practice Commission of the International Union of Architects (UIA) and on behalf of its Spanish section (Consejo Superior de los Colegios de Arquitectos de España - Higher Council of Architects' Institutes of Spain)

In parallel to that, 50 percent of the countries have today some compulsory **examination** by a professional or governmental body after finishing the educational period and before being allowed into practice.

These two tendencies will not only increase in the coming future but also become progressively sophisticated as there is a dramatic need to prepare the educated architects to be competitive professionals able to face the daily challenges of our practice. The professional bodies have here an important role to play as they can both assist the relevant authorities in preparing the process and accompany the architects into that.

There will a need to clearly define the areas in which an intern should get practical experience before licensing and define a clear methodology to ensure that a standard form or logbook is maintained as evidence to the registering authority that the required training has been completed. Similarly, the examination will need to be linked to the internship period and ratify the progress made through it.

But Architects' education does not finish as soon as they become licensed. The amount of changes we have to face during our professional career forces architects to constantly update their knowledge. There is a need for **Continuous Professional Education** (CPD) along our professional life.

75 percent of the countries and territories of the above mentioned research have already put in place some CPD system even if this life long education is only compulsory in 18 of them. A similar number of countries structure and record this kind of education.

Similarly to what has been indicated for the initial period of training before practice, Continuous Professional Education will become progressively important and sophisticated as it is the only means to guarantee that architects can cope with the changes happening and maintain their abilities up to date. Already now, many countries that have not such a system are putting it in place. Others are redefining the content of such an education or making it compulsory to maintain architects' licences to practice. This will undoubtedly increase in the future and we, both as individual practicing architects and representatives of the professional organisations, should be aware of the importance it has for our future as performing professionals in order to satisfy the needs of our society.