

**14th EAAE-ENHSA Meeting of Heads of Schools of Architecture
Doing more with less: Architectural Education in challenging times**

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Session 1

Doing more with less finances

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1. SPANISH ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Professional profile of Spanish architects

It's important to briefly mention the professional specificity of the profile of the Spanish architect before starting to expose the present situation of the architectural education in the School of Architecture of Barcelona (ETSAB) related to the financial cut.

Unlike other European countries, Spanish architects have a wide range of powers that include all the technical fields related to the construction: Static calculations, Installations supply, etc.

In parallel to this fact architects are also responsible for specific disciplinary areas like Town planning or Landscape Architecture.

The figure of the of the Civil engineer doesn't exist in Spain, an the "signature" of an architect is needed for every construction or refurbishment work and he/she can assume the liability of all the technical fields related to it.

Every council—even the smallest ones— have got among its staff the figure of the municipal architect.

This professional reality has got implicit that there is an important amount of work for architects, but we also have to consider that the ratio architects/number of inhabitants is very high; the number of registered architects is too high.

With the present crisis in the construction sector, the excess in the number of architects related to the demand of their services has enormously increased.

Spanish schools of architecture

The high number of graduate architects is a consequence of the high number of architecture schools, which has significantly increased during the last years.

There are 33 schools of architecture in Spain, including the public and the private ones. It's a too high number of Schools.

Comparing the public Schools with the private ones, nowadays we can say that the public Schools are better than the private ones.

There is still a high demand from students applying to architectural studies, and this means a very high cut off mark, and a consequential high level among the selected students.

There is also significant number of architects with relevant professional activity teaching in the public schools, what raises the education level.

Private Schools of architecture are, for the moment, a 2nd choice option for students that haven't been accepted in the public ones.

With the cuts in public funding and the current situation in the public University, this reality could change: Private schools could achieve better quality than the public ones if they can maintain the number of students and their budgets.

ETSAB (Escola Tècnica Superior A'arquitectura de Barcelona / Barcelona School of Architecture)

The ETSAB is one of the five big schools among the 33 Spanish Schools of architecture. It has got approximately 3000 degree students, 600 PhD students and 800 post graduation students

There is a single state model for the curriculums for all Spanish schools of architecture that leaves less autonomy on each University for the definitions of its own curriculum.

The ETSAB's new curriculum is being gradually implemented, it is integrated in the European Space for Higher and has to follow the Spanish model for architecture schools that previews a 5+1 (Bachelor + Master) model.

2. FINANTIAL SITUATION AND TEACHING QUALITY OF ETSAB

Funding

Almost all the funding (80-90%) for the public Universities proceeds from the local government and it depends only on the number of students of each Faculty.

These funds are allocated to three costs of the degree that have to be completed with other sources like: Educational cooperation agreements, spaces rental, investment plans from the University ...

The funds for research are not included in these funds, they have diverse sources and have to be found, depending on the projects, through other ways: National, local or European research projects, Councils, etc.

Loss of funds

As a consequence of the cuts in the local government funding to the University, the last revision of the budget from the School of Architecture suffered a cut from 30% - 50% related to the budget approved last December 2010. This cut included reductions between 30% and 70% in the various items and the elimination of some of them.

Further cuts are expected for the next two years.

There have also been significant cuts in teaching staff, with a cut of 30% in the number of associate professors and further cuts announced for the next two years.

In parallel to the reduction in government funding to universities, the crisis in the construction sector has led to a crisis in the profession with a huge reduction in Educational Cooperation Agreements, that where one of the main sources of income in parallel to the government funding.

Possible general impact

It's difficult to advance the general impact of the current situation, but a possible scenario considers two different aspects concerning the role of the public University and the teachers profile involved in architectural education.

The private Schools than can resist the crisis maintaining the demand of students could be able to have in relation to the public ones a better qualified and better-paid teaching staff.

The emergence of private university academic institutions in contrast to the decline of the public one could have as consequence the Collapse of the system of "Universal right to access to University".

The other aspect is related to the fact that the current cuts in teaching staff in the public universities mainly affects the associate professors —a professional profile that combines teaching and professional activity—

what means an important reduction of the presence in the schools of architects with relevant professional activity, and a loss in the connection of architectural studies with architectural practice and a loss of academic quality.

Finally the cuts in the teaching staff in general and in the figure of the associate professor in particular make difficult the incorporation of young professionals to the University.

Actions/ Initiatives/ Strategies

In front of this situation and in order to avoid the loss of quality in architectural education some strategies have been planned. However some of them depend on the acceptance from the University and/or government.

A first group of actions/Initiatives aim to assure a high level in architectural education despite the loss of funds:

_Reduce number of students, without reducing number of professors.

This could be achieved through increasing and stabilize the professors' dedication to research, while at the same time part of the actual number of students could be transferred to new created degrees (Landscape, Design...).

_The reduction of optional courses that in the new curriculum are partially absorbed by specialization Masters could absorb part of the decrease in the number of teachers.

Regarding the Bachelor level, the decrease in the number of students would increase the level of selected students that is already very high.

Regarding the masters level, a higher dedication from teachers to research with the potentiating of the specialization masters means a raise in its quality and aims to place them as an academic reference of excellence in masters and Phds for architecture.

A second group of actions/initiatives aim to search for new funding sources and/or to reduce expenses:

_Raise the prices of Post graduations, that are the next step after the Specialization Masters: Town planning, Technology, Theory and History, etc...

_Charge fees for courses and workshop for professional training, summer workshops, etc.

_Promote the ability of the school to issue Academic certifications of quality. This experience is already been undertaken with some schools of South America.

_Reduce temporarily expenses everywhere it's possible. For example in teaching equipment or building investments.

Threats of the present situation

One of the main threats is —as mentioned before— the loss of professional profile, by losing number of associate professors, that in our schools include on one side a group of relevant professionals that have a stable commitment to teaching, and on the other side a group of young professionals who combine teaching and professional activity to start their training as teachers.

This means on one hand an important loss of the presence in the University of Teachers with professional activity, that is a determinant factor in the high level reached in the ETSAB.

Probably in future, this figure will be intended exclusively for established professionals with a short contact with education.

Another question, than more than a threat should be appointed as challenge is the ability of the school to respond to the change in the professional profile of the architect, in its professional, social and intellectual commitment.

IDEAS TO SHARE

International initiatives

The current crisis is a reflex from a deep transformation of the economical and cultural system.

In this uncertain and changing reality the possibility of sharing ideas and experiences in the frame of ESHE is of high importance.

It's necessary to define and specify with maximum precision the role of European schools in the International context.

It's necessary to render more competitive the offer of architectural education, considering mainly the North American architectural education.

It's necessary to export the European ideas, culture and experience and its expertise in specific fields like: the urban project, the relationship between city and architecture or between object and place, the sustainability of architecture in compact contexts, etc.

In this sense we need to push forward a real harmonization of the ESHE (European Space for Higher Education), the harmonization of educational system that allows an effective exchange of students between different European Universities and the possibility for them to complete their architectural studies partially in more than one University.

At the same time it's important that different Universities can establish common international strategies and offer for example joint degrees.

The social role and potential of the architect

It's very important to be able to answer in a European frame to the present change of the professional profile of the profession.

This affects both the architectural education and the projection of the social profile of the profession.

It's necessary to make society aware of the social role of the architect. The life of an important part of the world population is mainly linked and partially determined by the space built and defined by man and the quality of this spaces and lives is on one hand a duty of city councils and politicians and a at the same time citizen's right.

A work in this direction can increase the social consciousness of the role of architecture serving society and the recognition of the specificity of our profession. This can at the same time increase its social and economic value, and generate a stronger need for research in architecture.

In parallel to this, it's necessary to enhance the completeness, richness and value of the architectural education that enables the architect to assume a wide range of social responsibilities not necessarily linked to its professional exercise as architect.