Introduction

The relevance of the current structure and content of both architecture and architectural education is being questioned more frequently during these times of economic and social upheaval in various places around the world. In response, the UIA2014 Durban Student Charter on Architectural Education documents the opinions of those currently in the system, as a way forward that may ensure the longevity of the architectural practice.

The three topics that have been included in the UIA2014 Student Charter are founded in the topics presented as part of the student debate which was held on Monday 4th August 2014, during the UIA2014 Durban World congress. They investigate architecture in an academic environment; architecture in practice and architecture as a catalyst for socio-economic development. The topics are designed to highlight the current state of architectural education in various parts of the world and where students believe architectural education should be headed.

The charter is presented as a guideline to the institutions of architectural education around the world and will stand as testament to where students see the future of their education as well as of the architectural industry needing to go, in order to remain relevant and valuable. This document will form a part of the Educational Legacy of the UIA2014 Durban World Congress.

Statement

Topic A: Architecture in an Academic Environment

- Architectural education is for reasons of cost and time, an exclusive course and becoming more isolated with further increases in fees. We propose that government structures become more active in providing subsidised fees for socially beneficial courses such as architecture.

- The culture of the architecture studio is one of the most important parts of architectural training and education. In recent years we have seen that technological advancements have had a detrimental effect on the culture and effectiveness of studio based learning. Architecture schools need to find ways of marrying the benefits of both practical and computer training in such a way that studio culture is maintained. Architecture students around the
world should use technology to benefit their education by connecting to each other to facilitate a sharing of knowledge and intellectual resources.

- Architecture schools need to cultivate the individual talents and inclinations of their student body. It has been suggested that the Bachelor’s degree remain a broad approach to architecture that introduces the student to as many aspects of the field as possible, while allowing them over the course of three years to identify with certain aspects of the field that interest them the most. However, when a student progresses into their post graduate study, it has been suggested that the scope of post graduate curriculum should be broadened in such a way that the mature student is able to select the courses that will allow them to study towards addressing a need within architectural practice.

- In order to address the social problems that architects are challenged with on a daily basis, architectural education needs to adopt a more person-centred approach. The school curriculum needs to equip the student with the necessary skills and tools to be able to deliver such an approach. Like other general degrees, the post graduate Architecture curriculum should offer the option to select electives from disciplines such as economics, business management, social sciences, engineering etc.

- Outside of South Africa there is an options-based learning that should be introduced in South African schools of Architecture.

- It is important that we broaden the process of how to become an architect. In order to create a fair platform for those who do not have access to specific resources, alternate and practical routes to qualification need to be established. This will ensure that Architecture schools are able to deliver a more tailored approach to education that addresses the context in which the school, the student and professional entities find themselves in.

**Topic B: Architecture as Practice**

- Architecture students are generally underprepared for the workplace and upon leaving university they are seen as resource intensive in the office. There is a need to broaden the curriculum to better prepare students not only for architectural work but for the business operations of the workplace in general.

- The profession needs to be more directly involved with schools and architectural education and students need to take on greater responsibility to step up to the challenge of practice.
The frequent stand-off between practicing architects and academics is damaging to the quality of education that students are receiving. Both lecturers and practising professionals are essential to the development of a student; as such systems need to be in place to ensure consistent contributions to the school curriculum from the two.

Schools need to integrate more practical construction experience into the curriculum by arranging that their students work directly with firms, such that the theoretical aspects of construction knowledge are implemented and realised in the mind of the student by the time of his/her graduation.

Learning from the School of Architecture at the University of Johannesburg, the profession and the university must embrace the concept of the ‘Folding Studio’ where those who practice teach within the university and those who teach practice outside of the university. There is also much to learn from UK, USA and Australian teaching in practice programmes that regulated by the universities themselves. The work that students do during their internships is moderated and ensured to be productive because students are engaging in tasks in the office that directly benefit their architectural learning.

We encourage architectural institutes around the world to take a stand against unpaid internships which fail to reward students for the work that they are doing, which also fail at teaching students skills that are relevant to the practice of architecture. A few bodies such as the AIA have already established rules against unpaid internships with its members. Such efforts need to be initiated by all architectural bodies across the globe.

There is a need to investigate ways of reducing the amount of time post-graduation, taken to register/become a licensed professional. It has been suggested to look at the ways this may be achieved within the post-graduate curriculum.

In the past, the part-time student used to ensure a greater standard of technical and design skill gained by the simultaneous relationship between learning and working. Now that method of teaching has become limited and in some instances halted, the quality of the graduates produced is significantly lower with most graduates being proficient at rendering and possessing very little other knowledge of architecture.

Academic staff needs to engage in more practical time in the field, practising architecture. It is suggested to limit the amount of time academic staff may be out of practice.
For commercial reasons, architectural practice needs to stay on trend whereas academia tends to fall behind. This disparity may be remedied by the closer relationship between professionals, academics and students towards an architecture that is appropriate, contextual and economically viable.

The students, in questioning whether architectural education has become redundant, also question the same of practice. In response, it has been identified that in order to stay relevant, both architectural education and practice must become more responsive to social issues.

Both curriculum and outcome needs to be more regularly and rigorously reviewed to ensure education remains aligned with both practice and the socio-economic needs of the society.

It needs to be clearly defined as to what exactly an architect is in relation to the daily tasks he/she undertakes in professional practice and tailor the architectural education curriculum to respond to this. We suggest a more specialist approach tailored to the individual talents/interests of the student and the specific social and commercial needs of their context.

Topic C: Architecture as a Catalyst for Socio-Economic Development

Architecture is both process and product with the outcome to which, not necessarily a building. However architectural education is graded minimally on process and largely on product. We believe more value needs to be placed on process in the grading of architecture students’ work.

We propose that the community/end-user that students are charged with designing for should be involved in their design process throughout each stage of the project. As time is limited for student projects, ways need to be developed of facilitating these relationships between schools of architecture and their local communities.

If we intend on responding to poverty we need to study macro and micro economics as a part of the curriculum and in order to employ a multidisciplinary approach to technical and design solutions, we need to be more inclusive of other disciplines.

Architects have an ethical responsibility to act with empathy and to also be mindful of the social context in which their project resides. This sense of responsibility needs to be instilled at the academic level, through the careful selection of design studio projects, and the incorporation of social responsibility within the respective project outcomes.
• Post-mortem evaluations of buildings need to be more regularly carried out in practice in order to learn as much from our mistakes as we publicise our successes.

• Culture is an integral part of the creation of good architecture and needs to be included more rigorously in architectural education and in professional practice most notably when working on projects abroad or within foreign contexts.

• Schools and the profession need to develop time and cost-effective methods of community engagement in order to create and efficient participatory approach.

• The grading and the critique of students work needs to include all members of society that have an impact on the work of professionals namely: government, academics, practicing architects, engineers and a community representative/end-user.

• Pro-poor architecture is undervalued and stigmatic. This needs to be addressed on both professional and academic levels. There needs to be more awareness around the ability of the built environment to improve people's personal circumstances. Pro-poor approaches to design should respect and be sensitive to existing social and economic structures in communities and aim to refine them.

• Architects need to be trained technically, creatively and socially in order to respond more realistically to real-life situations. Architects, academics and students need to embrace the ability to learn from others

Conclusion

The contents of this charter will be further ratified and are presented to as a statement for the state of architectural education debated and contributed by the UIA2014 student group. The measure of success for such a document lies in its ability to join the global conversation as contributor and also to serve as a catalyst for a UIA2017 Student Charter for Architectural Education to come out of the efforts and contributions made by Seoul in the next UIA World Architecture Congress.

In the hope that the UIA2014 student group has been able to provide a legacy of critical analysis of architectural education such that it remains adaptive and relevant to future generations. In 6, 9 or even 30 years to come, we hope to see the visible absolution of many of the challenges
This document is the speech given by the UIA2014 Student President, Sinethemba Buthelezi, with regards to the UIA2014 Student Charter on Architectural Education. It is not the final UIA2014 Student Charter. The UIA2014 Student Charter in its final form will contain a greater depth of information and will be made available as an online resource post congress.