

## **THE EDUCATIONAL DILEMMA: OPPORTUNITIES LOST ?**

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The dilemma--when does education end, and what should be included beginning to end?

Professional education has been under a form of siege for several decades. Unlike the '20s and '30s and some years later there is a penchant to disconnect education from work place, especially in the professional offices. Basically, this takes the form of a sort of "artificiality" in academia, and the continual decrying of the realities of "real world work".

Without even being of a mind to compare the value of various professional services (to a project) we recognize that specifications are but one part of the whole array required. It is obvious, and long held that the specifications carry a very substantial load in regard to getting the project built as designed and anticipated by the owner. The interfacing of drawings and specifications, in a complimentary and supplementary fashion, adds a good deal of credence to the value of and necessity for specifications--no project, except the very small and innocuous, can built using just a graphic or a written description.

There is no denying that specifications need to be part of virtually every project. So why is specification writing, or even specification orientation not part of every academic curriculum for architects and engineers?

Why? Because there is no authority that controls the curriculum development of degree programs for those professions. True, there are organizations that service examination and registration, per se, but who really do not "hear" the real world professions and their needs. Many makes vague, open-ended statements about professional education, but the stark truth is that there is a skewing of courses and instruction to such a point that mere instruction and orientation as to the "whole of the profession" is not addressed. Students for the most part never are given even a glimpse of what their chosen profession is ALL about; the many niches and positions under the umbrella of the profession; and how the many parts and services need to fit together for successful projects--and profitable practices.

The skewing is so profuse that the profession of architecture for example, is readily and obviously portrayed as only those projects within the slick pages of trade magazines. These are "plucked out" for the charm, eccentricism, uniqueness, good design (in a few cases) and too often to merely catalog what the starchitects are doing currently. There is no context that relates this minuscule snap shot of the profession in relationship to the whole of the working, real-world profession--and the tremendous work of the thousands of professionals "putting project together" and getting this built in good order, for satisfied owners.

Is this, then, opportunity lost, say to specifications writers, individually (professionally registered or not) and even perhaps to a narrow scope organization like CSI?

The opportunities, it appears are many--the array of "players" rather extensive, wide-ranging and of course, dual impressive (and perhaps too smug, dismissive and "put-offish" about the issues involved. Smug in that each has its very specifically carved and honed niche, very self-contained, and with virtually no oversight by a "higher" more encompassing authority. In other words, they have their own agenda and strongly tend to "stick to their knitin' ". And there currently is no impetus, effort or mindset to really sit down and find out what the working profession sees as problems.

Yes, in most cases, there is a functional disconnect between organization and members served (is there an echo in here?) The professions are directly served by the academy, the registration system, the laws for continuing education, and facilitation of all these--BUT in a unilateral manner; i.e., the direction the

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organization, alone, chooses to take. Evidently they don't talk, interface, call, blog, text-message, or really converse, in meaningful ways. The working profession lies basically without organization and a unified voice, so complaints, grouching, and varied mumblings and rantings are easily dismissed if not totally ignored.

Problem is--the interns (those caught between graduation and registration, and early in their careers) are perplexed--openly. Far too many feel removed from their professional direction, out of step with what they expected to experience and at odds with what they were taught and what is now being required for successful employment.

The need is simply that where the design professions are trying to attract and encourage new members, and the prospective members are already saddled with enormous debt, there is a distinct need to ensure that they at least have a glimpse and fundamental understanding of their profession and the opportunism available. There is a need to portray careers as successes even though one does not produce cutting edge projects or is not published ever so often. There is a need to carry forth what has been brought to us from years and experiences past, to those new members can call upon and enjoy the information and enrich their careers with it.

We need, perhaps most of all, to quit the organizational attitude and address the true real world of the professions and not the idealistic world that the organization tend to try to impose. We need to teach fundamentals, including orientation to the professions and with an eye toward full functionality in the work place--we need to set criteria for schools to meet realistic levels of instructions, and then examine to reasonable standards, devoid of aloof and inappropriate standards.

Where we need to adjust the academics to meet the educational standards set forth by other appropriate authorities, so be it. Maybe the ideal is a 2-year pre-professional sequence, (like pre-med and pre-law) to satisfy the better, more rounded, general education requirements, followed by a concentrated and directed 3- or 4-year sequence of professional instruction. But the real issue is making this uniform across all schools, with the normal variations of faculty experience and interests but with distinct and strictly enforced goals for the instruction overall.

In addition, there is need to retain the baccalaureate degree after such a sequence, keeping the Masters at a higher level and with a different orientation. There is little if any value in the March for those seeking to work in professional offices. That degree is of value to those interested in teaching, research, advances in specific areas of practice (but not for just general professional practice).

Where the schools may still be incapable of more than scratching the surface of some topics", we need to establish a program that viable, directed, and valuable to the budding professionals-- one that assists them; one that is honest; one that is embraced by the professions!

To augment a better scenario in the schools, and relieve the remote, abused and rather ill-advised IDP of the NCARB, professional educational facilities could be established. These would work specifically in areas and topics that the schools cannot or do not reach, and that not addressed in the professional offices. Offered by creditable and experienced personnel, at low rates, and with financial support of the area's professional offices, this type of program--perhaps a CSI developed program --could act as an intermediary educational reroute to teach the general fundamentals not taught elsewhere and without drawing time away from the productive effort in the offices.

One can easily envision upwards of 250 topics that can be covered that will provide grater breadth and depth for the graduate/intern/new professionals (even those who are successful with the current ARE may need some reinforcement).

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BUT!!!!!! How can this proposal begin? Who convenes, or attempts to convene a gathering to even explore the possibilities, in an objective manner and without the biases and parochial approaches, or the silly vying for power and exclusive control. In this there is need to separate the elements--ACSA from AIA, from NCARB, from NAAB, etc. so there is a chance for open discussion unconstrained by second agendas and convoluted interfaces. How can the operating offices be brought into this mix, speaking with individual voices in addition to those of professional organizations?

LOTS TO DO!! SEVERAL THINGS TO ACCOMPLISH!!! HOW????

more about Interfacing schools one by one; ACSA; AIA; NCARB; ICC (being done some); NFPA; NSPE; and the working professions