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Symposium on New Directions in Architectural Education

"The necessity of a cultural paradigm responsive to the majority"

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training a new generation of professionals to direct the
future of our built environment, it is surprising to note
the pedagogic content and course material in these
schools

What has been neglected is the essential relationship
between materials and energy, which gives rise to life-
sustaining configurations realised through technologies
appropriate to the amelioration of the human condition

at Human Settlement Management Institute (HSMI), New Delhi from 3rd - 5th April 1999



supported by
British Council, ICCR,
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organised by
GREHA and HSMI of HUDCO



SYMPOSIUM ON
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

hudco

3-5 APRIL, 1999.

ORGANISED BY
GREHA and HSMI of HUDCO

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SYMPOSIUM ON
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Symposium was held at Human Settlements Management Institute (HSMI), Lodhi Road from 3-5 April 1999. It was supported by The British Council (BCL), Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Department of Urban Development, UK, (DTUDP) and Department for International Development (DFID). It was organised by GREHA, a voluntary organisation of professionals working in the field of architecture and Environmental Design and HSMI, the research and training division of Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO).

Background Note

Symposium to direct architectural education to become responsive to the Cultural Aspirations of our people

Architecture has been characterised as the 'grandmother of the arts'. The buildings we inhabit and the monuments we create are perhaps the most permanent examples of our culture.

In India we have a legacy of some of the finest examples of architecture and human settlement design spread over a very long span of time. To complement the great public monuments, there is the rich and varied expression of the dwellings and public places of the ordinary folk, organically evolved out of the extraordinary environmental diversity of the sub-continent. This diversity is apparent physically – from high mountains, to huge river basins, to the great Thar desert, to extensive coastal plains, to the highlands of the Deccan, to the lush rain forests of the North-east, and to the off-shore island groups of the Andaman and Nicobar as well as Lakshadweep. The geographic diversity is coterminous with a cultural plurality which has produced a wealth of indigenous building types. This is an important part of our cultural heritage and a great resource for understanding the symbols of our collectivity, which are a critical source of inspiration to generate our built environment.

Today, with almost a hundred architectural schools in this country training a new generation of professionals to direct the future of our built environment, it is surprising to note the pedagogic content and course material in these schools. The architectural programme is derived in large measure from the experience of the industrial enterprise of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. What has been neglected is the essential

relationship between materials and energy, which gives rise to life-sustaining configurations realised through technologies appropriate to the amelioration of the human condition. This is resulting in an unfortunate poverty of ideas and inspiration which is reflected in the ugliness of contemporary architecture and the chaos of our cities. The promise of a better life in the next century is therefore in danger of being denied.

It is proposed to hold a symposium on "new directions for architectural education – the necessity of a cultural paradigm responsive to the majority". The symposium would bring together architects, teachers and researchers from different parts of the country and one or two researchers from abroad to discuss and formulate new approaches based on a cultural paradigm.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

Working Group Session

3rd - 4th April, 1999

Venue : Human Settlement Management Institute, HUDCO House, Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110 003

Saturday , 3rd April, 1999

09:00 AM Registration
09:30 AM Introduction to the Symposium and Formulation of Working Groups
11:30 PM Working Group Session I on " The Learning Universe"
14:00 PM Working Group Session II on " The Learning Universe"
15:45 PM Working Group Session I on " Instruments"

Sunday , 4th April, 1999

09:30 AM Working Group Session II on " Instruments"
11:30 PM Working Group Session I on " Certification"
14:00 PM Working Group Session II on " Certification"
15:45 PM Summing up of Working Group Sessions

Open Session

5th April, 1999 (Monday)

Venue: Sammelan Kaksh, HUDCO Bhawan, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110 003

09:30 AM Opening Remarks
10:00 AM Presentation of Working Group Findings
11:30 AM Discussion
12:30 PM Closing Address by CMD, HUDCO
Vote of Thanks

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The first note on this subject put forward in a general way the background leading to the concern about architectural education.

We are to discuss the issue in two days, with the hope that we can arrive at a statement of intent which can be presented to the professional community as well as the lay public. In order to focus the discussions and to keep within the time frame available, some of us have been meeting and thinking together regarding the essential issues which describe our concerns. It is proposed that the subject be divided into three parts :-

1. *The learning universe - which would help us define ourselves as teachers / students and describe the educational consciousness.*
2. *Instruments - dealing with teaching methods and materials*
3. *Certification - to understand standards, forms of governance, and the objectives of validation.*

1. **The learning universe**

There is an ancient belief that the phenomenal universe is duplicated within each human body. This may help us in locating the source of knowledge, and consequently mapping a route to reach this source. Going to the source may enable us to identify the subject / object of the educational enterprise, and give us clues to its nature.

It has been said that the educational enterprise is grounded on faith – the teacher may not have the answer, but a teacher will never knowingly mislead a student. Thus the essential bond between student and teacher is sealed by this faith and gives rise to the values which create and sustain the educational enterprise.

In the recent past we have been subjected to an exponential increase in the quantity of information we deal with. Just as the printed word and the on-line image floods our senses, so our capacity for tolerance and human judgement is put to test.

How can we evolve an architectural consciousness which allows us to learn from our experience of the everyday world, transform this into knowledge and the ability to recognise wisdom?

Perhaps the essential characteristic which helps in this transformation is integrity – of mind and body as well as of the material and spiritual aspects of our existence. At the end of the twentieth century we inhabit a world of materialist science and technology which seems to deny those abiding spiritual values which have been the foundation of all enduring civilisations.

*Architecture has always been concerned with civilisational values.
Can we outline an educational strategy which places these values at
the centre ?*

2. Instruments

The architectural consciousness needs to be defined to give us an understanding of the methods and materials appropriate to an educational strategy for the next millenium. In the last two centuries the industrial revolution which originated in Europe gave rise to social and economic systems which could not be shared by a majority of the world's population. The ancient societies and the indigenous people of the planet have been driven into an ecological cul-de-sac which threatens their survival. Industrial values increasingly replace vernacular values. Towns and cities have attracted more and more people, and now for the first time in human history a majority of the world's population is living in urban areas. Yet a country like India, which contains one-fifth of the world's population, is still predominantly rural, with two-thirds of its population living in villages and rural settlements. Habitat design needs to address these imbalances in a decisive manner.

*What are the skills with which an architect today needs to be
equipped?*

What is the nature of the architectural school?

*How does the overpowering reality of the information revolution and
consequent global connectivity affect the form of the architectural
classroom?*

Surely the perception of the architects' role in society needs to evolve much further to fulfill the aspirations of a new generation. In India the professionally trained architect is being increasingly distanced from the variety of crafts and indigenous techniques which form the staple repertory of the majority of the artisans in the building trade.

*How can architectural training create a bridge between specialised
theoretical knowledge and essential building practice?*

How can this training address the problems of the marginalised sections of society – the rural and the urban poor – who constitute a significant majority in our society ?

3. Certification

The setting of standards for architectural education is the task of abstraction which forms the essential feed back for monitoring the educational strategy we wish to formulate.

Statutory authorities which have the authority to regulate professional conduct are generally charged with certifying standards for educational proficiency. These bodies are finding their mandate becoming less relevant as the pace of technological and social change has been increasing.

What is the basis of power and authority for a regulatory body in today's globalised context?

Can professional expertise be equated with priestly ordinance as was done sometime in the past, or do we try and make the profession accountable to the general public in a more transparent and day-to-day manner?

Who validates excellence and professional relevance?

Is there a model of governance for the architectural profession which would encourage excellence ?

In a country like India there is also the question of very large numbers wanting professional training. As the numbers of architectural schools increase – in the last 15 years almost 50 new architecture schools have started in India – the problems of funding, infrastructure requirements, and the availability of teachers becomes a crucial determinant of the quality of education that can be provided. In an uncertain economic situation it may be appropriate to find a system whereby the test of professional excellence is determined by the local community who is directly affected by the architects work on the ground.

Perhaps there is enough awareness among ordinary people today about global standards, and the best judge of educational relevance may no longer be teachers but students.

Can we design a strategy whereby the object of architectural education would become the transformation of each student into a teacher ?

PROCEEDINGS OF WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

The organisers of the Symposium did not call for formal papers, but intended a meaningful debate and dialogue amongst architects, teachers and researchers, who are national and international experts.

The Working sessions of the symposium were initiated by presentations of Sashikala Ananth, H.D Chayya, Akhtar Chauhan and Rohit Gulati with Mansi Jasuja, ex-students of TVB School of Habitat Studies, on the theme of 'the learning universe'; Shireesh Deshpande, Nicholas Weaver and Paul Simpson on the theme of 'instruments'; and Charanjit Shah on the theme of 'certification'.

DAY 1, MONDAY, APRIL 3, 1999

After an initial round of introductions, the members discussed the programme for the meeting. M.N. Ashish Ganju (MNAG) drew the attention of the group to the problem statement circulated to the group prior to the symposium. The problem statement discussed the issue of architectural education in three parts: firstly, 'the learning universe', attempting to help professionals define themselves as teachers and students and describe the educational consciousness, secondly, 'instruments' which dealt with teaching methods and materials, and finally, 'certification' which raised the issues of standards, forms of governance and the objectives of validation.

MNAG stressed that the problem statement represented a collective view of GREHA and was born out of several meetings held on the subject.

Paul Simpson (PS), who was the moderator of the first session, expressed the opinion that the base paper had raised some very valid issues for discussion and drew the attention of the group to Akhtar Chauhan's (AC) paper, which dealt comprehensively with many of the issues.

Nicholas Weaver (NW) opined that what the significant issues were should be arrived at from the first session of 'the learning universe'.

Shireesh Deshpande (SD), in his opening remarks accorded a special welcome to the two participants from United Kingdom, Paul Simpson (PS) and Nicholas Weaver (NW). Describing architecture as a mirror of the aspirations of our society, he referred to the tendency to talk of grassroots and not of ground realities. He expressed the hope that the deliberations of the symposium would contribute effectively towards addressing some of these issues.

With a general consensus on the structure of the programme to be followed, PS concluded the first session of the symposium.

The post-tea session was chaired by SD. Two theme presentations were made - one by Sashikala Ananth (SA) and the other by HD Chhaya (HDC). SA made a very powerful presentation. She began by explaining that she had spent the better part of her life studying the traditional building sciences and invited every one to become a part of this effort to demystify the understanding of tradition. She referred to yoga and ayurveda and *vaastu* as the anchors of Indian logic. She presented a description of the *vaastu purushamandala* and stressed that her work was based on three major premises, namely the integration of traditional and contemporary selves, reassessing traditional wisdom and applying it in new context, and commitment to human processes. She illustrated the presence of a strong rhythm in traditional architecture both with the use of temple plans as well as domestic architecture. She also illustrated the modular nature of planning, both for buildings as well as for sculpture. Mentioning that the *Shastras* had ascribed several qualities to good professionals, she presented a triad of pre-requisites for a professional - a philosophy/belief system, integrity of self and accountability to system/people. She raised the soul-searching question - 'Can we as designers hold a belief in the living nature of an environment?' Finally, she presented a listing of subjects in the architecture curriculum and suggested areas where changes could be introduced.

HDC made a detailed presentation describing a means of incorporating vedic wisdom in architectural design. He described consciousness as a three-way relationship between mind, space and time and talked of the importance of the process. He presented a graphic representation of various forces, which work on the 'I'. He presented a very detailed chart of how these subjects could be included in the architectural syllabi.

In the post-lunch session (AC) made a comprehensive presentation. He raised the issue of a proper identity for architects and the need for understanding the *society we live in* as well *the society we desire*. He pointed out that human and social issues are neglected in the present curriculum which is restricted to manipulating functions in physical dimensions, resulting in inhuman buildings and settlements. He pointed out that rural settlements and related issues are dealt with in a very peripheral manner. Describing the present framework of the architectural curriculum as extremely loose, he called for the development of an academic programme which would develop the students ability to learn and experience architecture in a variety of ways. He talked of the need for an enlightened educational policy with an enlarged perspective. He stressed the need to encourage new institutions, promote research, and made a call for a 'humane' architecture - appropriate to context, environment-friendly, culturally relevant, and

giving priority to the poor/underprivileged sector. He concluded with an appeal to 'humanize the process of architectural education'.

SD intervened to draw the attention of the group to similar recommendations prepared during the workshop on architectural education at Nagpur and the series of workshops initiated by the Council of Architecture/Indian Institute of Architects. He also called for a revision of criteria for admission in order to open architecture to students of home science, commerce and humanities as well. He also made the point that the entire community of teachers needed to be 'overhauled' with more stress on quality rather than qualification.

A.G.K. Menon (AGKM) intervened to support the idea of doing away with physics, chemistry and mathematics as a criterion for admission to architecture courses. HDC emphasized the need for criteria to evaluate teachers, and raised the issue of adequate support – moral and financial, to be provided to the academic community.

A debate on the duration of the course was raised and several alternatives were given, such as, four years plus one-year training, three-year diploma and five-year degree, etc.

The second presentation after-lunch was by Rohit Gulati and Mansi Jasuja, recent graduates from the TVB School of Habitat Studies. They described in brief the curriculum followed in their school and illustrated it by means of student projects. The curriculum is organized to focus on habitat/settlement issues – organically evolved settlements in the first year, planned settlements in the second year and spontaneous settlements in the third year. They described the first year exercise of students building full-scale enclosures as extremely rewarding. They also described the explorations through various forms of arts, paintings, sculptures, etc., as very exciting. In the second year, they described the process by which the class worked together to re-model a part of the planned settlement of Daryaganj, and the learning experience derived from the same. They described as very informative and rewarding the study trip to Arunachal Pradesh undertaken as part of the related studies programme. In conclusion they described the struggle in trying to translate too much of ideology and thought into practice, and expressed the opinion that theory should not suppress ideals.

AGKM raised the question of whether architecture should be student centred or teacher centred.

MNAG clarified that at the TVB School education after third year is yet to be formalised. It is expected that after third year students are sufficiently skilled to know how they want to deal with architecture, and expect the freedom to explore their own thoughts, fears and intentions while developing the confidence to build their own philosophy.

After tea the session was moderated by CS Shah (CSH). He gave a general introduction and listed some subjects which ought to find a rightful place in the architectural curriculum, as for instance building and planning for rural areas, management skills,

disaster management, cost effective and environment friendly building materials, international standards of construction and project management, office management etc. .

SD spoke of his long experience and his ideas about teaching design. He described the setting up of design problems and stressed the need for a creative exercise to precede every design studio in order to introduce a stimulus for exploration. He talked of a flexible design syllabus and described the process of design as having three parts:- a core of design practice, a body of technical skills, and an understanding of humanities. He stressed that the process of learning is more important than the end product. He also gave a brief break-up of the curriculum, with subjects to be taught in each year as well as the skills required from the teacher for each. He ended with the maxim 'make them think and they will learn, for nothing is taught unless it is learnt'.

AGKM opined that the present system dehumanizes the problem and this called for a new aesthetics. He also expressed the opinion that a pragmatic end to a design was not necessary.

SA questioned the need for any layout procedure and described design as a "simplifying procedure".

Ramu Katakam (RK) expressed the opinion that the present five-year course in architecture has not succeeded in its objectives over the past 70-80 years, and therefore a new process was required now. Quoting the example of designing a living room in a house, he elaborated that the form of a living room does not exist in India and therefore whatever is designed is living specific.

Raoul Rewal (RR) described architecture as a fantastic programme.

The meeting broke for the day with Ashok B Lall (ABL) making a request for all to reflect over the day's discussion.

DAY 2, SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 1999

The first session was moderated by CSH and continued with the theme of 'Instruments' – teaching methods and materials. NW made the theme presentation focussing on the 'Atelier Principle in teaching'. He began with the screening of a video film describing the experience of teachers and students with this method. The Atelier way, also called the unit system, is characterized by studio work where the students work on open-ended questions. It was born out of a recognition of situations which arose as a consequence of teachers not knowing exactly what to do. This method could be applied to any subject. The Atelier Principle is based on an interpretation of education as having two parts- knowledge and application. In this system, the educational aim is to induce the student to 'think like an architect'. He also presented a definition of architecture:

Architecture is approached as a complex problem-solving activity within a defined field. The ability of 'thinking like an architect' can only be learnt through experience; that is, learning to solve problems through the experience of solving problems. It is not for the teacher to tell the student everything, as if knowledge went from one head into another and was then tested. The essential task in teaching consists of organising the situation so that students will have necessary experiences. A good design project is one that asks fruitful questions to which each student offers their own answer, questions which develop this 'thinking like an architect'.

The presentation generated a lot of interest and several questions were raised. ABL wanted a clarification on the inter-staff arrangement as well as staff interaction. He also wanted clarifications on how the two parts of the diagram namely, application and knowledge dynamically relate to each other. SD sought clarification on the use of computers.

There followed a detailed discussion on the system of 'tutors' and their relationship with each other and the students and also a brief comparison of the system presented with the American system. MNAG intervened to opine that education is about learning and not about exercising authority. He spoke of finding the truth, which is available to all.

In the second presentation PS described the method of teaching followed at the Mackintosh School of Architecture at Glasgow. The school follows a more conventional system but the basic principle is still: - posing a problem, explaining its parameters and arriving at solution through exclusion of options. Each year of study has a clearly defined syllabus. Most of the time is spent in the studio. He described some special features, such as the vertical project conducted once or twice a year, ranging from one day to one week, where the same subject/design problem is set up for the whole school. He briefly outlined the subjects covered every year. He illustrated the presentation with slides showing student works, especially of the first year, which he coordinates. A special feature of learning in the first year was the study of indigenous building types from across the world. The idea being to build on existing knowledge to develop a new way of thinking. Students are required to begin with making models, followed by making drawings of these and then an analysis. To reinforce intuitive understanding of structures, special exercises have been developed which use the human body (of the students themselves) to demonstrate fundamental structural principles. In the vacations PS organises building projects for students to work with their hands, on the ground and build full scale. These are rapid exercises starting with design and completed by creating space.

AGKM observed that the interesting thing about both the methods presented was the space for self-reflexive change, which was not happening in India.

PS also clarified that a high value was attached to drawing skills but thinking skills were also given equal weightage.

SA observed that there was a very subtle shift from teaching to evoking experience and exploring architecture, a method that needs to be explored in India. She observed that Indian academics make excellent theoreticians but tend to stifle the evocation of experience.

NW moderated the post tea session on certification with a theme presentation by CSH. CSH listed several areas where interventions were needed to improve the organizational set up and the award of professional degrees. He put forward the concept of architectural studies which could control quality by monitoring, research and development (training of trainers), education programme and study material.

After lunch the discussion centred on formulating the recommendations of the symposium to be put forward to the larger group in the special session of Monday, April 5. The members present decided to constitute a small drafting committee to sum up the deliberations of the 2 days and prepare a note highlighting the conclusions. All interested members were invited to assist and join the group. The drafting committee was anchored by AC and MNAG, with the active participation of SD, PS, NW and SA.

The deliberations of the Symposium focussed on the three themes of the problem statement, and was concluded by a summing up where the participants presented a collective statement of the essential concerns.

THE COLLECTIVE STATEMENT

1. Architecture is a discipline which is concerned with defining and realising a harmonious relationship between human habitation and the environment.
2. A reservoir of knowledge evolved over a long past which offers a great range of principles and techniques must be used as a resource to inspire and guide us.
3. Technological advances of the recent past require that educational structures and teaching methods be made more open in scope and deeper in content.
4. The focus of architectural education should include the rural areas where the majority of the population lives.
5. The vast numbers of economically and socially disadvantaged people should be another important focus of architectural education.
6. The sustainability of natural resources and the importance of sound ecological practices which promote a harmonious balance in the environment should be all determinant of the educational strategy.
7. The internet and the consequent global connectivity offers the possibility of a new community consciousness which should be utilised.
8. To encourage growth of knowledge and appropriate skills within the architectural profession, the educational system requires to be made more democratic, ensuring operational autonomy to each educational institution, and making community involvement a feature of professional accountability.
9. The design studio is the distinctive and essential feature of architectural education. This has to form the core of the academic framework.
10. Theoretical studies need to be fully integrated with project work in the design studio.
11. The extensive repertory of crafts and indegenious building techniques should be an important source of learning by first hand experience on site.

12. Examination systems need to be devised which reflect the unique character of the studio based learning strategy.

In order to realise these objectives, there is an urgent need to clarify the operations of the regulatory bodies.

These bodies include the Council of Architecture, The All India Council of Technical Education, The State Councils of Technical Education and the Universities which affiliate colleges of architecture. For effective action the area of responsibility of each body needs to be defined.

The following are the levels of responsibility- Architectural college, State Government, Central Government, International Institutions- and the actions appropriate at each level .

Architectural College

1. Each college to identify the goals and objectives of its academic programme without waiting for anyone to deliver this from the top.
2. Each college to identify its approach to the issues – human, social, environmental, philosophical- in its own context.
3. Each college to evolve an academic programme incorporating this approach in design studios, theoretical lectures and workshops.
4. Each college to prepare a research programme to support the main academic programme.
5. Each college to develop an examination system appropriate to its academic programme.

State Government

1. To prepare a programme of development of architectural, habitat and environmental education.
2. To facilitate academic restructuring and improvement through financial aid and all round co-operation.
3. To encourage research institutions, faculty development and professional development programmes.
4. To provide moderators for college examinations as identified by each college.

Central Government

1. To prepare a national plan for architectural habitat and environmental studies at under graduate, graduate, post graduate and doctoral levels in formal and non formal streams.
2. To open up architectural admissions to arts, science and commerce streams in formal and informal sectors.
3. Admissions to architectural colleges to be made on an equitable basis.
4. To promote colleges as autonomous centres of excellence in public and pvt. sector.
5. To allocate more resources for architectural education and to revise fee every year in relation to the cost index.
6. To encourage research through grants, scholarships and awards.

International Institutions

1. To facilitate co operation amongst institutions at national , regional and local level through faculty and student exchange.
2. To publish relevant literature at affordable prices promoting a more appropriate approach to architecture , habitat and environment.
3. Provide fiscal resources to support national, regional and local restructuring in the field of built environment at an affordable rate of interest.

DAY 3, MONDAY, APRIL 5, 1999

The final session of the symposium was started with the tabling of the summing up statement prepared by the participants at the end of the two days of working sessions. The statement was read out and a discussion followed. There was an endorsement of the collective vision contained in the summing up statement and a series of recommendations emerged, highlighting the concerns already stated.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The identity of the architect to be recognised as being distinct and not to be confused with allied professions such as engineering and other technical disciplines.
2. An increased social awareness necessary for the practice of architecture in our developing world becomes a pre condition to the delineation of roles and definition of norms for the architectural profession.
3. The Council of Architecture to take up the task of clarifying the autonomy of the architectural profession and to delink itself from AICTE.
4. The Architects Act of 1972 to form the basis for developing rules for conduct of the profession and for architectural education.
5. The present requirement of affiliation of architecture schools to universities be re examined in the light of the necessary autonomy of the architectural profession.
6. Studio based learning practices be recognised as the essence of architectural education, and an examination system appropriate to such practices be put into place as early as possible. The core of such practices being the concept of peer group evaluation.
7. A special effort has to be made to train teachers of architecture. This is an urgent necessity considering that over 100 architecture schools are in operation in India and most of these schools function with hardly any teachers.
8. There is an urgent need to produce appropriate teaching material, which would be of relevance to the regional schools of architecture. Such material to include software specially developed for global connectivity through the internet.
9. A small working group to be established immediately to go into the issues and make proposals for the autonomy of the architectural profession, evolve standards of evaluation specific to architectural education, propose guidelines for the training of teachers of architecture as well as the production of appropriate teaching material, and to suggest ways of raising finance for these activities. State Governments, central Governments, International Institutions, as well as private sector institutions to be included in these efforts.