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REPORT-BACK ON THE AEF PROGRAMME PARTNER ACTIVITIES AT THE UIA 2014 DURBAN CONGRESS

The AEF convened the parallel academic paper sessions on Education on 5 August, that were ably chaired by Prof Lone Poulsen and Prof Andre van Graan, with good attendance. We appreciate the presenters who played musical chairs to fit this in between other sessions!

This set the scene for our discussion workshop, 'Architectural Education Otherwhere – seen from the South' on 6 August. In the end there were 26 posters on exhibition in the foyer, which are currently on view in the AEF Dropbox but will be published on-line and also exhibited at the University of the Witwatersrand in the near future. The main role players involved in organizing this event were Jolanda Morkel and myself, but without your participation there would have been no forum: Thank you!

In the morning session participants first viewed and discussed the material presented on the posters and then grouped themselves according to interests for further discussion on the challenges and solutions in these fields. There were smaller, specialized discussion groups on (1) on-line architectural education and (2) the role of architectural projects in raising awareness of social problems and in catalyzing solutions. The majority of participants were drawn to 'architecture schools and curriculum' and this group eventually split into two in order to give everyone a chance to participate in the discussion. These discussions were centered on a range of challenges and looked at a whole spectrum of interrelated issues under the headings 'response to context and culture' and 'more inclusive and relevant architecture schools'. The feedback from each of the groups was recorded and is also in the Dropbox.

The afternoon session started with short contributions by Prof. Kate Schwensen of Clemson University, USA, co-director of the UIA Education Commission and past president of the AIA, who gave us feedback on the Education Commission's morning session and the UIA education charter.

She was followed by Lindy Osborne of the Queensland University of Technology, Australia, who is a university transformation fellow and a recipient of an Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching citation. She gave an overview of different types of architectural studio learning situations, including her own new developments that make use of available on-line communication technologies.

Jhono Bennett is a lecturer and independent researcher at University of Johannesburg, SA, and founder of 1 to 1 – Agency of Engagement which came out of his work for Architecture for Humanity. He took us through his own experiences of community-based work, starting as a student, which highlighted the challenges of this type of engagement in traditional academic environments, concluding with the remarks that the gaps had created his most valuable learning experiences.

Finally Berend van der Lans, a Netherlands-based architect who lived and worked in Tanzania in the 90's and is the co-founder and secretary of the ArchiAfrika Educational Network, spoke about various student collaborations which were their attempts to foster pan African collaboration in architecture education.

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Andrew Caruso, a past national president of the AIA Students and member of the AIA board and US national accreditation board, currently working for a global architecture firm, led the plenary discussion after this. The aim was to compile a list of key priorities that are going to change how architectural education happens in future, and consider what research and/or restructuring these will require.

- Debating on how to (re)stimulate students' (lost) creativity.
- Every school needs a core philosophy which will determine its curriculum and guide how it teaches. This needs to be defined.
- Architectural teaching needs to be better integrated with the real world to prepare students for practice.
- Teaching should involve more collaboration with different professions involved in the built environment.
- We need a forum for a sustained African debate on education.
- New modes of assessment are needed for new design outcomes, which may be wider than designing buildings.
- South African architecture schools need to emerge from the straitjacket of university standardization requirements on the one hand, and professional accreditation requirements on the other, in order to keep teaching creative thinking.
- The architectural focus should change from product to process; from buildings to the people who use spaces
- The education of architects should not be equated with architectural education.
- Who become our students? When do they come in and leave? What are they leaving with?
- Are the right people teaching? Teaching staff need a transformative vision.
- How do we find equilibrium between the practical and the poetic?
- Are our European standards the right standards for Africa?
- Are we training teaching staff to be good educators? How do we assess teachers?
- We have a relatively small role: formal teaching only makes up 10% of what students learn. Students learn from peers + practice + staff – are we taking that into account?
- Student selection based on school results does not promote diversity and diversity promotes performance. We must talk about student selection criteria.
- Student selection should not favour Eurocentric cultural capital, which must not be confused with architectural cultural capital. Staff must be co-learners.



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- Learning must be designed. It must also be designed for students who are not ideally prepared.
- Education should be a partnership between teaching staff, students and built-environment stakeholders.
- We are not just training architects; we are training both technologists and designers. Their education needs to be equal but different.

In terms of the future of the AEF, it was felt that it is a little premature to agree on a constitution, and that we should first discuss our aims. The need was expressed for an African Education forum, which would be open to interested members from anywhere else, but would as a first priority be looking at issues affecting this continent, which would of course include global problems. The AEF is seen as a discussion forum for educators with a primary aim of sharing and publishing research on architectural education issues. We should investigate the possibilities of continued on-line discussions (Jolanda will investigate the possibilities of E-merge Africa webinars), and of collaborating on doing and publishing research. Publishing could possibly happen through SA Architect at first, but we should investigate the possibility of a future accredited on line journal. The membership is too small to do much with membership fees. It will be more practical as educational researchers to apply collaboratively for research grants to further our aims. Since the ArchiAfrika network and the AEF share the same ideal of a pan-African educational network, but have had slightly different vehicles for achieving this, we should collaborate and share what we are doing as far as possible and avoid a division of membership and energy.

With this in mind, please keep the EAF informed of research that you are doing, possible vehicles for publishing our research; conferences, discussions and funding opportunities, by e-mailing ArchiEdForum@gmail.com. We are aiming for a research symposium in 2016 at the University of the Witwatersrand. Is there something on the priority list that you would like to take up now and present then?

The congress started with a student debate on architectural education in which Jolanda Morkel and Jhono Bennett were involved. At the closing ceremony, the students presented a student charter on education, which addresses many of the same issues raised in our workshop. This is also available in the AEF Dropbox and on the UIA 2014 Durban website.

Best regards

Ariane Janse van Rensburg