

# **A Position Paper on the Future of Architecture Education in Asia: Guiding the Architect of 2040**

## **Preamble**

This position paper is the outcome of a collaborative insights by the representatives of the ARCASIA Committee on Architecture Education (ACAE). Conceived during the ACAE Roundtable Discussion entitled "Designing the 2040 Architect: Competencies for a Changing World," at the 21st Asian Congress of Architects (ACA21) in Incheon, South Korea on September 8, 2025, this document aligns with ACA21's overarching theme, "A Better Tomorrow." In keeping with that spirit, this paper addresses the critical need to re-evaluate architectural education. These global challenges – technological disruption, climate change, urbanization, social inequity, and cultural shifts – demand a new approach to equipping future architects with the competencies needed to thrive and lead in this rapidly evolving world.

## **I. The Imperative for Change**

The architectural landscape of 2040 will be vastly different. Traditional skills, while foundational, are no longer sufficient. We must embrace a holistic approach that integrates:

**Technological Fluency:** Architects must be adept at utilizing emerging technologies such as AI, BIM, parametric design, digital fabrication, and data analytics. They must be able to critically assess and ethically integrate these tools into their practice.

**Sustainability and Resilience:** Climate change is an existential threat. Architects must champion sustainable design, climate-responsive solutions, and resilient building practices that minimize environmental impact and protect communities from disasters.

**Socio-Cultural Sensitivity:** Architects must design for inclusivity, equity, and cultural preservation. They must understand diverse social needs, respect local contexts, and promote cultural heritage in their designs.

**Systems Thinking and Integration:** Architects must move beyond individual buildings and embrace a systems-thinking approach, considering the interconnectedness of urban environments, ecological systems, and social networks.

**Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Architects must be able to effectively collaborate with professionals from diverse fields, including engineers, planners, policymakers, community members, and data scientists.

**Ethical Leadership and Advocacy:** Architects must act as ethical leaders, advocating for responsible development, social justice, and environmental stewardship.

## **II. Key Strategies for ACAE to Support Architectural Education**

To effectively guide the future of architecture education, ARCASIA, through its ACAE, commits

to the following strategies:

#### **A. Curriculum Transformation:**

1. **Promote competency-based learning** that prioritize the development of essential skills and mindsets in lieu of a content-heavy curricula.
2. **Integrate emerging technologies** such as training in AI, BIM, sustainable design principles, and other relevant technologies.
3. **Emphasize interdisciplinary approaches** like collaborative studios, joint projects, and cross-disciplinary coursework.
4. **Incorporate real-world experiences** by facilitating internships, community engagement projects, and design-build opportunities.
5. **Promote critical thinking and innovation** by encouraging students to question existing norms, explore new ideas, and develop innovative solutions.

#### **B. Faculty Development:**

1. **Provide training and resources** through workshops, seminars, and online resources to equip faculty with the knowledge and skills to teach emerging technologies and sustainable practices.
2. **Facilitate industry partnerships** by encouraging faculty to collaborate with industry professionals to stay abreast of current trends and best practices.
3. **Support research and innovation** through provision of funding and resources for faculty to conduct research and develop innovative teaching methods.
4. **Promote international exchange** through faculty exchange programs to foster cross-cultural learning and collaboration.

#### **C. Resource Mobilization:**

1. **Advocate for increased funding** for architectural education to support curriculum development, faculty training, and infrastructure improvements.
2. **Establish digital libraries and virtual studios** to provide access to learning materials and facilitate collaboration.
3. **Negotiate software and hardware discounts** to make these resources more accessible to students and faculty.
4. **Promote open-source resources** and learning materials.

#### **D. Collaboration and Networking:**

1. **Establish a youth advisory council** by creating a platform for young architects and students to provide input on the future of architectural education.
2. **Facilitate regional exchange programs** through the promotion of student and faculty exchange programs to foster cross-cultural learning and collaboration.
3. **Organize joint workshops and conferences** to share best practices and promote innovation in architectural education.
4. **Develop shared frameworks and standards** for architectural education to promote quality and consistency across the ARCASIA region.

5. **Recognize student-led innovation** and public design efforts.

#### **E. Advocacy and Policy Influence:**

1. **Advocate for policy changes** that support sustainable development, affordable housing, and equitable access to architectural education.
2. **Promote the value of architecture** to policymakers, the public, and other stakeholders.
3. **Engage with regulatory bodies** to ensure that licensure and accreditation systems are relevant and inclusive.
4. **Support research and data collection** to inform policy decisions and track progress in architectural education.

### **III. Conclusion: A Call to Action**

The architectural profession in Asia is demanding decisive action and transformative vision. The challenges we face – climate change, rapid urbanization, technological disruption, social inequity, and cultural erosion – are interconnected crises requiring a unified and proactive response. This position paper, synthesized from the diverse perspectives of ARCASIA member institutes, lays out a strategic roadmap for empowerment, urging a fundamental shift in how we educate and prepare future architects.

By embracing the strategies outlined herein, ARCASIA, through its ACAE, can empower architect-educators and students to become catalysts for positive change, actively shaping a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient future for Asia and beyond. This requires a commitment to:

**1. Fostering Innovation** by moving beyond traditional methods and embrace experimentation, encouraging the development of novel design approaches, materials, and technologies. This includes actively exploring the potential of AI, BIM, and other digital tools, while simultaneously promoting critical thinking and ethical considerations in their application. As highlighted by the reports from Japan and the Philippines, innovation also means reshaping the image of the architect to attract younger generations and ensuring graduates possess the skills to thrive in a rapidly evolving professional landscape. This innovation must also look at alternative building materials and construction techniques.

**2. Prioritizing Collaboration** by actively foster collaboration across disciplines, engaging with engineers, planners, policymakers, community members, and other stakeholders. The reports from Indonesia and Pakistan underscore the importance of architects acting as "ecosystem orchestrators" and "strategic coordinators," integrating diverse perspectives to create holistic solutions. Sri Lanka emphasizes the need for a "cross-pollination of ideas" through multidisciplinary approaches.

**3. Embracing Change** by actively challenging outdated curricula, traditional teaching methods, and rigid institutional structures. This requires a willingness to experiment with new pedagogical models, embrace lifelong learning, and adapt to the evolving needs of the profession. As noted

in the reports from Nepal and Malaysia, this includes addressing challenges related to faculty development, access to resources, and industry fragmentation.

**4. Championing Sustainability and Resilience** by prioritizing sustainable design principles, climate-responsive solutions, and resilient building practices in the architecture curriculum. This includes promoting the use of renewable energy, adaptive reuse strategies, and designs that minimize environmental impact and protect communities from disasters. As Singapore's report exemplifies, this also means integrating specific sustainability targets into architectural education and practice.

**5. Advancing Equity and Inclusion** by promoting universal design principles, engaging with marginalized communities, and ensuring that architectural education is accessible to students from diverse backgrounds. As highlighted in the reports from India and Mongolia, this also means promoting cultural sensitivity and addressing the unique needs of different communities.

**6. Internationalization and Global Citizenship** by preparing students to work effectively in international contexts, understand diverse cultural perspectives, and contribute to global efforts to address shared challenges. This includes promoting student and faculty exchange programs, developing joint degree programs, and fostering collaboration on international research projects.

**7. Contextualizing Design** by remaining rooted in local contexts and traditions. Architectural education must emphasize the importance of understanding local cultures, histories, and environmental conditions. As Sri Lanka's report highlights, globalization can lead to the dilution of regional identities, making it essential to preserve and celebrate local heritage.

**8. Promoting Ethical Practice** by instilling a strong sense of professional ethics, emphasizing the importance of honesty, transparency, and accountability. This includes addressing issues such as corruption, conflicts of interest, and environmental responsibility.

The time to act is now. The challenges we face are too urgent and the stakes too high to delay. Let us work together – educators, practitioners, and policymakers – to design the future of architecture education, and in doing so, design a better world for all.

# MANIFESTO ON THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE EDUCATION IN ASIA

GUIDING THE ARCHITECT OF 2040

## PREAMBLE

WE, THE ARCHITECTS AND EDUCATORS OF ASIA, STAND AT THE THRESHOLD OF TRANSFORMATION. THE WORLD FACES ACCELERATING CRISES—CLIMATE CHANGE, URBAN INEQUITY, TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTION, AND CULTURAL EROSION—THAT DEMAND MORE THAN INCREMENTAL CHANGE. BY 2040, ARCHITECTURE MUST ADAPT TO THESE FORCES, AND RISE AS A CATALYST FOR RENEWAL, RESILIENCE, AND JUSTICE.

THIS IS OUR CALL: TO REIMAGINE ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION SO THAT THE ARCHITECTS OF TOMORROW WILL NOT ONLY DESIGN BUILDINGS, BUT ALSO DESIGN A BETTER WORLD.

## OUR COMMITMENTS

### 1. INNOVATION AS OUR LANGUAGE

WE PLEDGE TO EMBRACE EXPERIMENTATION, DIGITAL TOOLS, AND BOLD IDEAS—AI, BIM, PARAMETRIC DESIGN, SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS — AS INSTRUMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION. INNOVATION WILL NOT BE OPTIONAL; IT WILL DEFINE THE ARCHITECT OF 2040.

### 2. COLLABORATION AS OUR METHOD

NO ARCHITECT IS AN ISLAND. WE COMMIT TO DISSOLVING SILOS, UNITING WITH ENGINEERS, SCIENTISTS, POLICYMAKERS, COMMUNITIES, AND CREATORS. THE ARCHITECT OF 2040 WILL BE AN *ECOSYSTEM ORCHESTRATOR*, WEAVING DIVERSE KNOWLEDGE INTO HOLISTIC SOLUTIONS.

### 3. SUSTAINABILITY AS OUR IMPERATIVE

WE REJECT DESIGNS THAT HARM THE EARTH. WE COMMIT TO REGENERATIVE, CLIMATE-RESPONSIVE, AND ADAPTIVE PRACTICES THAT RESTORE ECOSYSTEMS, REDUCE VULNERABILITY, AND SAFEGUARD FUTURE GENERATIONS.

### 4. EQUITY AS OUR COMPASS

WE WILL DESIGN FOR ALL—ESPECIALLY THE MARGINALIZED AND UNHEARD. EDUCATION MUST TRAIN ARCHITECTS TO PRACTICE UNIVERSAL DESIGN, EMBRACE DIVERSITY, AND RESPECT CULTURAL HERITAGE. THE ARCHITECT OF 2040 WILL BE A BUILDER OF INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES.

## 5. ETHICS AS OUR FOUNDATION

WE PLEDGE TRANSPARENCY, HONESTY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY. THE ARCHITECT OF 2040 WILL NOT ONLY SOLVE TECHNICAL PROBLEMS, BUT ALSO CONFRONT ETHICAL DILEMMAS WITH COURAGE—ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE, DIGNITY, AND HUMANITY IN EVERY DECISION.

## 6. GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP WITH LOCAL ROOTS

WE WILL PREPARE ARCHITECTS WHO MOVE FLUIDLY ACROSS BORDERS, LEARNING FROM GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES WHILE REMAINING DEEPLY GROUNDED IN ASIA'S RICH HISTORIES, TRADITIONS, AND LOCAL CONTEXTS.

# OUR CALL TO ACTION

WE DECLARE THAT THE TIME FOR HESITATION HAS PASSED. ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION MUST BE REIMAGINED NOW—NOT TOMORROW. TOGETHER, EDUCATORS, PRACTITIONERS, POLICYMAKERS, AND STUDENTS MUST BREAK BARRIERS, IGNITE IMAGINATION, AND DESIGN WITH COURAGE.

THE ARCHITECT OF 2040 WILL BE:

AN INNOVATOR, SHAPING FUTURES YET UNIMAGINED,  
A COLLABORATOR, UNITING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS DISCIPLINES,  
A STEWARD OF THE EARTH, HEALING WHAT HAS BEEN BROKEN,  
A CHAMPION OF EQUITY, GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS,  
AND AN ETHICAL LEADER, INSPIRING TRUST AND INTEGRITY.

WE COMMIT TO NOTHING LESS THAN THE TRANSFORMATION OF ARCHITECTURE ITSELF—SO THAT IN DESIGNING THE FUTURE, WE DESIGN A BETTER WORLD FOR ALL.

THIS IS OUR MANIFESTO.  
THIS IS OUR PLEDGE.

ARCASIA COMMITTEE ON ARCHITECTURE  
EDUCATION  
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