

## Diversity in Architecture: What can Architectural Education and Practice Learn from Law?

Sophie Mayer

### Introduction

This article has been adapted from my dissertation entitled ‘Diversity in Architecture: What Can Architectural Education and Practice Learn from Law?’ The primary ambition is to bring together a multiplicity of voices from the legal and architectural professions to compare attitudes towards ethnic and gender diversity. The research interrogates case studies from the legal profession to determine if any of the diversity initiatives utilised by law could be adopted to disrupt the existing homogeneous culture that exists within architecture. The issues explored were framed by a series of interviews with students and practitioners from law and architecture; the results of an online survey answered by sixty-seven architecture students; and a literature review focussing on gender and ethnic representation in the legal and architectural professions. The landscape of diversity in architecture is ever-evolving. This article acknowledges this and is intended to act as a marker of 2021, to assess what is currently being done to combat the profession’s alarming lack of diversity.

### Response to ‘Anti-Racism at SSoA: A Call to Action’

As a woman of mixed white and Asian origin, I find the issues raised in ‘Anti-Racism at SSoA: A Call to Action’ deeply alarming. This article emanates from my own experiences at SSoA, namely in a management

practice and law seminar, in which three white male presenters, an architect, a contractor and a client, proudly discussed their team structure: all 30 members were white and male. When I challenged the team's lack of diversity, I was assured that female architects had worked on "collages" in the earlier design stages but it was assumed that they would not enjoy the technical design that followed. The ignorance of this response was deeply disconcerting and points to an industry still perceived as a white, old-boys club which is largely unwilling to recognise it has a problem.

Similarly to the 'Call to Action', this article acknowledges that overlaps in social characteristics can create interdependent systems of disadvantage. Initiatives which are too narrowly focused on one underrepresented group can detrimentally overlook another. Consequently this article does not exclusively focus on race and gender; where appropriate it also draws on initiatives utilised to encourage wider diversity within the profession.

The 'Call to Action' has provided SSoA with a unique platform to instigate change on a local level. This article argues that to achieve the celebrative, respectful and heterogeneous culture the profession deserves on a national level, architectural education and practice must take drastic action. Learning from the diversity initiatives utilised by the legal profession to achieve 'formal equality' with respect to gender and ethnicity, this article demands action on a macro scale.

## Diversity in Architecture: What can Architectural Education and Practice Learn from Law?

The demographics of the architectural profession have not changed very much since the inception of the 'professions' in the nineteenth century, when secular ideals were propagated via public schools through a celebration of 'gentlemanly conduct'.<sup>1</sup> Today, how many of us believe that white, middle-class men are the only ones capable of fulfilling an architect's responsibilities?<sup>2</sup> The role of the professional is undergoing radical change; this is just as true for the learned professions such as medicine and law as it is for architecture.<sup>3</sup> Statistics for the medical and law professions continue to show increasingly diverse workforces, but architecture is falling behind this trend.

The following infographic highlights the well known fact that women and Black and minority ethnic groups (BAME) are under-represented in the architecture profession. Findings from the Architect's Journal's 2020 Race Diversity Survey suggest racism within the profession is getting worse as those from non-white backgrounds struggle against 'both blatant and less overt racism'.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 Simon Foxell. 2003. *The Professionals' Choice : The Future of the Built Environment Professions* (London: Building Futures), p. 21
- 2 John Morris Dixon. 1994. 'A White Gentleman's Profession?', *Progressive Architecture*, 75, 11. p55
- 3 Foxell. *The Professionals' Choice*. p. 13
- 4 Richard Waite. 2020. 'Architecture Is Systemically Racist. So What Is the Profession Going to Do about It?,' *The Architects' Journal* <<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/architecture- is-systemically-racist-so-what-is- the-profession-going-to-do-about-it>> [accessed 9 October 2020]

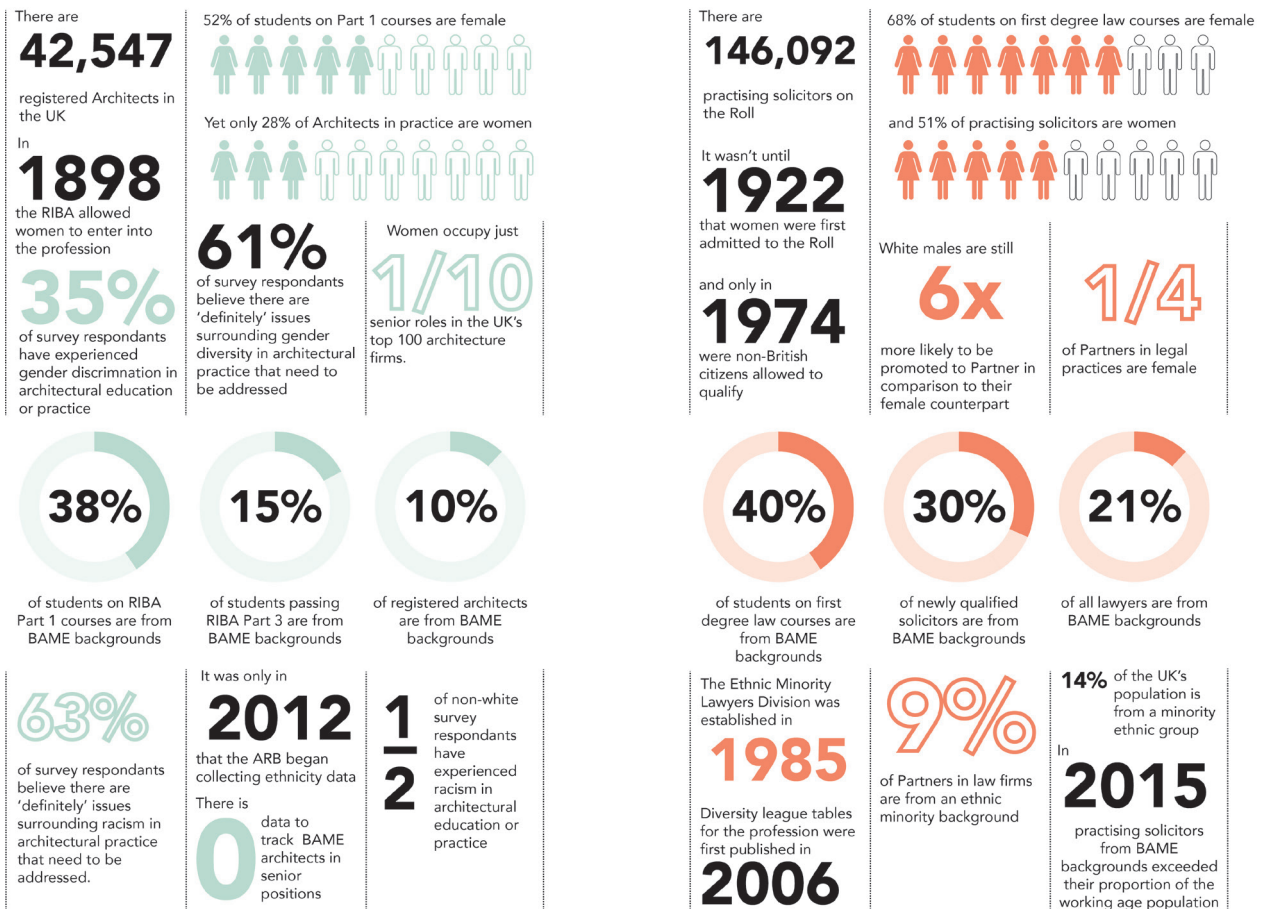


Fig. 1: Infographic produced by the author, 2021 with reference to: ARB Annual Report 2019. 2020. (Architects' Registration Board) . Lynne Walker. [n.d.]. *Golden Age or False Dawn? Women Architects in the Early 20th Century* (English Heritage), p. 2 "Diversity in the UK - Diversity UK." 2012. *Diversity UK* <<https://diversityuk.org/diversity-in-the-uk/>> Marcus Fairs. 2017. "Survey of Top Architecture Firms Reveals 'Quite Shocking' Lack of Gender Diversity at Senior Levels," *Dezeen* (Dezeen) <<https://www.dezeen.com/2017/11/16/survey-leading-architecture-firms-reveals-shocking-lack-gender-diversity-senior-levels/>> "Population\_solicitors." 2011. *SRA*. (Solicitors' Regulation Authority) <[https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/reports/statistics/regulated-community-statistics/data/population\\_solicitors/](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/reports/statistics/regulated-community-statistics/data/population_solicitors/)> Sundeep Aulakh, Andy Charlwood, Daniel Muzio, Jennifer Tomlinson, and Danat Valizade. 2017. *Mapping Advantages and Disadvantages: Diversity in the Legal Profession in England and Wales* (Solicitors Regulation Authority) Urwin, Gould. Diversity League Table: A 10 Year Demographic Survey of the Legal Profession

5 The Law Society. 2019. *Trends in the Solicitors' Profession Annual Statistics Report 2018* (The Law Society)

In comparison, the legal profession's attitudes towards diversity have changed markedly over the last thirty years as women now constitute 51% of all qualified solicitors and those from minority ethnic backgrounds have exceeded their proportion of the working population as a whole.<sup>5</sup> As one trainee solicitor mentions, diversity and inclusion has become a flagship policy of The Law Society.

The thing with the legal profession is that everyone is so acutely aware of how much diversity is an issue and it is something we really have to be doing something about.

RECENTLY QUALIFIED SOLICITOR

Fig. 2: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with a recently qualified solicitor, 2020.

Despite drastic improvements in the diversity of the legal profession, the legal community continues to recognise that further progress is required to ensure that ‘substantive diversity of non-traditional groups’ is achieved.<sup>6</sup> This means addressing the fact that representation within different minority groups is uneven, balancing representation in the most lucrative areas of the profession and providing equal opportunities for advancement within them. Nevertheless, the legal profession must be applauded as with respect to gender and ethnicity at least, ‘formal equality has been achieved.’<sup>7</sup> The following sections interrogate the diversity initiatives utilised by the legal profession to critically evaluate if similar initiatives could be adapted to architecture.

## The Role of the Student Body

### *Junior Lawyers Division*

A branch of the Law Society, the Junior Lawyers Division (JLD) is the community for aspiring and newly qualified solicitors in England and Wales. To learn more about the JLD, I interviewed their Executive Committee Member, Adam Hattersley.

One of the JLD’s responsibilities is to issue a quarterly poll to learn about the demographic and experiences of their members. The majority of participants voiced feelings of alienation in firms once qualified, resulting in most solicitors from lower socioeconomic backgrounds leaving the profession less than five years post-qualification. Describing employers as ‘the driving force’ for increased social mobility, Hattersley culminates the study by outlining initiatives law firms can implement to ensure solicitors from all backgrounds feel welcome. As a first-generation university graduate himself, it is evident that Hattersley’s own experiences have contributed to the rigour of the JLD’s study on social mobility which ultimately reiterates the need for diversity amongst the committee itself.

6 Sundeep Aulakh, Andy Charlwood, Daniel Muzio, Jennifer Tomlinson and Danat Valizade. 2017. *Mapping Advantages and Disadvantages: Diversity in the Legal Profession in England and Wales* (Solicitors Regulation Authority) p.12

7 Aulakh



Fig. 3: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with Adam Hattersley, 2020.

### *An Architectural Student Body*

The JLD's commitment to data collection is vital as a means of capturing the issues prevalent in the profession and is supported by further studies such as the Race Fairness Commitment which has enlisted seventeen legal firms to 'identify and attack' unfair career obstacles faced by BAME staff.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, as Katy Ghahremani argues, diversity statistics in architecture are hard to come by as even the RIBA's 2017 Destination Survey failed to address ethnicity, referring only to 'diversity' in regards to gender.<sup>9</sup>



Fig. 4: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with Katy Ghahremani, 2020.

However, the formation of the Black Solicitors Network's (BSN) Junior Lawyers Division, established to focus specifically on the needs of black junior lawyers, signals a lack of faith in the abilities of the JLD to singly champion diversity.

Groups constitutionally disassociated from the Law Society, such as the Black Solicitors Network (BSN), could be argued to have a greater influence on the profession than the JLD. Responsible for annually publishing diversity league tables for the legal profession, the BSN's research on diversity has contributed to 'significant change in the profiles of those who work within it.'<sup>10</sup>

- 8 Jemma Slings. 2020. 'City Firms Embark on Data-Drive to Combat Racial Inequality,' *Law Gazette* <<https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/city-firms-embark-on-data-drive-to-combat-racial-inequality-/5104889>. article?utm\_source=gazette\_newsletter&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=City%27s+race+pledge+%7c+Pre-charge+bail+review+%7c+Rozenberg\_07%2f06%2f2020> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 9 Kelly MacKinnon. 2017. RIBA Student Destinations Survey 2017, RIBA (RIBA), <<https://live.architecture.com/~/media/GatherContent/RIBA-Student-Destinations-Survey/Additional-Documents/>
- 10 Professor Urwin, and Dr Matthew Gould. 2017. *Diversity League Table: A10 Year Demographic Survey of the Legal Profession* (Black Solicitors' Network), p.16

Independent organisations on the outside need to be the ones that actually push for change.

SIMEON SHTEBUNAEV (CO-VICE PRESIDENT OF THE RIBA FOR STUDENTS AND ASSOCIATES 2017-2019)

Fig. 5: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with Simeon Shtebunaev, 2020.

According to Co-Vice President of the RIBA Students and Associates 2017-2019, Simeon Shtebunaev, independent organisations must be the ones lobbying for greater diversity. The establishment of Black Females in Architecture (BFA) seeks to 'cater for a very specific problem that seems unnoticed or misunderstood by others' by actively addressing issues of inequality and diversity.<sup>11</sup> Established as an independent network, BFA hopes to collect their own data to educate others about the common problems Black women in architecture face. BFA's growing network of over three hundred members highlights the potency of their cause.

Students and associates make up approximately one third of the RIBA's membership and yet responses indicate that the role of the RIBA was perceived as being obsolete.<sup>12</sup> The formation of the Architecture Students Network (ASN) in 2012 as an 'independent network of student representatives' highlights the incredulity amongst students about the RIBA's ability to spearhead change.<sup>13</sup> However the ASN, funded by the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA), cannot be deemed to be entirely independent. Given that schools of architecture often have their own agenda, which usually involves attracting more students as a means of receiving greater funding, Shtebunaev argues that the ASN may be 'a placating device not a revolutionary one.'<sup>14</sup>

The lacklustre success of architectural student bodies such as Archaos have proven that groups which are wholly dependent on the RIBA cannot enact drastic change. Similarly to the JLD, Archaos was founded as a wing of the RIBA in 1999. The transitory nature of the student community resulted in the dissolution of Archaos in the mid noughties, only to be revived in 2019 with the launch of the RIBA's Future Architects, a programme aspiring to provide 'a network and community for future and emerging architects designed to support, inspire and provide a voice for those transitioning from education to practice.'<sup>15</sup> However, even those closely associated with Future Architects contend that 'it risks turning into more of an RIBA-led business body.'<sup>16</sup>

- 11 Black Females in Architecture Committee Member. Interview (21.09.20)
- 12 Richard Waite, 2020. 'How will the would-be RIBA presidents tackle education and diversity?' *The Architects' Journal* <<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/how-will-the-would-be-riba-presidents-tackle-education-and-diversity>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 13 Merlin Fulcher, 2012. 'Architecture Students Network Replaces "defunct" Archaos', *The Architects' Journal* <<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/archive/architecture-students-network-replaces-defunct-archaos>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 14 Simeon Shtebunaev. Interview (31.08.20)
- 15 RIBA [n.d.]. 'Future Architects', *RIBA* <<https://www.architecture.com/education-cpd-and-careers/future-architects>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 16 Simeon Shtebunaev. Interview (31.08.20)

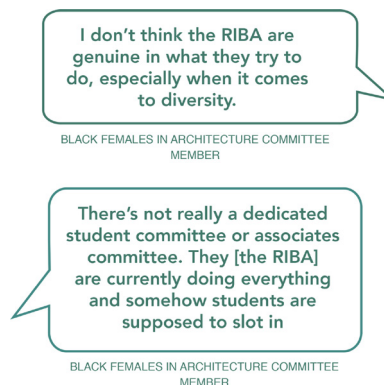


Fig. 6: Quotes from an interview conducted by the author with a Black Females in Architecture Committee Member, 2020.

It is evident that the legal profession's ability to report on, address and champion diversity is strongly supported by a combination of work undertaken by groups such as the JLD, who maintain a direct association with the Law Society, and fully independent networks such as the BSN. In response, the architectural profession must foster and encourage a similar balance of association and autonomy with the RIBA. Still very early on in its inception, RIBA Future Architects has the potential to provide a sustained student voice to lobby the profession on issues important to the student community. However, given responses allude to incredulity around the RIBA's ability to justly represent students, perhaps Future Architects must become semi-autonomous if it is to be successful. This would ensure it can withstand the transient nature of the student community and is still supported financially by the RIBA, but can operate as an semi-independent student-run organisation.

## Routes to Qualification

### *Pathways to the Roll*

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) specifies a six-year pathway to The Solicitor's Roll. Crucially, as a Senior Law Lecturer mentions, admission does not mandate possession of a legal undergraduate degree.<sup>17</sup>

Leading legal firms believe that too many candidates come from similar backgrounds as they utilise the same gilded degree route. The introduction of an apprenticeship promised to encourage diversity, by taking away the burden of debt. However, 'after a period of upscaling their non-graduate recruitment, firms have reached capacity' leading to an anticipated 14% decline in legal apprentices in 2020.<sup>18</sup>

17 Senior Law Lecturer.  
Interview (08.07.2020)

18 Marialuisa Taddia. 2020. 'Earn and Learn', *Law Gazette* <<https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/analysis/earn-and-learn/5103352.article>> [accessed 9 October 2020]

A lot of students start a law degree without having decided exactly what career they are going to pursue. Plenty of law graduates don't become lawyers and plenty of lawyers haven't done law as a first degree.

SENIOR LAW LECTURER

Fig. 7: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with a Senior Law Lecturer, 2020.

Upscaling the apprenticeship route is heavily reliant on the introduction of the Solicitor's Qualifying Exam (SQE) which will act as an endpoint assessment. The SQE is a direct result of the SRA's 'Training for Tomorrow' report which consulted 'on some of the most far-reaching changes to legal education and training for over 40 years.'<sup>19</sup> By providing a single standardised assessment, it aims to diversify the profession by addressing concerns that the traditional routes are expensive and inflexible.<sup>20</sup> However, the substantial training costs associated with the SQE have left critics sceptical that it will actually provide students with a financial saving.

### *Architectural Education Reform*

The RIBA Education Review (RER) has been underway since 2013, the same year the SRA launched their 'Training for Tomorrow' report. Yet many interview participants argue that progress in education reform has been painfully slow.

The RIBA Education board did a full review of the Part 1 and Part 2 system because the EU laws were about to change, but nothing seemed to come out of that; which was very frustrating.

KATY GHAHREMANI (ARCHITECT & PRACTICE  
DIRECTOR)

19 SRA. 'Policy Statement: Training for Tomorrow.' 2013. SRA <<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/training-for-tomorrow/resources/policy-statement>>

20 Solicitors' Regulation Authority. 2020. *Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) Briefing* (Solicitors' Regulation Authority), p. 3

21 Laura Mark. 2015. 'RIBA Moves to Scrap Part 3', *The Architects' Journal* <<https://www.architectsjournal.com>>

Fig. 8. Quote from an interview conducted by the author with Katy Ghahremani, 2020.

Outlined in the infographic, the central proposal of the RER was the introduction of a '7-year integrated award' whereby Parts 1, 2 and 3 would be combined into one single programme.<sup>21</sup> The reformed award was intended to retain students through to qualification in an attempt to address high drop out rates from student dissatisfaction, as illustrated



22 The UK Architectural Education Review Group. 2013. PATHWAYS AND GATEWAYS, p. 7

in the graph below. This approach would tie students to a single school for the entirety of their education as architecture schools would take on responsibility for everything required for registration, an obligation that many are unwilling to be burdened with. Furthermore, the programme would only further exacerbate the siloed nature of architectural education, which already fails to comprehend that not all architectural students wish to become architects.

The greatest disappointment of the RER is that it fails to respond to recommendations by the independent UK Architectural Education Review Group. The group recommends a revised framework which removes the Parts 1-3 system in order to shift the focus of architectural education to the demonstration of competence, rather than the possession of prescribed awards.<sup>22</sup> This would give universities greater freedom to develop more distinctive programmes and, similarly to the SQE, would allow entry into the profession via a single professional gateway; without mandating an undergraduate architecture degree.

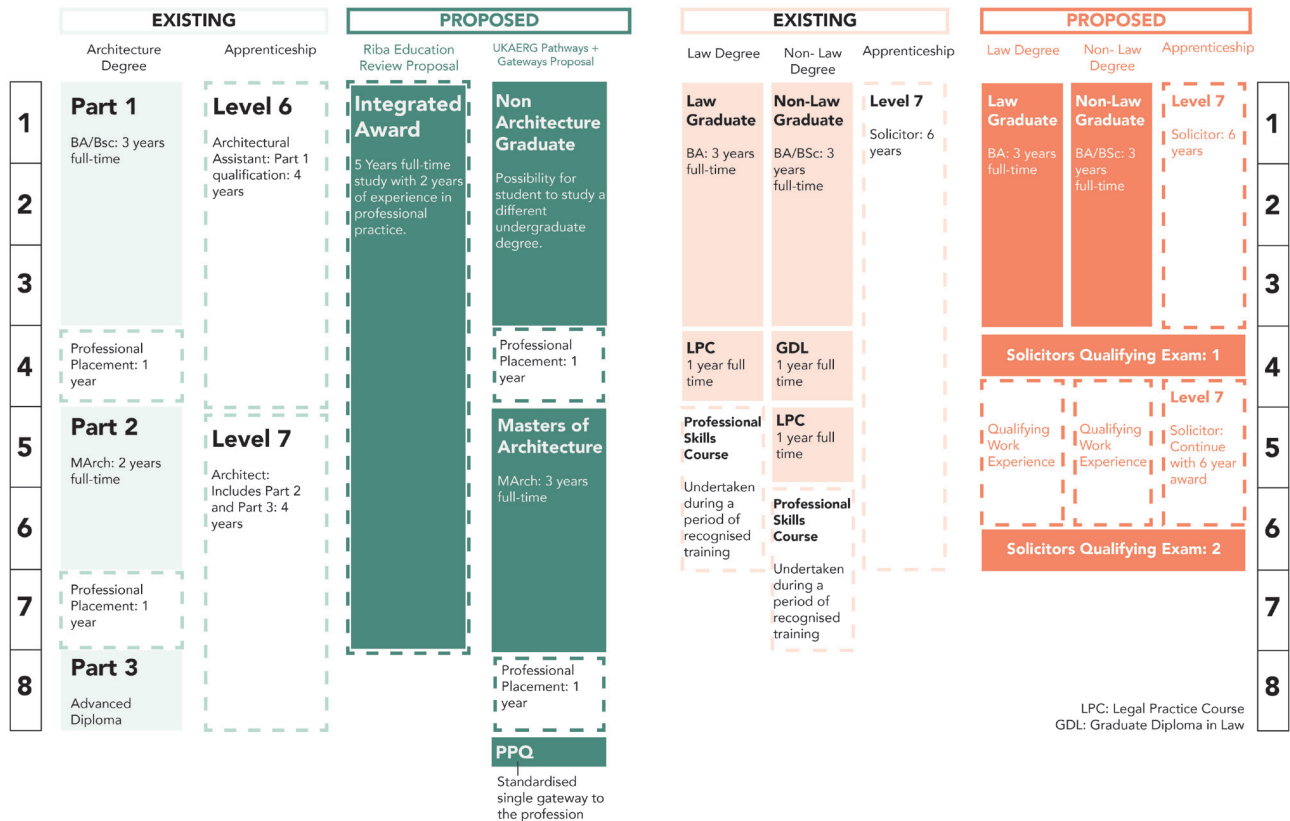


Fig.9. A comparison of the pathways to becoming an architect and a solicitor. Infographic produced by author and aided by interview conversations, 2020.

The London School of Architecture, alongside The University of Sheffield’s Collaborative Practice course, directly addresses the issues raised by the Diversity in Architecture Sophie Mayer

RER by offering work placements alongside learning. Nonetheless, despite showing great progress, it is disappointing that both programmes charge fees in excess of £9,000 a year.

In 2020 the ARB undertook a consultation process which they describe as ‘the biggest step so far on the journey towards the most significant shake-up of architectural education since the 1950s.’<sup>23</sup> The ARB’s ‘Modernising the Initial Education and Training for Architects’ report found ‘a consistent and widespread view is that there is a need for new, more flexible routes to the Register’ as the current system ‘is likely to be a barrier that is impacting on diversity.’<sup>24</sup> The ARB’s commitment to co-create outcomes and standards through direct engagement with the sector signals a promising awareness of their need to open up the profession. As part of the three year project, the ARB will develop routes to registration through a period of public engagement in 2022, with an ambition to establish the operational systems required to implement the new educational framework in 2023.

The most tangible reform to architectural education to date is the introduction of the architectural apprenticeship. The biggest hope pinned on the scheme when it was introduced in 2018 was that it would widen access to the profession by promoting more opportunities to ‘earn and learn’ as one survey respondent remarks.<sup>25</sup>



23 Richard Waite, 2021. ‘ARB chief on education shake-up: “We want to remove unnecessary barriers.”’ *The Architects’ Journal*. <<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/arb-chief-on-education-shake-up-we-want-to-remove-unnecessary-barriers>> [accessed 29th October 2021]

24 Architects Registration Board, Modernising the initial education and training of architects: a discussion document. (Architects Registration Board, 2021) p13

25 Anonymous response from author’s online student survey, 2020.

26 Social Mobility Commission. 2020. Apprenticeships and Social Mobility: Fulfilling Potential (Social Mobility Commission), p. 5

Fig. 10: Anonymous response from author’s online student survey, 2020.

However, only two universities currently provide a Level 6 apprenticeship – equivalent to the RIBA Part 1 – suggesting the scheme is suffering from the same funding issues as its legal counterparts. Instead, more universities offer a Level 7 apprenticeship – equivalent to Parts 2 and 3 – which requires applicants to hold an architecture Bachelor’s degree. As a result, little progress has been made to broaden entry into the profession. This supports research from the Social Mobility Commission, whose report ‘Apprenticeships and Social Mobility’ found that the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017 has disproportionately funded higher-level apprenticeships for students from more advantaged communities, rather than those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>26</sup>

If an architecture apprenticeship had been available to you, would you have considered it over the traditional degree qualification?

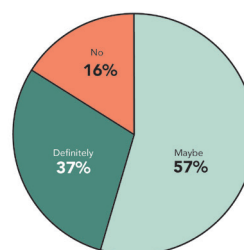


Fig. 11. Infographic produced by author from anonymous survey responses, 2020.

The legal profession has shown that apprenticeship roles are likely to decline as opportunities within the industry become saturated. This problem of scalability is likely to be amplified in architecture as small practices make up approximately 79% of all RIBA chartered firms.<sup>27</sup> As a result, Level 6 positions will be hard to come by as many firms will struggle to commit to the mandatory 4 year period of employment required. Therefore, despite survey responses indicating high levels of interest in apprenticeships, the scheme cannot independently solve the profession's lack of diversity.

A representative from the Architects Registration Board (ARB), warns that we risk reducing standards and safety when introducing alternative pathways to the profession.<sup>28</sup> Regulatory competence is crucial if we are to maintain public confidence in the profession. However, it is this reliance on legislation that has led to a lack of diversity. In response to the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire, the RIBA outlined plans to introduce mandatory competency tests for architects.<sup>29</sup> However, this shows a failure to respond to the lack of social justice exemplified as working-class communities were corralled into 'the worst housing in a global city in the twenty-first century.'<sup>30</sup> Given that diversity is ultimately underpinned by social justice, it's not surprising that unlike the Statement of Solicitor Compliance, the ARB's Code of Conduct fails to assert the importance of diversity.<sup>31</sup>

The implementation of the SQE will provide students with greater flexibility, notably by not mandating an undergraduate law degree. Therefore, reforming the tripartite structure of architectural education is imperative if we are to diversify the profession. For this to happen, the RIBA and ARB must proactively act on feedback from students, practitioners and schools of architecture to create a multitude of flexible pathways into the profession. Furthermore, the architectural profession's largely legislative approach must be replaced by one that instead looks to 'promote and manage diversity, with an increasing focus on recognition and celebration of difference.'<sup>32</sup>

- 27 The Fees Bureau. 2019. RIBA Business Benchmarking Report 2019 (RIBA)
- 28 ARB Representative. Interview. (16.07.20)
- 29 Tom Ravenscroft. 2020. "RIBA Set to Introduce Mandatory Competency Tests for Architects," Dezeen <<https://www.dezeen.com/2020/09/01/riba-architects-mandatory-competency-tests/>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 30 Coventry University. "The Big Question: 'What Has Grenfell Tower Taught Us about Housing, Racism and Social Justice?'" [n.d.]. Coventry University <<https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/about-us/research-events/2017/the-big-question-what-has-grenfell-tower-taught-us-about-housing-racism-and-social-justice/>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 31 "Statement of Solicitor Competence." 2015. SRA <<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/cpd/competence-statement/>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 32 Professor Urwin, and Dr Matthew Gould. 2017. Diversity League Table: A10 Year Demographic Survey of the Legal Profession (Black Solicitors' Network), p.16
- 33 Adam Hattersley. 2019. "Weighing the Cost of Qualification," Law Gazette <<https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/commentary-and-opinion/weighing->

## Funding

### *Funding in Law*

Upon qualification, a newly qualified solicitor is likely to be burdened with total debt of around £70,000–£80,000.<sup>33</sup> As one newly qualified solicitor mentions, around a quarter of aspiring solicitors will have their Legal Practice Course (LPC) tuition fees paid for by their future employers, which, when self-funded, can cost up to £16,750.<sup>34</sup> Individuals from minority ethnic groups cannot be assumed to be of a lower social mobility, however the overall social and economic statuses of BAME individuals has been proved to be generally lower than that of the white population.<sup>35</sup> Therefore this increased financial support could be argued to contribute to greater ethnic diversity. Nevertheless, the new SQE qualification will replace the LPC in a bid to further improve social mobility and to provide a level playing field for all candidates.

Unless you had lots of money, the only way to become a solicitor was to work for a corporate firm, who would sponsor you and pay for everything. There's no way I could have qualified without any of that.

RECENTLY QUALIFIED SOLICITOR

Fig. 12: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with a recently qualified solicitor, 2020.

A career within the legal sector is often perceived as a prestigious one due to its respected “learned” status. Unlike architecture, both a solicitors’ title and function is protected by the Legal Services Act 2007, legislation that ensures a person can only carry out a reserved legal activity if authorised by the SRA.<sup>36</sup> This layer of protection ensures that solicitors remain in demand and, as a result, are well remunerated for services rendered.

### *Funding in Architecture*

In 2013, the average student debt for qualifying architects was estimated to be £76,968.<sup>37</sup> This raises concern that those from poorer backgrounds are being priced out of architectural education as “elitism” continues to be a recurring criticism. As stated in CABE’s report ‘Architecture and Race,’ there is a ‘need for additional funding for those in lower-income groups, many of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds.’<sup>38</sup>

the-cost-of-qualification/5069108.  
article> [accessed 9 October 2020]

- 34 Jemma Slings. 2020a. “40% of LPC Students Not Getting Training Contracts,” Law Gazette<<https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/40-of-lpc-students-not-getting-training-contracts-/5105248>. article> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 35 Helen Barnes, Dorothe Bonjour, and Melahat Sahin-Dikmen. 2012. *Minority Ethnic Students and Practitioners in Architecture: A Scoping Study for the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)* (Policy Studies Institute), p. 6
- 36 SRA. 2019 “Guidance: Admission as a Solicitor.” SRA <<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/admission-solicitor/>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 37 Marlin Fulcher. 2013. “Profession Divided over RIBA’s Shake-up of Architectural Education,” *The Architects’ Journal* <<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/archive/profession-divided-over-ribas-shake-up-of-architectural-education>> [accessed 9 October 2020]

In 2019 the RIBA were only able to award twenty scholarships and bursaries, despite their Hardship Fund receiving three hundred applications in 2018. This financial strain is worsened as students are also expected to spend around £2,000 a year on hidden extras such as printing.<sup>39</sup> As one Part 2 Architect explains, for many students the long hours studio culture restricts them from obtaining part-time work, only further exacerbating their crippling financial burden. Similarly to how many law students have their LPC fees paid for by private institutions, architectural organisations, schools and government must take greater action to address the financial struggles with which many architecture students are encumbered.

Personally for me, it was a bit of a struggle because I couldn't work during the year and then during the summer I'd waitress myself to death.

BLACK FEMALES IN ARCHITECTURE COMMITTEE  
MEMBER

Fig. 13: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with a Black Females in Architecture Committee Member, 2020.

Architecture's culture of low pay and long hours is causing many to drop out of the profession as unpaid overtime is all too common. Despite the legal profession harbouring a similar culture, an average salary of £65,000 a year for newly qualified solicitors provides a redeeming incentive when compared to the £34,000 average for a newly qualified architect.<sup>40</sup> As many survey responses indicate, this lack of financial reward has led to growing disillusionment with the profession, typically centred around the relatively low pay which fully qualified architects could expect to achieve, in comparison to allied professions such as medicine and law.<sup>41</sup>

If we want the profession to be attractive to all, we must address the consistent financial exploitation of the Architect's function. According to Femi Oresanya, Principal Architect and Honorary Professor at The Bartlett School of Architecture, protecting only the architect's title, as enforced by the Architect's Act 1997, is not enough. Greater restrictions are required to 'protect not only what we do, but who does it,' as current legislation has led 'architecture to become a lost leader' in what Oresanya describes as an 'open market.'<sup>42</sup> This inability to be justly remunerated diminishes the salaries of all within the profession. This low pay is further compounded by the willingness of some to undertake early design work at little or no fee; a notion unimaginable in the field of law.

38 Barnes, Bonjour, Sahin-Dikmen. *Minority Ethnic Students and Practitioners in Architecture*. p. 85

39 Ella Jessel. 2018. "Student Survey: Only the Rich Need Apply to Study Architecture," *The Architects' Journal* <<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/student-survey-only-the-rich-need-apply-to-study-architecture>> [accessed 9 October 2020]

40 Prospects. "How Much Do Lawyers Earn?" [n.d.]. Prospects <<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/how-much-do-lawyers-earn>> [accessed 9 October 2020]



Fig. 14: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with a Black Females in Architecture Committee Member and anonymous responses from the author's online student survey, 2020



Fig. 15: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with Femi Oresanya 2020

Despite the traditional routes to qualification in law and architecture being of a similar financial magnitude, the legal profession has shown that the prestige and remunerative award post-qualification contributes to the attraction and retention of a more diverse workforce. Alternative routes into architecture will help to address students' financial burden, but ultimately we need to have a stronger lobbying element within the profession if we are to increase salaries and make architecture more attractive to a broad student audience.

## Educational Outreach

### *Legal Work Experience*

Unpaid internships have become a prerequisite for attaining a legal training contract. This is detrimentally impacting diversity as only aspiring solicitors from privileged backgrounds are able to take these opportunities.

However, when interviewing a newly qualified solicitor, she was optimistic that organisations such as ‘Aspiring Solicitors’ (AS) are opening up opportunities within the profession. AS was established with the primary aim of increasing diversity in law.<sup>43</sup> In a bid to provide free access, opportunity and assistance to students from underrepresented groups, AS equips aspiring solicitors with mentors, interview coaching and work experience opportunities. As a result, since 2014 AS’s diverse members have been offered over 1600 training contracts and vacation schemes.<sup>44</sup>



Fig. 16: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with a recently qualified solicitor, 2020

### *Educational Outreach in Architecture*

The problem of unpaid work experience is all too pertinent in architecture. The RIBA made a stand on unpaid work placements in 2011 by announcing that practices had to pay interns at least the minimum wage, or risk losing their chartered status.<sup>45</sup> However, it is evident that these unpaid placements are still happening. If this is to change, the RIBA must establish a proxy by which students can anonymously report experiences of little or no pay.

Built By Us (BBU) was established with the primary ambition to ‘connect diverse talent to construction businesses, to support companies on their journey to becoming more inclusive workplaces and nurture diverse talent through mentoring.’<sup>46</sup> When speaking with BBU’s Founder and CEO, she argued that the way teenagers are often unclear on the role and responsibilities of an architect causes many to discount it as a serious

- 41 Barnes, Bonjour, Sahin-Dikmen. *Minority Ethnic Students and Practitioners in Architecture*. p. 77
- 42 Femi Oresanya. Interview (06.07.20)
- 43 “Aspiring Solicitors- The Principles.” [n.d.]. Aspiring Solicitors <<https://www.aspiringsolicitors.co.uk/about-as/>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Laura Mark. 2013. “Architecture Students Call for an End to Unpaid Internships,” *The Architects’ Journal* <<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/architecture-students-call-for-an-end-to-unpaid-internships>> [accessed 9 October 2020]
- 46 “WELCOME.” [n.d.]. Built By Us <<https://www.builtbyus.org.uk/>> [accessed 9 October 2020]

career path. As a result, educating students about the multitude of professions in the construction industry is crucial.

As the former chair of the RIBA's equality, diversity and inclusion group – Architects for Change – BBU's Founder was instrumental in launching the RIBA Role Model campaign. In a bid to communicate the RIBA's 'commitment to making architecture and the broader construction industry more inclusive,' the Role Models campaign successfully outlines the experiences of a diverse group of architectural practitioners.<sup>47</sup>



Fig. 17: Quote from an interview conducted by the author with Built By Us Founder and CEO, 2020

The establishment of Aspiring Solicitors shows that many in law still believe some groups are underrepresented in the legal profession. It is encouraging that similar organisations such as Built By Us exist in architecture too, highlighting that many within the industry are aware of the profession's lack of diversity. Nevertheless, all within the profession must do more to facilitate mentoring and educational outreach.

## Recommendations

The initiatives presented in this paper constitute the initial steps that architectural education and practice can learn from law to diversify the profession. Moreover, it argues that the legal profession has shown us that the first step to achieving diversity is to recognise that minority groups are underrepresented in the profession. For many, this awareness will only present itself through statistical data and qualitative studies; both of which the architectural profession is currently lacking. Nevertheless, attracting a broader pool of talent is just the start. In order to retain diversity, we must cultivate environments that are inclusive and respectful of difference.

The SRA's development of flexible pathways to the Solicitor's Roll has significantly contributed to greater diversity within the legal profession. However, perhaps what is most interesting is their shift in focus from a largely legislative approach, to one which instead promotes and celebrates diversity. It is clear that implementing such change requires a top-down,

47 "RIBA Role Models" [n.d.] RIBA <<https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/role-models>> [accessed 9 October 2020]



transformative approach which encourages solidarity amongst the profession. In response, architectural schools, organisations, government and the RIBA must take similar, drastic action. The findings from this study have been formulated into a series of recommendations below and are directly derived from the initiatives successfully employed by the legal profession.

1. **Acceptance:** Everyone within architectural education and practice must acknowledge the homogeneous culture within the profession. Everyone must understand the barriers that individuals from non-traditional groups face and recognise that overlaps in social characteristics can create intersectional systems of disadvantage. Both the RIBA and independent networks such as BFA must carry out further research to raise this alert.
2. **Semi-autonomy of RIBA Future Architects:** Groups such as the Black Solicitors Network and Black Females in Architecture have shown that operating independently from the RIBA can engender greater solidarity. Future Architects requires continuous resourcing and therefore continued funding from the RIBA is imperative. Nevertheless, it must become more ambitious if it is to strongly advocate the issues important to the student community.
3. **Flexibility:** Architectural education must focus on the demonstration of competence, rather than the possession of prescribed awards. Schools of architecture need to be granted greater flexibility to create a multitude of 'earn and learn' pathways.
4. **Greater Funding:** Architecture schools, organisations, government and the RIBA must provide more funding opportunities to allow those from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter into the profession.
5. **Protection of an Architect's Function:** Professional bodies such as the ARB and the RIBA must protect not only what architects do, but who does it. The gratuitous working culture within the profession must stop and architectural schools must reiterate the value of an architect.
6. **Greater Financial Rewards:** Remuneration upon qualification must be attractive. Practices must ensure all work is paid; the RIBA must implement a formal proxy process to declare practices who fail to pay interns.
7. **Educational Outreach:** Architectural practices, schools, independent groups and professional bodies must encourage more mentoring and provide educational support in order to retain individuals from underrepresented groups through to qualification.

## Biography

Sophie Mayer is a Part 2 Architectural Assistant at West Port Architects. Sophie studied as an undergraduate at the University of Bath before undertaking her Master's of Architecture at the University of Sheffield where she graduated with distinction. Her experiences in several small to medium architecture practices, as well as for a large main contractor, developed her interest in the topic of diversity in architecture.