INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGIES FOR ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES

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Abstract

Globalization is especially affecting the profession of the architect. The increasing complexity related with regulations, technology, environmental and production needs is modifying the professional skills required. The mobility of architects has been a key factor in the restructuration of the labour market within the architectural profession as a result of the dysfunctions introduced by the recent international crisis that particularly affected the construction sector. These factors and many others have a clear impact on the internationalization process of architectural degrees in Spain. Changes can be gathered into two large groups: first, the need to internationalize the curriculum profile in the training of architects; second, the vanishing of the frontiers and the increasing displacement of students outside their country seeking for qualitative formation.

This paper collects all these aspects, trying to reflect the challenges, difficulties, opportunities and advantages inherent to the process that is happening, based on the real experience of transformation carried out by the degree of Architecture at the Superior School of Technical Education of the University CEU UCH. Some of the topics to be addressed are: international practices, inside and outside the Erasmus/Leonardo programs; the international meetings or international weeks as a tool of internationalization at home of the curriculum of both students and teachers; the process of curricular transformation and the incorporation of English for Academic Purposes; the adjustments to deal with the multi-culturalism of students with very different backgrounds; and the need to adjust the curriculum.

Keywords: Architecture, Internationalization, Internships, International Weeks, Multiculturalism.

1 OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY ARCHITECTURE EDUCATION

We live in a g lobalized world, it is an indisputable fact. The results of globalization include “the integration of research, the use of English as the lingua franca for scientific communication, the growing international labor market for scholars and scientists, the growth of communications firms and of multinational and technology publishing, and the use of information technology” [1].

All this is affecting the professional profiles of many professions and, consequently, the curricular profiles of the associated teaching. A profession that is suffering more alterations in this direction is possibly the architect. In Spain, the profession of the architect has been traditionally developed in more or less local areas, with the exception of a few architects with an international projection. In the past, the knowledge of the circumstances of the local market, the direct contact with customers and the adaptation to fragmentary regulations and local specificities favoured this situation.

Increasingly, however, the changes in the working environment mean that geographical frontiers of work are opened up and, at the same time, there is a need for greater adaptation of future professionals. These modifications increase the complexity of the professional exercise due to the normative, technological changes and of the tools of production. This increase in complexity is leading to an increase in the average size of architectural firms; a large number of them are becoming larger, and this allows them to intervene in larger markets at both European and global levels.

There have been several circumstances in the European Union that favour this internationalization: free movement of people is fundamental to understanding this process; enhancing the exchange and opening up of national labour markets from programs funded by the European Union; the constant trend towards the unification of European regulations in order to achieve harmonization and avoid local specificities; or the harmonization of university studies to favour the mobility of students, are some of these factors.
The free movement of people within the European Union is the great political advance on which any current mobility plan is based. It was the mainstay of the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 but its implementation and development was complex, passing through a first phase through the so-called "Schengen area", which included only a few countries, to be developed legally through European Directive 2004/38/EC.

The European Directive 2005/36/EC, which regulates the system for the recognition of academic and professional qualifications of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area (including Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), regulates a specific procedure so that persons qualified to practice a profession in one Member State and who wish to have their professional qualifications recognized in another Member State, can practice their profession there. This Directive also regulates the procedure for developing in each country the national legislation that applies this supranational regulation.

However, each country has a specific model for the organization of qualifications related to the construction sector, as a consequence of different traditions and professional models. The figure equivalent to the Spanish architect, is atomized in multiple professionals who have academic formation, professional attributions and different responsibilities depending on the country. Although the European Directive 2005/36/EC (as subsequently amended by DE 2013/55/EU) established regulated professions and tried to harmonize the academic contents of university degrees leading to that profession, the reality is that considers just a few, almost all of them in the field of health, and did not enter into the reorganization of the professional powers in the member countries to make them compatible.

Thus, the only regulated profession in the construction sector covered by the Directive is Architecture, and already in the initial considerations (in particular No. 28) it says: "National regulations in the field of architecture and on access to and the pursuit of the professional activities of an architect vary widely in scope. In most Member States, activities in the field of architecture are pursued, de jure or de facto, by persons bearing the title of architect alone or accompanied by another title, without those persons having a monopoly on the pursuit of such activities, unless there are legislative provisions to the contrary."

Therefore, what the Directive harmonizes are the minimum contents to obtain the title of Architect and that it is recognized in the countries of the European Union, but not the professional performance associated with that degree. That is, the title of Architect is recognized in any country, but what can or cannot do from a professional point of view remains regulated by the legislation of each country. This area remains the national sovereignty of each Member State, and depends as we explained, on different traditions, legal regulations or pressures from other professions.

But beyond the particular European circumstances, we live in a globally connected reality in which information is available in real-time and at any distance. Nowadays an architect can digitally visit any location in which he intends to intervene in a virtual way from his place of work; you can see the place from the sky and approaching the ground to cover it on your computer.

Also the physical mobility has been increased exponentially. Sometimes it is easier, faster and cheaper to catch a plane and travel many hundreds or even thousands of kilometres to another country than to travel locally an intermediate distance of just a few hundred kilometres.

Language barriers are also rapidly dissolving with an international variant of the English language acting as a professional, teaching and research lingua franca.

An important consequence of these circumstances is the modification of the profile of architect required by the companies to join their work teams. The mobility of architects has been a key factor in the restructuring of the labour market within the profession as a result of the dysfunctions introduced by the recent international crisis that has particularly affected the construction sector.

All these factors, and many others more local or particular, are having a clear impact on the process of internationalization of university studies of architecture in Spain. These changes can be grouped into two large blocks: the first is the need to internationalize the curriculum profile in the training of architects; the second is the opening of borders in the training process with the more and more habitual displacement of students outside their country of origin for their formation, and the consequent cultural change (and exchange) given within the groups of students that we form.

This situation allows us to ask ourselves some important questions: What are the challenges, difficulties, opportunities and advantages inherent in the process being experienced? What are the
appropriate strategies and tools to deal with these changes? What consequences have these changes and how we react to them?

In the bachelor degree of Architecture of the University CEU Cardenal Herrera already have been given many of the mentioned changes and therefore we can use the experience acquired in the last 5 years as a case study on which to evaluate the possibilities tested and to take some Conclusions.

2 INTERNATIONALIZATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As pointed by J. Knight [2], “while universities and colleges have clearly shown increased interest in and commitment to internationalization, the question now facing them is how to sustain this interest and turn the commitment into effective strategies”.

A comprehensive categorization of possible on- and off-campus strategies for internationalizing the curriculum has been gathered by R. Latiner [3] including: diversify the number of modern language programs; target all disciplines, even those that need extra support; use the experiences of international students to secure international literacy; infuse international perspectives into lesson plans and course activities; introduce new course content; focus on systemic changes.

The internationalization of the teaching of architecture in Spain presents certain difficulties that we can link with their respective challenges. It also, of course, implies advantages derived from the opportunities open to both students and teachers. Some are generic and, therefore, shared with other specialties; others are specific to the teaching of architecture.

One of the difficulties is the lack of motivation on part of the national students to open up or adapt to an international orientation. As Soria and Troisi [4] remark it is necessary “to examine why some students are more likely to engage in global/international activities than other students and seek to remove barriers for all students to participate in these activities”.

Although it is a fact clearly backward, still a considerable percentage of the students of architecture accede to the studies with perspectives rooted in the culture of the architect as a local agent that does not work outside its regional, county or even municipal scope. These situations are due to the previous influence of relatives dedicated to the profession or with trades linked to the field of construction, which in our country has had a very strong local dynamics until a recent past. The challenge underlying this situation is precisely to motivate these students to join the new dynamics and make them understand that, even from a geographically limited professional environment, cultural expansions are occurring so quickly that it is impossible not to assume an internationalized market and international production systems.

Another of the great handicaps of our educational system is the low level of training in foreign languages, including English, which continues to condition some of the national students. This factor is also in decline, but we are still far from situations like those in other countries where bilingualism between mother tongue and English is practically complete in the students that accede to the university. One of the challenges of higher education in Spain is precisely to make it compulsory for students to reach high minimum skills of second and third languages during university formation. This challenge will disappear as the previous level with which students gain access to the university advances. At the moment, the process of internationalization of studies is also an important opportunity in this direction that becomes an advantage for those universities that know how to take advantage of it.

Another starting condition that is variant and sum of the two previous ones has to do with the little family tradition of international mobility, a situation inherited by a part of the national students. This situation is also in sharp decline, and understood as both cause and consequence of the two previous ones it will decrease proportionally to that they do.

At the moment, according to the study Education at a Glance of 2015 [5], published by the OECD, Spain is one of the countries that receives the least foreign students, with a notable number coming from France, Italy, and Colombia. That is, geographical proximity, culture, or language. These values must be maintained and strengthened, while an effective communication on the quality of our education is initiated in parallel.

We cannot forget that these same conditions are shared partially, on a scale and with a very different scope, by Spanish university teachers. In the case of teachers, the socio-cultural level greatly attenuates these shortcomings, but it does not prevent certain reticence or prejudice regarding the
benefits of the internationalization of teaching. On the one hand there is a certain reluctance to change; on the other hand, the language requirement for teaching at a university level is much higher than what the student can be required to receive. The teacher is faced with the abyss of the mental re-composition that involves the double recycling of the language internationalization: oral fluency and specificity of the vocabulary to be used. This situation is forced even in those cases in which the processes of internationalization are more delayed. Research is also increasing the language requirements of English as vehicular language for university faculty. All this leads us to the challenge of how to enhance the language skills of our teaching staff. It also opens the door to the opportunity to increase the mobility of teachers, and the engagement of new teachers with high language skills and international curricular professional experience.

Language problems also affect foreign students. On the one hand the level of English is sometimes not ideal for following the evolution of the teachings; on the other hand, in some cases, the lack of command of the Spanish language conditions the integration of the students in the life of the country and the management of the day-to-day problems. The latter is especially sensitive when it involves basic administrative procedures, such as obtaining residence permits, visas, academic documentation, or even in situations of medical emergency. As it was pointed by Swales, Barks, Ostermann and Simpson [6], we have that writing and reading requirements in English are much more complex in architecture than in other areas, especially in courses as Theory and History of Architecture, while the architecture schools have traditionally been more flexible in terms of English-language admissions requirements, doubtless connected with a general perception that architects communicate primarily through visual means.

On the other side of the scale are the challenge of spreading Spanish as a third language and the opportunity for foreign students, non-Spanish speakers, who come to our country to learn one of the most spoken languages in the world that gives access to a wider labour market. Faced with this problem, it is crucial, on the one hand, to find an idiomatic balance of the curricular part in English with the offer of learning support classes of the Spanish language, and on the other hand, give integral support to the students to manage their cultural integration and administrative support and management adapted to their reality and their needs. All this necessarily implies the participation of teachers but also a reconversion in the administrative functioning of the university and consequently the skills and availability of administrative staff. The latter implies some greater resistance even than those that can be found in the teaching staff, a problem whose resolution requires, in addition, a longer time horizon.

Another problem that teachers face when managing a group of international students with very different origin countries is the vast variation of basic knowledge that students have. This circumstance can be minimized by significantly increasing entry requirements or by performing sufficiently restrictive access examinations. The latter is only possible when it comes to careers with high international demand, such as medicine, but this is not the case with architectural degrees. In the present case, although the offer of architectural education with a consolidated international profile is scarce in Spain and not sufficient at European level, the general offer of the degree is high compared to the demand, which makes it difficult to handle excessively restrictive criteria. On the other hand, even a levelling access test does not eliminate certain specific asymmetries of students in certain subjects, especially the basic ones, such as physics and mathematics. Nor is it possible to ignore the differences between learning methodologies which students are used to. All this poses a challenge when conducting an initial grading of students, well before joining the university, either in the first two semesters, to avoid failure and consequent desertion of studies. This circumstance also provides us with a clear opportunity for a methodological review of the functioning of the lessons taught, which in the case of architecture are of particular importance due to the structural changes in the performance of the profession, the associated knowledge, the necessary skills and the methodology to apply all of them.

More specifically, there is a problem related to the curricular differences in duration, orientation and contents existing between the teachings of the architecture in diverse places of the world. These variations imply aspects related to the structure of the studies and their mandatory contents, but also with their more artistic or more technical curricular orientation, and consequently the variations in the professional training and prerogatives that students have at the end of their formation. The teaching of architecture in Spain has an important technical tradition based, fundamentally, on a strong component of constructive and structural aspects. This specificity is an added difficulty in the adaptation of the international students, intensified by the compulsory basic mathematics and physics that are non-existent in most of the architecture degrees of the rest of the world (or at least they are
much more nuanced). But from another point of view, if managed and oriented properly, this difference offers a very important curricular and professional advantage, and an opportunity of distinction in the offer that other countries cannot easily give, and to which must be added the consolidated international prestige of Spanish architecture.

Likewise, the difficulties of coexistence between national and international students must be addressed. As J. Knight [7] points out “a long-standing myth is that more foreign students on campus will produce more international culture and curriculum” while on certain occasions “international students feel marginalized socially and academically and often experience ethnic or racial tensions” and sometimes “domestic undergraduate students are known to resist, or at best to be neutral about undertaking joint academic projects or engaging socially with foreign students – unless specific programs are developed”.

All change produces resistance and this especially affects the relationship between students during the internationalization process of a degree, which is the most delicate period. It is imperative to avoid the formation of segregated groups of students by nationality, maximizing cultural integration and exchange as inherent advantages to the process itself, making students understand this point. This is more complicated when there are language barriers or large imbalances between groups of students of different nationalities. In the sense of cultural integration, although seemingly contradictory, it is easier to manage a particularly heterogeneous group than major groups of differentiated nationalities. The need to find a common lingua franca of understanding avoids the formation of differentiated groups and helps the local integration of international students, even from the perspective of acceptance by the nationals. Therefore, the coexistence of national and international students implies certain management difficulties that can be amply compensated by the integration facilities of the international students if certain dynamics are favoured in the group. This opens up opportunities for outside communication regarding the inherent advantages of studying in an environment of great cultural and idiomatic diversity and the readiness it gives students to work in the future in multiple environments with complex cultural situations, improving the skills of working in international teams.

The same can be applied to the problem of adapting international students to local ways of life in aspects such as schedules and eating habits, which can be especially marked in our country. It is not the same that the foreigner adapts to the particularities of our way of life and our schedule when it comes to Spain on holidays, than being able to assume it for his internalized daily work habits. In this aspect, especially if the group is particularly heterogeneous, there may be irreconcilable differences that need to be managed through agreements, commitments and meeting points in which everyone must give in part. Culture shock, if well managed, can be redirected as an opportunity for exchange and cultural discovery. It is also possible to take advantage of the capacity and habit that exists in our country in the reception of foreigners for tourism as a point of attraction and call for international students. Undoubtedly, in addition to the cultural motivations, we enjoy important advantages related to the climate and the tourist infrastructures.

There are also important cultural differences according to the country of origin that affect aspects such as religious beliefs, social relations, clothing, or how to use public spaces and collective equipment; Serve as an example the management of toilets with different habits of use that can generate anomalous situations. To all this we have to add the stress that usually produces the displacement of the familiar environment and that can be more accentuated in the case of international students. We should note that the distance factor hinders the mobility of students for the prompt return home during the semester, a fact that does not happen with national students offshored from their city of origin.

In short, the process of internationalization of the degree, beyond the difficulties described, opens windows of opportunity that, if properly exploited, allow greater versatility of the professional future, improving the curricular adaptation to the existing and future reality, allowing a greater Capacity for exchange and joint work with other universities around the world and improving the competitive capacity in a university system increasingly oriented towards internationalization and excellence.

As we have already mentioned, we can group the strategies, actions and tools focused on facilitating and optimizing the process of internationalization of a degree in two major groups: first, those that facilitate the curricular, organizational, and therefore internal transformation of the degree, to proceed to the internationalization of the national students; secondly, those that aim to facilitate the actual transformation of the composition of university students to a new, mostly international spectrum.
3 CURRICULAR INTERNATIONALIZATION. FROM LOCAL TO INTERNATIONAL

As we have already mentioned, one of the basic strategies of the internationalization process of a degree is to promote it from the curricular, idiomatic, mobility of national students, as well as international activities that occur in the University itself. The evolution of the definitions of comprehensive internationalization, internationalization of the curriculum and internationalization at home were collected by J. Beelen and E. Jones [8] and we keep the idea of Leask [9] that “Internationalization at Home is not an aim or a didactic concept in itself, but rather a set of instruments and activities ‘at home’ that aim to develop international and intercultural competencies in all students. Just as with internationalization of the curriculum in general, IaH is specific to the context of a discipline and, within that, to a program of study in a given university”.

Some possible ways to approach internationalization of the curriculum defined by J. Kight [2] are: the infusion of disciplines with international content; comparative approaches; issue-oriented approaches and interdisciplinary studies; area studies and civilizational approaches; international studies and intercultural studies; international development studies (theory and practice). In the CEU Cardenal Herrera University, different strategies and tools have been used in the last years to carry out this transition of the degree of architecture to an international profile.

One of the possibilities to begin to internationalize the curriculum in architecture is to look for international locations in which the students develop the design studios and workshops. The choice of cities within Europe allows the mobilization of the group of students to carry out field visits that allow understanding the work areas. These trips organized from the degree favour the student's perception of being prepared to practice professionally beyond borders. Programming the course to develop in cities such as Porto or Brussels, for example, has allowed students to compare cultural, topographical, environmental and regulatory realities different from those they are used to. The difficulties of travel and distance are compensated amply with the opportunities generated. Encounters, agreements and exchanges can be promoted simultaneously with the architecture schools of the selected cities, so that cross-exchange or even shared work on the same theme by all students takes place.

This type of initiative is not new, and it has been developing for a couple of decades through the Intensive Programs (IP) within the Erasmus program, and the specific workshops with selected students groups within the architecture schools. Perhaps the key to the difference of approach in the UCH is, on the one hand, the expected duration of these actions (generally shorter, around one or two weeks) that are rarely designed with the time horizon of the entire academic year; on the other hand, because the size of the group affected by the initiative, which in the case we referred was complete for the whole school and not only for a small group of students. The notion is that they were not short study abroad programs for a few but taking mentally and physically abroad the entire school of architecture. The annual term and the extension to all the students transform the operational approach of the academic year, and force to assume that the initiative has a strategic and inclusive character, and therefore it is perceived by the totality of students as something that directly affects them: their school is becoming international.

Other useful tools for transforming the curriculum profile have been, with no doubt, the European exchange and mobility programs, both for studies and for internships. From the old Erasmus and Leonardo to the present Erasmus+ programs, they have undoubtedly transformed the opportunities and lives of many European students. From the architecture degree at the UCH, an attempt has been made to enhance the use of these tools to improve the international training of students. To this end, we launched a pilot program of European fellowships for architectural internships (called BEPAD), rewarded the best students with the possibility of carrying out a training period in professional offices of architects of recognized prestige in several European countries. One of the difficulties for the students that do international internships is to be accepted by an architectural office. For four years, the BEPAD program has brought a competition among last year students rising 14 internships in prestigious European architecture studios, which had previously agreed to participate in the program. Offices such as Müller-Sigrist in Zurich, Cruz and Ortiz with their Amsterdam’s office, João Álvaro Rocha and Correia-Ragazzi in Porto, McCulough-Mulvin in Dublin or Aires Mateus in Lisbon have received some of the most outstanding students for six months or even one-year internships. This initiative generated a dynamic capable to motivate students to compete for access to one of these positions, increasing the perception of internationalization of the degree and the entailed advantages. In parallel to this initiative, we organized training workshops for all students for improving the access of the students into the international labour market. The workshops explained how to search for
appropriate destinations depending on the students’ abilities and interests, as well as how to prepare the material: CV, cover letter, portfolio, etc.

It was necessary to begin to accustom students to the presence of English in the classroom in the idiomatic sphere. One of the strategies implemented was using the international Weeks as a tool to achieve this. The International Weeks are usually focused in the context of European exchange for mobility of faculty and staff for training. The idea sought to take advantage of another of the modalities planned for the teaching staff, teaching assignments, to generate dynamics concentrated in time for visiting professors.

The iWeeks established a previous theme to develop during a week in which regular teaching stopped, so all students were immersed and involved in the activity. Once again, the compulsory nature, the transversality and verticality of the initiative made possible the communication of a defined institutional strategy for internationalization of the degree. Once established the theme the iWeek was announced through the usual channels of the Erasmus + program, and to our international partners. As a result, we obtained groups of teachers from a wide range of backgrounds and countries interested in moving with an Erasmus scholarship to participate in the iWeek. This experience has also allowed the teaching staff to share the classroom with teachers from many different backgrounds and be immersed in a full-time teaching activity in English, anticipating the transformation that involves international lecturing.

One of the challenges comes from some educators “who see the English for Academic Purposes movement as being unnecessarily passive in its acceptance of institutional practices and precepts” [5]. To deal with this situation another version of this type of tool was used: iWeek for teacher training. Under the title "Lecturing in English" we developed some intensive workshops that sought to compile teaching experiences in English for Academic Purposes. The first of these lecturing iWeeks took place specifically for architectural degree staff involved in the idiomatic transition to English. A visiting professor who was expert in communication and teaching through the English language was in charge of articulating this first workshop. Subsequently, and due to the success of the first initiative, a second iWeek in English lecturing was held open to all faculty members of the university. This second one was attended by numerous visiting professors and experts on the subject, and it was a wonderful opportunity for sharing experiences, tools and good practices. Since 2014, all new hires in the Degree of Architecture at CEU Cardenal Herrera University incorporate the requirement of English C1 or equivalent level.

4 STUDENTS INTERNATIONALIZATION. FROM INTERNATIONAL TO LOCAL

Most of the described above was modified as the process of substitution in the degree of Architecture of the national students by students of international origin took place. In a relatively brief period of just five years, the profile of the students according to their origin changed from exclusively local to 8 different nationalities, with national students as a small minority.

The School of Architecture and Design at the UCH CEU began a partial internationalization in 2008-2009 with the admission of the first international student, of Moroccan nationality. During the next three years we continued to receive Moroccan students, all of them educated in Spanish schools. This initial phase did not entail problems of integration since the students spoke perfectly Spanish and had been educated in our culture and values. Together with this group, two French students arrived in 2013-14.

In 2014 it is decided to intensify internationalization by offering bilingual training in English and Spanish, which would allow the expansion of the student market to non-Hispanic speaking countries. The result was the arrival of students from the Middle East and French-speaking Moroccans.

Finally, in 2015 it is decided to transform the training offer into 100% international and English-speaking, which has attracted students from 4 continents and 8 different countries.

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It was imperative to state what modifications were necessary to adapt the curriculum of the degree to the needs and profiles of the new international students, without losing the essence of the identity of the degree taught. Some of the challenges that had to be faced included the adaptation of the syllabuses and bibliography, not only idiomatically, but also referenced to the future expectations of the new students. This implied, among other things, the need to rapidly expand the bibliographic library funds with original material in English, confirming the idea that “librarians support increasingly global study and research and are well positioned to support trends in campus internationalization” [10].

One of the problems initially detected had to do with the tightness of knowledge among the different disciplines of the first course, since there was not a sufficiently transversal subject agglutinating all the learning objectives. This separation was perceived by international students as a learning handicap, and the response to this problem was a double teaching innovation project called Crossworks. The general approach of the Crossworks teaching innovation project was to search for themes that would facilitate the synergy and contact between the different disciplines of the first year. The idea was establishing these themes to produce a parallel approach into them from subjects as physics or maths, theory, drawing or design studio. The sharing of objectives and themes across all subjects facilitates the student's view of the transversal utility of the knowledge acquired in each subject and acts somehow similar to a basic case study methodology.

In order to promote these themes, it was developed an initiative with support in the study trip, called “Travel for learning”. The visit of built architectures has always been basic as a learning tool. Here, in addition to the usual benefits were added another two more specific: first, the intensification of the crossworks program with the perception by the student that the trip was a temporal playful milestone in the cross-cutting theme, a goal in itself; second, the use of the trip as a tool for achieving the integration of international students, and their adaptation to the local culture. In that way, they would perceive the trip as a specific added value in their training. Spain has a huge cultural and architectural heritage, both historical and contemporary, that can be used as added value for students who travel thousands of miles from their country of origin to study architecture.

Another of the specific handicaps detected was related to the more or less trouble of international students for adapting to the Spanish local culture and way of life: food schedules, lifestyles, administrative management and bureaucracy, etc. The implementation of English taught architectural degree eases the joint of international students with the most diverse backgrounds, but also implies that those students are less aware of the cultural shock ahead. Sometimes, the international student expects that the language support given at the university would be happening in the private sphere too, and finding out the opposite results in frustration and misfit.

One tool that helps to partially manage this integration is the free and compulsory Spanish language lessons. Those lessons add value to the degree and ease local integration. It is essential to integrate the lessons into the curriculum and the schedule to be perceived by students as a whole with the rest of their formation.

Another tool, with specific potential in the case of architectural studies, is the use of local cultural visits. The international students do not have previous base knowledge of the city in and, therefore, they are able to appreciate these short visits as an added value while they discover the new environment.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The adaptation of the teaching of architecture in Spain to an increasingly international reality seems inevitable. The departure point from local premises, although having a great quality tradition suffers from a lack of specific tools to ease the students’ adaptation to a global market. Internationalization is the right pathway when mobility is increasing as a consequence of increased geographical freedom.

Handicaps of this internationalization process can be seen as opportunities for action rather than limitations or problems. The process has resistance from the university community, but it is inexorable and must be understood in terms of being compulsory, specifically in architecture.

One of the fundamental objectives of the internationalization process of architectural degrees in Spain is related to the simultaneity of the two situations described above: the capacity of the degree to offer international skills to the national student and the integration of a greater number of international
students. As long as both situations happen simultaneously in the internationalization process, there will be more synergies.

Currently, this process has been undertaken mainly by some Spanish private universities for both undergraduate and master's degrees. On the other hand, public universities, benefited by more local captive students, are only now beginning to face the problem of student profile in architectural degrees. Some of these universities, the most farsighted, have been able to perceive the advantages of internationalization of master's studies. But we are still far from the theoretical potential established by the Bologna frame for greater European studies integration. Even before those objectives are met, we find that our degrees of architecture are expanding beyond European frontiers to reach a global dimension. The challenge is how and when we will be able to adapt to this new reality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper reflects a transition to internationalization in the Architectural Degree promoted by the university CEU Cardenal Herrera and sustained by the work of many professors and administrative staff, without whom it would have been impossible. Alfonso Díaz Segura was the former Deputy Director of Architecture at the CEU Cardenal Herrera University between 2011 and 2016, currently he is Coordinator attached to the Vice-Rector for International Relations at CEU UCH. Ricardo Merí de la Maza was the former Director of International Relations at CEU Cardenal Herrera University between 2013 and 2016, and previously International Relations Coordinator of the Technical School.

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