

A Study on the Effectiveness of Ethics Education of KIRA Education Board and Necessity of Professional Ethics Education of Architects

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Abstract

Professional ethics is necessary for architects to perform their job well as well as education and dedication. In this paper, I reviewed a role of ethics education for architects and the current ethics education in Korea. Professional ethics is a required code of conduct for profession, but also is considered as a concept containing belief, value, attitude or calling about a profession. Professional specialist should have higher ethical standards than general laborers do, because of their bigger influence on society. Therefore, the architect as a professional specialist behaves ethically for sure. KIRA (Korea Institute of Registered Architects) provides the code of ethics and the ethical education for architects. But it seems that there is little approach to the current educational situation. It is likely a professional ethics for architects, working sincerely and tuning requirements of a client with considerations for the public users of the building-to-be up properly. The mandatory ethical education since collage could be a solution for the professional ethics for architects, thinking about the public.

Keywords: *Ethics education of architects, Professional ethics, Profession ethics of architects*

1. Introduction

Architecture is a bowl in which people's lives are stored, and an idea where we store our food, clothing, and shelter. Architecture, however, supersedes the simple act of building as it provides a space and location for people to engage in a variety of activities and behavior. Today, this type of architecture is being planned and created by architects in front of our very eyes. Architects and the sometimes cumbersome topic of professional ethics is a good opportunity to rethink why architectural design work is necessary, what role it must perform, and how it's been carried out up until now.

This study intends to examine the effectiveness of KIRA's education board's ethics education, the professional ethics mentality architects must possess who work in the construction design industry, and the necessity of such education.

2. The concept of professional ethics

Professional ethics can be defined as a set of behavioral rules which regulate the type of ethical relationships that are regarded as optimal in professional activities.

The important thing here, as mentioned above, is that the goal of professional activities

Article history:

Received (January 12, 2017), Review Result (March 08, 2017), Accepted (April 26, 2017)

aren't confined purely to economic aspects such as livelihood maintenance, but is also connected to goals which have social and personal significance. Therefore, a set of rules that regulates ethical relationships is necessary in order for the economic, social, and humane significance of an occupation to be realized.

However, restricting professional ethics merely to the ethical issues individual professionals encounter in their occupational activities seems to be extremely limiting. This is because professional ethics typically is not only recognized as the ethical issues faced during occupational activities, but also as a concept comprised of the consciousness, convictions, and values of individual professions. In a broad sense, professional ethics incorporates all topics related to the ethics and values implied in roles and behaviors of a professional. In this manner, professional ethics shouldn't be understood simply as the application of a narrow theory of ethics, but as a broad concept that includes the ethical issues that arise in relationships between clients and professionals, and the influence professional transactional behavior on behalf of clients has on third-parties.

3. Architects and professional ethics

3.1. Professional ethics for architects

What are the ethical standards for architects? Architect A, commissioned by a building owner, has been providing design services to the client. The owner trusts A's professional capacity. For the building construction, the client has received written quotes for the project from a few candidate contractors, introduced through acquaintances. The owner asked A to make an objective assessment of the quotes and select the best contractor for the project. A analyzed and reviewed all the quotes carefully. A particularly focused on reviewing which company would meet the client's needs and requirements, guarantee the progress and quality of the project, provide the best post-project management while offering the best possible prices. A's conclusion was D Company. A presented the results of his review along with detailed explanations and recommended D to the client. However, there was important information that A did not mention to the client. The fact was that D was a company co-owned by him and his friend. Is A's deed unethical? Did A have to reveal the fact that among the companies who submitted the quotes, D was related to A? Or did A have to refuse the client's request if A knew that D had submitted a quote?

Currently, A is in trouble. The utilitarian would say that if A's conclusion brought the best result to the client, A would not need to reveal his or her personal secret. Deontology would demand that A reveal the truth regardless of the consequences. However, another thing to consider in this conundrum is that A performed the role of a specialist, which entails ethical responsibility. In other words, A, as an architect practicing in South Korea, should reveal the truth because he or she is obliged to be faithful to the client who has commissioned him or her to provide architectural design services.

3.2. Ethical regulations and professional discipline on architects

Korea Institute of Registered Architects (KIRA) enacts ethical regulations for architects, and its articles of association stipulate that the association can conduct projects on establishing the member's professional ethics as well as protecting, supporting and nurturing architectural copyrights for the achievement of the association's objectives. The regulations on ethics, which have the same binding force as the codes of ethics for architects, were established on October 23, 1965, and have been revised five times. Article 13 of the

Regulations on Ethics for Architects, which has been in effect since February 27, 2014, discusses the Ethics Committee for any violation of the Articles 1 through 12.

Accordingly, the Ethics Committee reviews the disciplinary actions and corrective measures against its members. Also, the Regulations on Ethics for Architects establish the Central Ethics Committee, which reviews cases in which members request for an re-examination of the disciplinary actions by KIRA; two or more members are involve in a dispute; there is a notification by the authorities concerned; there is a request a board of directors request; t there is a Chairman's request after deliberations of the board of governors ; and a problem has been detected during an inspection conducted for preventing poor construction. KIRA's criteria for determining disciplinary actions stipulate that if a member violates the Article 14 of the Regulations on Ethics or a member commits perfidious acts in competition with other members, KIRA shall suspense the membership rights for 12 months or terminates the membership, and if a member violates the Articles 6 and 12 of the Regulations on Ethics, KIRA shall terminate the membership.

3.3. Current status of ethics education in korea institute of registered architects

On October 17th 2012, the Korea Institute of Registered Architects (KIRA) announced the establishment of its affiliated Education Board (KIRAEB) in order to build up KIRA's capacity for developing architectural culture and to support future architects who will lead the architecture in Korea.

According to the revised Certified Architects Act of March 23rd 2013, practical education for architects has been mandated to enhance professional knowledge and technical ability required to perform architectural businesses, and the authority for such practical education can be consigned to the KIRA. Moreover, the revised Enforcement Decree of the Certified Architects Act of February 11th 2016 mandates architects to receive at least 40 hours of practical education in order to renew their registration pursuant to Article 18, Paragraph 5 of said Act (Certified architects shall renew their registration as prescribed by Presidential Decree within the extent of three years or more). The practical education for architects comprises group education and online education, and is classified into ethics education, professional education, and self-development program. The ethics education is conducted to prevent architects from falling under any of the subparagraphs under Article 30, Paragraph 3 of said Act (registration or renewal of qualification by fraud or wrongful means; violation of the declaration of ethics of architects; performance of work in violation of the scope of work; submission of a false statement of work performance, etc.; failure to perform architectural work in good faith; disclosure of any confidential information learned while performing their work to others or use of such confidential information for other purposes; committing an act of damaging dignity when providing an architectural work; founding or belonging to two or more architectural firms; and continuing to performing architectural work even after being suspended by disciplinary action). The ethics education includes educational programs on the social role and vocational ethics of architect, intellectual property rights, copyrights and construction disputes, architects code of ethics and legal obligations, and development of the social responsibility of architect. The educational programs authorized by the KIRA EB must be at least 60 hours in total for 5 years, including 5 hours of ethics education, 40 hours or more of professional education, and 15 hours or less of self-development. Except for the 40 hours of professional education, which is mandated by the Certified Architects Act, the remaining 20 hours of self-development and ethics education is not a legal obligation.

The KIRA has been demanding architects to receive 5 hours of education in 3 years since 2013 to improve their qualification as architects in the Architect Training Institute, for which

architectural ethics is allocated for 5 hours.

Table 1. Five Year Education Schedule in KIRA EB

Ethics Education	Professional Education	Self-Development	Total
5 hrs.	Over 40 hrs.	Under 15 hrs.	Over 60 hrs.

However, the allocated ethics education is not being conducted properly. The topics dealt with in the ethics education for the past four years could be identified through the KIRA homepage, but the information on lecturers, specific contents and details of the education program as well as the satisfaction and needs of architects for the education could not be confirmed through the KIRA. It was also found that some of the ethics education sessions conducted in several regions were reportedly unrelated to ethics education, and no proper instructions on the vocational ethics of architect were provided. Such sessions were only for killing time and the curriculum was disregarded.

The following shows the status of ethics education sessions conducted by the KIRA EB from 2013 to 2016.

Table 2. Ethics education sessions in KIRA EB from 2013 to 2016

Region	Number of Ethics Education Sessions			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
SIRA(Seoul)	7	8	12	12
DIORA(Daegu)	8	7	1	1
INKIRA(Incheon)			2	
KGIRA(Gyeonggi)	10			1
CIRA(Chungbuk)	1	2	1	1
CNKIRA(Chungnam)	1	1	1	
DIRA(Daejeon)				1
JBKIRA(Jeonbuk)		1	1	1
JNIRA(Jeonnam)		1	1	
GJKIRA(Gwangju)				1
KKBA(Gyeongbuk)	2	1	1	1
GIRA(Gyeongnam)		1	2	
UIRA(Ulsan)				1
BIRA(Busan)			7	2
JIRA(Jeju)	1	2	2	1
KIRA EB		5	3	4

4. Conclusions

As of December 31, 2014, we have 9,787 architects' offices and 14,127 architects in Korea. So, architectural design work is not going to be such a thing which is like waiting in a queue for a service such as grocery shopping or seeing a doctor. Recently, architects need jobs desperately and the benefits decrease because of the cost increase and the price bargain with clients. Moreover, architects have blamed more than before if a building has a problem or a defect after late 1990s. It is because our society have recognized the unlimited responsibility of architects rather than of constructors in case that careless disaster like building collapse happens. It seems related with a situation that people have had more information about construction process and known better before.

All issues related to architects' professional ethics arise from the relationship with clients. First, clients know little about design costs for the desired quality of a building. They have a vague idea about high quality of work while wanting to lower the design cost which is the price for the quality they want; most of the time, inexpensive designs are preferred if similar quality can be attained. Although standards on design costs are provided by the KIRA, the standards are nominal. Moreover, it is almost impossible for clients to assess their buildings by themselves according to the standards.

For these reasons, clients and architects often need to finish the work within an insufficient duration and violate related regulations and law. Architects end up accommodating all the unreasonable design conditions demanded by clients and are requested to deliver high quality outcomes at the same time. This is the current status of the construction design market inundated by low-cost orders. Furthermore, during the course of a design contract, architects need to meet the owners' daily requests to change design, which results in the situation where the final outcome is far different from the original intention. Architects are not social workers or philanthropists who serve our country or society. However, all constructions that they design are spaces for others. Clients may have paid the cost; however, architects cannot be free from the evaluation of other people on their work and use of the buildings from the moment the buildings are erected until they are demolished. Due to such public nature of buildings, architects are required to have more social responsibility and higher level of professional ethics than any other professionals and more strictly prohibited from working against public welfare or striving only for their self-interest and money.

As specialists in all areas of architecture, registered architects have the responsibility to make decisions that would place public interest above all the other interests for public safety, welfare, and health. They need to be conversant with some 30 to 50 related laws and regulations depending on the size of the project and the conditions and circumstances of the construction site. They also need to conduct appropriate legalistic reviews. People who have not taken special training in architecture cannot have knowledge on the laws, legal procedures, legal reviews, relevant authoritative interpretations, and administrative procedures. Registered architects in South Korea are specialists in construction who are certified by the government and have secured an exclusive position in our society. The government has no reason to grant such a specialized certification if architects are allowed to make decisions based on their personal interest. The only people who can deceive or incite clients to make unethical decisions, apply all the possible scenarios to pursue their own interest, and make unethical decisions and attempt to circumvent the law in designing buildings. For this reason, higher level of professional ethics is expected from architects compared to other professionals.

We believe that professional ethics education programs for architects in KIRA Education Board should be strengthened while improving the self-esteem of registered architects in Korea, the professionals who work for the public. Furthermore, systematic education to

promote professional ethics should also be provided to college students who major in architecture by revising the current educational system.

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