



UN-HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS 2009



CASE STUDIES

PLANNING EDUCATION

PIONEERING OF SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION: UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

The School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia defines its mission as advancing the transition to sustainability through excellence in integrated policy and planning research, professional education and community service. It sees its primary challenge as the need to give practical meaning to the concept of ecologically sustainable social and economic development and to explore local and global paths towards achieving it. It approaches this task through practiced inter-disciplinarity. The integration of teaching, research, capacity-building and practice is oriented towards providing the knowledge and skills required to ensure the viability of communities and regions in a rapidly evolving world. From the university's perspective, adapting to global ecological change and economic rationalization requires a new generation of planners who are dedicated both to understanding the issues and acting to resolve them in a wide variety of public and private settings.

The university began pioneering work on sustainability before the concept was widely used, as early as the mid 1970s, championing notions of adaptive environmental management. By the time of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the university's planning school had established a Centre for Human Settlements and had developed a well-known research programme focused on sustainability ideas and issues. The centre now partners with the university's Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability. Current projects include investigations of ecological footprints of countries, and sustainability impact assessments of land development projects. The school is moving towards objectives of addressing sustainability implications for urban governance, potential for using new media to increase public awareness of sustainability issues, and deepening research by examining intrinsic sustainability issues of resilience, infrastructure and public service systems and ecological stocks.

The university's planning school prides itself on the fact that its commitment to sustainability has fostered a climate of productive disagreement and greater intellectual interaction among faculty, as they struggle to resolve the tensions inherent in operationalizing cultural, economic and environmental sustainability.

Source: based on correspondence with Thomas Hutton (Vancouver, Canada), 2009

CHALLENGES FOR PLANNING EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

Challenges include:

- keeping pace with the development of new technical expertise (such as geographic information systems, computer-aided design, transportation or real estate modelling, etc.) and with the equipments (hardware, software) required to perform relevant planning analyses;
- expanding negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution and consensus-building skills;
- complementing the rational planning model with participatory, advocate, democratic and collaborative planning models, as needed;
- coordinating multidisciplinary teams effectively with various forms of knowledge and knowledge production;
- addressing metropolitan and regional planning and governance;
- more effective responses to the growing environmental challenges in the region and the world;
- more effective responses to the growing socio-spatial justice challenges in the region;
- forging more collaborative relations with community and governmental organizations involved in planning so that knowledge produced in higher education can improve practice and vice versa; and
- greater emphasis on ethics education so that planning professionals can become more effective agents in combating corruption and other professional and governmental vices.

Source: Irazábal, 2008a

PLANNING SUSTAINABLE CITIES

PLANNING EDUCATION IN GHANA: THE NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Planning education in Ghana started in 1958 with the establishment of a planning programme in the School of Architecture, Planning and Building at the Kumasi College of Arts, Science and Technology, now the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The programme entered students for the intermediate examinations of the Royal Town Planning Institute (UK). After passing the examination, students were sent to universities in the UK to obtain full professional qualifications. Even though this practice no longer prevails, staff are still enrolled in PhD programmes abroad. The department is currently the only university department officially recognized to run planning programmes in the country

The undergraduate planning curriculum combines instruction in physical design with instruction in policy development, while the postgraduate programmes focus on policy development at the macro-level, as well as development planning and management at the grassroots level. At various points in the history of planning education in the country, emphasis has been placed on physical design or policy development, according to prevailing concerns. In the current curriculum, there is an attempt to respond to the issues related to decentralization, the reduction of poverty, and the social, economic and spatial development needs of human settlements within the context of urbanization and the challenges associated with it. The department currently runs the following academic programmes:

- BSc in Development Planning and in Human Settlement Planning;
- MSc in Development Planning and Management and in Development Policy and Planning;
- MPhil in Planning and Development Studies; and
- PhD in Planning and Development Studies.

With a total student strength of about 700 and 21 staff during the 2007/2008 academic year, the staff–students ratio stands at 1:30 and 1:3 at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, respectively. With the assistance of partner institutions, the school has been able to undertake successful staff development and student programmes. Although there is no official accreditation programme in place, the Ghana Institute of Planners plays a vital role in curriculum design and the provision of external examiners to moderate the planning programmes offered by the university.

To a large extent, the Department of Planning has been able to respond to the needs of the planning profession in Ghana by producing graduates to meet national development needs. There is, however, an urgent need for urban planners to address the physical development and management of towns and cities. In order to do this effectively, there is a need for adequate resources in terms of teaching and learning materials and space, resources for exchange with other professionals for experience sharing, and practical training of students with professional planning institutions and firms.

The experience from Ghana illustrates that it is possible for planning curricula in developing countries to respond to the contextual issues and paradigm shifts. However, limited resources are seriously influencing the quality of facilities to promote teaching and learning, the orientation of planning to the development context of the country, and the relevance of planning curricula to the developmental needs of the country. The Ghana experience suggests that, for planning education to be effective, there is a need to develop the capacity of planning educators and involve professional associations and bodies in the reshaping of planning curricula. Also important is the need to network with other planning schools in developing countries in order to increase the potential for planning education to respond to the needs of the 21st century.

Source: Inkoom, 2008

URBAN PLANNERS BEING SIDELINED FROM URBAN PLANNING: THE CASE OF SOUTHERN ASIA

Urban planning education in Southern Asia is still based in a tradition dominated by architecture and civic design rather than the multidisciplinary approach adopted in many other countries. The planning education curricula in the region thus continue to lay emphasis on physical design solutions without much consideration of the financial, fiscal and administrative dimensions of urban planning.

Having been moulded through such a limited module, planning graduates are ill equipped in skills that are needed to comprehend and resolve problems rooted in the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the region. This leads to the isolation of the physical planners from mainstream planning and development processes.

For example, planning in India at the national and sub-national levels is geared to sectoral economic planning where physical planners have very little to contribute. At the settlement level, the concerned sectoral departments and development authorities or special purpose agencies mostly implement development works. These agencies generally prefer to involve architects and engineers rather than urban planners since the former are more useful for the kind of work that they carry out. The planners' main contribution is thus limited to preparing master plans for towns and cities. But almost all of the few hundred master plans that they have prepared remain largely unimplemented. This further diminishes the creditability of physical planners in the eyes of the decision-makers and the people at large.

Source: Ansari, 2008

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