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The Evolution and Pedagogy of Urban Planning Education

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2.1 Introduction

Urban and regional planning is a specialized activity which is focused on the design and development of land use and the built environment. It is a multi-disciplinary profession that concerns the orderly development of human settlements and the welfare of the community. The discipline deals with the planning, provision and maintenance of infrastructure to improve the quality of life of the people. It is thus a dynamic profession with the primary objective of improving the welfare of communities by creating a safe, equitable, healthy and efficient places for people to live, work and recreate.

Urban and regional planning is known by various nomenclatures such as urban planning, city planning, physical planning, town and country planning, urban and rural planning, amongst others. It consists of a body of knowledge which emerged in the 19th century and which evolved over the years as a distinct field of human endeavour. As a

multi-disciplinary profession, it borrows and shares concepts, theories and practice with other disciplines in the built environment such as geography, architecture, estate management, building technology and land surveying. However, amongst the disciplines in the built environment, urban planning is regarded as a broad-base profession which provides the template or prepares the ground for other professional activities through land use planning in human settlement.

Urban planning education is a practice of teaching and learning urban theory, studies, and professional practices (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2019). Over the years, urban planning profession is sustained by specialized teaching and learning programmes which were designed to pass the knowledge from one generation to the other. The various teaching programmes are based in educational institutions across the globe. According to McClinchey (2013), as cited in Olufemi and Jimoh (2013), education institutions are responsible for the transmission of particular knowledge, skills, values and attitudes deemed desirable in a given society. Planning education provides the knowledge, skills, training and development through teaching and learning (Olufemi and Jimoh, 2013). Hence, planning education delivered through both formal and informal platforms has produced crops of urban planners worldwide and it is central to the sustenance of the profession. This paper considers urban planning education as a professional activity. It examines its genesis, scope and contents as well as the challenges facing urban planning education in developing nations and Nigeria in particular.

2.2 The History of Urban Planning Education

The history of urban planning education cannot be completely divorced from that of the evolution of urban and regional planning as a professional activity. In the pre-classical and the classical periods, quite a number of cities in the Egyptian and Hindus valley civilization

exhibited some archaeological features of laid down (planned) houses. Evidences of planning were discovered in the ruins of cities in China, India, Egypt, the Mediterranean as well as the South and Central America (Fainstein, n.d). According to Wikipedia encyclopedia (2019), some cities of many Central American civilizations featured city planning as evidenced from the planning of sewerage systems and running water. In the Medieval Europe, Elburg city in the Netherlands also featured elements of planning based on the cadastral plan of 1830. Between the 9th and 14th centuries, several new towns in Europe were built while many other were expanded with newly planned extensions (Ferreira *et al.*, 2015).

In Africa, the indigenous conceptions of forms and functions were evident before colonialism started between 1884 and 1885. Indigenous African villages and cities had ordered structure as the different land uses – markets, religious sites, farms and communal assembly spaces existed in ordered and rational ways (Okpala, 2009). In Nigeria, ancient cities like, Benin, Zaria and Kano featured elements of pre-colonial planning with land use arrangement following the socio-political structures of the communities.

Modern urban planning commenced with industrial revolution in the late 19th century which witnessed tremendous urban development with all the associated sanitation, health and housing problems. According to Amanda Erickson (2012), the idea of modern urban planning began to crystalize in America as a result of the efforts of three different groups of thinkers – the architects, public health officials, and social workers. At that time, the architects were concerned with the design of cities, the public health professionals focused on infrastructure for water and waste for disease control while the social workers were concerned with cleaner tenements in cities to improve the lives of the urban residents. The ideas of the three groups

of thinkers were brought together during the industrial revolution and consequently, urban reforms started as a reaction against the poor physical development and the social disorder of the industrial city. Thus, modern urban planning was driven by the desire for an ideal city with good sanitation, provision of better facilities, good environment and aesthetics.

The evolution and development of the pre-classical, classical, medieval, modern and contemporary urban planning coincided with the development of a body of knowledge and skills to practice and sustain urban planning. Around 1900, theorists began to develop urban planning models to mitigate the consequences of the industrial age (Fainstein, n.d). For instance, Sir Ebenezer Howard developed an urban planning concept and imitated the Garden City movement in 1898. The works of Ebenezer Howard, Patrick Geddes, Le Corbusier, etc., contributed immensely to the development of a body of knowledge in urban and regional planning. These and many other theories, concepts, skills and practices developed in the field of urban planning over the years have been used to train Town Planners in order to sustain the profession.

Although the evolution and development of urban planning practice and the training of personnel in the field have run concurrently over the years, the history of formal urban planning education could be traced to the establishment of School of Landscape Architecture in Harvard University in 1898. At the Harvard University, the School of Landscape Architecture began to offer classes in city planning to mark the commencement of planning education in the United States of America. Following from this, urban planning emerged as a scholarly discipline in the 1900s. In the United Kingdom, the first academic planning program began at the University of Liverpool in 1909. Thereafter, the Town Planning Institute was established in 1914 with

the mandate to advance study of town planning and civic design (Royal Town Planning Institute, 2013). This pioneering beginning in the in America and the Great Britain was followed by the establishment of many other planning schools across the globe. The first full fledged urban planning programme in America was established at Harvard University in 1924. This was followed by the establishment of several other planning schools at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1932), University of Washington (1936), Columbia University (1945), University of Oklahoma (1957) and Michigan State University (1957), amongst others. As at 2016, North America had 86 accredited urban and regional planning programmes in 75 universities.

Apart from the United Kingdom and USA, many other parts of the world, including Africa, South America, Asia and the Caribbean also witnessed the commencement and development of planning schools and the teaching of urban planning education. According to UN-Habitat (2009) there were about 550 universities offering urban planning degrees with over 13, 000 academic staff in planning schools worldwide. These figures have since increased tremendously in the last one decade as the world witnessed the establishment of more planning schools in developing countries which initially underserved by urban planning schools.

In Nigeria, the commencement of formal urban planning education could be traced to 1959 when a Town Planning course was started in the Town Planning Division of the Ministry of Lands, and Housing under the Western Regional Government (NITP, 2016). The Town Planning course was later transferred to the Technical College in October, 1961. Thereafter, urban planning education started in 1962 with a 3-year Sub-Professional Diploma in town planning mounted at the Technical College, Ibadan, now the Polytechnic of Ibadan (Olujimi and Enisan, 2015). In 1972, Ordinary National Diploma

(OND) programmes in town planning were mounted in Yaba College of Technology and Kaduna Polytechnic while about 12 more Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology offering town planning courses were established in 1977 (Olujimi, 1999 as cited in Olujimi and Enisan, 2015). The diploma course run at the Polytechnics and Colleges of Technologies were meant to train middle level technical manpower in Nigeria. Aside from these diploma programmes, Master Degree programmes in urban planning were also introduced at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaira in 1972 and University of Ibadan in 1981. The degree programmes were aimed at training higher level policy/executive manpower in urban and regional planning in Nigeria.

Over the years, urban planning schools have grown in number in Nigeria. As at 2019, there are about 38 Polytechnics and 28 Universities offering urban planning programmes in the country (see Appendix 1). These institutions offer various levels of urban planning programmes and they have trained and graduated a lot of students who are now practitioners in the field of urban planning.

2.3 The Scope and Pedagogy of Planning Education

Urban planning is a broad and interdisciplinary field which cover diverse subject areas. The early planning schools were usually small and they were housed in the department of geography, engineering and architecture. Thus, the discipline shares basic concepts, theories and some academic contents with geography, engineering, architecture and other disciplines in the built environment. The discipline's theoretical core, being somewhat amorphous, is better defined by the issues it addresses than by any dominant paradigm or prescriptive approach (Fainstein, n.d).

Although urban planning is regarded as a general discipline, it has evolved a distinctive scope of practice over the years. The scope of

urban planning covers many areas of interest which include land use planning, land economics, environmental and recreation planning, housing, real estate, community development, economic development, urban heritage, regional development, urban design, planning law and administration, professional practice, transportation planning, geographic information system (GIS), sanitation and health, statistics, urban violence, good governance, amongst others. These broad subject areas contained in the urban planning programmes across the world address issues relating to the effective development and management of human settlements.

Urban planning is taught at different academic levels in many countries of the world. The discipline is taught the Diploma, Bachelor degree (B.Sc./B.Tech.), Postgraduate Diploma degree, Master's degree and Doctorate levels. The diploma courses (Ordinary National Diploma, Higher National Diploma and Full Professional Diploma) are 2-3 year programmes mounted by Polytechnics and Colleges of Technologies in Nigeria. The Bachelor degrees are 4-5 years undergraduate programmes, depending of the programmes of individual universities while the Master's and Doctorate (PhD) degrees are run for minimum of two and three years respectively in the Universities. While the Bachelor and Master's degrees involve taught courses with final year dissertations, the PhD degree is a research programme that provide greater insight into the issues, theories and practice of urban and regional planning.

In Nigeria, the conventional training programmes offered in the Polytechnics and Universities are complemented by other informal levels of urban planning education. These include the Postgraduate diploma programme run by the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), the Mandatory Continuing Professional Development

Programme (MCPDP) run by the NITP and Town the Planners Registration Council (TOPREC) and the Annual NITP conferences. The NITP postgraduate diploma is run as a bridge gap training programme that enable people with OND certificates and non-planners register with NITP. On the other hand, the MCPDP is an annual training programme that facilitates the re-training of urban planners in order to keep them abreast of contemporary issues in the profession.

The pedagogy of urban planning education at the different levels follows a historical trend that depict the evolution stages of urban planning practice. The traditional urban planning education was situated within the framework of architecture studies. At the early stages of urban planning practice, the teaching of planning education was focused on city or urban design. According to Amanda Erickson (2012), the first city planners in America were influenced by the focus on physical space as professors at the city planning school in Harvard University worked along with the school of architecture and the school of landscape design in faculties which were more or less interchangeable and collaborative. Thus urban planning practice was traditionally rooted in technical disciplines and oriented toward engineering knowledge which did not incorporate learning from social and environmental sciences (Marija Maruna *et al.*, 2018).

Generally speaking, urban planning programmes domiciled in architecture schools focused primarily on physical planning and design (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2019). In Africa, the urban planning educational systems was tied to the former British and French colonial master's planning tradition and technical and physical planning approaches dominated planning education for many years (UN-Habitat, 2009). Thus, the institution based planning education

remained largely vocational until after World War II (Beauregard, 2003 as cited in Olufemi and Jimoh, 2013).

Urban and regional planning is a dynamic profession that has continued to develop and improve its training curriculum based on advancement in human society. While preserving the traditional contents of the physical design and land use, the discipline has developed new knowledge and skills as well as new academic culture to address the challenges of the 21st century smart cities. According to UN-Habitat (2009), planning education has grown exponentially and diversified broadly in the last 100 years as most planning schools have re-conceptualized planning from a rational modernist perspective to include deliberative and participatory processes that advance civic engagement and promote citizen participation. In the contemporary time, the pedagogy of urban planning has transcended the teaching of planning as “top-down”, control-oriented and master planning approach that produced only technical manpower. The modern urban planning programmes are now designed to provide board based education with technical, managerial, policy and analytical research trainings that produce proactive and competent personnel for effective planning and management of modern human settlement. Leading planning schools have recognized the nature of 21st-century urbanization problems and are familiarizing their students with theory and tools related to sustainability, globalization, social equity, climate change and the full range of specializations that are involved in effective plan-making (UN-Habitat, 2009).

2.4 The Challenges of Planning Education

The Planning profession faces a number of challenges in the training of students and other practitioners in the field. The challenges are diverse as they assume different dimensions across nations of the

world, depending on the level of development. In the developing countries, several authors (see UN-Habitat, 2009; Ileleji, 2014 and NITP, 2016) have discussed common problems of poor funding, inadequate training personnel and infrastructure (computers, library, studio space, etc.), lack of interest in the course by some students who never chose the course, but admitted into planning department as alternative and, to these I have added the challenge of over population of urban planning class in the recent times. The issue of over population is a new paradox in some planning schools in Nigeria where we have over 150 students in a class. All these problems create poor teaching and learning environment which affect the quality of urban planners and effective management of human settlements in developing countries.

Beyond these common, but not universal challenges, one major challenge of urban planning worldwide is the issue of ensuring the necessary improvements and regular review of curricula to meet the challenges of cities of the 21st century. As it were, the rate of urbanization is on the increase and cities are growing at a super speed. The problems of the modern city are complex, diverse and the management approach is dynamic, requiring high planning skill and the inputs of multi-stakeholders. This situation requires an up to date training curriculum to train people in modern urban planning.

The challenge of curriculum review is not as serious in Europe, America and other developed nations of the world. In these countries, urban planning curriculum are being tinkered with on a regular basis to accommodate urban realities in the contemporary times. In the 1990s, the growing significance and concerns for environmental management led to the popularization of the sustainable development paradigm and its principles were included in the curricula of planning

schools throughout the developed world (Marija Maruna *et al.*, 2018). Urban planning education has evolved pragmatically over the years in the Western world. Leading planning schools in developed democracies have now incorporated integrated practice that requires technical, analytical and communicative skills, including participation and conflict resolution in a multicultural context (Frank *et al.*, 2014 as cited in Marija Maruna *et al.*, 2018).

The issue of creating an inclusive and smart city planning has moved beyond integrated land use and transportation planning to that of integrated land use planning that connects planning, ecology and natural resources for sustainable development. Emphasis in planning in the western world is now shifting to walkability and biking in cities which carry financial, environmental, health-related and social benefits (University of Arizona, n.d) and this is being reflected in the planning curriculum. However, in many parts of Africa, urban planning curricula still contain old land use models and theories developed in the early 19th century which do not address the problems of modern cities. According to Watson and Agbola (2014), planning problem in Africa is more of a faulty curricula which feeds wrong professional practice that seeks to produce Euro-American cities on the African continent, using old concepts and ideas that are no longer in vogue in the developed countries.

The problem of inadequate planning curriculum is aggravated by the challenges of content delivery in the pedagogy of planning education in Africa. There is no doubt that many planning schools are responding to the yearnings for curriculum update. Quite an appreciable number new programmes have accommodated contemporary issues in planning while some old programmes are being reviewed in line with the minimum standards recombined by

the regulatory bodies. In Nigeria, periodic accreditation of planning programmes by the National University Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and Town Planners Registration Council (NITP) has facilitated curriculum review in many schools to accommodate the teaching of current topics in Geographic Information System (GIS), Land Information System (LIS), remote sensing, quantitative techniques, computer and software applications, informality, urban crime and violence, ecological footprint, climate change and disaster management to mention a few. However, adequate delivery of these new contents remains a challenge. The problem is that, there is inadequate manpower in some planning schools to teach these new areas as majority of the old crop of academic staff do not have competence in these areas. Where these courses are serviced by other departments in an institution, the issue of application of the contents to urban planning remains a challenge. Thus, many students are yet to fully benefit from the new courses injected into the planning curriculum in our higher institutions of learning. This affects the quality of planners we produce and the outcomes of curriculum review are yet to manifest in our towns and cities.

Planning curriculum contents delivery approach is another challenge. The teaching methodology in many African planning schools is a similitude of what Abercrombie et al (2006) as cited in Olufemi and Jimoh (2013) described as conservative pedagogy in which the lecturers are the experts who have authority over the students as the direct learning subordinates and the curriculum seen as the relevant classroom knowledge as defined by teachers. Unlike the liberal pedagogy approach which considered learning as a process of developing the students' innate abilities and which tailors the curriculum towards guiding the students' owned development

potentials, the conservative pedagogy manipulates the students. Thus, students rather than acquiring the skills and knowledge to allow them solve problems, only acquire inapplicable knowledge of theory without practice and their focus is to graduate and get a job (Olufemi and Jimoh, 2013). The largely conservative pedagogical approach of delivering planning education does not allow the production of skilled and proactive urban planners who address urban planning issues from a problem solving approach. Thus, many of the products of our planning schools have not impact positively on the morphology of our cities and livelihoods of the citizens (Watson and Agbola, 2014).

2.5 Prof. S.B. Agbola and Planning Education in Nigeria: Some Contributions

There is no doubt that urban planning faces numerous challenges as considered in section four of this paper. However, several efforts have been made at various levels to overcome the challenges. As a fulfilled academic, Prof. S.B. Agbola has made commendable contributions to the pedagogy of planning education in Nigeria. With reference to deficient urban planning curriculum, he has made significant contributions to the improvement of urban planning curriculum in the country. At the Ibadan Planning School, he joined forces with senior academics like Professors Mabogunje, Aboyade and Poju Onibokun early 1980s to rejuvenate urban planning curriculum in Nigeria. Based on the premise that the planning education being taught in many of the existing institutions in the Nigeria was too technical and mechanistic with little academic and theoretical knowledge (Agbola, 2019), and need to train urban planners in the economics and the sociology of cities, the planning curriculum of the Ibadan Planning School was reviewed and improved upon to enhanced the training of modern urban planners in Nigeria.

Prof. S.B. Agbola made a significant proportion of his contributions to the pedagogy of planning at the graduate level. He facilitated the expansion of planning programme of the Ibadan Planning School from the initial Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP). He has contributed to the design of B. Sc., Masters and PhD programmes in urban and regional planning at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Perhaps, one outstanding contribution of Prof. S.B. Agbola to the pedagogy of urban planning education is in the area of training content delivery. With background in economic planning and armed with contemporary urban planning ideas, the professor pioneered the liberal pedagogy approach at the Ibadan Planning School. His teaching methodology was quite engaging, thought provoking and participatory. Thus, he has produced skilled, broad minded urban planners who can rise up to the challenges of the 21st century urban settlements.

2.6 Concluding Remarks and Way Forward

The different challenges of urban planning education raise a lot of concern. There is the need to appraise the planning education system in developing countries and Nigeria in particular in order to address the challenges of the 21st century cities. The need to rejuvenate planning curricula in Nigeria and other African countries was emphasized at the conference of Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) held in 2008. This is because the requirements of effective urban planning is now beyond the traditional planning confinements. Contemporary urban planning calls for a collaborative approach which involves different partners, interests and professionals coming together to deliberate the future of our cities. Therefore the existing old urban planning curricula in many of our institutions in Africa need to be overhauled to equip students with new skills that prepare them for collaborative urban management.

There is no doubt that the institutions hosting urban planning programmes in Africa have internal mechanisms for curriculum review and quality control. However, the existing mechanisms are sometimes cumbersome, slow or completely neglected. In Nigeria, there is the need for the regulatory bodies like NUC and TOPREC to facilitate and sustain planning curriculum review through the regular accreditation exercises. In addition to this, regular training and re-training of urban planning educators is important to keep teachers abreast to current thinking in urban and regional planning and to enable them deliver new modules in the curricula. The retraining programmes should include change in curriculum delivery approach. According to Olufemi and Jimoh (2013), the training method in urban planning need to move from conservative pedagogy to *paideia*, which is a system of learning that develops the self-reflective capacity of individuals in order to produce fully educated, intelligent and autonomous urban planners who adopt the problem solving approach and situate planning practice within the context of the needs the city and the community.

Situating modern urban planning within the context and need of the community is germane in Africa and other parts of the world. In Africa, for instance, the problems of informal, illegal, slum and squatter developments are peculiar features of most cities that require new competencies to deal with the challenges. Therefore, issues of informality, illegality and sustainable management of slum\squatter settlements need to be incorporated into the urban planning curricula, given the scale and enormity of these challenges in Africa (Wahab and Agbola, 2017).

There are no common core curricula or a universally-agreed guidelines for urban planning education across the world as planning schools do not agree on the competences professional planners should have

(Frank et al., 2014 and Mironowicz, 2015 as cited in Marija Maruna *et al.*, 2018). Perhaps this is due to the fact that urban planning should be done within the physical, socio-economic and cultural settings of individual countries. However, regardless of the requirements of local planning in individual countries, a general list of universal core competences for urban planning across the world is desirable. These core competencies should be determined, harmonized and constantly reviewed by national and international planning associations to keep urban planning curriculum current and practicable.

Practitioners across the world have realized the importance and the need for collaborative and multidisciplinary approach to urban planning. The European Council of Spatial Planners underscores the fact that professional town planners require training that develop their ability to identify problems and devise solutions from an interdisciplinary perspective (Marija Maruna *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, urban planning curricula in all parts of the world should be tailored towards a collaborative pedagogy that combines the academic, practical, analytical and theoretical teaching with applied, intuitive and creative skills. The teaching of new skills in planning should involve partners in the research institutes, industry, government agencies, NGOs and the community to promote collaborative urban planning. In order to achieve all these in the developing countries, exchange programme in urban planning should be encouraged and promoted to make teachers and students have easy access to teaching and studying in different schools in different countries. This will promote experience sharing in the teaching and learning of urban planning across the world.

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