ADB

Recommendations for Improved Urban Planning Curricula in National Planning Schools-Engagement Strategy cum Case Study

NIUA

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1. Issues and Challenges

What is the nature of problem and what challenge are we addressing?

Large urban centers are fast becoming multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic zones of settlement assimilating a cosmopolitan character due to inherent impact of globalisation. Urban settlements also act as a service centre for large scale human activities catering to needs of their hinterlands. Hence, the issues pertaining to urban settlement are diverse that demand a holistic and pluralistic approach to deal with. To understand the diverse issues of modern cities especially in the developing world, there is a need for a multi-disciplinary approach and perspective to widen the subject horizon of planning education. The urban agenda of the world has been changing with time from provision of infrastructure and basic services to environment to urban growth to sustainable urban development to liveable, smart and intelligent cities. (Wheeler *et. al.* 2010).

Emergence of planning education dates back to later part of the 19th Century in response to growing concern of rapidly urbanising centre with environmental pollution affecting human health in Western Europe. Along with the changing issues in urban areas, the definition of urban planning have changed over time and are not the same across the globe (UN-Habitat 2009). There existed a gap between planning agendas and planning education both in space and time which compelled the planning education and its pedagogy to change and adapt to new approaches that identify institutional shift from governmental control to good governance facilitating wider scope for planning through public participation and effective implementation of the plans. (ibid).

The history of urban planning education in the South Asia is only half a century old since the first planning school started in India (Ansari, 2009). Nonetheless, all the planning schools in the continent have ideological orientation under the British influence and have initially followed the urban planning thought process of diagnostic survey, conservative surgery and integrated planning ideas of Sir Patrick Geddes and or Garden city principles of another British urban thinker Ebenezer Howard (ibid, p69)

The earlier review paper has tried to assess to what extent the global and

national urban agenda are incorporated into the course curriculum of planning education in India. Secondly, while global planning education focus on multi-disciplinary skill development to deal with the global urban agenda, does Indian planning education provide adequate attention to the contemporary urban agenda? Thirdly, it also examines whether or not the existing curricula and pedagogies are relevant to the present days needs of the planning profession. Historically the planning education in India started with colonial influence of regulatory provisioning of civic administration under the town and country planning framework; however, there has been a major diversification in specialisation within planning courses incorporating the multiple-dimensions of urbanisation. While there exists a model curriculum, public funded schools of planning have been innovative in addressing the contemporary needs of planning education tools compared to those run by private institutions. It is observed that the outreach of planning education is low in India given the vastness and requirements of planning professionals in the country under rapid and higher economic growth and urbanisation.

Currently, there are 25 planning schools in India operating under public and private ownership. Majority of them are under public sector, which are directly governed either by the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), Government of India or run under various State Government patronage. However, All Indian Council of Technical Education under MHRD provides accreditation and major curricula guidelines to be followed by all of them.

The School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi had a modest beginning in 1941 as the Department of Architecture of Delhi Polytechnic. It was later affiliated to the University of Delhi and integrated with the School of Town and Country Planning which was established in 1955 by the Government of India to provide facilities for rural, urban and regional planning. On integration, the School was renamed as School of Planning and Architecture in 1959. Recognizing the specialized nature of the fields in which the School had attained eminence, in 1979, the Government of India, through the then Ministry of Education and Culture, conferred on the School of Planning and Architecture the status of "Deemed to be a University". With this new status, the School has broadened its horizon by introducing new academic and extension programmes and promoting research and consultancy activities.

> **Department of Architecture and Regional Planning at IIT Kharagpur** was established in the year 1952 with undergraduate programme in Architecture. This department is one of the pioneering architecture departments among the Architecture and Planning Schools, integrating with normative and cultural dimensions of the science, technology and human society. Post graduate degree in Planning was introduced in the department in the year 1959 and the first doctoral programme started in 1970. The post graduate programme in Planning is called Master in City Planning (MCP) which strives to impart technologically intensive and holistic education in urban and regional planning and produce globally competent urban professionals Since then, the department has grown step by step in expanding its reach to national and international platform in planning education. It has also incorporated the current urban planning agendas such as provisions of basic services and utilities, housing for all, disaster management etc. into planning education.

2: Goals and Objectives

Articulate the goal and objectives:

The overall goal of this exercise is to promote recommendations for improved and more effective curricula for the Masters in Urban Planning programme (to suit the new urban agenda in the country), to the Board of Studies (BoS) and Academic Council (AC) in the 4 national planning schools (Delhi, Bhopal, Vijayawada), and IIT Kharagpur.

In order to achieve this goal, some key tasks have been realised through reviewing the existing curricula of the leading planning schools taken as sample for study; develop a case study of the technical methodology through an engagement strategy; hold discussions with the schools as well as the decision making authority to vet the methodology; draw up the draft recommendations on the basis of analysis of the individual discussions and information from the Planning Schools; hold second round of discussions to present this draft and take feed back from various stakeholders; and submit the revised recommendations to the relevant

> **School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal** was established by Government of India as an Institute of National importance in the year 2008.This school is committed to produce best Architects and Planners of the Nation to take up the challenges of physical and socio- environmental development of global standards. This will be developed as 'University of imagination', where a sense of enquiry will prevail amongst all stake holders- students, researchers, professors and society at large. School of Planning and Architecture will strive for social sustenance through universal design, cultural sustenance through conservation and environmental sustenance through the discipline of Architecture, Planning and Design.
> Two under graduate programs, one in each of the two departments, Architecture and Planning, were started from the academic year 2008-09. The Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) program is a 5-year under graduate program and the Bachelor of Planning (B.Plng) is a 4-year under graduate program, Post Graduation and Masters. Various post graduate and short term certificate programs are proposed to be introduced in the near future. In addition, the Doctoral Program leading to a Ph.D. Degree is being introduced from the academic year 2012-13. Admissions process for the Doctoral Program hasalready started.

School of Planning and Architecture, **Vijayawada**, (SPAV), was established on July 7, 2008 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, as an autonomous institution. SPAV is a premier Centrally Funded Technical Institution (CFTI) directly under the MHRD, for excellence in the fields of Planning and Architecture. Although in its nascent stage, with experienced faculty and guest lectures by eminent visiting faculty and industry experts from all over the country, the quality of education imparted and its focus on research puts SPAV in the league of leading institutes in the country.

At SPAV, the academic focus and approach is a unique blend of design, creativity and objectivity with a social purpose. Students not only learn the skills required, but during the course of studies are exposed to though-provoking and intellectually inspiring sessions, through studios, field trips and research projects, which brings out the creative best in them.

authority for consideration.

The engagement strategy described here is aimed at articulating the process through which all relevant stakeholders (government, private, academia, corporates, NGOs, financing authorities and regulatory bodies) have participated in every stage of preparation of the recommendations for acceptance by the approving authority. It will assess the relevance of planning education in terms of the contents of courses to the contemporary urban agenda in India.

3: Contextualising the Issue: Background and present scenario

The first educational programme of planning was started with the formation of School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), New Delhi in 1955. This was followed by another Masters level programme by Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, West Bengal in 1956. Currently, there are almost 30 planning schools in India operating under public and private ownership. Majority of them are under public sector, which are directly governed either by the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), Government of India or run under various State Government patronage. However, All Indian Council of Technical Education under MHRD provides accreditation and major curricula guidelines to be followed by all of them. At a more micro level, each planning school has its own Board of Studies at department level which is responsible for framing the curricula. After clearing them, the curricula is sent to the Academic Council which validates curricula and other academic decisions of each department. The final accreditation comes from Ministry of Human Resource Development .

Planning effectiveness is strongly influenced by the trained professionals who manage and produce planning

processes and products, although newer approaches recognise that planning activity depends upon the inputs of many sectors, groups and professionals. This exercise examines whether planning education is attuned to changing urban contexts and the degree to which planning schools in India have the capabilities needed to lead the next generation of planning practice in the light of changes underway. It notes that in some cases, planning education has not kept pace with changing urban conditions and demands on professionals. The recommendations will be aimed at aligning the curricula of the planning schools more closely with the needs of practice.

Planners capacity to respond to global trends in terms of both understanding the dynamics and processing the requisite skills is learned by and large on the job. Planners feel that planning programmes, with few exceptions are not adequately preparing students for planning practice in globalising world. Planners feel that certain knowledge areas need emphasis specially those related to the development process. This should be acknowledged and appreciated among educators and appropriate changes in teaching needs

to be made. Analysis of syllabi and recommendations to streamline it is a step in that direction. Content analysis of courses in an interdisciplinary field such as planning is particularly challenging as most courses contain a diverse menu of topics, making it difficult to create domains within which to fit the syllabi. There are significant regional variations in terms of the relative importance being given to technical skills, communicative skills and analytic skills in planning curricula; planning schools in Asia rate analytical skills as the most important followed by technical skills and communication skills.

The need for a paradigm shift in the orientation and the direction of education towards achieving the goals of sustainable urbanisation is the way forward for educational policy changes for urban and regional planning education in the country. On a global level, three quarters of planning schools teach sustainable development, more than half teach participatory and deliberative planning and similar number tech social equity. In India, the design of curricula has been more traditional and following historical pattern; there have been changes and attempts to streamline

the content with time but the need to modify the content in view of the new urban agenda to match education with practice is still being felt.

As a system, planning education has moved vigorously towards theories and tools that respond effectively to the new challenges of 21st century planning. Curriculum reform is needed in many planning schools. Those which teach planning as technical and analytical without incorporating the political and participatory facets of the profession must expand their curricula.

To help promote cities as engines of economic growth through improvement in the quality of urban life by facilitating creation of quality urban infrastructure, with assured service levels and efficient governance and for creating economically vibrant, inclusive, efficient and sustainable urban habitats, the Ministry of Urban Development has launched 4 key Flagship Missions : Smart Cities Mission (Mission Transform-Nation), AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation), HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) and Swachh Bharat (Clean India Mission). This strengthens the

Government's intent to transform living conditions of millions of urban dwellers. In the process of implementing the Missions and bringing about this country wide transformation costing the Government close to Rs. 98,000 crores, it is seen that a glaring capacity deficit is perhaps the most daunting challenge facing urban rejuvenation and development. Thanks to this anomaly, urban policy focused academic programmes are often missing at premier urban Institutions and planning schools and, when taught, such courses lack uniform coverage.

Institutionalising and professionalising municipal cadre has been outlined in the ATAL Mission of 500 cities leading to the need for more number of specialised professional city managers for efficient governance and service delivery. Hence an improved course structure with streamlined content taught in the Planning Institutions is the need of the hour.

4: Identifying stakeholders for engaging

Identify decision makers, key actors, and relationships

It is important to be able to identify the key stakeholders who will contribute directly or indirectly in the process of framing recommendations for an improved urban planning curricula and map their involvement in it.

The following are the key stakeholders who are involved in various stages of engagement:

Government of India (GoI): Ministry of Urban Development and Ministry of Human Resource Development: MoUD has re-defined the mandate of the urban sector in the current decade leading to a crucial need for change in the education being imparted to students preparing to be skilled in order to be absorbed in the development of cities. It is very important thus, for the GoI to take a leadership role in providing their feedback , endorsing and approving the recommendations and thereby strengthening the argument so that Planning Schools also do the same. MHRD has an important role validating the changes made in the curricula as they are in charge of higher education.

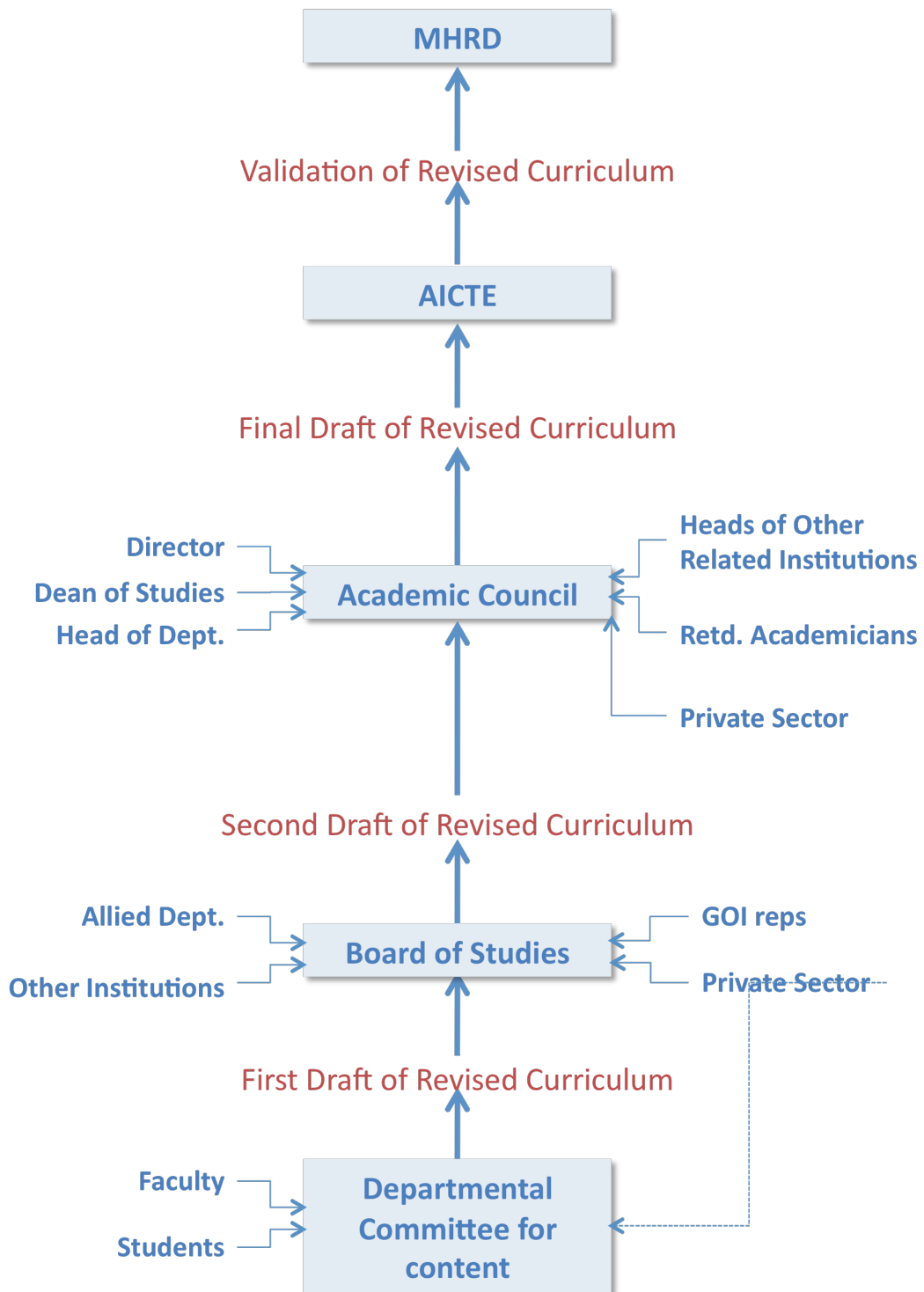Academia and other related Institutions are the most important stakeholders as they are directly involved in this process. They will be generating the content, interacting with various stakeholders for their inputs, monitoring quality of content and end result for success, filling in knowledge gaps where required through research and capacity building of faculty who will be imparting the education to the students.

Private sector and Industry play an indirect yet important part as they are possibly the biggest employers of planners in the urban market. By virtue of the fact that they play the role of technical facilitators as well as implementers for the city government, they are an important source of information about skill gaps of planners who are absorbed in the sector.

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Institute of Town Planners India (ITPI) are the regulatory bodies which are involved at the later stage of curricula content review. AICTE validates and approves the curricula based on the model curricula prepared by it (which national schools heed to but are not bound to emulate), before the same becomes part of the planning schools syllabus. The model curricula by ITPI acts as a framework which is open for

schools to follow. ITPI is the authority which endorses the planning profession as all planners passing out have to register with them. They have an independent diploma course on town planning for working professionals who have not qualified planning from the planning schools but their job requires them to be so. It has its own Steering committee on Curricula revision but plays a very important role as an advisory body for

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                    Validation of Revised Curriculum

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                   Final Draft of Revised Curriculum

    Director ──────────┐                    ┌──── Heads of Other
    Dean of Studies ───→  Academic Council ←─     Related Institutions
    Head of Dept. ─────┘                    └──── Retd. Academicians
                                             └──── Private Sector
                                 ▲
                 Second Draft of Revised Curriculum

    Allied Dept. ──────┐                    ┌──── GOI reps
    Other Institutions ─→  Board of Studies ←─     Private Sector
                                 ▲
                  First Draft of Revised Curriculum

    Faculty ───────────┐   Departmental
    Students ──────────→   Committee for  ←------
                            content
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the planning profession as a whole.

5: The process of Engagement: Describe your engagement story

Approach and Methodology

This methodology shall try to understand the existing course curricula of the selected planning schools in India. The selection of planning schools has been based on the nature of affiliations- the government run Schools of Planning and IIT Kharagpur, which has the oldest Department of Architecture & Planning. There are close to 30 planning school in India at present and substantial number are run by the private organizations. Amongst these schools there are four traditions or pathways of planning education with focused ideologies reflected into their course curriculum. They are the Schools of Planning and Architecture (SPA) that focus on promoting traditional planning practices of physical planning through design and pragmatic planning tools such as master planning and developmental control regulations. To some extent IITs especially, IIT Kharagpur also follow the similar ideology in their respective planning curriculum with dominance of architecture and

engineering solutions to planning problems. CEPT University on the other hand follows MIT and Chicago schools of thought and promotes socio-economic planning along with physical planning and design oriented curriculum. Besides these traditions, there is a prescribed but not mandatory model course curriculum by All Indian Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Institute of Town Planners, India (ITPI), respectively, which provide general guidelines for planning education in India.

The analysis will be based on collection of secondary sources of data, mainly the urban planning curricula of the selected planning schools. Interviews with Dean of Studies or HOD or programme coordinators, depending on availability.

1. As a first step, the structure of a streamlined curricula is framed based on assessment of the current content . A comparison among the selected schools is made in order to review the gaps.
2. Further to this, consultative meetings with stakeholders at various levels are done: students and faculty of the Schools, heads of the Planning

Schools, Dean of Studies, Programme Coordinators, members of curricula review committee at the Institute of Town Planners (ITPI), external stakeholders from Industry and town planning departments at the state and city. These are done through small group discussions, some face to face, some over telephone and some through collection of secondary information of questionnaire. This has supported the understanding of the institutional capacity and extent of professional engagement of these Schools with practice.

3. The suggestions are incorporated into a framework which is discussed in a roundtable with some of the key stakeholders. The draft recommendations are compiled based on comments received and shared with the Ministry, ITPI and heads of Planning Schools.

4. The national workshop brings together stakeholders who are presented the revised framework of recommendations for an improved curriculum.

5. The finalised recommendations are submitted to the Board of Studies and Academic Council of the Schools for consideration into the syllabus.

The scope of the study will identify:

- to what extent coverage of current urban policy and practice and all related aspects are incorporated in the planning curricula;
- how are they sequenced through the semesters;
- whether sufficient 'hands on' application of methods and tools are being taught; and
- whether there is sufficient capacity to cater to the demand of trained urban planners and managers required to make cities better governed and sustainable.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation:

The recommendations for an improved curricula will be a learning experience developed through a participatory process engaging with stakeholders at various stages. It has incorporated the existing scenario and identified the gaps with respect to the current mandate before formulating recommendations for a more streamlined version. Monitoring is possible once the recommendations are incorporated in the mainstream urban planning syllabus in the planning schools. The acceptance by the Schools for a streamlined curricula

which will match the urban scenario of the country and link theory to practice will mark the success of this exercise. Evaluation will be done by the Schools themselves when they witness the fact that the fresh planners who are incorporated in the industry (both government and private jobs) are better prepared to meet the challenges in the urban sector.

7. Lessons Learnt

The curricula framed by the national level planning schools more or less decide the content for most of the other schools (both government and private). The process of framing the curricula is very internalised and academic where involvement of stakeholders from all sectors is limited. The syllabus is framed internally and then shared with the Academic Board for validation. The regulatory bodies like AICTE and ITPI confer their approval at a later stage after which it becomes the new curricula.

The curricula for the planning schools, though following distinct lines of thinking, have been subject to modifications periodically in order to keep up with the urban scenario in the country. As was revealed during the discussions, most of the national

schools defended their content as being updated . The acceptance of the need for a change was one of the biggest hurdles in this exercise added to which was the fact that it was coming from an external stakeholder.

The interaction with the schools also revealed that most of the schools are rigid in terms of pedagogy and focused vision for spatial and physical planning. Non-spatial components are not given the same importance as the spatial ones in the curricula. This comes in the way of making or perceiving the required changes necessary in the content.

Planners may be seen to use their core skills to build future cities; as a result of this the engagements between planning schools and state planning departments and city governments needs to be adequate. Lack of the same impedes the opportunities for realising the challenges faced by the latter.

The current design of programmes is more focued on developing knowledge rather than transfering skills. This view is held by those in the industry but not those in the planning schools. Bringing a synergy to work towards making a change which will bridge this gap was also a challenge.

8. Conclusions

The recommendations for a revised urban planning curricula will essentially be to re-orient the planning education to support the skill development and capacity building needs being identified as part of urban sector missions. The timing for this is also right as SPA Delhi is in the process of changing over to credit system from 2017 due to which the planning curricula along with the others is undergoing a revision. The chances of acknowledging or acceptng suggestions towards these rvisions are therefore high.

The Government of India is also proactive and positive towards this change as urban planning has been made a very important component of all the urban missions, thereby making the planners role even more important. Industry or Private sector/ consultantsin the urban sector are one of the largest employers of urban planners as they are implementors of projects and plans for most of the missions and comprise the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the same. These are headed by urban planners too. Also, as per recent Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) initiative on this, an option

for project based learning (PBL) where atleast 25% of curriculumwill be recommended by the Industry, has started.

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