

Planning education imperatives for the global South: rising to the 21st century urban challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa

Gilbert Siame

PhD Scholar, University of Cape Town

Lecturer & Researcher, University of Zambia

School of Natural Sciences, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

P.O. Box, 32379, Lusaka, Zambia

siamegilbert@yahoo.co.uk; gksiame@unza.zm; smxgil002@myuct.ac.za

PhD Scholar, University of Cape Town

<http://www.ebe.uct.ac.za/ebe/study/architecture-planning-and-geomatics>

Global South cities are growing and changing rapidly. These cities, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, are increasingly becoming dysfunctional and without appropriate planning they risk becoming more inefficient, unsustainable and ungovernable. A shortage of urban planning and urban management professionals trained to appropriately respond to the urban complexity of the South will exacerbate urban dysfunction and promote failure in achieving a sustainable urban future for millions of urban residents in the South.

Urban planning curricula of many planning schools in Africa are outdated. In this regard, I argue that change in the way planning is done in Africa will require new thinking to overhaul planning education on the continent. The central argument in this study is premised on the assumption that reforming and revitalising planning education in the global South coupled with appropriate reforms in planning legislation could allow the global South to effectively rise to the 21st Century urban challenge.

Change will by and large depend on planning schools producing planners who are innovative, problem solvers and willing to collaborate with all parties, including the urban poor, involved in urban development processes. Planners' actions will need to be informed by explicit and progressive values and professional ethics as well as exposure to good governance and anti-corruption practices. Thus, the education of these future planners requires a thorough reappraisal of existing teaching methods,

the introduction of new ones, and a remodelled curricula. This, however, is not an easy engagement as it requires some degree of institutional transformation and new financing windows and models.

The Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) was formed to mitigate the dominance of unsuitable and irrelevant archetypes in planning education on the continent. AAPS aims to improve the quality and visibility of planning pedagogy, research and practice in Africa, and to promote planning education advocating ethical, sustainable, multicultural, gender-sensitive, and participatory planning practice. In 2008, the first major AAPS conference took place in Cape Town, South Africa, and proposed five main themes for a model curriculum for African Planning Schools: Informality; access to land; climate change; collaboration between planners, communities, civil society and other interested parties, and; mismatch between spatial planning and infrastructure planning.

While the AAPS model curriculum has been on offer as a pilot at the University of Zambia for more than two years now, it appears other African Planning Schools and some partners have not followed its implementation processes to learn and adapt it to their local contexts. In addition, the Zambian government seems to rely on this curriculum to transition from old styled urban planning and management to new models. For instance, the government passed a new planning law in August 2015, with content that is well covered by the AAPS model curriculum. The government has also indicated that the full implementation of the revised decentralisation policy will largely depend on the availability of qualified staff in the over 105 local authorities in Zambia. As such, the paper seeks to detail the processes, innovations and prospects that characterise the implementation of AAPS model curriculum at the University of Zambia. It is hoped that this paper will motivate increased engagement with the AAPS model curriculum by African Planning Schools and other partners, and that the agenda to reform planning education on the continent will be re-energized. Furthermore, the paper will indicate how 'non-traditional' planning education themes, such as planning for informality, provide space for curricular innovation needed to produce planners that will assist African governments to prepare and adapt to a more urban and a challenging 21st Century urban future.

Research methodology

The paper is based on ethnographic methods. It is based on the experiences of the author who has been deeply involved in the implementation processes of the model curriculum. The author has been a key academic member of staff during both curriculum development and implementation phases and processes. Primary and secondary data will be analyzed through qualitative methods. Primary data will involve recounting experiences which the author has been recording for the past two years. Further, semi-structured interviews will be used to collect additional information from local key stakeholders on the programme. These stakeholders will include the Lusaka City Council, Ministry of Local Government and Housing, the NGO-People's Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia and selected residents from two informal settlements in the City of Lusaka.