















(RE)CONSIDERING AND (RE)IMAGINING URBAN PLANNING CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION



SAPER: THE APPROPRIATENESS, USEFULNESS AND IMPACT OF THE CURRENT URBAN PLANNING CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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SAPER

- Investigate the social and economic value of planning education in South Africa and its challenges
- Assess the current needs of South African planning practitioners (skills and training) and the relevancy with the urban planning HE curriculum
- Decrypt the wider implications for teaching international students in the UK and maximise knowledge transfer opportunities
- First phase of data collection with 212 questionnaires collected amongst South African planners. Main areas of queries included:
 - Education level and formation
 - Relevance of training and relationship to professional performance
 - Professional stage, expectations and accomplishment

1. THE PROBLEM

- For many years South Africa has modelled its urban planning practices on Western systems, reinforced by the education and training provided to urban planning students in Higher Education institutions.
- Concerns have been raised about the relevance and applicability of these methods when planning African cities (Watson, 2003, 2009).
- Calls for decolonising the curriculum in theory and practice is resonating in current debates while being a very sensitive issue.

1. THE PROBLEM

- Urban planning in South Africa is undergoing key challenges
 - Heritage of apartheid and very diverse and segregated cities dating back from colonial times (Robinson, 2005; Parnell, 1997)
 - Important informal sector
 - Severe shortage of urban planners (public sector)
 - Different planning systems simultaneously operating
 - Political and economic issues
 - Critical position of SACPLAN

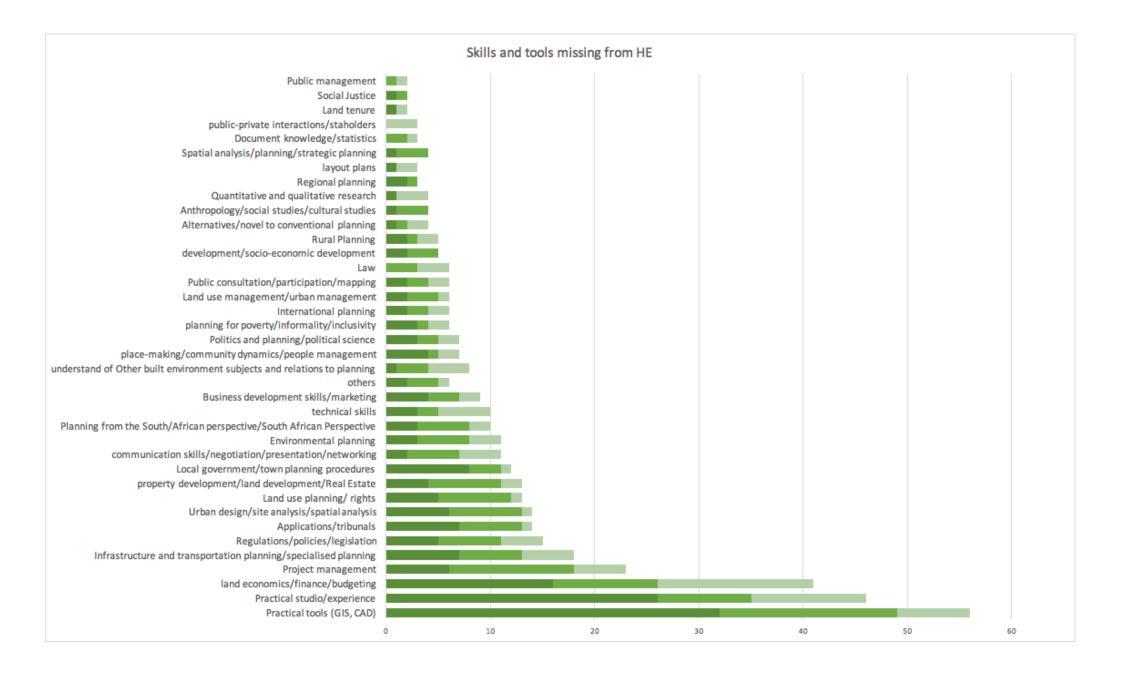
2. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE GEOGRAPHIES OF SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN PLANNING KNOWLEDGE?

 Rethink how the object of study is constituted and address the issue of skills

"We were not taught to plan for the environment we would eventually work in - ie South Africa and not a European country. There was insufficient emphasis given to problems such as dealing with conflicts, or making difficult trade off's. The theory of public participation we were taught, suggested it was really quite simple, and in reality it is not".

"My undergraduate degree was of little value - I had no specific skill to apply in the work place - compared to other professions."

"Education gave me the right to work as a town planner and a basic understanding, but there were also "nice ideas and theories" that never happens in practice. I feel that it should focus more on everyday realities. Teach the new generation to write a proper report, rather than Jane Jacobs and her opinions."



2. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE GEOGRAPHIES OF SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN PLANNIN KNOWLEDGE?

Rethink education systems?

"When I completed my studies many years ago we have a good base and an excellent support and mentoring system when we started working (usually in government or municipalities) which allowed one to become job ready in a very short time. Currently, the base planners get lacks a reference framework within which the can address challenges and be trained in practice. Much better for any planning business to rather employ a GIS, specialist, architect, or economist."

In later years I have worked with several planners that were educated at technicon. Having more practical skills when graduating, they have a huge advantage in the first year of employment. But later they lack the knowledge or understanding of the theory. I believe a mixture of the theoretical degree and practical diploma will be most sufficient to prepare a graduate for work as a planner."

3. DECOLONISATION OF URBAN PLANNING KNOWLEDGE

Issue 1: Decolonising individual's positioning

"First World experience. Working with Government Departments that function properly and effectively. For instance used to get response on e-mails within 48 hours of submitting query".

"First world examples of Non Motorised planning and implementation."

"To attain more knowledge and see planning systems in place in "First world cities/countries", compared to "Third world countries/cities)".

"I have wanted to experience working in a developed world to get that experience and replicate the same in my country upon returning".

3. DECOLONISATION OF URBAN PLANNING KNOWLEDGE

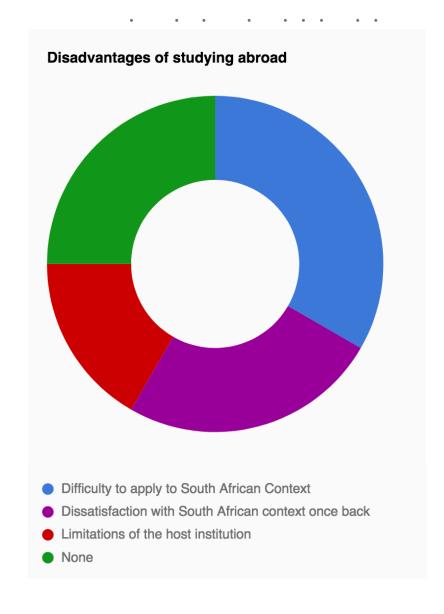
Issue 2: Gaps in international education

"Local knowledge/ or the legal planning framework not the same"

"Non applicability of some of the issues for the SA situation"

"Planning legislation not the same; different focus in planning in different countries. Poverty, crime and housing are the primary focus in SA whereas in the Netherlands other factors such as environmental".

"Theories and models that don't necessarily fit easily locally"



4. RACE AND PROFESSION

There is a perception of race bias in the field, specially from the white population (due probably to recent affirmative actions)

"Not sure if there is a future for a white male in South Africa" (white male, 25-34).

"The fact that as a white South African you get over looked for jobs" (White male, >75).

"South Africa has limited opportunities in this sector for a certain racial group. My qualifications are highly sought after in the USA specifically" (white female, 35-44).

"I potentially see a limited future for myself in South Africa. Due to my race and gender I am unlikely to ever be considered for a meaningful position. Similarly, it is frustrating to work in a planning system not willing to do what a planning system must, which is to create a sustainable future for all" (white female, 25-34).

"Being a white male it is next to impossible to work in the public sector. This limits job opportunities to private sector consultancies" (white male, 25-34).

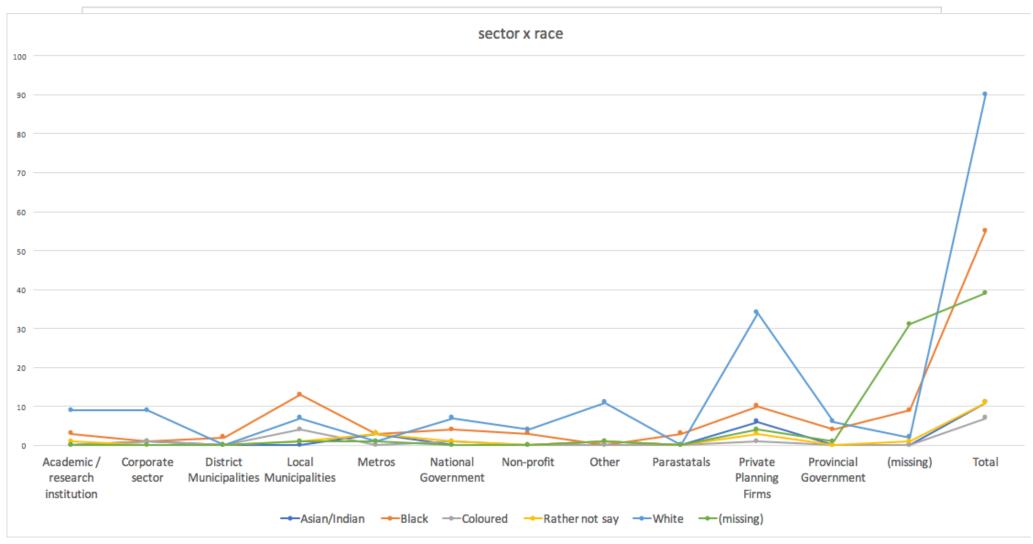
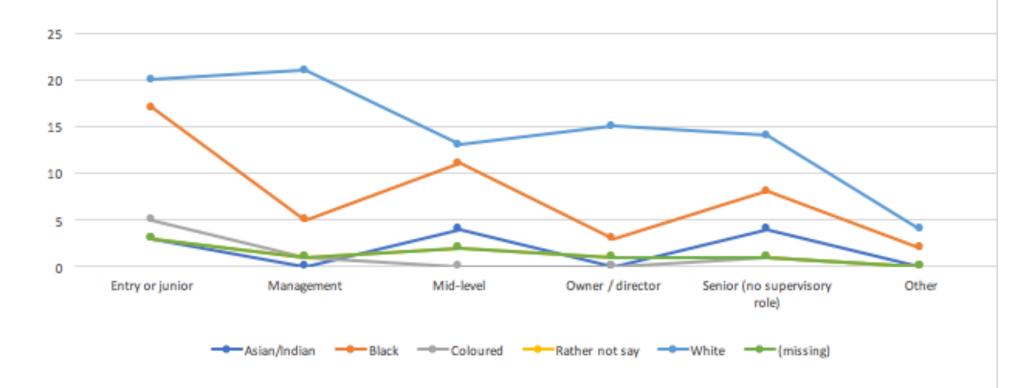


Table 2.4: Population by province and population group (percentage)

Population Group	wc	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	SA
Black African	32.8	86.3	50.4	87.6	86.8	89.8	77.4	90.7	96.7	79.2
Coloured	48.8	8.3	40.3	3.1	1.4	2.0	3.5	0.9	0.3	8.9
Indian or Asian	1.0	0.4	0.7	0.4	7.4	0.6	2.9	0.7	0.3	2.5
White	15.7	4.7	7.1	8.7	4.2	7.3	15.6	7.5	2.6	8.9
Other	1.6	0.3	1.6	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Career stage in relation to population group



5. GOING BEYOND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

 Knowledge, education versus reality and everyday of the planning profession

"No difference is being made. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The environment suffers as a result of unsustainable

"We do no have the leadership role we need in order to be able to deliver sustainable communities and also help deliver the international agreements on sustainable development."

"When studying we got the impression that we could change and help shape the built environment and that there are plenty of employment opportunists and that the salaries would be good. In reality there are very very few town planning opportunities and the salary is not up to scratch for a 4 year professional degree. You will not be able to pay student loans, move out of the house and buy a car."

5. GOING BEYOND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

 The future of the discipline and the importance of politics and power relationships

"Planning needs to be a more prominent discipline to get the respect from other professionals and policymakers that will enable them to influence process outcomes more directly."

"I realize many of comments are concerned more with the politics of my country that planning specifically. The unfortunate reality is that planning in South Africa is mired up in political quick sand and thus cannot be treated as two separate entities."

CONCLUDING REMARKS

How to revisit the contours of our current geographies of knowledge production?

- Transnational character and role of the academic community in considering international education
- Possibility of informed exchange
- Engage a wider dialogue is key