



COVER SHEET

Heywood, Phil (2006) Educating Australia's future planners. Australian Planner 43(4):pp. 28-31.

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EDUCATING AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE PLANNERS

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Introduction:

Planning is both a generic activity combining mind and senses in appraisal, speculation, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and design, and a practical profession performing a necessary social role of spatial organization. As the pace of change accelerates in contemporary society, there is an increasing need for these roles to help integrate diverse innovations into coherent wholes and provide processes of assessment and control for new physical development (Alexander, 2003).

As a result, there is mounting world wide demand for well educated and competent planners, which is exceeding supply (Planning Institute of Australia [PIA], 2004). This, in turn, creates pressures on traditional educational systems and provides incentives for new providers to consider entering the field of planning education.

The scope of planning education

Planning education needs to span a number of essential components:

- The elements of value formation and expression
- The logic of planning processes, and the relations of land uses to activity systems and values
- Social and political organization
- The nature and evolution of major human activities of shelter, work, play, access, social interaction and governance
- Analytical and synthesising techniques
- The local, urban and regional scales of planning, and the associated processes of urbanization and regional change
- Theories in, of, and for planning- (i.e. technical, procedural and normative)

In general, these are well summarised in the *Core Curriculum in Planning* which forms Appendix A to PIA's *Educational Guidelines for Recognition of Australian Planning Qualifications*, which groups these items into the categories of knowledge, skills and ethics (PIA, 2002)

The Providers of Planning Education

In order to ensure the best possible quality and relevance of planning education for society, the profession and intending entrants at this time of rapid social and educational change, it is important to identify the most appropriate roles for each provider. These can be grouped into the four categories of educational institutions, community organizations, professional institutions and commercial organizations. Although it is recognized that universities may be to some extent professional and commercial bodies, that community and professional organizations have educational roles, and that commercial organizations may be interested in both educational and professional issues, the four bodies are differentiated by being driven by different core values of communication, service, practice and profit.

Educational institutions should be seen as including schools, which do much to shape the broad social consciousness on which professional programs are ultimately based. Schools influence both the supply and demand for planning and planners. The Civics, Social Studies, Geography and Art courses of the mid twentieth century did much to shape public awareness of the social and environmental needs for wise resource management, on which the current expanding demand for planners is built. At the same time, they helped develop natural capacities for creative, reflective and well informed thinking that produced the young people who chose to go on to study planning courses at university. While not direct providers of professional planning education, their powerful supporting roles need to be recognized and nurtured.

There is a broader role of community education which goes even beyond the official school system, into the voluntary and non vocational educational activities of bodies

like Britain's Workers Education Association, and the citizen education activities of organizations like the Town & Country Planning Association (Hall, 1988), the 1000 Friends of Oregon (Knaap & Nelson, 1993), the Australian Institute of Urban Studies (Wright 2001), and the Queensland Urban Design Alliance (UDAL). The contribution of such bodies to planning education is diffuse and often indirect, but it is of vital importance in sustaining its energy, purpose and relevance. Each of the other more systematically organized sets of providers needs to maintain its links with these community based sources of ideas and energy, and to contribute to and help to sustain them in reciprocal support. Programs, spaces, speakers and membership can be shared. Examples of major educational figures in planning who have transcended this official- community boundary are Ebenezer Howard with the Garden City Movement (Fishman, 1983), Patrick Geddes with his Outlook Town and Country Planning Summer Schools in Edinburgh (Mairet, 1957), Lewis Mumford with his work with the New York Regional Plan Association (Mumford, 1938), Hugh Stretton with his combination of writing, teaching, and long-serving role as deputy Chair of the South Australian Housing Trust (Stretton, 1989, Marsden, 1986), Danilo Dolci's social activism in Italy, and Professor Mohammed Yunus and the Grameen Bank Micro credit movement (Bornstein 1998). While such leaders and their social movements are not direct providers or shapers of planning education curricula, their roles can be acknowledged and their contributions integrated into the work of all the mainstream providers.

Notwithstanding the crucial roles of these creative thinkers and their activist organizations, **Universities** currently provide the great majority of all organized planning education throughout the world, building on long standing traditions of knowledge development and communication. In the last eighty years, courses in urban and regional planning have been developed which are well integrated with professional aims and accreditation processes. University traditions of rigour and range are important because planning is both a rationalist and an empirical activity, requiring equal attention to facts and values; these can only be developed through carefully sequenced patterns of learning using teaching skills to combine factual and process knowledge. Planning education requires "knowing of", "knowing that", and "knowing how", to which universities are well suited because of their scope and continuity of activities. The universal quality of their access to different fields of knowledge ensures that social and technical changes can be accommodated through regular review and development of curricula. Because universities are the natural repositories of human and cultural capital, they can ensure that new knowledge is integrated into existing frameworks, that unintended consequences are tested, and that the natural enthusiasms of innovators and marketeers for change can be subject to well informed risk assessment.

University courses in social, environmental and political studies also help to develop wider public consensus in support of planning by increasing public awareness and concern over conservation of such matters as conservation of resources and improvement of social equity, as well as providing suitable first disciplines for later postgraduate entry into planning studies. England's Open University and Open Universities Australia, for instance, produce excellent course material which is directly relevant to planning, and often encourages students to enrol in recognized

professional planning courses, including those offered in distance teaching mode at institutions like the University of New England at Armidale (Dredge, pers. comm., 2006). This pattern also highlights the current world wide resurgence of interest in professional qualifications being associated with 1 and 2 year postgraduate courses following more broadly educational undergraduate degree programs of three year duration. This is associated with the so called "Bologna Model", developed within the European Union to promote international commonality, portability, and academic exchange (Whitzman, 2006, Pers Comm.) which will also have to be given careful consideration in planning the future of planning education in Australia.

The limitations of universities are that they are partially distanced from immediate practice, and that academics may be more attuned to the stimuli of academic progression through conventional research than to introducing beneficial changes. In addition modern universities are often inflexible and pursue policies to maximise their income and grant position rather than being guided by social need. They require constant incentives to maintain their links with the community and professions. While maintaining the vocabulary of public interest organizations, they may often behave like commercial corporations, unless subjected to careful scrutiny and guidance.

Professional Institutes enjoy advantages of good links to their members, and a keen awareness of current trends and changing needs for personnel and skills. In the field of education and training they have natural advantages of commitment to the interests of their members, and a degree of democratic responsiveness to them. All of their elected office holders will themselves possess educational qualifications and first hand knowledge of their strengths and limitations. They will be well qualified to participate in debates about steering the scale and scope of professional education, though neither they nor their permanent administrative staffs can be guaranteed to be educational experts.

Their limitations are that, unlike universities, they are not themselves in a position to provide the necessary educational information, and their policy making contribution is inherently likely to be limited to intermittent initiatives and scrutiny. They are well suited by knowledge, skills, size and time to the roles of partnership and guidance rather than delivery or resource allocation.

Commercial Providers possess advantages of innovation, flexibility, flair and diversity. Their marketing skills alert them to the latest and most engaging application of communication techniques. Their daily application of commercial skills ensures that maximum contact is made with potential course attendants, and that once enrolled, techniques of achieving customer satisfaction are consistently applied. Image projection and personal involvement are both likely to be well developed. They have strong capacities to innovate, develop, abandon, and then innovate again (Popper, 1947; Jacobs, 1992).

The limitations of commercial providers are that they have no incentive to contribute to the basics of understanding, capacities for lifelong learning, deep understanding, critical skills, recognition of the dangers of unintended consequences or the values of professional wisdom and experience on which the reputation and long term roles of the profession depend. They are not well qualified to participate in strategic educational planning, and have a limited capacity for curriculum development. Their offerings need to be carefully framed, constantly evaluated and carefully distinguished from long term professional education. What they offer is the possibility of interesting and stimulating short term introductions to new approaches and techniques. They will prosper and contribute well in an integrated model in which their role is confined to the popularisation of new applications and techniques.

The Range of Roles required in Planning Education

Intellectual awareness and the capacity for life long-learning

The nature of urban and regional planning in devising better futures involves identifying and interpreting existing situations and prospects. This in turn requires a robust understanding of the nature and determinants of knowledge, and the capacity to integrate new understanding as situations change. This goes beyond the ability to acquire and analyse information, and involves powers of evaluation, criticism, association, inference, and hypothesising as well as deduction. Life-long learning skills will be required for any policy making profession in the twenty first century.

Current and refreshed technical skills

Information that is acquired during student's initial grounding, unlike well grounded powers of understanding and interpretation, will rapidly be superseded by new technologies, economic developments, environmental changes and political priorities. Continuing professional education will be required.

New fields of application & techniques

New fields of application will continue to open on the borders of existing ones, and in unexpected areas of society and technology. Information technology can be expected to continue to open new applications. Social change will generate new demands for inclusive techniques of objective setting. The demands of environmental change and the capacities of environmental monitoring will need to be rapidly recognized, introduced and explored. While these must, in the long run, be integrated into main stream tertiary education, professions may want and need to have them introduced to their members in more rapid and even experimental ways.

The Appropriate roles for each provider

Given the wide and rapidly expanding scope of Planning education, and the clearly differentiated strengths and limitations of the potential providers, it is possible to attempt an evaluation of the appropriate roles for each, and this is done in Table I, below.

TABLE 1: AN ASSESSMENT OF PROVIDER ROLES IN PLANNING EDUCATION

	BASIC KNOWLEDGE & LIFELONG LEARNING	UPDATING & REFRESHING SKILLS	INTRODUCTION OF NEW TECHNIQUES, APPLICATIONS & INNOVATIONS
SCHOOLS	*** Interest in ideas, capacity for idea formulation and collection and interpretation of evidence	* More scope for skill establishment than renewal	** Introduction of new skills in the syllabus- e.g. information management, human relationships, personal and group negotiation
COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS	* Dependence upon existing knowledge and skills of members, but capacity to enhance and apply these in high motivation situations	** Need and motivation to apply and synthesize a wide range of existing skills	*** Invention of new and innovative applications of existing techniques – e.g. cultural mapping, participative objective setting, self survey, peer research, micro credit
UNIVERSITIES	*** 4 year or 3+ 1 or + 2 year courses in multi-themed learning institutions linked to professional and community advisory committees	** Short courses offered as e.g. Graduate Certificates or units which can be grouped as introductions to full professional qualifications	* Specific applications which have been developed through research, teaching and consultancy in unis- e.g. GIS, GPS, MapInfo, Group Facilitation, Strategic Planning
PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTES	** Ensuring that university courses maintain relevance, currency and quality by accreditation procedures	*** Policy, support and participation in Continuing Professional Development programs linked to maintenance of professional membership – e.g. new legislation, regional and metro planning approaches etc	* Integrating such courses into CPD programs by monitoring quality and allowing CPD points where appropriate
COMMERCIAL PROVIDERS	* Participating in university professional courses as occasional contributors and innovators, thereby gaining exposure and contributing intellectual stimulus	** Participating in Professional Institute designated provision of refresher courses and programs of skill renewal which cross professional and commercial boundaries such as current PIA CPP initiative	*** Short courses held in opportunistic locations – hotels, public libraries, uni spaces during vacations, etc using “star” presenters from commerce, practice, research and education to introduce new techniques which have been produced by technological change (GIS) or social development (Public consultation, Appreciative Enquiry)

KEY: *** Primary role
 ** Secondary Role
 * Minor role

National and Divisional roles in CPD.

This evaluation raises the further currently significant issue of the relations between central and state roles in CPD. The National PIA has the advantages of its legal status as the official body, and the ability to set common standards to ensure portability of professional qualifications around the country. However, it lacks regular and constant contact with the membership which the Divisions and Branches enjoy, and the related strong senses of their members of affiliation and motivation to contribute and engage. The Divisions provide the continuing reality of the PIA for most of the members, constituting accessible organizations which they feel they can readily influence, and in whose structures they feel empowered to participate and innovate. Thus, two kinds of innovative capacity are involved and need to be balanced: central will, direction and command over resources; and divisional and branch energy, knowledge and responsiveness.

Conclusion

One way to optimize the potential benefits from all four sets of potential contributors would be to balance and integrate their roles. National PIA would maintain its CPP initiative within a regularly reviewed and carefully circumscribed field. The Divisions would retain their CPD programs with conscious re-focussing on market research of their members, participative techniques of delivery, links with universities and joint programs with other professional institutes to promote regional synthesis. Commercial providers would be encouraged to integrate their offerings within the framework of PIA educational policy to obtain official support and CPD rating. In this model, there would be a need for regular review of the relationships between all four elements- universities, PIA National, PIA Divisions and Commercial providers. The logical groups to manage and maintain this review would be the Education Committees of National PIA and the Divisions. An annual Education Policy Meeting attached to the National Congress and lasting for a full half day session on the day following the Congress would be ideal. It should include the National Education Committee, amplified by Education and CPD chairs and one University representative from each Division. This approach should support the further development of considered and informed decision making and review within which innovations need to be located.

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