

Improving Sustainability Concept in Developing Countries

Architecture and Urban Education in Egypt: Producing Designers that are ready to respond to the Social and Environmental Circumstances of the Egyptian Context.

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Abstract

Architects and urban planners must be aware of the impact of their contribution to both the society and the environment, this awareness needs to be planted in their educational programs. This paper is trying to determine the social and environmental priorities in architecture and urban undergraduate programs. After discussing the trends of curricula in architecture programs the paper analyses Ain Shams university curricula as a case study. Leading the paper to determine the correct approaches that need to be taken in order to produce a generation of practitioners that are aware of the social and environmental needs of their society.

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1. Introduction

The Egyptian nation is one of many other nations whom their economic growth in the past years was being accompanied with social and environmental degradation. This degradation generated continuous pressure on all kinds of fields and disciplines to give attention, consider, involve and integrate the social and environmental aspects in both their practice and education. Urban planners, architects and designers in particular as generators of the built environment are always being blamed for not giving priorities for the social and environmental aspects in their field. Questions regarding the role of such disciplines and their social responsibilities toward the society and the environment are being raised continuously. A lot of literature that Focused on the education as the keystone of practice discussed

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the role of architectural education and its integration to the social and environmental aspects.

‘Architectural education should have two basic purposes: to produce competent, creative, Critically minded and ethical professional designers/builders; and to produce good world citizens who are intellectually mature, ecologically sensitive and socially responsible.’

-International Union of Architects (UIA, 2008)

The second purpose of architectural education identified above by The International Union of Architects (UIA) is what this paper mainly discusses, the idea of an education that produces architects that are ecologically sensitive and socially responsible. Continuous increase of social and environmental problems in Egypt pushes the architectural education to start giving much attention to such problems and integrate them as vital aspects into its educational curricula. The educators must start preparing the architectural students on the different social and environmental problems that they will meet when they start to practice the profession in the real world, this kind of preparation is expected to be reflected in the architecture programs and curricula. Architectural students must gain awareness on the huge impact of their designs on both the social and environmental level, and how their role as architects will be ever translated as a set of social responsibilities. The paper discusses the social and environmental priorities in architectural and design programs, Egyptian education, and the potential for education to bridge the implementation gap for such priorities. After Looking through all kinds of literature that was written regarding the role of education, educational curricula of architecture, and the dilemma of not considering the society and the environment in the practice and in the architectural programs. Through Checking the different interpretations of analyzing the architectural curricula, and the new models of curricula implemented in the field of architecture and urban planning education. The paper selected Ain Shams University as one of the biggest and the third oldest public universities in Egypt. The paper discusses the architectural and urban planning education of Ain Shams University by analyzing its curricula. The curriculum analysis will be limited in discussing the Ain shams university approach towards integrating the social and environmental factors inside the curriculum. The analysis will be based on three different online documents retrieved from the university websites which are the architectural and urban planning curricula, the architecture and urban planning quality assurance documents and finally the statistics of the grade performance of architecture and urban planning students in 2013. This will be followed by Analysis and discussion of the data mentioned in the case study and the architectural and urban planning education in Egypt, presenting policy recommendations to this field.

2. Social and environmental trends in the curricula

In the past Education and curricula in general have been a subject of analysis to many researches as many authors discussed the role of education in the society and impact of the curricula. Starting from the twentieth century and due to the huge social and environmental challenges, researches started to give greater attention to the way the curricula approach such aspects and the responsibility of architecture education towards the society and the environment. Spencer [1] as one of the leading sociologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century believed that the role of education in general and the curricula in particular is to constantly improve the society, where he argues that the only knowledge that should be included in the curricula is the knowledge that proved its significant role in the survival of the human species. Wang [2] illustrated how the late twenties century witnessed the emerging of two fundamental paradigms and concerns of the curriculum, the first is the role of education in creating social change which emerged from the 1960's till the 1980's, second the idea of considering the environmental concerns in the curricula which emerged in the 1990's. The first concern was driven from the social efficiency ideology in curricula which was discussed heavily by Franklin Bobbitt in the 20th century. Schero [3] explained that the social efficiency ideology of the twentieth century allocated the purpose of education in being efficient to meet the needs of the society by training the youth to function as future mature contributing members of the society. The second concern was based on the environmentalism ideologies, Wang [2] argues that the environmental and social paradigm did not go in parallel with each other but instead the environmental paradigm has replaced the social paradigm. Wang was also concerned that the curricula should not only teach environmentalism to the students but it should provide ways for the students to experience and discover the different environmental problems and search for realistic and applicable solutions to them.

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