

Pathology of the Urban Planning Education System in Iran in Relation to the Profession*

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ABSTRACT

Following the specialization of urban planning disciplines in 2008 and the move toward a specialized urban planning system, the curriculum for the Master's program in Urban Planning was finally approved and notified in 2013. The lack of review and updating of this program over the past ten years, on the one hand, and the gap between the content of the educational system and the professional system, on the other hand, have resulted in the inefficiency of educational outputs in relation to the profession and have caused dissatisfaction among professors, students, professional consultants, and employing institutions. Of course, multiple intervening variables, such as the political, managerial, and economic systems, among others, affect the formation of the gap between theory and practice in urban planning. However, this article exclusively examines the relationship between the education system and the profession. From this perspective, this research aims to analyze the pathology of the urban planning education system in Iran in relation to the profession. To this end, in the first step, a qualitative meta-analysis was used to review and synthesize valid domestic and international research sources. In the second step, the structures of the educational programs at seven leading universities in urban planning were examined, and key points were extracted. Finally, by integrating research findings and academic experiences, a pathology of the urban planning education system in Iran was presented. The research results indicate the impact of three interrelated layers with three performance scales—macro, meso, and micro—on the emergence of the issue. The first layer concerns the macro approach to the higher education system and universities within the theoretical framework of education. The second layer pertains to the field's educational methodology, as reflected in course syllabi. The third layer refers to the classroom environment, including course content, procedures and processes, relationships, facilities, and support mechanisms.

Keywords: Pathology, Education, Urban Planning, Profession.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The rapid growth of urban populations and, consequently, the emergence of increasingly complex problems due to substantive changes in the components of urban systems—manifested in crime, energy, and information—have caused transformations across various dimensions of cities. Within this context, the urban planning education system in Iran, relying on capabilities and experiences accumulated over several decades of university education, has endeavored to address these issues. The underlying assumption of any education and educational content in academic and training institutions is that “the outcome of knowing is to acquire knowledge and ultimately to act.” However, examining and understanding the efficiency and results of these institutions’ efforts, and listening to the challenges and grievances of professionals, students, employers, professors, and even the general public, reveals a significant gap between the domain of knowledge and the domain of practice and the urban planning profession (Irvani 2008, 7; Quoted from Ahmadabadi Arani, Farahini, and Ahmadi Hedayat 2016, 302).

Since one of the objectives of urban planning education is to train specialists and professionals to solve urban problems, and given that urban issues are constantly undergoing substantive and surface-level changes, it is necessary for the urban planning education system to be regularly updated in alignment with the profession and to provide a platform for adapting to these changes (Talebi, Habib, and Itsam 2015).

Urban planning education in Iran began with the establishment of the Urban Planning Department at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Tehran, in 1965 (Talebi, Farah, and Itsam 2016). Following the specialization of urban planning disciplines in 2008 and the movement toward a specialized urban planning system, the Master’s curriculum in Urban Planning was revised in 2013 due to factors such as demographic and urbanization changes, modifications in planning course content (e.g., quantitative and qualitative methods), the need to foster innovation and creativity, and most importantly, the establishment of the undergraduate urban planning program in 2008 and the necessity to align the Master’s curriculum with the undergraduate program (Ministry of Science 2012). Since 2013, this curriculum has not been reviewed or updated.

The increasing number of urban planning students, especially in recent years, the ambiguity regarding the relationship between the profession and the discipline, the dissatisfaction of students and professors with educational content (Fallah Manshad 2013), coupled with the continual growth of urban populations and the emergence of increasingly complex problems due to substantive changes in urban system components,

as well as transformations in professional content and practices, have made the evaluation, revision, and assessment of the efficiency of the urban planning education system in alignment with the profession one of the most critical challenges facing urban planning education globally and in Iran. In many countries, planning curricula are regularly reviewed by professional institutions and review boards, often inviting practitioners to ensure that the curricula provide an appropriate combination of topics and cover the most critical issues (Frank 2006).

In contemporary Iran, the gap between theory and practice, particularly the failure to implement theoretical knowledge, and the consequences of this gap, are clearly observable (Sajjadi and Nourabadi 2014, 163). This challenge had not been reported in earlier educational literature (Irvani and Bagheri 1999, 39). At the beginning of the 21st century, when urban planning education was considered to have reached maturity, practical training had regained importance, and the need to link knowledge and practice was recognized as a serious necessity for the field (Talebi, Habib, and Itsam 2015, 59).

As Campbell, a professor of urban planning at MIT, notes, the field of urban planning exists at the intersection of theory and practice (Campbell 2012). Since its inception, the transfer of knowledge from theory to practice has been a significant concern, rooted in university education content and processes. In particular, the lack of cohesion and effective linkage between theoretical courses and practical workshops, as well as the organization of these workshops at odds with professional practice, significantly contributes to the theory-practice gap (Talebi, Habib, and Itsam 2015, 59). Furthermore, the frameworks and structures of courses, teaching methods, knowledge production, knowledge transfer, and learning approaches are rapidly evolving, and predetermined knowledge delivered solely by the instructor is no longer acceptable (Saif 2016, 537; Roya Sadeghi et al. 2019, 44).

Of course, the geometry of power and the sum of socio-economic, governance, and political ideologies governing the city, each as an effective stakeholder in shaping the urban planning profession and, subsequently, the Iranian contemporary town, play a prominent role (Babapur, Davoodpur, and Moenyfar 2022). A significant part of the gap between opinion and practice in this field stems from these intervening factors. However, in the following article, an attempt has been made to examine and present the relationship between the education system and the professional system by reviewing the content of research in the field of urban planning education and discussing operational experiences at the level of prestigious universities in the world, and the pathology of the urban planning education system in Iran in proportion to the profession.

2. GAP BETWEEN THE URBAN PLANNING EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM

The topic of urban planning education and professional practice exhibits two distinctly different cultures in most parts of the world, and this gap appears to be widening over time (Bayer, Frank, and Valerius 2013). On one hand, theory forms the foundation of practice. However, given the extensive range of factors influencing practice, the focus should ultimately be on the impact of theory on practice rather than on a direct, deterministic relationship between theory and practice (Irvani 2008).

The theory-practice gap in urban planning consists of two interrelated components: the first is the gap between the content of urban planning theory and

the urban planning profession, and the second is the gap between this content and the final product derived from professional practice or the application of theory. These two gaps are not identical and occur sequentially. In other words, the application of theory is a prerequisite for producing an outcome consistent with the theoretical content. However, since various factors influence urban planning practice, it is not the sole determinant of the final product. In many cases, these intervening factors reduce or neutralize the impact of practice. Consequently, despite adherence to theory, the resulting product may not align with the theoretical content. The process of this gap can be illustrated as shown in the following diagram (Irvani and Bagheri 1999, 41).

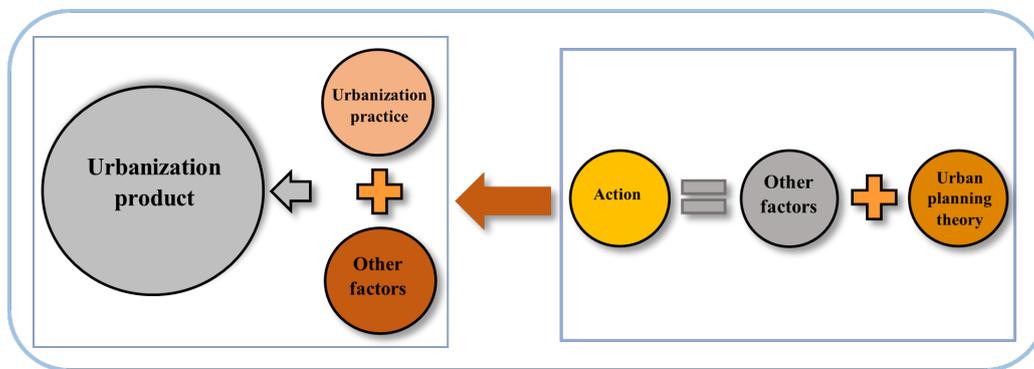


Fig. 1. Two-Part Gap between Theory and Practice in Urban Planning
(Quoted from Irvani and Bagheri 1999, 41)

In fact, the term “other factors” in the above diagram refers to the role of external factors influencing the theory-practice gap and indicates that even when the content of theory and the education system is aligned with the urban planning profession, factors such as the interdisciplinary nature of urban planning, the individual characteristics of planners, personal preferences of managers, gray interests of groups and profit-seeking organizations, political power geometry, and others can still affect the final urban planning outcome. Moreover, the interdisciplinary nature of urban planning, by increasing complexity and the development of the sciences involved in its content, while enhancing understanding of various dimensions of urban issues, can also create conditions that widen the gap (Sajjadi and Nourabadi 2014).

On the other hand, professional urban planning practice in Iran has historically relied on specialists from different fields, particularly architects and civil engineers. It has therefore primarily been based on bureaucratic, quantitative, sectoral, and product-oriented approaches, rather than human-centered, sustainability-oriented, and future-oriented practices (Ministry of Science 2020, 7). Unfortunately, despite several decades of professional urban planning in

Iran, the urban planning profession still lacks an independent professional organization. Currently, urban planning exists alongside other professions under the umbrella of organizations such as the Construction Engineering Organization, the Association of Architects and Urban Planners, and the Iranian Consulting Engineers Society. Nevertheless, urban planning is considered a subsidiary discipline, and the initial perspective emphasizing the primacy of four main disciplines in the Engineering Organization can still be observed in some regulations, by-laws, and administrative correspondence, leading to the decline of the urban planning profession. Factors such as a weak professional body, poor internal organizational relations and structures, and the low status and credibility of the urban planning profession have also contributed to the limited role of these organizations in advancing the profession (Yadegarzade and Nurian 2020, 261). Unfortunately, without political power and authority, planning theories are politically annoying and of little help to planners, and ultimately, the integrity and credibility of planning is under constant threat from political actors. Components such as the political (the sum of the power geometry) and ideological components, along with the need

for municipalities to earn money and apply non-expert opinions and sometimes contradictory laws and regulations, have all caused the profession and the final product of urban planning to distance itself from the path of educational teachings (Babapur, Davoodpur, and Moenyfar 2022). Therefore, several factors affect the gap between education and the urban planning profession, and this study attempts to examine and pathologize only the relationship between the urban planning education system and the profession.

3. METHOD

The present study falls into both fundamental and applied research. To scientifically and rigorously analyze the pathology of the urban planning education system in Iran in relation to the profession, the study first employed a qualitative meta-analysis method. Based on the keywords listed in Table 1 in both Persian and English, a total of 16 keywords or phrases were identified, and a search for reliable scientific sources commenced. Meta-analysis, through comparing and contrasting conceptual and methodological bases, as well as descriptive and explanatory findings and results obtained for each topic, generates an

integrated perspective and methodology, providing a solid foundation based on accumulated knowledge to emphasize multiple perspectives and methods in analyzing each social phenomenon (Akbari, Kahraman, and Mazhari 2012). Based on this approach, more than 172 primary sources were initially identified. Following a review of abstracts, 112 sources were excluded. After a rapid review of the remaining sources, 40 sources were ultimately selected, including two doctoral dissertations, 17 reputable international articles, 17 academic research articles, one research project, one Persian conference paper, one master's thesis, and one book. The most relevant items aligned with the research objectives were then reviewed and extracted from these reliable sources. Subsequently, the structures and frameworks of seven leading global universities in urban planning education from different continents were examined, and practical experiences and outcomes were compared with those of the current system in Iran. Finally, by integrating the findings from the literature, theoretical foundations, and empirical evidence, a pathology of the urban planning education system in Iran was presented.

Table 1. Key Keywords Used in the Literature Search

Row	Key Words (In Persian)	Key Words
1	بازنگری	Review
2	آموزش شهرسازی	Planning Education
3	ارزیابی	Assessment
4	ارزیابی	Evaluation
5	حرفه	The Profession
6	برنامه درسی	Curriculum
7	هماهنگی آموزش و حرفه	Coordination of Education and Profession
8	انطباق آموزش و حرفه	Adaptation of Education and Profession
9	کارایی آموزش	Training Efficiency
10	کارایی آموزش شهرسازی	Efficiency of Urban Planning Training
11	کارایی نظام آموزش شهرسازی در هماهنگی با حرفه	Efficiency of Urban Education System in Coordination with the Profession
12	سنجش کارایی نظام آموزش شهرسازی در هماهنگی با حرفه	Measuring the Efficiency of the Urban Education System in Coordination with the Profession
13	چالش‌های آموزش شهرسازی	Challenges of Urban Planning Education
14	شکاف نظریه و عمل	The Gap between Theory and Practice
15	آسیب‌شناسی آموزش برنامه‌ریزی شهری	Pathology of Urban Planning Education
16	آسیب‌شناسی آموزش برنامه‌ریزی شهری در تناسب با حرفه	The Pathology of Urban Planning Education in Accordance with the Profession

4. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

One of the most important results of the review is the chronological progression and the temporal necessity of addressing this challenge in reputable scientific sources. According to the findings, this challenge has primarily emerged as a topic of discussion since 2000, and more specifically since 2010. Both domestic and international sources have emphasized the need to address it and the importance of investigating this issue in depth.

Overall, 32% of the sources, comprising 13 references, directly engaged with the discussed challenge and attempted to address it from various perspectives. However, since each approached the challenge from a specific viewpoint, their final responses are not practically generalizable, as also noted in the conclusions of these sources. For example, the alignment between the education system and the

profession has been examined through the lens of learning models. At the same time, in another study, a specific approach was tested through an action research methodology and subsequently evaluated. The remaining sources, accounting for more than 67%, highlighted the relevance of this challenge and stressed its necessity. The main themes emphasized in the sources, in the context of analyzing the pathology of the urban planning education system, are summarized as follows.

4.1. First Theme: Necessity and Importance of Content Revision

As shown in the following table, the majority of sources emphasize the necessity and importance of continuous revision of educational content through the evaluation of the urban planning education system in alignment with the profession (Table 2).

Table 2. First Theme of Qualitative Meta-Analysis Results of Related Studies on the Challenge (Necessity and Importance of the Issue)

First axis	Source Type	Source
The Necessity and Importance of Continuously Reviewing The Content of Urban Planning Education in Accordance with the Profession	Doctoral Thesis	(Fallah Manshad 2013; Talebi 2015)
	Master's Thesis	(Salimi 2006)
	Research Plan	(Bahraini and Tabibiyan 2005)
	Book	(Bazargan 2012)
	Valid Foreign Articles	(Cook 1999; Denbow and Nutt 1973; Frank 2006; Hambleton 2006; Klosterman 1992; March, Hurlimann, and Robins 2013; Polat et al. 2013; Poxon 2001)
	Authentic Domestic Articles	(Alwandipour, Abbas Zadegan, and Sarbandi Farahani 2015; Azizi 2011; Bahraini and Fallah Manshadi 2013, 2018; Bahraini and Tabibiyan 2007; Barati, Mohaghegh Montazeri, and Nik Pima 2018; Mohammadi and Pandar 2021; Samanpour, Barakpour, and Maghsoudi 2017; Talebi, Farah, and Itsam 2016)
	Prestigious Domestic Conference	(Pourjafar, Shah Hosseini, and Ahani 2015)

All of the referenced articles identify the gap between the content of urban planning education and the professional domain as a significant challenge. They emphasize the need to revise the content of the urban planning education system continuously and to reduce the distance between the profession and the academic discipline.

4.2. Second Theme: Reasons for the Need to Revise Content

Based on domestic and international research, the results of the qualitative content analysis identified the main reasons and drivers for revising the content of urban planning education to align with the profession. These reasons are organized into nine categories, as presented in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3. Reasons and Drivers for the Need to Revise the Urban Planning Education System in Alignment with the Profession

Row	Reasons and Triggers	Source
1	Globalization of Science, Communications, and Relations	(Barati 2006; Hambleton 2006; Hashemi and Pour Aminzad 2011; Pezzoli and Howe 2001)
2	Development of Information and Communication Technologies	(Barati 2006; Barati, Mohaghegh Montazeri, and Nik Pima 2018; Burayidi 1993; Frank 2006; Hashemi and Pour Aminzad 2011)
3	Demographic Changes, Increasing and Changing Demand, and Various Needs	(Alwandipour, Abbas Zadegan, and Sarbandi Farahani 2015; Barati 2006; Barati, Mohaghegh Montazeri, and Nik Pima 2018; Cook 1999; Hashemi and Pour Aminzad 2011; March, Hurlimann, and Robins 2013; Mohammadi and Pandar 2021; Polat et al. 2013; Poxon 2001; Friedmann 1996)
4	Changing Climate of Higher Education and the Changing Generation of Universities	(Afshar 2001; Bahraini and Fallah Manshadi 2015; Mohammadi and Pandar 2021; Roya Sadeghi et al. 2019; Talebi, Habib, and Itsam 2015; Yalpanian, Saeedeh Zahrabadi, and Behzadfar 2016)
5	Emergence of Global Challenges and the Need to Move Towards Sustainable Local Development	(Azizi 2011; Barati 2006; Barati, Mohaghegh Montazeri, and Nik Pima 2018; Burayidi 1993; Frank 2006)
6	Lack of Efficiency and Up-to-Date Content and Procedures of the Education System in Line with the Profession	(Bazargan 2012; Budge 2009; Lak and Aghamolaei 2022; Poxon 2001; Roya Sadeghi et al. 2019)
7	Lack of Attention to Contextualism and the Indigenous Perspective in the Education Structure	(Alwandipour, Abbas Zadegan, and Sarbandi Farahani 2015; Azizi 2011; Diaw, Nnkya, and Watson 2002; Samanpour, Barakpour, and Maghsoudi 2017)
8	Lack of attention to New Approaches, Methods, and Theories in the Education Structure	(Afshar 2001; Alexander 2001; Alwandipour, Abbas Zadegan, and Sarbandi Farahani 2015; Barati 2006; Frank 2006; Lak and Aghamolaei 2022; March, Hurlimann, and Robins 2013; Mohammadi and Pandar 2021; Polat et al. 2013; Samanpour, Barakpour, and Maghsoudi 2017; Yalpanian, Saeedeh Zahrabadi, and Behzadfar 2016; Talebi 2015; Talebi, Habib, and Itsam 2015)
9	Lack of Coordination and Fit between the Education System and the Professional System	(Afshar 2001; Alwandipour, Abbas Zadegan, and Sarbandi Farahani 2015; Bahraini and Fallah Manshadi 2018; Barati, Mohaghegh Montazeri, and Nik Pima 2018; Burayidi 1993; Cook 1999; Fallah Manshad 2013; Frank 2006; Klosterman 1992; Mobini, Qaraei, and Habibi 2013; Mohammadi and Pandar 2021; Pourjafar, Shah Hosseini, and Ahani 2015; Poxon 2001; Yalpanian, Saeedeh Zahrabadi, and Behzadfar 2016; Friedmann 1996; HaghighatNayebi 2011)

4.3. Third Theme: Approaches to Revising Content

The third theme, derived from the qualitative meta-analysis of studies on the present challenge, concerns proposed strategies to reduce the gap between the education system and the profession. These strategies can be categorized within the following frameworks:

A- Changing the Cognitive-Theoretical Paradigm in Content Revision

Some research sources offer recommendations for changing and reforming the cognitive-theoretical paradigm as a foundation for structural and content modifications, as well as for a macro-level perspective in revising the urban planning education system. These suggestions are summarized as follows:

- One of the commonly cited frameworks, considered

a primary source for revising the urban planning education system, emphasizes three components: knowledge, skills, and values. This framework was introduced by the Royal Town Planning Institute in the UK during the 1990s and has since served as a basis for defining and revising urban planning curriculum content worldwide (Alexander 2001; Kunzmann 1999; Sandercock 1998).

- In revising the urban planning education system, it is necessary to establish an interdisciplinary cognitive foundation to enhance critical and creative thinking, among other capacities (Hashemi and Pour Aminzad 2011).

- Topics such as globalization and sustainable development should be incorporated into revisions to urban planning education content (Hambleton 2006).

- In revising the urban planning education system,

contextualization and attention to theoretical foundations and local literature are necessary (Diaw, Nnkya, and Watson 2002).

- Continuous revision and evaluation of the urban planning education system should be carried out with an emphasis on social sciences (Talebi, Farah, and Itsam 2016).
- Urban planning education should shift its orientation from mechanical engineering approaches toward social engineering or civilization engineering (Barati 2006).
- Revisions should shift the content approach from an expert-centered to a reciprocal learning and comparative study approach (Afshar 2001).
- The use of constructivist learning models in revising the urban planning education system is currently essential (Hamid, Saman, and Saud 2012; Roya Sadeghi et al. 2019; Talebi 2015).
- Integrating urban design knowledge with planning in curriculum structure revisions is necessary (Barati, Mohaghegh Montazeri, and Nik Pima 2018; Frank 2006).

B- Emphasis on Continuous Content Revision Based on Real Needs

- Attention to real current needs can serve as a basis for revising the professional structure and, consequently, the urban planning education system (Barati, Mohaghegh Montazeri, and Nik Pima 2018; Cook 1999; Pourjafar, Shah Hosseini, and Ahani 2015).
- The content of the urban planning education system should be continuously revised in line with the real needs of society and the profession (Bahraini and Fallah Manshadi 2018; Cook 1999; Diaw, Nnkya, and Watson 2002; Frank 2006; Hambleton 2006).
- Continuous revision of curriculum structure and course syllabi aligned with professional needs is essential (Hambleton 2006; March, Hurlimann, and Robins 2013; Poxon 2001).
- In revising course definitions and new syllabi, alignment with professional practice must be considered (Goldstein et al. 2006; Forester 1989).
- Developing the urban planning curriculum structure to align with specialized fields (through the provision of specialized courses or diverse sub-disciplines within urban planning) should be considered (Bayer, Frank, and Valerius 2013, 89).
- In revising educational content, development, reinforcement, and emphasis on practice-based program design should be incorporated (Razzaghi Asl 2011, 24).

C- Focus on Enhancing Skills and Using Creative Methods in Content Revision

- Attention to methods, skills, and values in preparing and revising urban planning educational content is essential (Alexander 2001).
- Emphasis on developing and strengthening problem-solving methods should be considered (Ahmadabadi

Arani, Farahini Farahani, and Ahmadi Hedayat, 2016, 313).

- Using a design-oriented planning educational approach can be beneficial in revising the urban planning education system (Alwandipour, Abbas Zadegan, and Sarbandi Farahani, 2015).
- Volunteer university service approaches in extracurricular environments can be employed to revise the urban planning education system (Samanpour, Barakpour, and Maghsoudi 2017).
- Emphasis should be placed on developing and strengthening project-based learning foundations compared to research-based learning approaches (Mohammadi and Pandar 2021, 75; Mahgoub 2015).
- Attention to both soft and hard evidence in design, and to incorporating residents' opinions, is effective in reducing the theory-practice gap (Lak and Aghamolaei 2022).
- Emphasis on strengthening various required skills, especially in workshops, is a key factor linking education and profession (Bahraini and Fallah Manshadi 2013; Melsner 2019; Mobini, Qaraei, and Habibi 2013; Mohammadi and Pandar 2021; Ozawa and Seltzer 1999).
- Internships, practical training, and similar methods are effective in bridging education and professional practice (Bayer, Frank, and Valerius 2013, 99; Brooks et al. 2002, 200).

D- Strengthening, Emphasizing, and Revising Workshop Content and Procedures

- Revisions to the urban planning education system aimed at reducing the theory-practice gap should emphasize and strengthen workshop courses and revise their procedures and content (Talebi, Habib, and Itsam 2015).
- The development of electronic and virtual studios should be considered to strengthen workshop-based courses (Frank 2006).

E- Strategies Related to Content Delivery Methods

- Attention to individual differences among learners in content delivery, evaluation, and classroom procedures is essential (Ahmadabadi Arani, Farahini Farahani, and Ahmadi Hedayat 2016, 313).
- Development of content delivery methods using games, simulations, and multimedia tools should be implemented (Frank 2006).
- Creativity, reflection, critical thinking, and fostering a receptive attitude toward criticism should be encouraged in classroom procedures, especially workshops (Higgins, Aitken-Rose, and Dixon 2009, 18).
- Development of Work- and Service-Based Learning Approaches (Frank 2006)
- Development of Constructivist Learning Approaches (in accordance with constructivist theory) as opposed to traditional and conventional methods (Fathi 2019; Hamid, Saman, and Saud 2012; Roya Sadeghi et al. 2019; Walsh et al. 2008).

F. Strategies for Institutional and Intersectoral Development

- The necessity of networking for knowledge exchange between universities and other institutions (Domanski, Anderson, and Janz, 2019).
- Offering specialized complementary courses for professional education with the assistance of university consultants (Frank 2006).

4.4. Curriculum and Syllabi of the Urban Planning Program in Iran

As previously mentioned, following the specialization of urban planning disciplines in 2008, the Master's curriculum for Urban Planning was ultimately revised in 2013 (Ministry of Science 2012, 2). One critical point regarding the revised curriculum is the significant similarity between the courses and the structure of the 2008 program. This alone indicates a lack of substantial or even minor changes in the currently approved curriculum. Even in the 2014 revision at the University of Tehran, more than 98% of courses and content were offered without any modification. Moreover, as observed in the content analysis results, research on urban planning in Iran indicates that urban planning education has not achieved the necessary alignment with professional practice. Interestingly, this concern exists among university faculty, students, graduates, and both public and private institutions.

Undoubtedly, the current approved curriculum is the result of extensive efforts by faculty members of Iranian universities and possesses strengths and progressive elements. However, studies conducted in

recent years (as referenced in the previous section) indicate that these efforts have not been practical. For example, according to research by Dr. Simoni and Ms. Abbasi in 2020, which evaluated the quality of education across all educational groups in the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Art, technical and practical skills were assessed at the lowest levels by all respondent groups. The findings indicate that, according to most respondents, the faculty's education falls short in adequately preparing students to enter the profession and engage in research activities. The most significant disagreement concerns the need to supplement education with up-to-date technological, scientific, and legal knowledge (Simoni and Abbasi 2022, 5). Due to the lack of updates to course syllabi since 2013 and the absence of changes to the structure of the previously approved curriculum, a fresh perspective is needed on the structure and content of the urban planning education program.

4.5. Global Experiences of Leading Universities in Urban Planning

To examine the structure and curriculum of urban planning education abroad in alignment with professional practice, a comprehensive review was conducted across multiple international universities. After eliminating programs with similar structures or those that did not offer new content, seven top universities in the field of urban planning education from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and China were selected for analysis, as detailed in the following table.

Table 4: Characteristics of the Universities Examined, by Rank and Country

Country	University Name	Rank	Source	Website
United States of America	Wagner New York	1	usnews	https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-public-affairs-schools/urban-policy-rankings
	Southern California (Price)	2		
	Cleveland State University	3		
Canada	University of Toronto	1	qs ranking	https://www.topuniversities.com/programs/canada/masters/urban-planning?country=[CA]&study_level=[3]&subjects=[510]
	McGill University	2		
United Kingdom	University College London, Bloomsbury	2	qs ranking	https://www.topuniversities.com/programs/canada/masters/urban-planning?country=[GB]&study_level=[3]&subjects=[510]
China	Xi'an Jiaotong University-Liverpool	1	qs ranking	https://www.topuniversities.com/programs/united-kingdom/masters/urban-planning?country=[CN]&study_level=[3]&subjects=[510]&sorting=[rankings_htol]

Table 5. Important Points in Developing the Framework and Syllabus of Urban Planning Education in accordance with the Profession, by Selected Universities

Essential Points in the Structure of Lessons	Wagner	California	Cleveland	Toronto	McGill	UCL	Xi'an
In developing the discipline's framework, the connection between urban planning knowledge and the professional field has been considered an operational goal rather than just a slogan.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
In developing the syllabus, special attention has been paid to the content of the urban planning profession, such as economics, statistics, management and institutional development, power relations, and the acquisition of various skills.	■		■	■	■	■	■
An extensive and diverse syllabus of optional courses has been proposed to enhance individuals' ability to develop their desired career awareness through a specialized bias.	■	■	■	■	■		
The final project syllabus has been developed precisely to meet the needs of the profession.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
A course titled Professional Experiences has been designed to align with the professional field.	■						
Establishing a career services office and preparing and linking graduates with the professional environment	■	■	■	■		■	■
Defining specialized trends and providing a wide range of related courses has allowed individuals to make multiple choices based on the level of community needs and personal abilities and interests, and, on the other hand, by creating greater focus, it has led to greater efficiency in the discipline's specialized fields.		■	■	■	■		
Definition of internship courses		■	■	■	■	■	■
Definition of a guided project course aligned with the needs of the profession		■				■	
Presentation of an article focusing on solving real-world professional problems in connection with labor market consultants				■			
Definition of two practical workshops	■	■	■	■			■
Definition of three practical workshops					■		
Definition of three research project courses aligned with the profession					■		
Definition of three courses related to the workshop and professional skills					■		■
Definition of theoretical and workshop courses in urban design in the urban planning discipline		■		■	■	■	■
Emphasis on contextualization and urban regeneration in the structure of the discipline							■
https://priceschool.usc.edu/careers/ , https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/cv-and-personal-statement-event/ , https://wagner.nyu.edu/education/ , https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2022.2023/faculties/engineering/graduate/programs/master-urban-planning-mup-urban-planning-non-thesis#mup-n_upl5_major_en https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ , https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/study/masters/msc-urban-planning https://levin.csuohio.edu/sites/default/files/MUPD_CurriculumSheet2022.pdf							Source

A brief comparison of the frameworks and syllabi of the above universities with the Iranian syllabus reveals a different perspective on the suitability of educational content to the systems and structures of the professions in these universities, including attention to providing very extensive and diverse optional courses, planning to develop a wide employment capacity at the community level by establishing an employment services management unit, defining specialized trends and providing a wide range of related courses,

defining internship courses, paying attention to new approaches in planning theory, namely developing a critical perspective and participatory procedures in developing syllabus, integrating and combining urban design teachings and the prominent presence of design-related courses in the field of planning and supporting a design-oriented planning approach, paying attention to cultural, indigenous, and historical contexts and contextual issues in developing the program structure in universities with a national-

local role. Also, each university has followed its own educational framework in line with its goals, context, role, and scale, so there is no common government-approved syllabus across the countries under study.

4.6. Transformation in Educational Theories: Constructivism – A Novel Approach in University Education

As observed in the meta-analysis, over the past two decades, a new approach to education, constructivism, has been introduced to strengthen the link between education and professional practice. According to research, to reduce the gap between education and profession, teaching methods and the delivery of concepts must also change (Hamid, Saman, and Saud 2012). Based on this approach, pre-determined knowledge delivered solely by the instructor is no longer acceptable (Saif 2016, 537). Constructivism provides a framework of structure and principles that describes and explains how individuals learn (Walsh et al. 2008), representing a paradigm shift in epistemology and learning theories. In this philosophical-psychological perspective, individuals themselves actively construct reality and meaning, and learners build much of what they learn. The fundamental principles of constructivism are rooted in the learning theories of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner, and Vigotsky (Fathi 2019). This theory emphasizes knowledge construction rather than replication or copying. Individual factors, such as personal perceptions, experiences, thinking patterns, beliefs, and context, directly affect the construction of design knowledge. According to studies, design and planning knowledge is specific to each individual. Active learner engagement in the classroom, especially in workshops—through presence, exercises, experiencing project environments, encouragement, motivation, and prompting critical thinking—leads to deep understanding and the construction of design or planning knowledge (Roya Sadeghi et al. 2019, 49). Although over the past decade, practice-based approaches—including the addition of internships and practical training—have emerged to strengthen connections with the profession, this remains a serious challenge in urban planning education. In the educational process, besides learning, the concept of transfer of learning is crucial for understanding human behavior (Pourghasemian and Zarei 2021, 1). The idea of transfer of learning, as a subset of constructivism, refers to applying learned knowledge and skills in contexts different from the learning environment (Haskel 2001). Some scholars and urban planning instructors consider learning transfer—the process and effectiveness of its implementation—as foundational to urban planning education, thinking, and problem-solving in professional practice, with practical training (studios) serving as the primary venue for applying theoretical knowledge (Talebi, Habib, and Itsam 2015, 58-59).

Constructivist learning transfer refers to applying acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the workplace and maintaining them over time (Baldwin and Ford 1988; quoted in Hamid, Saman, and Saud 2012, 662). Emphasizing the product or outcome of learning highlights the learning process and the reflective thinking behind it. Moreover, group activities and collective interactions are considered means of increasing knowledge and producing new knowledge (Roya Sadeghi et al. 2019, 49).

4.7. Linking Education and Profession in the Transformation of Macro Approaches of the University System

The needs and requirements of contemporary societies, along with the constant evolution of human demands, have led to changes in the goals, functions, and responsibilities of university systems (Suhonen and Karhunen 2019). These content- and process-related changes require attention to thinking in both substantive and formal domains of management and leadership, planning, and adaptation to internal and external organizational environments to meet the diverse needs of the professional system across social, economic, scientific, and cultural dimensions (Kapitulčinová et al. 2018). Therefore, the macro approach and orientation of universities, as defined by their roles, objectives, and positions, have a direct impact on the professional system across disciplines. Universities' macro approaches are categorized into four generations:

First generation: education-oriented university, second generation: research-oriented university, third generation: innovative and entrepreneurial university, and fourth generation: entrepreneurial, value-creating and wealth-creating university, based on a knowledge-based system (Garretsen, Van De Goor and Van De Mheen 2021). Some also define five generations and believe that fifth-generation universities are human-building and civilization-building universities. Some consider the fifth generation to be the completion of the foundations of the fourth generation (Fazel Kamalian and Aligoli 2017).

Fourth-generation universities must have four essential characteristics, including being transformational, transcendental, demand-oriented, and contributing to regional development. Fourth-generation universities, while examining current and future trends and identifying strengths and weaknesses, have guided the university toward an appropriate position in the global, local, and regional arenas (Mehdi 2014). These universities are ethical and value-oriented and are committed to the development of human dignity (Khazni et al. 2012).

Since macro approaches to the educational system directly affect the goals, content, procedures, and processes within and outside universities, the final outputs and products of universities will also be derived from these approaches. The table below

examines the relationship between the challenge in question and the macro approaches of the educational

system over the past decades (Table 6).

Table 6. Relationship between the Challenge of the Mismatch between the Educational System and the Profession and the Macro-Approaches of the Education System

Criteria	First Generation (Education)	Second Generation (Education and Research)	Third Generation (Innovation and Entrepreneurship)	Fourth Generation (Transformation, Value Creation, Ecology, and Knowledge-Based Development)
Course Content	First Period Dominance of Physical Issues	Integrated knowledge; introduction of sustainable development thinking into course content; introduction and reinforcement of courses related to research methods	Introduction of entrepreneurial literature; attention to knowledge related to urban development experiences; emphasis on workshops	Strengthening moralism; introducing constructivist theory into content; emphasizing interactive and applied knowledge creation; linking content with context and background.
	Second Period Dominance of Social Sciences			
	Third Period Entry of Environmental Sciences			
Strategy	Science Development/ Knowledge Transfer, Specialist Training	Cultivating specialists; expanding the boundaries of the university through the world of research; the growth and development of theoretical science	Development of applied science; Development of entrepreneurship; Development of knowledge-based employment; Cultivation of expert facilitators	Developing the university's role in the target region; Commitment to the university's social responsibilities; Strengthening connections with the community and local issues and context; Cultivating expert mediators.
Methodology	Traditional Education is based on Objectivism	Traditional education, Development of research based on scientific articles, Development of quantitative research methods	Linking the university with industry and urban management, providing entrepreneurship, internship, and training courses; establishing career services offices; introducing qualitative research methods	Constructivist-based education; Emphasis on service learning; Interactive knowledge construction; Development of employment services; Context-based education; Development of qualitative research methods
Challenge-Related Output	A Wide Gap in Academic Education and the Urban Planning Profession	Moving towards understanding the factors affecting the reduction of the gap	Highlighting the position of the profession in education and developing profession-based science, reducing the gap between education and the profession	Redefining education based on the needs of the target community and profession; Building interactive knowledge-based on profession; Reducing the gap between education and profession.

As observed, moving toward the realization of fourth-generation universities not only enhances universities' influence and role in their surrounding environment and society but also helps reduce the gap between the education system and professional practice. Therefore, any reform or revision of the urban planning curriculum must primarily be based on revising the Ministry of Science's macro-level approach and universities' curricula.

4.8. University Social Responsibility

University social responsibility (USR) represents the first and arguably the most critical dimension in achieving fourth-generation universities. USR describes a method by which universities, through education, research, events, and public activities, create meaningful differences in the social and economic well-being of their communities (Chashmi Ahmadian, Niazazri, and Salehi 2019). In practice,

USR can be defined as a set of responsibilities that make universities operationally effective, efficiently manage their stakeholders, share burdens through humanitarian initiatives, and actively engage society (Latif 2018). Additionally, by undertaking sustainability-focused projects of shared value, universities act as a bridge between corporate institutions and society's local and global environmental needs (Kouatli 2019). USR enhances the social utility of knowledge and improves quality of life (Babiker 2019). Projects under the USR framework, which focus on student learning by solving real-world problems, strengthen the link between theory and practice, enhance students' skills, and build bridges between academia and communities (Coelho and Menezes 2021). Experiential learning (service learning), which combines structured learning opportunities, is highly effective in strengthening the link between education and profession (Khatami, Boujari, and Ranjbar 2022, 4). In this regard, universities should participate in shaping societal values and establishing achievable goals for the benefit of the wider community, positioning themselves as agents of social and economic change (Connolly and Farrier 2021).

4.9. Assessment of the Urban Planning Education System in Relation to Profession

Based on the summary of the studies and results in the research findings section, and the diagram below, the emergence of challenges in the current situation can be categorized into three interconnected layers with three performance scales: macro, medium, and micro. In the first layer, which is proposed at the level of the Ministry of Science and universities, the framing of educational theories based on the macro approach of the higher education system is practically achieved. The primary manifestation of this theoretical framing will result from the goals, missions, and role of higher education in the current society. It will be derived, at the macro level, from the same four generations of educational approaches referred to in the previous table. In parallel, at the same level, the macro approaches of the professional system also lead to its framing by the relevant agencies. Unfortunately, there

is little coordination and proportion in this framing between the two educational and professional systems, and this is the beginning of the challenge at the macro level. On the other hand, by reviewing global theoretical and practical experiences and the opinions of domestic researchers, the current higher education system framework should also move towards a fourth-generation university approach. In this regard, to reduce the gap between education and profession at the first level, the framework of education theory should be formulated as a structure and content based on the foundations of the fourth-generation university, and this should be coordinated and proportionate with the framework of the profession system.

In the second layer, based on the framework defined in the first layer, the education system's methodology is developed. The most important output of this layer is the development of an urban planning education syllabus and framework, structured into three parts: content, procedure, and support mechanism. Based on the research findings, emphasizing constructivist theory in the education system can make a significant contribution to the positive performance of this layer. Also, by coordinating with the outputs of the second layer of the professional system, the issues, problems, needs, challenges, and requests of the professional system can complement the second layer's outputs in the education system. In the third layer, which deals with the overall space of the lesson, including the content of a lesson, procedures and processes, relationships, facilities, and support mechanisms, the practice of educational theory is realized. Emphasizing the keywords of constructive knowledge transfer, interactive knowledge construction, and service learning plays a significant role in the output of this layer. In this layer, by increasing coordination with the vocational system in the third layer through formats such as internships, brainstorming sessions, participation in real projects, etc., it can be expected that the gap between the education system and the profession will be minimized. Also, in line with global experience, establishing an employment service office as a facilitator of employment relations will be a suitable means of supporting the link between the university and the profession (Fig.s 2 and 3).

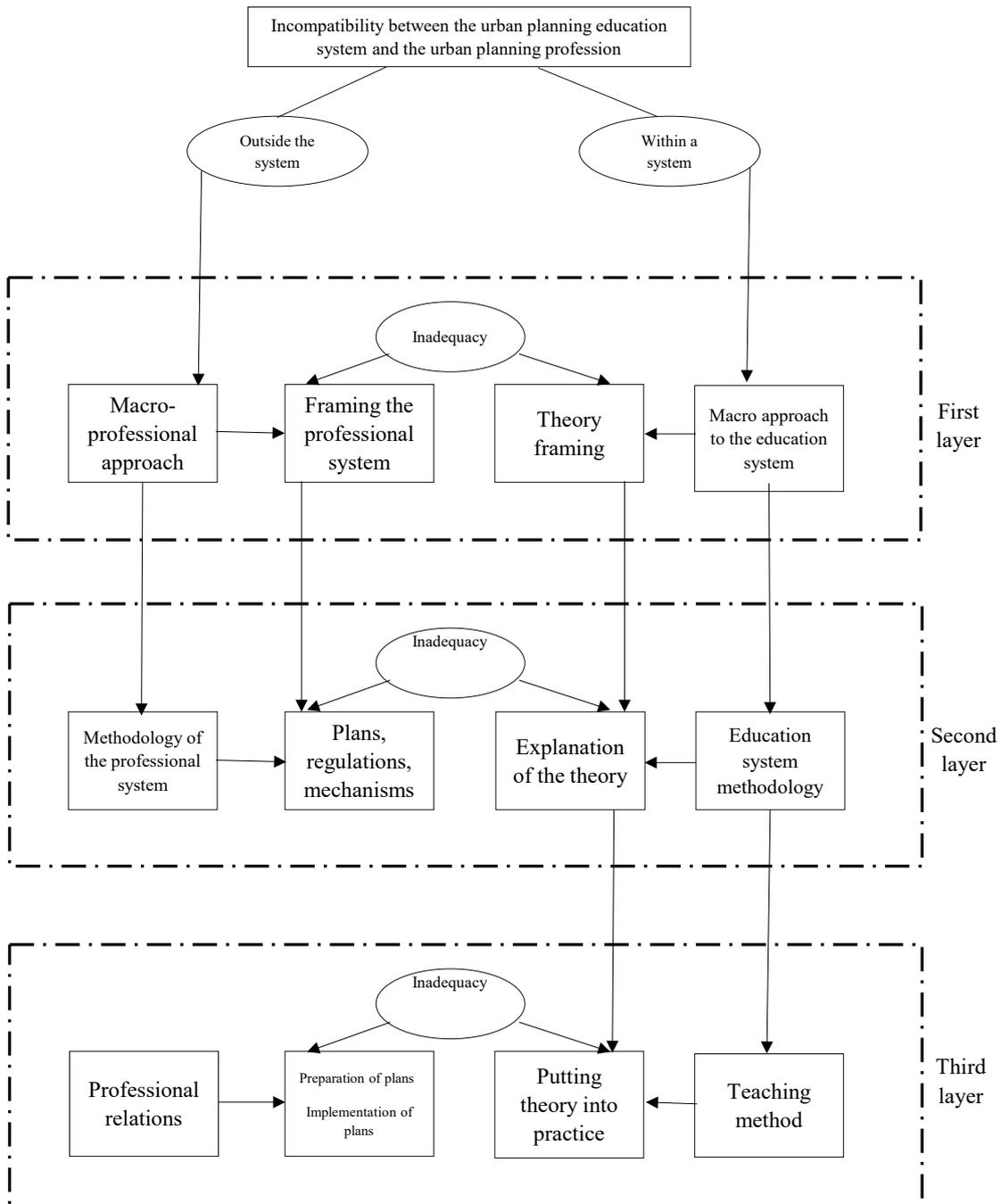


Fig. 2. Three-Level Pathology in the Challenge of the Mismatch between the Urban Planning Education System and the Professional System

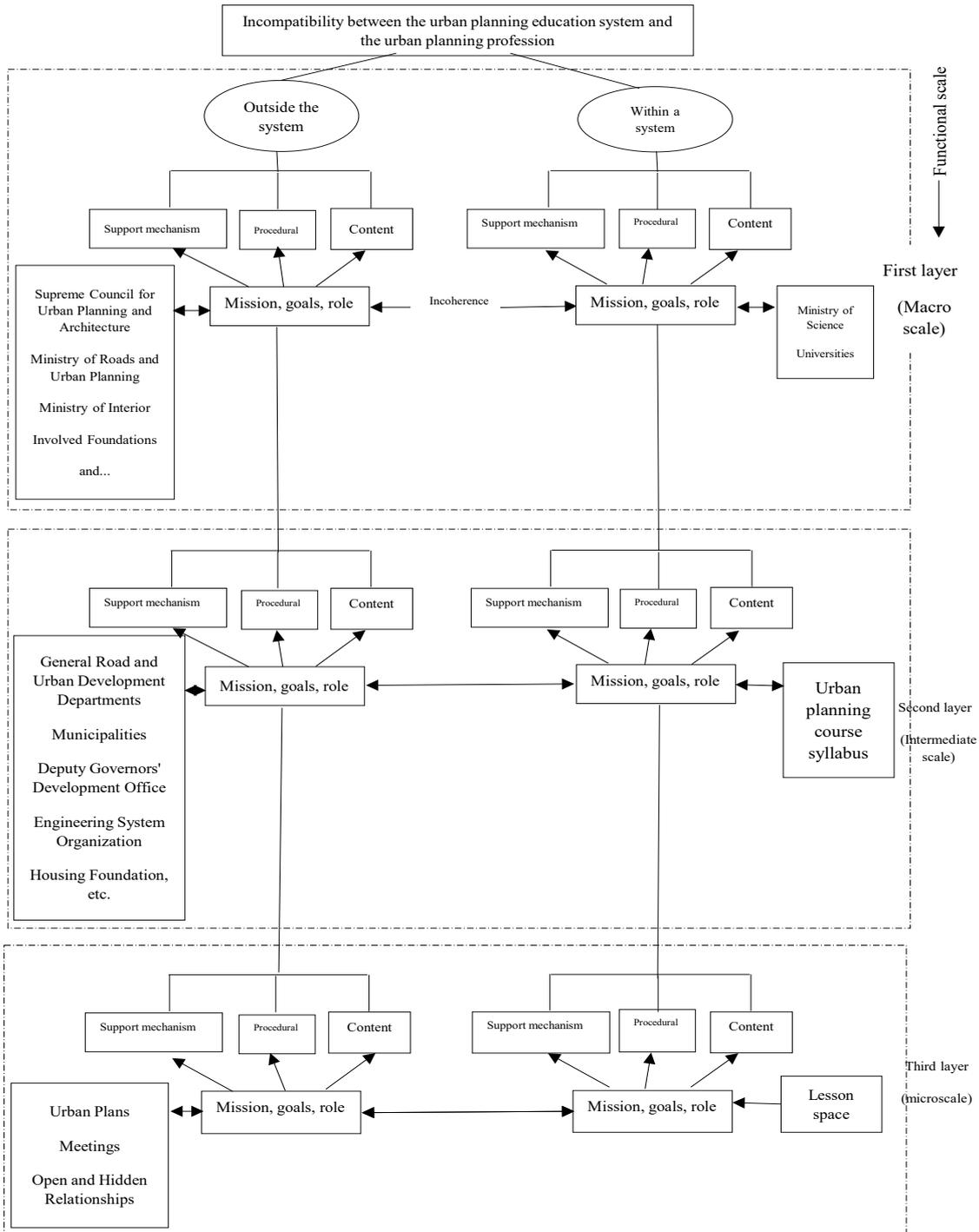


Fig. 3. Pathology of Elements and Components in the Challenge of the Mismatch between the Urban Planning Education System and the Profession

5. CONCLUSION

As highlighted throughout this article’s review, the gap between education and the urban planning profession stems from multiple internal and external factors. Part of this gap relates to intervening factors, such as the influence of power structures and the political system, managerial and governmental interventions

by agencies related to urban management, weak institutional and structural frameworks within the profession, personal and individual preferences, economic and livelihood conditions, and so on. The second part of the gap concerns weaknesses in the structure and system of urban planning education, particularly the alignment of urban planning education with professional practice. This article

specifically focuses on the educational system and its challenges concerning professional alignment. The study's findings indicate that the primary explicit and implicit drivers of the misalignment between the education system and professional practice in urban planning include:

The impact of varying temporal conditions and neglect of changing needs; the impact of differing spatial conditions and neglect of evolving local needs; lack of coordination between the education system and professional system at macro to micro levels; failure to update the structure and curriculum of urban planning programs; insufficient attention to contextual issues in the development of course content and syllabi; the imposition of a single approved curriculum across all universities and higher education institutions (despite differences in objectives, roles, context, and operational scale); the extensive involvement of multiple institutions in the profession and the differing needs and perspectives regarding graduates'

competencies; lack of accountability of universities and urban planning departments in addressing contextual issues; insufficient consideration of the influence of the overarching higher education framework on course content and failure to update this framework in accordance with the fourth-generation university model; underutilization of non-governmental and non-profit institutions for graduate employment and employment development (noting that this capacity-building starts within universities, as courses on social and community institution development have been included in curricula at many global universities for over a decade); inadequate integration of constructivist theory in course content and delivery methods; absence of courses such as internships and apprenticeships; and insufficient attention to social responsibility principles from the macro level of universities to the content of the urban planning education system.

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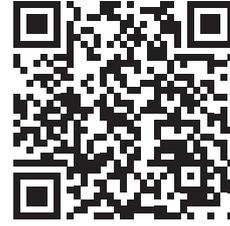
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