



Some Insights on Studio Courses in City and Regional Planning Education: A Personal Reflection

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1. Introduction

As both a studio student and a studio project coordinator, I was required to review studio lessons at various periods. When my friends began publishing a geography, planning, and tourism planning journal that focused on studio issues, and they asked me to write an article on the place and role of studios in city and regional planning and related disciplines, I gladly agreed to put my years of experience and knowledge into writing.

The inclusion of studio courses in “City and Regional Planning Departments” can be explained both by the logic of higher education as a whole and by the nature of the field itself. This article begins with overarching justifications, before moving on to more particular justifications in the context of city and regional planning. Studio courses in city and regional planning degree programs can benefit from such an opening section since their goals and roles in the students’ development will become clearer. The second section of this paper will address the issues of course direction, performance indicators, and assessment of learning in a studio setting.

1.1. Relationships with Professional Practices in Different Fields of University Education in the World and in Turkey

University life after WWII is very different from that of the pre-war era. When Germany’s Von Humboldt University opened its doors in the 19th century, it sparked a revolutionary change. Academics at this school were not making individual contributions to science; rather, they were doing them collectively within the institutes. Academic output became communal. There was a definite uptick in the university’s scientific contributions. This school, however, was not involved in any way with the phenomenon in question. Research was conducted solely for the sake of academic

inquiry, rather of any practical application. The scientific community at this university was highly compartmentalized. The people living in “Ivory Towers” received their degrees from this school. Collaboration among its leaders was evident in the way they ran things. The rector of this university was more of a peer leader than a boss. Soon, he would be passing the torch to a well-regarded scientist from a different field. The institution was dedicated to academic inquiry and higher learning. During this time, engineering and architectural programs that were directly applicable to practice were not included in academic institutions. They went to schools that specialized in their field of interest.

A new type of American university emerged after WWII. A term for this was “Multiversity.” In addition to teaching and study, this institution also produced public service in the form of a variety of programs. The research being conducted at this institution was not scientific in nature. He would think of answers to society’s issues. These university rectors spend four to five years developing a program that encompasses the university’s new functions, and then serve as rectors during its implementation after receiving approval from the university’s various parts. There was a rise in graduate-level coursework at these schools with a deliberate focus on social issues. Master’s Degrees in City and Regional Planning was also listed. Multiversity’s areas of concentration, in contrast to Von Humboldt University’s, were determined as problem-centred, and a multidisciplinary education path was opted for within their education. After the initial success of problem-focused master’s degree programs, the same institutions expanded their offerings to include undergraduate degrees.

There was a shift in the calibre of higher education following the year 1980, when the manufacturing sector began its shift from Fordist to flexible production. Once the industrial workforce shifted from blue-collar to white-collar, higher education shifted from being a privilege reserved for the top 10-15% of society’s relevant age group to a necessity for the top 65% of society’s relevant age group and above.

Due to the university’s structural changes, it is now more vital than ever to connect classroom learning with students’ everyday lives. Academic institutions anywhere, but especially in Turkey, have failed to come up with a sufficiently radical response to this issue, in my opinion. In Turkey, universities use a variety of approaches to provide students with practical experience in their chosen fields of study. It is common for senior-year college and university students to worry that they will be unprepared for the workforce upon graduation. They then begin to criticize their education, saying that it lacks relevance to real life. An unreasonable national expectation, rather than the quality of the education on offer, is driving this “rush” acquisitions in employability. In Turkey, obtaining a degree in a particular field and the legal right to practice in that field are treated as two sides of the same coin. However, completion of college in industrialized nations does not equate to professional job title. After working for a set amount of time in permitted settings following graduation and passing exams routinely held by professional chambers, a university graduate earns the right to practice independently in his area. Although there were relatively few university graduates in early times of Turkish Republic, a bachelor’s degree was considered adequate for self-employment. But now mass education is the tradition at Turkey’s universities. More and more people are completing higher education. I do strongly believe that it is to formalize the reality that obtaining a degree from a university and being allowed to perform a profession are two entirely different steps. Turkish politics, however, precludes this outcome. The fundamental cause of the difficulties in this regard is the failure to recognize this distinction.

There are three models for connecting theory and practice in Turkey’s higher education system:

i. Medical Education Model: Integrating the university’s teaching, research, and clinical duties is a central tenet of the medical education model. There needs to be a hospital on the campus of the medical school. All aspects of healthcare, including education, research, and hospital care, are delivered in a coordinated tradition. Each of these capabilities benefits from this type of integration. Of course, the morals espoused in the Hippocratic Oath undoubtedly played a role in the improvement of this performance. Medical schools in Turkey also have a greater worldwide publication rate per faculty member than schools in other disciplines. This is the best-case scenario, as it helps to alleviate some of the issues stemming from the gap between theory and practice.

ii. Engineering Faculties: Yet there is no such ideal condition in other professions. The way for faculty members in engineering faculties to practice as office holders outside the university is not permitted. However, the

institution can use its revolving finances to take on initiatives and carry them out. Gains to universities are substantial. With this new policy in place, professors will have less involvement in student mentoring and lab work. Although there is an accessible path for students to participate in these revolving fund projects, only a small amount of eligible students actually take advantage of it.

Furthermore, there are project courses that are directly relevant to the topic. The goal of these classes is to teach students the fundamentals of engineering by having them apply what they learn to a real-world project. In engineering faculties, students are asked to perform internships in private and public entities during the summer semesters in order to establish a contact between the students and practice. Obviously, this is crucial for the student's socialization into his profession and for the development of his interaction with practice. However, students often complete these internships fraudulently, as it is not hard for them to produce a document claiming to be about completion of internship. Since most academic research ignores real-world issues, it is difficult to forge a strong connection between students and practitioners in these settings. As things are, higher education in this setting is unable to advance beyond the methods employed by Von Humboldt University.

iii. Law Faculties: Law schools in Turkey developed the third model for connecting theory and practice in higher education. Law professors often go into private practice when their academic careers goes. The lecturers in the law programs were given this privilege whereas their counterparts in the engineering and architecture schools were not. As a result, academics are able to successfully put theory into practice. However, other from a few practical classes, students have no chance to develop a connection with practice during their time in higher education. To become a lawyer, a graduate student must complete a six-month internship at a legal firm. The interesting thing is that there appears to be a compensation for having a practical use, not least Turkey's. Turkey's law professors have the lowest global publication rate.

It is common knowledge that a proliferation of board of trustees-run "Foundation Universities" has occurred in recent times. Many of these schools boast of a closer connection to real-world application. Attempts to accomplish this were primarily focused on modifying the curriculum. Some of these schools now compulsory participation in a community service project as a condition of graduation, with the goal of instilling in their students a sense of civic duty and responsibility.

1.2. Specificity of the Studio Courses in City and Regional Planning Education: Establishing the Relationship with University Education with Vocational Practice in Turkey

City and regional planning programs evolved in the post-war, problem-oriented academic milieu, and the focus placed on professional practice and practice is reflected in the "Studio" courses offered by these programs. It can be noted that the curriculum of these areas of study consists of two distinct types of classes. The first category contains classroom sessions dedicated to theoretical study. In the second group, there was only one course, the studio. Studio courses were worth two times as many credits as their theoretical counterparts. In reality, though, it was even more. The time commitment required for studio left no open room in the schedule for additional studies. Naturally, when a course is given such prominence in the curriculum, high hopes are placed on the course's ability to advance the student's knowledge in the topic.

However, it is not simple to live up to such lofty standards. One-semester evaluations might raise some dissatisfaction. It seems to reason that when studio classes account for a disproportionately large number of students' lost credits, the resulting losses are also disproportionately large. What I mean by "unhappiness" is not the kind of discontent that comes after "a failed studio training," but rather the kind of dissatisfaction that comes after a studio course that was well-organized and executed. My immediate assessments have always left me feeling dissatisfied, whether I was a student or the studio coordinator. It was not until I was writing my own autobiography that I fully appreciated the formative role that studio time had played in my life. What was initially perceived as negative feedback proved to be beneficial in the long run?

The main reason why students are not happy with these quick evaluations is that the studio's evaluation is not sufficient for the amount of information and abilities taught in such a high-credit course. The favourable outcome

of the long-term assessment can be attributed to the fact that it focused not on the acquisition of new information or the development of new abilities, but rather on the transformation of one's attitude toward existing information. Short-term evaluators may propose eliminating studio classes or lightening the credit load every once in a while. The close alignment of theoretical and studio study is a key advice here. What is learned in theoretical classes can be put into practice in studio classes, which are conceived as a collage of practices. The proposals made with short-term pragmatic considerations concerning studio courses lose their grounding and applicability when the significance of the formation change caused by these courses in the student's approach to knowledge and local knowledge is acknowledged.

1.3. Differences and Dynamics of Studio and Theoretical Courses

Studio classes are important because they can drastically alter a student's development, yet they differ from theoretical sessions in both content and methodology. Not least, because each studio in the Department of City and Regional Planning is led by a studio executive professor and staffed by a team of faculty members with specialized knowledge and research assistants. After deciding on a city or regional planning issue to focus on for the year/term, the studio coordinators write up a document outlining the studio's goals, methodology, and student outcomes for the year/term. This text is still up for improvements, so long as the instructor is willing to negotiate with the class what is anticipated from the studio based on data collected as it is being created.

Since there is a studio course at both the undergraduate and graduate levels of urban planning education in Turkey, the level at which the studio subject is selected needs to be considered. While first-year studios focus on solving straightforward design/planning challenges on a modest scale, the scope of the settlement under consideration expands and the complexity of the planning issue becomes more apparent as the course level increases. The path from easy to difficult is a ladder including a learning curve.

Studio solutions to large-scale, complicated planning problems, especially at the upper levels, are typically developed in the context of a classroom or group setting. Discussions among students in class lead to a sort of consensus on how to approach this problem from a variety of perspectives. Each student's performance in the studio needs to be evaluated independently. The nature of the result precludes its analysis in isolation. Making sure that individual grades are consistent might be difficult. Therefore the studio's designers and monitors will be aware of this issue from the earlier and will take measures to eliminate it.

The student's development might also be affected by this distinction, since the sense a theoretical course is taught and the qualities of what the student learns and the way a studio course is performed and the quality of the relationship the student develops with knowledge have both distinctions.

i. Theoretical Courses: These lectures are presented by a departmental professor on a topic specified by the curriculum. Classroom instruction is prioritized. Instruction focuses mostly on textbook-based nomothetic information in an effort to instill in students the foundational skills necessary to become competent professionals in the field. A lot of the learning here is passive and a single-side (not interactive). The understanding of a self-contained whole. There will be no modifications or additions made; students will absorb the material by verbatim.

ii. Studio Courses: Rather than learning everything there is to know about a subject in a single Studio Class, students might learn more by working together on a project. The student can confidently claim that the information they have jointly created is not foreign to him but rather his own. The studio course extends beyond the classroom and the instructor's desk. It wasn't limited to the confines of a classroom; it also extended to the playing field. It's now accessible to a wider range of participants in society. Idiomatic expressions specific to this region are being developed. Open system knowledge is the studio's specialty. It must not become secret information. Having an open mind to new ideas is essential to working in an open studio. The studio can no longer create only original regional knowledge when open information is co-produced there. It encourages them to trust one another and the results of their collaborative efforts.

The quality difference between these two course groups is the primary basis for the assertion made in this article

that studio courses provide a very big formation difference for a planner. Naturally, I believe that in studio lessons, students and teachers both discuss this distinction from the outset of the lesson, raising awareness that will prove invaluable to the success of that studio.

Successful completion of a studio course results in the acquisition of a generic skill for every student, regardless of the specific subject matter covered in the course. As a studio student in this program, he has excelled;

- Define the problem in a locality within the community with precision,
- Conducting fieldwork and study, forming relationships with the community, and developing a solution collectively,
- Developing a solution through in-group discussion,
- Creating a plan report from it,
- Justifies the recommended remedy to the jury.

A student in city and regional planning who undergoes this procedure each semester acquires a variety of generic skills that students in other disciplines lack. Students can therefore be successful beyond the subject of city and regional planning when they enter the workforce.

2. Some Notes on Improving the Success of Studio Courses

In order for the anticipated benefits of studio courses, which play a vital role in City and Regional Planning education, to be achieved, the teaching faculty and students enrolled in the course must execute them properly. Note that I did not imply it is well-managed. The performance of a studio, in my opinion, is mostly dependent on the performance of its students. When students' performance and acceptance of the lesson improve, faculty members' performance will also improve. Therefore, the initial objective of faculty members should be to make the subject appealing and desirable to students and as well as high motivation.

There should be a crystal-clear knowledge of the nature of the product that will arise from the studio's activities among the studio's coordinators and participants. This output must be specified on two levels: the nature of the studio's subject matter and the individual evaluation of each student at the end of the semester. The major product of the studio course will be the collaboratively generated, large-scale, group-negotiated core product, and there will be portions of the core product where the individual performance of each student can be observed independently. The procedure for acquiring these things should be outlined in such a way that no student feels excluded. Similarly, a student who does not contribute should be unable to conceal this fact. For a studio to be successful, both instances must be prevalent. Each student must be able to acknowledge his or her contribution to the final collective product. Then and only then can a student devote themselves to the emerging solution. He would have avoided isolating himself from the studio class.

If there are enough students in the class, the studio should house many study groups. Creating alternate solutions for the upper-scale fundamental solution in the classroom will enhance the creative learning environment fostered by the studio. Alternatives should not be automatically produced. At the beginning of studio work, after a certain degree of topic knowledge has been attained and differences of opinion regarding the solution have emerged among the students, the solution should be reached through negotiation. When these alternatives are not presented to the students from the outside, but rather are based on the divergent opinions of the students, conversations about the solutions will be more sincere and credible.

In addition to the process followed in this study, the selection of the question or subject is also crucial to the success of a studio project. The urban and regional planning concerns addressed by elite studios must be of great complexity and require exhaustive solutions. This issue should not be resolved in a routine manner, such as by using mathematical models. Through multifaceted research and negotiations, solutions to these complicated

problems will be discovered. The subject of the studio cannot be a model, or a planning exercise based solely on pure nomothetic knowledge. The subject of the studio must be a planning issue associated with a known settlement in a specific location.

Naturally, each city and regional planning department will have a degree of complementarity within the department and a concern for educating students to assume responsibility for the following year, while selecting the locations and planning themes to be covered each semester/year. Before establishing the techniques to be utilized in the studio course, the administrators who selected the subject should have made preliminary selections on a few subjects. Given that there is a planning studio, it is necessary to first determine what planning entails. In some instances, the planning issues dealt with in these studios fall under the purview of urban design. Among the answers that will be reached will be urban designs of various scales and design manuals. If design is not prioritized, the term planning will be insufficient. Today's world of planning is multifunctional, multiscale, and multiparadigmatic. In this regard, studios are also expected to make clear decisions. The planning that will be carried out by the studio; It should be made clear whether it will be comprehensive rational planning, deliberative collaborative planning, or affect-led planning of a post-anthropocentric world that views society as an assemblage. If it is agreed that planning in the modern world has become multi-paradigmatic, then a department that intends to prepare its students for this multi-paradigmatic world should be able to select multiple planning paradigms for different studios, not the same planning paradigm.

2.1. Assessment of the Performance of Studio Students

Ensuring that students receive fair grades is one of the most difficult aspects of these studio courses. Due to the high credit weights of these courses, the consequences of making mistakes in this topic will be severe. It is extremely difficult to assess their individual grades by isolating the basic collective result of a studio from the individual contributions of its students. More challenging is convincing the students enrolled in this course that these grades are issued fairly. No matter how effective a studio project was in enhancing students' problem-solving skills, if the students perceive that they are not evaluated fairly, the project was a failure.

In order to conduct such performance evaluations, the method to be followed in the studio course will be set in advance, grades will be granted to students at intermediate stages of the studio, these grades will be disclosed, and the means to contest these grades will be left accessible. These intermediate evaluations are crucial. The student will not receive an unexpected grade at the conclusion of the term; if his/her performance is inadequate, he/she will be informed and given the opportunity to improve it. Of course, the ultimate grade is what matters. Students should be aware of how the final result will be determined and should be able to anticipate the grade they will receive. This procedure must be transparent and responsible. Obviously, at a studio, students know a student's performance the best. In various departments around the world, grading processes are kept open to student input for this reason.

2.2. Ensuring the Studio Works Become the Memories of the Departments

Since the 1960s, city and regional planning studios have been in practice in Turkey. Additionally, the number of departments has expanded. The studios collect a tremendous amount of information on our settlements each year. At the conclusion of studio work, the results are analysed and compiled so that they can be used in subsequent years; nevertheless, they are not typically saved in the department's memory so that they can be accessed on demand. This information gained from studio work is useless.

For this reason, I believe that the studio work team's responsibilities should not end when studio grades are assigned. The team responsible for preparing the studio should be charged with making the inputs and outputs of this activity accessible and secure. Lack of sufficient departmental archives is the primary reason why this was not done. Currently, the use of digital storage media enables this convenience.

Due to Kemal Kurdaş's interest in village development, the Hayriye Köy (Hayriye Village) studio work in which I participated when I was a student at METU was printed in a restricted number of copies using duplicating machines. The existence of such a study and a detailed description of the village in 1961 drew further researchers to Hayriye Köy in subsequent years, resulting in additional research on this community. After sixty years, "The Development

Workshop” published a collection of these investigations in 2021. This is an intriguing illustration. The department of city and regional planning’s studio work has become one of the village’s most valuable assets.

What studio coordinators should do following studio work can be specified in a manner distinct from the storage of relevant materials and products. The coordinators of the studios may be asked to make the topic they are addressing into a case study and transform it into course content that will be used in the studios in subsequent years. Through “case studies”, “Harvard Business School” maintains its contact with business world while educating its students. On case studies from real life that are presented to students, they are encouraged to come up with solutions or critique existing ones. In a semester, the student encounters numerous case studies and has the opportunity to gain a diverse understanding of his or her profession. If city and regional planning departments turn their old studio work into case studies, they will be able to incorporate it into their new studio courses.

3. Final Words

My paper on studios and studio education in city and regional planning departments has reached its end. This article does not prescribe how studios within these departments should be arranged. Whether a studio coordinator or a participating student, I want to establish a list of critical issues that can be used by anyone who wishes to consider the studios. I believe that the growth and efficacy of studio instruction are crucial. I feel that the contribution of the profession of City and Regional Planning to society will increase if we can converse more about this topic and raise our success.