

Analytical and Critical Study of the Making of Academic Master's Theses In the Department of Urban Planning and Environment in Faculty of Architectural Engineering Damascus University*

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Abstract

After a decade of teaching, the Department of Urban Planning and Environment in the Faculty of Architectural Engineering at Damascus University has accumulated a good number of Master's theses amounted to thirty four theses. These theses dealt with different areas of urban and regional planning. They formulated a distinguished character for the Department and indicated the interests of the faculty and students in research. They also define areas of concentration that reflect specific needs and temporal and locational circumstances. Therefore, they can be seen as an indicator for evaluating planning education.

No study has been made related to the evaluation of this research product. This paper aims to looking at how these theses are developed in terms of their mechanisms, orientations, and scientific and application feasibility, without actually evaluating their quality. The study looks at the fixed and variable practical, educational, and research issues pertaining to the development of these theses. The study is based on a questionnaire that was answered by 74% of researchers who finished their theses in the Department during the last ten years. The paper consists of six parts: the first discusses planning education requirements in general whereas the second deals with planning education in Damascus university as a case study of Syrian universities. The third deals with the first year of the Master's academic, and fourth part presents the development of the theses starting with the registration of the thesis through all working stages until the defense. The fifth section deals with the feasibility and return theses research and dissemination, and leads to a number of findings and recommendations. It used analytical descriptive method and analytical inductive method in the introductions and definitions; and deriving method in discussing research work in the Department; and deductive method to reach conclusions.

The paper suggests periodical review of work developed in the Department for continuous evaluation and to uncover the valuable information included in this large quantity of work. Also it aims to evaluate the Master's study as the only available alternative of teaching planning in the University. This can be done through the careful connection between work done in the Department and the goals and objectives of local and national planning strategies. The paper also suggests the diversification of research work in the Department whether it is scientific, application, or action research. The work should follow quality standards and meet the needs of the forthcoming period of recovery and reconstruction phase.

Keywords: Planning education – Academic Master's – planner's roles – Application Master's – quality of thesis – procedural research – feasibility of research.

* For the paper in Arabic see pages (155-181).

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