

(Paper 52, 148)

Analysis and Comparison of Masters Real Estate Curricula in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

No systematic curriculum analysis was conducted in the past to compare topics offered in Masters Real Estate (MRE) curricula in South Africa locally and with similar curricula internationally. The study supports the process of critical assessment of existing MRE curricula in South Africa as well as contributes towards the global effort of discovering contents of real estate curricula. Internet research and relevant real estate education publications are research approaches that were used to collect data for the study. The results indicate that MRE curricula in South Africa are diverse in nature even though they are comparable both locally and internationally in terms of course offerings.

KEYWORDS: Real estate topics, curriculum, property industry

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to analyse topics offered in MRE curricula offered in South Africa and compare them locally and with similar curricula internationally. These curricula are analysed in terms of course content to identify MRE topics which are presumed to be supporting constituents in the property industry. This exercise is a significant component of the critical assessment of postgraduate real estate curricula offered in South Africa for two main reasons. Secondly, this study supports the global effort of discovering contents of real estate curricula and adding literature on real estate curriculum, and offering guidance for their improvement. Further investigation of current level of skills and knowledge offered in existing real estate curricula was called by Epley (1996). This call is partially addressed by this survey by analysing and comparing postgraduate real estate curricula offered in South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gallupo and Worzala (2004) reported that real estate education has been taught since the early 1890s. Another author (Davies, 1958) (cited in Nourse, 1995) noted that formal education in real estate began with a lecture course at the West Side in New York in 1904. This means that real estate education has been in existence for over one hundred years. However, Epley (1996) lamented that over all these years the area of real estate has not evolved enough to receive consensus among educators about the necessary knowledge and skills which are required to be taught. He recommended further research as a solution to

in-depth understanding of content of real estate curricula which are so diverse. Black and Rabianski (2003) attempted to define a body of knowledge for real estate in the global context. They too found out that defining a body of knowledge in real estate in the global context is extremely difficult, since there appears to be no clear cut consensus on the boundary lines of the discipline, either academic or professional. Carn and Rabianski (1986) emphasised the lack of agreement over a common body of knowledge among academics by noting that Real Estate Principles, a core real estate course subject was an elective in many programmes.

Analysis of real estate curricula supports educators in the processes of curriculum development by discovering coursework offered in the curricula; extending literature on real estate curriculum; and providing insights to be considered in the establishment of new or improvement of existing real estate programmes (Finch and Weeks, 2003). Results of a study they conducted for all business schools in the USA accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International provided surprising insights into the variety of coursework completed by students either concentrating or majoring in real estate. This revealed that the education product of a real estate concentration programme was much different from that of a real estate major. Further, Finch and Weeks (2003) found out that there was no single real estate class which was offered uniformly by schools offering an undergraduate major in real estate. A part from Real Estate Principles, Carn and Rabianski (1986) identified five other course subjects that should constitute a real estate curriculum: Investment Analysis, Real Estate Finance, Market Analysis, Appraisal, and Policy and Law. Surprisingly, Finch and Weeks (2003) found out that many real estate majors were required to study these topics, while students pursuing real estate concentrations were not.

Black, Carn, Diaz and Rabianski (1996) emphasised that any well-rounded real estate curriculum should reflect the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of the field. In addition, a real estate curriculum has to recognise the different constituents in the industry whose needs and concerns must be met (Black, Carn, Diaz and Rabianski, 1996). Furthermore, Black, Carn, Diaz and Rabianski (1996) reported that the aim of the curriculum should be to produce effective real estate decision makers and managers who are armed with the concepts, techniques and skills required to solve the problems of today and tomorrow. Two basic issues dealing with curriculum change are identified in literature. The first concerns the curriculum paradigm (What knowledge and skills should be taught) (Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton, 1998). To address this concern it is important for real estate educators to seek input from leading real estate practitioners in the industry to assist in defining knowledge and skill goals of a curriculum (Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton, 1998). Some of the key skills and knowledge needed as part of a real estate curriculum summarised from Black, Carn, Diaz and Rabianski (1996) are: (a) skills: negotiation, information processing, management, communication, and problem-solving; and (b) knowledge: market evaluation; corporate and business environments; physical aspects of real property; laws, regulations and legal procedures; and financial dimensions of real property. The second issue concerns the learning paradigm (How should the curriculum be taught) (Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton, 1998). One approach is the text book model which involves adopting a text book and teaching whatever is in the book (Epley, 1996). The learning environment for this approach is passive in nature and has been criticised for failing to prepare students well for the industry due to its limited ability to confront reality (Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton, 1998). To address this challenge Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton (1998) suggested that the learning paradigm requires a change from the traditional passive educational delivery system into the disquieting arena of active learning and real-world experience.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND SELECTED POSTGRADUATE REAL ESTATE CURRICULA

Two main research approaches were applied to collect curriculum data used for this study. These methods are internet research on postgraduate real estate curricula and use of relevant real estate education publications. In total out of 71 MRE curricula which were identified in the survey, 28 were selected for analysis and comparison purposes in this study, representing 39%. The 28 selected programmes consist of 3 curricula from South Africa, 3 from other African countries, and 22 from other continents.

TABLE 1: DETAILS OF MASTERS REAL ESTATE PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

University & Dept / School	Name of degree	Admission requirements	Duration	Delivery	Total credits
Pretoria (Construction Economics)	MSRE	.Hons, 4 or 5 yr relevant bachelors degree .Work experience	2 yrs & treatise	8 block weeks	230
Witwatersrand (Construction Economics & Management)	MSPDM	.Relevant good bachelors degree .Work experience	1 yr full time, 2yrs part time & treatise	1 week block release	180
Cape Town (Construction Economics & Management)	MSPS	.Hons or 4 yr relevant bachelors degree .Work experience	2 yrs & treatise	Block system	180
Free State (Quantity Surveying & Construction Management)	MPS	.Relevant good bachelors degree	2 yrs & treatise	8 workshop weeks	240
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan (Construction Management & Quantity Surveying)	MSBE	.Relevant good bachelors degree .Work experience	1 yr full time, 2 yrs part time & treatise	4 or 5 block weeks	202
<p>Key: MSRE: Master of Science in Real Estate . Science in Property Studies MSPDM: Master of Science in Property Development and Mgt. Property Science MSBE: Master of Science in Built Environment MSPS: Master of MPS: Masters in</p>					

Sources: Real Estate Study Guides Universities of Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Free State, Cape Town, and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan (2012)

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

COMPARISON OF MASTERS REAL ESTATE CURRICULA IN SOUTH AFRICA

Results of the analysis of MRE curricula offered in South Africa revealed topic differences and similarities.

TOPIC DIFFERENCES

Results indicate that the curricula are diverse and consist of different course subjects, although there are similarities in some course offerings. In total 27 topics including treatise are offered in MRE curricula in South Africa. The research clearly shows topic diversity by showing universities offering a topic and those not offering a particular topic. It was found that 24 out of 27 topics are not offered by all the five universities in South Africa, representing 89% disagreement on course offerings. These topics include:

Applied Game Farm Planning; Accounting and Project Finance; Building Energy Analysis and Management; Construction and Agricultural Engineering; Corporate Strategy; Environmental Economics; and Financial Management. Surprisingly, even other topics expected in real estate curricula are also not offered by all the five universities. For example: Property Management, Property Investment, Property Law, Property Economics, Property Marketing, and Property Finance. The difference in composition of topics in the curricula could partly be due to different real estate educational needs of the local property industries and communities the universities intended to serve. For example, the inclusion of course subjects like Applied Game Farm Planning, and Construction and Agricultural Engineering by UFS could mean that the local industry and community being served considered agricultural engineering and game as important in their real estate involvements. It is important to note that the variation in topics offered in the curricula could equally create differences in the quality of educational products graduating from the universities in South Africa.

TABLE 2: COURSE SUBJECTS OFFERED IN MASTERS REAL ESTATE CURRICULA IN SOUTH AFRICA

University & Degree offered	Core subjects offered	Credits allocated	% of subject in curriculum
Pretoria: Master of Science in Real Estate	Property Development (including Property Finance, Property Law, and Property Marketing).	40	17.4
	Property Management/Facilities Management.	40	17.4
	Property Investment.	10	4.3
	Property Valuation.	40	17.4
	Construction Contract Law.	10	4.3
	Financial Management.	20	8.7
	Research Methodology.	10	4.3
	Treatise.	60	26.1
	Total	230	100
Witwatersrand: Master of Science in Property Development & Management	Property Environment.	15	8.3
	Property Planning.	15	8.3
	Property Investment and Development.	15	8.3
	Law for the Property Economist.	15	8.3
	Property and Construction Marketing.	15	8.3
	Property Economics and Valuation.	15	8.3
	Research Methodology.	15	8.3
	Elective Subject.	15	8.3
	Treatise.	60	33.3
	Total	180	100
Free State: Masters in Property Science	Property Development.	32	13.3
	Building Economics.	16	6.7
	Land Evaluation.	32	13.3
	Land Valuation and Business Plans.	8	3.3
	Construction and Agricultural Engineering.	16	6.7
	Construction Contracts, Procedure and Procurement.	8	3.3
	Environmental Economics.	8	3.3
	Applied Game Farm Planning.	16	6.7
	Introduction to Theory of Regional Planning.	16	6.7
	Introductory Studies in Regional Planning.	8	3.3
	Urban Planning Practice.	8	3.3
Property Valuation and Management.	16	6.7	
	Optional Modules.	24	10

	Treatise.	32	13.3
	Total	240	100
Cape Town: Master of Science in Property Studies	Property Development.	20	11.1
	Urban Land Economics.	20	11.1
	Property Law.	20	11.1
	Property Finance.	20	11.1
	Property Valuation.	20	11.1
	Property Portfolio Management.	20	11.1
	Introduction to Research.	4	2.2
	Research Methodology.	6	3.3
	Introduction to Applied Statistics.	4	2.2
	Further Applied Statistics.	6	3.3
	Treatise.	40	22.2
Total	180	100	
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan: Master of Science in Built Environment	Management Information Systems for Construction and IT Applications.	16	7.9
	Corporate Strategy.	16	7.9
	Accounting and Project Finance.	16	7.9
	Strategic Asset and Facilities Management.	16	7.9
	Property Investment and Portfolio Analysis.	16	7.9
	Building Energy Analysis and Management / Property Valuation.	16	7.9
	Facilities Operations Management / Property Development Planning and Appraisal.	16	7.9
	Research Methodology.	16	7.9
	Elective Subject.	14	4.9
	Treatise	60	29.7
	Total	202	100

Sources: Real Estate Study Guides Universities of Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Free State, Cape Town, and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan (2012)

TABLE 3: RANKING OF TOPICS OFFERED IN MASTERS REAL ESTATE CURRICULA IN SOUTH AFRICA BY UNIVERSITY FREQUENCY

Rank	Core subjects offered	No. of institutions Offering topic
1	Property Development / Property Development Planning & Appraisal	5
	Property Valuation	5
	Treatise	5
2	Introduction to Research / Research Methodology	4
3	Property Investment / Property Investment & Portfolio Analysis	3
	Property Law / Law for the Property Economist	3
	Property Management / Property Portfolio Management	3
	Property Economics / Urban Land Economics	3
4	Building Economics.	2
	Construction Contract Law / Construction Contracts, Procedure & Procurement	2
	Facilities Management / Facilities Operations Management / Strategic Asset & Facilities Management	2
	Property & Construction Marketing	2
	Property Finance	2
	Property Planning / Urban Planning Practice	2
5	Applied Game Farm Planning.	1
	Accounting & Project Finance.	1
	Building Energy Analysis and Management.	1
	Construction and Agricultural Engineering.	1
	Corporate Strategy.	1
	Environmental Economics.	1
	Financial Management.	1
	Further Applied Statistics Applied / Introduction to Applied Statistics	1
	Introduction to Theory of Regional Planning / Introductory Studies in Regional Planning	1
	Land Evaluation	1
	Land Valuation and Business Plans	1
	Management Information Systems for Construction & IT Applications	1
	Property Environment	1

TOPIC SIMILARITIES

Results of analysis of the five curricula reveal that the curricula possess some common topics expected in a real estate curriculum. In Table 6 it is shown that Property Development, Property Valuation, and Treatise are offered by all the five universities. This indicates that these three subjects are the most common topics offered in MRE in South Africa. Research Methodology came second by being offered by four universities. Third on the list of common subjects are Property Investment, Property Law, Property Management, and Property Economics for being offered by three out of the five universities. This proves

that despite the disagreements in course subjects, there are some agreements on course offerings in the study of MRE education in South Africa.

COMPARISON OF MASTERS REAL ESTATE CURRICULA OFFERED IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH THOSE OFFERED IN OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND OTHER CONTINENTS

When topics offered in MRE curricula in other African countries and other continents are compared to topics offered in South Africa again topic differences and similarities emerge.

TOPIC DIFFERENCES

The research shows that 11 out of 22 topics offered in other African countries are not offered in South Africa, representing 50% disagreement on course offerings. Some of these topics include: Valuation of Natural Resources, and Land Resources Management. South Africa is more urbanised and developed than the other African countries. Real estate professionals in other African countries are likely to encounter more rural real estate issues than real estate professionals in South Africa because of urbanisation and economic development differences. This could have influenced differences in topic selection. The results also indicate that 19 out of 29 topics offered in the USA are not presented in South Africa. Some of these topics include: Advanced Finance and Managerial Decision Making; and International Real Estate. In UK, 14 out of 28 topics are not offered in South Africa. The research also shows that 4 out of 9 topics offered in Belgium and Netherlands are not offered in South Africa. Furthermore, 9 out of 17 topics in Singapore and Hong Kong are not presented in South Africa (see Table 11). Finally the research shows that in Australia and New Zealand, 7 out of 19 topics are not offered in South Africa. However closer scrutiny of some topics offered in other continents but not in South Africa are presented as sub-topics in some curricula in South Africa. This issue complicates curriculum analysis and necessitates continued research in the area to thoroughly understand content of real estate curricula offered in the world.

TOPIC SIMILARITIES

Results shows that 11 out of 22 topics offered in other African countries are also offered in South Africa, which represents 50% agreement on course offerings. These course subjects include: Property Development, Property Management, Property Valuation, Property Investment, Property Finance, Property Marketing, Property Economics, Financial Management, and Research Methodology. In addition, students are required to complete treatise in order to obtain the degrees in all the programmes. It is noted that 10 out of 29 topics offered in USA are offered in South Africa. The study also shows that 14 out 28 topics offered in UK are offered in South Africa. In Belgium and Netherlands, 5 out of 9 topics are offered in South Africa. It is revealed that 8 out of 17 topics offered in Singapore and Hong Kong are offered in South Africa. Finally, 12 topics out of 19 in Australia and New Zealand are also offered in South Africa. These statistics have proven that postgraduate real estate curricula in South Africa are comparable internationally in terms of some common topics expected in a real estate curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This paper analyses five MRE curricula offered in South Africa and compares them locally and with similar curricula internationally. The results show that the curricula are diverse and exhibit both topic differences and similarities when compared locally and internationally. The variation of topics offered in the curricula agrees with the conclusion drawn by Epley (1996) that educators have not yet reached a consensus about the necessary topics that should be taught in real estate studies. Differences in the curricula could be due to the influence of different local property industrial needs the universities are targeting. Since the graduates are exposed to different topics in the curriculum, it is important to realise that this could affect the quality of education product from the different real estate programmes. The quality of graduates from the programmes is critical to employers.

However, despite the disagreement in topics offered some common course offerings required in a real estate curriculum are noted in MRE curricula offered in South Africa, like property valuation, property management, property development, property finance, property investment, property law, and property marketing (Carn and Rabianski, 1986; Epley, 1996; and Black and Rabianski, 2003). Results have also revealed that just like real estate programmes in UK and other British Commonwealth countries, MRE programmes in South Africa are housed together with other built environment programmes where both financial and physical aspects of real estate are taught (Black and Rabianski, 2003). Further scrutiny of the curricula shows that they were designed by considering four main components of a real estate curriculum: legal, financial, physical, and market course subjects (Black, Carn, Diaz and Rabianski, 1996). In addition, MRE programmes offered by the Universities of Pretoria and Cape Town are accredited by the RICS. Curriculum similarities exhibited by MRE curricula in South Africa provide strong evidence that they are indeed comparable locally and with similar curricula internationally.

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