



Factors in choosing landscape architecture as a major in iran: student's viewpoints

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Received: December 2010, Revised: April 2012, Accepted: May 2012

Abstract

Examining the universities postgraduate landscape architecture table in Iran, indicates the increasing growth in the establishment of this major course in most universities nationwide, since almost 10 years from the beginning of the first academic course of this major in the Shahid Beheshti University (SBU). As a result, every year the number of graduated entering the market is increasing in this major. Which in this case no clear condition exist, the suitable professional contexts and prefaces for graduates and professionals entry for graduation in this major in and out of university is a big obstacle. The aim of this paper is checking the causes and most important factors to select this major in Iran, of which market conditions is one of the most important factors in the process of this research. The result of research shows the opportunity of developing the landscape architecture, the opportunity and chances of finding a job in the future and earning high fees is part of the most important general factors to choose landscape architecture major in Iran. Additionally the professors, friends and landscape architects, the most important reason for choosing the landscape architect is personal. Besides these cases, landscape architecture department credence's, the quality of professors and location for College choice is the most important deliberation in this major.

Keywords: Landscape architecture; Choice of the discipline, Career development, Education, Personal and social approaches

1. Introduction

Landscape architecture is as a profession, expert knowledge of designing the environment and outdoors, in approximately the last century was the beginning of changes to increasing the quality of the view of towns worldwide. This subject was the reason for having a qualitative view in independent public civic aspect of areas of professions like urban planning, urban design & architecture. To enter landscape architecture, the acquisition of professional and speciality knowledge connected to that major is in the field of academics and theory. Therefore checking the terms, contents and factors for selecting professionals through architects and urbanises is one of the most important obligatory programs for teachers, educational planners, professors and professionals. The necessity of deep attention to main specialities or factors for choosing this major in Iran is imperative. The lack of studying and researching into this subject is one of the most important deficiencies in

educational based universities, not only in this subject but also in others. The aim of this paper is checking the most important factors for choosing the landscape architecture postgraduates in Iran. The most important aims of this research are:

1. to prepare basic factors for choosing people to enter landscape architecture courses
2. to list important factors for choosing the landscape architecture in Iran.
3. to review in detail the methods of entering into this major is in accordance to the balance to confirm the choosing factors.

This research includes two main parts. Initially, the most important factors of choosing academic discipline are initiating from experts view. Then the most important assessment factors and the participation of the students to landscape architecture course in Iran will be assessed and questioned from the students' points of view.

2. Literature review

2.1. Overview of landscape architecture

Those less familiar with landscape architecture tend to think of the profession in relatively basic terms, involving plantings around a building or in a park, for example. The reality is quite

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different; much broader, richer, and far-reaching. The profession of landscape architecture is much more diverse than the public may imagine. So wide is the range of opportunities, in fact, that people with a variety of interests and from many different types of backgrounds are able to fit comfortably under the title "landscape architect" and build exciting careers for themselves. Landscape architects do, however, no matter what their specialty, have a number of important things in common: a deep appreciation for the environment, a commitment to the highest standards of design and planning, and pride in knowing that their work directly enhances the quality of people's lives [1].

A growing understanding of the capabilities of landscape architects and the value they bring to many types of projects accounts for the ongoing expansion of the profession. The architects who interest this field and they regard as essential to achieve and enter in landscape architecture, should have many skills and characteristics such as below:

- Business sense
- Curiosity and lifelong learning
- Design and aesthetic sense
- Team player, collaborator, and negotiator
- Stewardship of the environment and understanding of natural resources
- Commitment to people and communication skills
- Perseverance, persistence and patience
- Integrity
- Passion, dedication, and conviction
- Balance
- Ability to synthesize information and/or be a big-picture thinker [1],[2].

2.2. Career choice

The act of choosing landscape architecture, as an academic discipline is only one of the very professional decisions in a huge process in professional development. McDonough explained that choosing one major is a decision which surfaces or processes from one professional development in a person's life, and shows one specific point in a person's life. So the variety of importance and factors which important professional choices in one person's life [3]. These important factors include, family, earned income, professors etc. Although before scrutinizing specific factors, make an understandable framework for career development where you can see the professional decisions and factors include choosing one subject in universities, is useful.

2.3. Career development approaches

There are many opinions from scientists to explain choices made and Career development. These opinions can be categorized by variety of style [4], mostly into two main groups, personal opinions and social opinions.

2.3.1. Personality theories & approaches

Opisow [4] showed that personal views mostly include types of life, variety of professions, physical and mental requirements, by doing a profession and specific needs of

users in a specialized job. Generally, the basic hypothesis of this approach says that the cause of people choosing a profession to satisfy talent is to have profession to suit that career. Kerka [5] suggests one logical hypothesis based on exhibition and show one work gradually rectification personal features of user. For example, an architect is to look like someone else although at first due to their personalities they were not the same.

Now there is not a specific study into connection of the kind of characteristic of landscape architecture students and their professional decisions. Having knowledge is better than that which side of landscape architecture is more interesting for students, in order to help to learn why they choose this discipline. Moreover, after their graduation, which fields of professions they choose to work, the aim of this research is not to examine this view or purity of personal students but to show only the factors of students.

2.3.2. Sociological theories & approaches

Osipow[4] says the social approaches and researches in choosing the profession is concentrate on this subject that the thing happened in socially for choosing the profession is important. Some social approaches which emphasis on users personal like architects or research managers as a personal view. Some of these views are "Functionalism" and "Human Capital Theory" & "Structural Approaches" have opinion over the process between bigger structures. For example the nature of one specific profession make it very difficult for mothers to reach success unless if they accept such experience as fixed work over long time. Many studies had ensured how effective social factors are over a professional development of a landscape architect [6].

However, there are no fundamental researches about how one social factor can affect a landscape architecture [7]. To know the important point that which social factors is related with the students' decision and of which level of education this factors can be effective on choosing landscape architect as an academic discipline.

2.3.3. A integrated approach for current study

Taking into consideration the aims of this research, none of this social views or personal views are enough and suitable for analysis the reasons to choose landscape architecture academic course (discipline) in Iran alone. Therefore, for making framework guidance for research, integration of both aspects of these two factors must be considered.

These views as a framework of examining a complete process of deciding professionally and the important purpose of decision making which have effect over landscape architecture are applicable. Five important factors upon combination of social and personal views are:

- 1) Family
- 2) Work
- 3) Accessibility to information
- 4) College Choice
- 5) Culture (e.g., "Fig. 1")

Each of the above mentioned criteria play an important role in making a personal decision by forming ones personal thought through a set of social experience. In the other side in

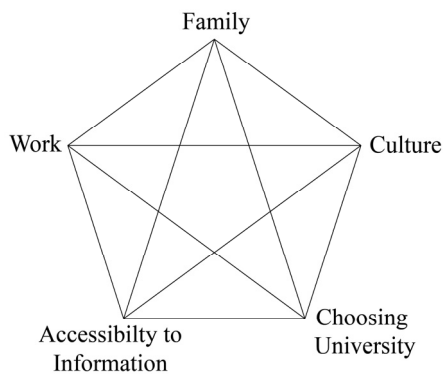


Fig.1. Five elements of academic course choice

order to examine the most important factors of students' tendencies and professional, the most important aspect of professional landscape architecture graduation in master, is conducted in accordance to a library and professional; experience in Iran, was put to question. These aspects are teaching and researching, managing natural resources, designing the environment, designing the urban spaces, landscape planning, designing the parks and entertainment centres, construction, industrial designing, protecting the historical sites, designing the residential area and designing the townscape [8], [9] and [10].

3. Criteria elicit

Researchers show in various areas from sociology, psychology, social science, growing children and career development that families have an important role in forming the educational and professional decision of children [11]. Splete & Freeman [12] determined some of family important factors of the professional decision process.

- 1) Geographical location
- 2) Particulars congenital
- 3) Families background
- 4) Socio-Economic condition
- 5) Families combination
- 6) The method of upbringing and training
- 7) The parent's attitude to work

To accept a trainee or professional work relevant to landscape architecture (for example –architecture offices) allows the students to learn new skills and search for their potential professional interest. In order to achieve professional decision related to landscape architecture is an important point to know that which professional works and activities is useful for students to help them to attain skills and knowledge for choosing their profession [11].

Accessibility to professional information sources is other factor in choosing profession. Splete & Pietrofesa [13] explained that receiving the professional requirements and learning is a necessity obligation. They introduce different tools to occur this information by students. This tools may includes: the printed information like book, and universities magazine, internet sites, the visual and audition equipments or people such as parents, family and relatives and ones specialized profession.

In most cases, for a landscape architect is important to graduate in a famous university in this discipline. But taking into consideration, the lack of various universities tutoring this field in Iran is limited to three universities including Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran University and Emam Khomeini International University. Researcher's imagination in the initial process is that this factor doesn't have much effect in ones choosing the major.

Different cultures have different understanding about family, the role of gender and family works relation. Carter & Cook [14] says that in some cultures is possible that "job" has a collective meaning not personal. That this subject indicates why some of the professionals, which need personal work is not suitable for disclosed cultures. Some writers like Leong [15] showed the huge vary in international view, nationality and social purity-economic groups like Asian, African, Spanish and Americans and how these differences effect upon job types is acceptable and the manner in which is done. For example, Mexican parents emphasise on the role of continues learning's developments but Korean parents do emphasis in choosing the profession [16].

4. Research methodology

Information and research data extracted from the questionnaire of the landscape architecture student's statistical sample from two universities Shahid Beheshti and Tehran. The questionnaire structure is prepared based on "Socio-Individual approach". The mooted questions in questionnaire, is based on the combination of social and personal dimensions of people prepared and went for performance so in first step in according to the review records and researches ,the most important factors of choosing this discipline is classified in five parts.

4.1. Questionnaire design

According to the bringing out five parts of main factors which are important on choosing universities discipline from records of literature review ,six main questions asked from 50 landscape architectures students of Tehran and Shahid Beheshti University. Under this subject, each of these main questions is the most important factors and extracts points from this major, the similar reading sources and interviewing with some of students in this major in two Tehran University and Shahid Beheshti University mooted. Designing this questionnaire based on to collect open question-answer and close answer, is trying to collect and classify the questions from students.

Closed question answered as Likert Scale (very important – Somewhat important-Neutral- Somewhat unimportant - not important) try to add student's point of view. Therefore, the abundance and stock of each collection will be fed in chart for analysis list.

- The first question is with aim of finding the roots and structures knowing of this major between students to design this question which when they learned about landscape architecture for the first time?
- The second question is also asking the students about the most important reasons of choosing landscape architecture.

- In third question they are asked the importance of which factors is more effective for choosing landscape architecture.
- The fourth question is similar to previous question, this time the importance of students personal reasons of choosing this major.
- The fifth question asked the importance of the pointed factors for choosing the College.
- The sixth question asked as final question that the most important specialized–professional aspect in this major which students, interested to work in after their graduations.

4.2. The study population

Since the aims of this research is recognizing and classifying the most important factors from the students' point of view in this major in choosing the Landscape Architecture major in Iran. Therefore, the statistical society of this research is 50 people of first year, second year and third year students of these two universities and the persons which wish to enter to this course professors and or graduated students in Iran are not include.

5. Data analysis

After collecting the questionnaires the result of answers the result for each question by statistical software SPSS16 discussed comparatively. The result showed in many table and graphs, in 1 to 3 Tables & Graphs, the most percentage showed about mentioned criteria in order to have the students point of view marked in dark colour.

To answer second question, students mentioned reasons such as they chose this course mainly due to be accepted in postgraduate exam according to their ranking mark not to be interested in this major. Moreover, other reasons such as the interest of designing nature and green space, the larger open view compared with architecture, attention to the land, the interest to environmental design, speciality and interest of ecological controversy. (e.g., "Fig. 2")

As you see in Table1 44/4% of students knows the factor of "the opportunity of enhancing landscape quality" to be very important. But this subject is within the main aim of this major which is to connect people, environment and land together and in conclusion the enhancement of landscape quality. Findings indicate that 61/1% of students know "the opportunity of finding job in future" very important. So from those 52/8% students, knows "the opportunity of earning high income" is

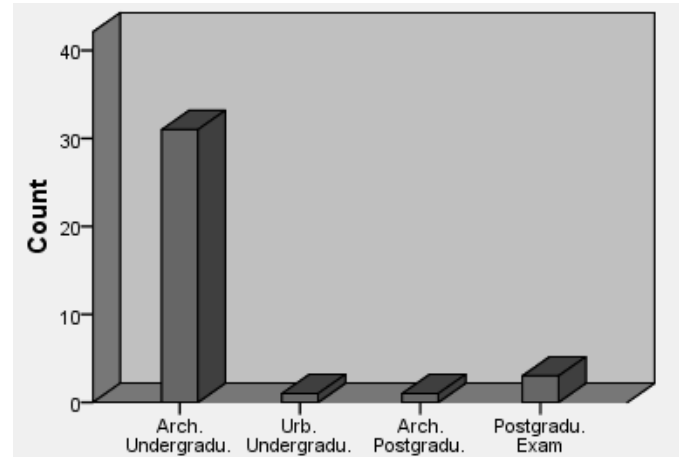


Fig. 2. Checking first Students Acquaintance and Confrontation with Landscape Architecture

very important. The factors of "professional credit and familiarity" with 50%, few of graduated students 41/7%, "opportunity of engagement in universities" with 36/1%, and "the familiarity from professional environments" with 27/8 % in these manner students knows the importance of this factors. (e.g., "Table. 1")

This is in such a way that students know the unsatisfactory of pervious major (architecture) not to be important. This statistic shows that the people in Iran mostly do not see landscape architecture as a profession that graduated from architecture or any improvement. Rather they choose it to position a specific profession and with specific practice.

The second table shows the most important of students' personal factors and reason of choosing the landscape architecture in Iran. The factors of "university professors" with 41/7% and the "conversation with landscape architects" 30/6% of students are of the most important for student to choose this major. Parents, friends and relatives factors have no effect. This fact in a postgraduate degree due to the age of students who are older and independent are opposite of undergraduate degree have acceptable result in this research. The factor that is important in this statistic is the specific role of professors and friends and role of choosing this discipline (e.g., "Table. 2").

The result of third table shows that the factor "the credit and background of the selected university" with 44/4% as very important factors of choosing the university for this major by students. Besides this element, the landscape architecture department credit with 36/1%, the geographical locations with

Table 1. The Significance of each factor on landscape architecture choice

| Reasons | Very Important | Important | Neutral | Somewhat Unimportant | Not Important |
|---|----------------|-----------|---------|----------------------|---------------|
| The opportunity for enhancing landscape quality | 44.4% | 30.6% | 0 | 11.1% | 11.1% |
| Professional familiarity & credit | 13.9% | 50% | 19.4% | 11.1% | 5.6% |
| Opportunities for future jobs | 30.6% | 61.1% | 2.8% | 0 | 5.6% |
| Chance for earning high income | 11.1% | 52.8% | 13.9% | 16.7% | 5.6% |
| The familiarity from professional environments | 19.4% | 27.8% | 19.4% | 25% | 8.3% |
| The opportunity for employment in university | 11.1% | 36.1% | 13.9% | 22.2% | 16.7% |
| The lack of satisfaction to previous major | 8.3% | 8.3% | 13.9% | 22.2% | 47.2% |

36/1% are very important as we see in statistics.

The quality of professors is in next most effective role with 30/6%. Therefore, as you see "the credit of landscape architecture department" with few percent in comparison with "professor's quality" is important to student's decision. Findings indicate that 30/6% of students see the factor of parents not as important. Also the fact of "the period of landscape architecture program" (3-4 year) which everyone think is important has no effect as we see in this research (e.g., "Table. 3").

The research into point of view of students shows that their favourite profession for working after graduating is "Park and Entertainment Places Designing", "Townscape Designing", "Residential Landscapes Designing" and "Urban Spaces Designing" with having the most subject as the most important professional aspects which students like in Iran.

The Findings of this research show that landscape architecture students have a special attention to teaching, research and translation of related texts, which they mostly enjoy. This subject is bringing the attention of management of universities for programming and allocating the special budget in this field. In other side the necessity of instructing research program and teaching with containing and teaching methods in relation to this view from professors and educational planners of this major in Iran. (e.g., "Fig. 3")

6. Conclusion

Initially the growth of landscape architecture course is the same as other majors connected and limited to choosing this field by people that select it as their academic discipline. Therefore, for all landscape architects it is critical to have a good quality skilled background. So development of landscape architecture needs to recognize these points that when, why

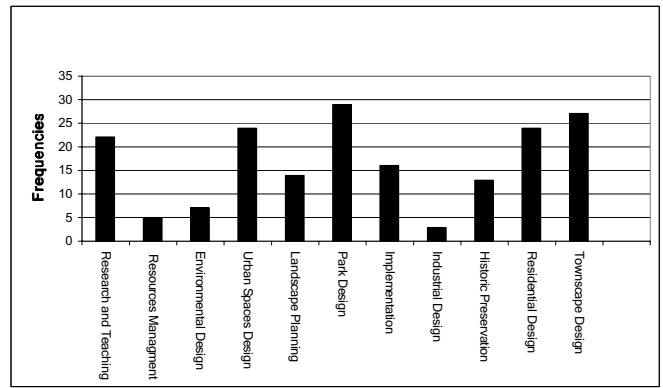


Fig. 3. Checking first students acquaintance and confrontation with landscape architecture

and how students, choose this subject as their major. This research is the starting point for checking this detail in Iran. What criteria and how much importance on choice. With reviewing the history of career development field and analysis, which contains, the most important factors of choosing this major includes family, job, and accessibility to information, college choice and culture.

The sub elements of each one of these factors are in four main closed questions -and answers and two open questions -between 50 landscape architecture students of Tehran University and Shahid Beheshti University. According to the answers of questionnaires, "opportunity for enhancing landscape quality", "the opportunity of finding a job in the future" and "chance of earning money" is the most important factors for choosing landscape architecture course in Iran.

According to findings universities, professors, friends and landscape architects are the most important personal factors

Table 2. The significance of each individual factor on landscape architecture choice

| Reasons | Very Important | Important | Neutral | Somewhat Unimportant | Not Important |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------|---------|----------------------|---------------|
| parents | 5.6% | 8.3% | 25% | 19.4% | 41.7% |
| relatives | 2.8% | 2.8% | 27.8% | 5.6% | 61.1% |
| Family friends | 0 | 8.3% | 30.6% | 5.6% | 55.6% |
| College professors | 11.1% | 41.7% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 25% |
| friends | 11.1% | 41.7% | 8.3% | 19.4% | 16.7% |
| Landscape architects | 5.6% | 30.6% | 22.2% | 19.4% | 22.2% |

Table 3. The significance of each individual factor on landscape architecture choice

| Reasons | Very Important | Important | Neutral | Somewhat Unimportant | Not Important |
|--|----------------|-----------|---------|----------------------|---------------|
| Effort for employment in university | 2.8% | 27.8% | 30.6% | 19.4% | 13.9% |
| The credit of landscape department | 36.1% | 33.3% | 13.9% | 2.8% | 8.3% |
| The quality of professors | 30.6% | 30.6% | 19.4% | 8.3% | 16.7% |
| Geographical location | 36.1% | 30.6% | 2.8% | 11.1% | 25% |
| parents | 11.1% | 19.4% | 11.1% | 22.2% | 30.6% |
| Length of landscape architects program | 2.8% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 27.8% | 38.9% |
| The credit of architecture or urban design disciplines | 30.6% | 36.1% | 8.3% | 13.9% | 5.6% |
| The credit of university | 44.4% | 30.6% | 2.8% | 5.6% | 2.8% |

for choosing this area of study. The factors of "landscape architecture departments' credibility", "the quality of professors" and "geographical location" is of the most important factors of choosing the university. At the end the recommendation that founds in this research is:

- The necessity of reviewing the syllabus programming and needs of attaining special skills in "designing parks and entertainment places", "designing of townscape", "designing residential landscapes" and "designing the urban spaces" as the most important professional parts of students of the finding of this research.

- Indication of 44/4% of students in connection with the role of professors in choosing this major are very effective, upon the special role of professors and the necessity of having their knowledge in professional tendencies after undergraduate degree level.

- From which that the most of the students indicate their understanding of landscape architecture after knowing this major at undergraduate degree level and the necessity of paying attention to the fundamentals of this course it is recommended to add some chosen credits or main credits "recognition with landscape architecture" beside other profession credits like "analysis urban spaces" or "village" in the bachelor period.

- 61/1% of students chose landscape architecture course for future job opportunity in Iran. Therefore, the special attention is given to market conditions and manifest the suitable and professional surroundings, backgrounds and requirements for graduates is essential to this course after university in the format of professional education courses.

- Special consideration to quality of architecture and urbanism faculties of all included courses in Iran which are of the most important factors for earning reputation and credit in architecture and urban design groups. The result of this research confirms the importance of choosing the selected course by the students is related to university itself.

- This research also recommends the need of contemplating all the aspects of professor's views, the professionals of landscape architecture in Iran, for further research.

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