

THE DIMINISHING ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF JOS METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the causes of the diminishing role in architectural practice in Nigeria, with a view to determining the factors that militate against sustainable architectural practice in Nigeria. Several internal and external factors have been found to contribute to the diminishing role of architects in practice globally and especially in Nigeria. The study also examined specific challenges facing Architectural practice in Nigeria. Using qualitative methods, the focus groups (consisting of undergraduate, postgraduate and architecture professionals and clients) examined reasons why the architects' role is diminishing globally and especially in Jos Metropolis, Nigeria and discovered that the societal perception of architects is largely negative due to an obscure image presentation which is also evident amongst students of architecture. The study also made recommendations to mitigate the negative effects of the societal perception the architects' role.

Keywords: Diminishing Role, Organizational Challenges, Professional Service Organization

INTRODUCTION

Considering the fact that role of architects is of great significance in the construction industry and the society at large which if well regarded as expected, will add value to the built environment and life as well hence, checking the diminishing role of the architect which has led to the decreasing in the profession relevance and reward, currently and directly affecting its future. Emmitt (1999) noted that architecture is a unique profession, which cannot be assumed to have similar characteristics with all other professions. Hence it needs to be studied as a profession on its own. However,

very few studies on its characteristics exist (Blau, 1984; Cuff, 1991; Haviland, 1996; Akinyosoye, 2005 and Oluwatayo, 2009). Blau (1984), suggested that architectural practices differ from other organizations. Even within the building industry, architecture is unique. The uniqueness of the architectural profession, according to Blau (1984) stems from its heavy reliance on the real estate industry, resulting in its fluctuation with the property development cycles. There is also the strong emphasis on arts and innovation in the profession of architecture. She also noted that architectural practice is more fully involved with technocrats and corporate elites than other professions, creating unusual difficulties. Ethically, professions have the objective of providing services for all clients, however, for architectural practices; the patrons are the rich and powerful (Blau, 1984).

Challenges Facing Architectural Practice

Architectural firms as professional knowledge-based service firms in general have peculiar challenges. Leadership structures in most professional firms are flatter in organization than their 'regular' counterparts (Ola-Adisa, Prucnal-Ogunsote & Dassah, 2012). Architecture firms can also be highly leveraged, attracting smart professionals with a very high need for achievement. Few architects however want to make a career of working in the firm (DeLong, 2008; Ola-Adisa, 2016). Furthermore, independent architecture practice is no longer the only place where architecture design is created. This poses challenges to architecture firms to survive in this increasingly competitive environment.

Architecture in the early days was a master builder approach, today's architect face more critical challenges. Pre-millennium Architecture practice looked at materials and environments as major determinants, for instance earlier trends could largely be determined by regionalism. Architecture today ironically is a throwback to Vitruvian principles of integrity or value, functionality and image or aesthetics. The prominence of value has necessitated the need for the architect to increase competencies such as finances and market forces. Despite the wide range of specialization areas in architecture, the demand on the architect is everyday stretching. Schools of Architecture

globally continue to review curricula in order to produce practice ready architects (Prucnal-Ogunsote, Ogunsote, & Umar, 2006; Prucnal-Ogunsote, Ogunsote, 2010). The challenges identified (Majekodunmi, 1985; Mbanefo, 1985) are chiefly:

- a. Lack of understanding of the duties and work process of the architect
- a. Non - payment of professional charge based on standardized scale of fees for Architects
- b. Corruption

Other challenges include the proliferation of non-professionals and quacks as well as the proliferation of project management approach as opposed to traditional method. In addition, there is increased competition due to an increase in the number of practices contending for the few jobs, while allied professions infringe on architects' roles. More general is the lack of a strategic plan for the practice of architecture in Nigeria.

Factors resulting in the diminishing role of Architects in Nigeria

Having identified the challenges, several factors have to do with the failure of the architectural profession, in general, to properly meet the needs of clients and to adapt to changing environments as follows:

- a. **Reluctance in Role Playing**
Architects usually are meant to be the main representatives of the clients' interests in construction projects; however, other professionals have stepped in to provide these services often more efficiently. Technology has impacted the role of architects as well. Specialized tools for project management, scheduling, cost reconciliation, etc., have become more integral to larger projects. Ironically, several architecture firms do not place a priority on use of these tools.
- b. **Impatience in Training**
While the older professionals are concerned with practice consideration and improvement, younger architects are more interested in launching directly into practice and bypassing the tutelage through the mentorship process

(Prucnal-Ogunsote, 1994; Jaiyeoba, 2002; Jaiyeoba, 2004; Ola-Adisa, 2016).

c. Low Quality Construction Work

One of the biggest challenges for the architect in practice could be striking a balance between compliance with the requirements of the Code of Conduct provision under professional obligations that a member “shall act impartially, firmly but fairly between client and contractor” (NIA, 2013) and ‘satisfying’ the client who often believes that ‘he who pays the piper, dictates the tune. Compromise could occur as a result of poor workmanship, in adequate procurement

d. Lack of Proper Enforcement of Policies Regarding Practice.
The Nigerian Institute of Architects NIA code of conduct covers all the areas of architectural practice but is not well enforced.

e. Lack of Awareness

The public do not really know who is an architect nor is his role in the society drawing often wrong conclusions by assuming anybody that can draw a building plan or has a little knowledge about building construction an architect. Leading bodies of the profession have failed to adequately to educate the public about the professions identity and role as well as prevent misconception of the profession identity as seen by the public.

f. Public perception of Architects

In western society, there is a general distrust for architects. The public perceives that Architects are unrealistic. In Nigeria, the image of the architect is obscure, often being mistaken for an engineer on site (Fola-Alade, 2005 in Ola-Adisa, 2016) Ward (2015) revealed that most project models exhibited or presented to clients cannot be executed with precision, we’re complicit in this. While architects have a significant and valuable expertise, it is often not presented in fruitful ways, opening ourselves up for criticism of elitism, disconnectedness, and being unrealistic.

Other causes include the cost of professional charges. With the technological advances and Computer Aided Design software such as Google Sketch up can make any layman think they can design a building, perceiving the employment of an architect as superfluous (Fasheun-Motesho, 2002).

Architects require the acuteness of the business manager plus the super skill to work

Within the confines of NIA strict provisions of the code of conduct on marketing. There are also the complication professional practitioners find themselves, that of the dual role of being both producers and managers at the same time. Client's expectations are reaching soaring height to the extent that they are expecting the architect to be a magician (Amole, 2006; Ola-Adisa, 2016; Eshaleku, 2019). The challenges facing the practice of architecture today has been growing in size and complexity. Architects are often excluded from construction because the role of architect in normal post contract services is misconstrued to be that of supervision.

The Future of Architecture as a Profession

Studies (Robinson 2012, Ola-Adisa, 2016) have examined the global role of architects by 2025 and have determined that:

- a. Global population growth from 2000 to 2050 will rise 46% and 70% of the population will live in urban areas.
- b. As of 2008, demand for architectural services has declined 40%.
- c. Only 50% of the architecture firms polled have a business plan.
- d. Areas of the profession predicted to remain relatively stable in 2025: small local general practices, international "starchiest," specialist niche practices, traditional regional delivery driven practices.
- e. Emerging areas of practice: developing economies, global inter-disciplinary consultancies, build/own/operate/transfer designers, subcontractors and specialists, design houses and creative agencies.
- f. Areas of practice those are most at risk are medium-sized firms of 25 to 150 people, and small metropolitan boutique practices.

According to the findings in the report, is that overall the role of architects has been greatly reduced. Traditional services that architects rarely provide: project management, contract administration and cost control. As more of the detailed design services are provided by supply chain, the role of the architect is further diminished. I have seen many projects where the architect's work involved little more than CAD drawings showing floor plans, elevations, section drawings and mostly boiler-plate specifications. Specific details are often not supplied, or are copied and pasted from standard libraries or supplied by material manufacturers. Other information incorporated in construction drawings are supplied by engineers and other consultants. Contractors, engineers, project management professionals, energy efficiency consultants, owners' representatives and others have taken on expanded roles in the construction field.

METHODOLOGY

The study area consists of architecture practice in Jos metropolis found in North Central Zone which consists of six states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Of the 840 architectural firms listed in the 2012 Architects Registration Council of Nigeria, ARCON Register, 190 firms are located in the North Central Zone and 13 firms in Jos.

a. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Jos Metropolis

Since the creation of six geopolitical zones in 1995, the North Central Zone has transformed from a mainly agrarian zone of multiple ethnic minorities to a largely agrarian economy with a collective GDP of USD 29.51 billion and an average per capita is USD 1,536 as at 2010 (The Conference, 1995; World Bank, 2014). The zone, which is also called the Middle Belt, consists of all six states in the zone, Adamawa, Taraba, parts of Southern Kaduna and Gombe, It is the largest zone by landmass (203,050 km²) though sparsely populated (22,610,043 inhabitants). The zone is largely rural with urbanization centered in the various state and federal capitals. As a result, amenities such as access to clean drinking water, household sanitation, and electricity are in short supply. Plateau State is one of the states that comprise the North Central Zone are a main source of the nation's agriculture

produce supply. It is also (along with Nasarawa State) main source of solid minerals. The recent insurgency has also adversely affected a zone known for tourism potentials. Jos is perceived as a civil service town without much of the infrastructural development found in other urban centers in Nigeria. Table 1 shows a comparison between Jos and the overall climate of the North Central Zone.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Climate of North Central Nigeria

State	Area km ²	Rank	Pop	Ran k	Density person/ km ²	GDP USD billion	per capita USD	Socio economic Activities
Abuja , FCT	713	—	3,00 0,00 0	—	1,400	n.a.	n.a.	Institutional and agrarian
Plate au	30,91 2	12 th	3,17 8,71 2	26 th	100	5.15	1,587	Largely agrarian
North Centr al	203,0 50	—	22,6 10,0 43	—	—	29.51	9,218	Largely agrarian

Source: Adapted from World Bank (2014)

b. Architectural Practice Characteristics in Nigeria

Architects Registration Council of Nigeria, ARCON is the regulatory body charged with the oversight of architectural practice in Nigeria (ARCON, 2004). The only other body for architectural firms in Nigeria is Association of Consulting Architecture Firms of Nigeria (ACAN), which has a membership of forty six (46) firms. Criteria for membership of ACAN includes registration by ARCON (ACAN, 2011), therefore, ACAN is a subsidiary of NIA and can be considered a sub set of ARCON (NIA, 2013; ACAN, 2011).

There are five forms of architectural practices observed in Nigeria (NIA, 2013), namely:

- i. registered firms that are listed in the ARCON Register
- ii. registered firms that are not listed in the ARCON Register
- iii. registered architects who do not have ARCON registered firms
- iv. registered architectural technologists
- v. quacks

While registered firms (listed in the ARCON Register or otherwise) and registered architects who freelance are well documented as the recognized forms of architecture practice in Nigeria, the researcher is aware of the activities registered technologists (as outlined in item d) who are legally entitled to practice in limited design and building services responsibility. The study does not also include the activities of quacks, which range from draughts men to persons with 'backgrounds in architecture' to related professionals (town planners, engineers and builders) who 'practice' architecture without the requisite registration. The activities of the latter present a challenge to conforming to globally accepted best practices and sustainability of the built environment

The research population study used comprised of focus groups with a total population of 39 participants, that comprised of undergraduate and postgraduate Architecture Students, Building Department Students, and Quantity Survey Department Students, registered and unregistered Architects and clients as outlined in Table 2, to give information about the view towards the diminishing role of Architecture in the building industry. The methodology stage had two elements; Conceptualization and Logistics

Conceptualization

The use Focus group Gathered information to determine:

- i. the specific factors that mitigates against the origin, causing the diminishing role of architectural practice in Nigeria and to examine challenges facing architectural practice in Nigeria.
- ii. The causes of the diminished clients' perspective on seeing Architect's role as irrelevant in the building industry.
- iii. Possible policies and preconditions by various concerned bodies (NIA, ARCON), that would appraise architectural practice in Nigeria.

Table 2: Focus Group Composition

Focus Group	Composition	Male	Female	Total
1	MSc 1 Architecture students	2	1	9
	MSc 2 Architecture students	1	1	
	Graduate (BSc)	4	0	
2	BSc Architecture 100 level	2	0	10
	BSc Architecture 200 level	2	1	
	BSc Architecture 300 level	2	0	
	BSc Architecture 400 level	3	0	
3	BSc Building 400 level	4	0	5
	BSc Quantity Surveying 400 level	1	0	
4	Registered Architects in Practice	3	1	10
	Unregistered architecture gradua	4	1	
	Architecture technologists	1		
5	Clients	3	2	5

Logistics

The logistics involved the most time-consuming element used for preparing and conducting the focus group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Focus Group Discussion Session 1

Participant Demographics

39 people in 5 different groups participated in the Focus Group Discussions (Table 1) and 75% of participants responded to the questions/data required. The gender composition was Thirty-two (32) men and Seven (7) women.

Outcome 1 – Response to question “Do you think Architecture has made requisite gains as a profession in Nigeria?”

1 respondent was affirmative reason stated that Architects are respected due to Architecture itself, is a noble profession, while 11 respondents answered the question in the negative. Reasons stated were:

- a. other building professionals and quacks
- b. Increase in the rate of building Collapse
- c. The professional name in practice is misused, where site laborers refer to Architects as Engineers.

d. Architecture study is meant to be mentorship, but Architecture in Nigeria is 'build yourself up'

Outcome 2 – *Response to question, "Are students properly prepared in the University for Architecture?"*

7 respondents answered the question in the affirmative, though in theory and not in practice.

Outcome 3 – *Response to question, "Is there a disconnection between theory and the practice of Architecture in real terms?"*

7 respondents answered the question in the affirmative. Reasons stated were:

- a. Yes, there is a disconnection; it's only during internship training that exposes students to practical duties. Therefore, students should perform internships at the end of each session and not only during the third year of study as is the current practice
- b. Theory most times is not obeyed in Practice due to corrupt practice of material usage and use of mix ratios.
- c. The Society influences the profession too.
- d. There is a distrust between students and Lecturers

Outcome 4 – *Response to question, "What are the external factors that cause building Collapse?"*

11 respondents answered the question. Reasons stated were:

- a. Substandard building materials
- b. Corruption
- c. Not involving construction team experts

Outcome 5 – *Response to question, "What is the cause of poor structural design?"*

3 respondents answered the question. Reasons stated were:

- a. Defective design that have not determined the actual loading condition on the structural element.

Outcome 6 – *Response to question, "What percentage of residential construction in the country at large is done/handled by architects?"*

3 respondents answered the question. Reasons stated were:

- a. Statistics vary from place to place; most residential buildings are undertaken by clients through their 'experienced' masons.
- b. Sometimes the architect does the design; do setting out on site, forms the substructure wall and the client takes over from there.

Outcome 7 – *Response to question, “- List the causes of enigmatic response to the profession from a. Society; b. Other building professionals; c. Academia and d. students”*

8 respondents answered the question. Reasons stated were:

- a. Society:
 - i. It's a waste of resource employing an engineer who is seen actualizing the building and the Architect who seems not to have any role.
 - ii. Lack of restriction of the architectural code of conduct in the society
 - iii. The rate of building collapse is becoming prevalent in the country
- b. Other building Professionals:
 - i. They know the value of architects, but see architects as lording themselves on them therefore, they under mind architects. And clients easily employ them because to him/her this is the person in action rather than the architect whose role is not evident to the eyes on site.
- c. Academia:
 - i. They have no problem with architects other “than killing the creativity of those under training with big dramatic theories”.
- d. Students
 - i. Some students in other departments in related disciplines have the perception that architecture is the same as draughting.
 - ii. The study of architecture is perceived to be esoteric and very difficult.

Focus Group Discussion Session 2

In this session separate set of questions were asked and respondents were asked to rank responses.

Outcome 1 – *Response to question “What are the factors causing decline of architecture from the following perspectives: a. Society;*

b. Building professionals, c. Architects in general; d. Students of Architecture?"

12 respondents answered the question as follows:

- a. Four (4) people chose option "A (Society)"
- b. Six (6) people chose option "B (building professionals)"
- c. Two (2) people chose option "C (Architects in general)"
- d. Six (6) people chose option "B (building professionals)"
- e. Zero (0) voting for option "D (Students of Architecture)"

Outcome 2 – Response to question "Ranking based on Internal Factors such as a. Lack of professionalism; b. Poor business practices; c. Poor Architectural training; d. Insufficient professional preparation from schools; e. Others (please state)"

12 respondents answered the question as follows:

- a. Three (3) people chose option "a (Lack of professionalism)"
- b. Five (5) people chose option "b (Poor business Practices)"
- c. Two (2) people chose option "c (Poor Architectural training)"
- d. Two (2) people chose option "d (Insufficient professional preparation from schools)"
- e. Zero (0) voting for option "e (Others)"

Outcome 3 – Response to question "Ranking based on External Factors such as a. Societal ignorance of the role of architects b. Poor regulatory practices c. Corruption; d. Irrelevance of the profession due to technological advances; e. Others (please state)"

12 respondents answered the question as follows:

- a. Four (4) people chose option "a (Societal ignorance of the role of architects)"
- b. Three (3) people chose option "b (Poor regulatory practices)"
- c. Four (4) people chose option "c (Corruption)"
- d. One (1) person chose option "d (Irrelevance of the profession due to technological advances)"
- e. Zero (0) voting for option "e (Others)"

CONCLUSION

From the qualitative method of survey conducted using a focus group, as a research tool, It is evident that architects are really facing a silent war between society, other construction professionals, corruption, academia and students. The role of Architects is diminishing over time and the future of the

professional practice is threatened in Nigeria and the world at large.

Based on this research, it was revealed that until there is a change of attitude by the Architect in private practice, public service, academia the societal perceptions of architect and the profession are not likely to change. External and internal factors alike need to be addressed from the architects' perspective before societal perceptions will change.

Architects should work hand in hand with regulatory bodies new policies, working in hand with state building development boards to ensure that, newly constructed buildings should be handled with the supervision of a registered Architect, thereby avoiding the boycott process of involving the Architectural profession during construction process and checkmating of building materials to be used to avoid building failure leading to collapse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Architects should set higher practice-based standards/requirements towards admission to all schools of Architecture in Nigeria, cutting across all levels from the first Degree to the Postgraduate studies to create more competition and value towards the career and also create at least an annual or monthly workshop for students to enlighten them about professional ethics.
- b. Architects should create public awareness as to the necessity of the involvement of an Architect in any construction and also work hand in hand with the security force providing sanctions or code of conducts, if any construction undertaken within the state without an Architects consent/knowledge of design and supervision, should be prosecuted.
- c. Architects should diversify in their practice and improve their level of creativity and innovation and technical skill acquisition so as to remain relevant.
- d. Policies concerning architectural practice should be frequently reviewed as the need arises, newly adopted policies should be well implemented to improve the affected weak areas concerning architectural practice and architecture at large.

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