



Adapting the Nigerian Architectural Educational School's Curriculum Towards Global Competitiveness

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Abstract

Globalization refers to the increasing connectedness of nations and peoples around the world through trade, investment, travel, popular culture and other forms of interaction. Globalization through information technology has brought so many openings that are breaking down boundaries hitherto existing in the practice of architecture. To enhance his place in the global market, the Nigerian architect needs to improve his skills on information communication technology (ICT). This paper examines how ICT enhances the global relevance of the Nigerian architect. It also examines the effectiveness and deficiencies of the curriculum in the Nigeria Schools of architecture. The paper therefore advocates a review of the curriculum in the Nigerian Schools of architecture to position the Nigerian architect for global competitiveness.

Keywords: Adapt, architect, competitiveness, curriculum, globalization

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Introduction

In adjusting the curriculum of Nigerian Schools of architecture towards global competitiveness, there is need to have a fair knowledge of the concept and dynamics of globalization, and how it can develop the study of architecture in Nigeria. Globalization is a comprehensive term for the emergence of a global society, in which economic, political, environmental, and cultural events in one part of the world quickly come to have significance for people in other parts of the world (Tabb 2006). Globalization has made people who live as citizens of a single nation, to be culturally, psychologically and materially engaged with the lives of people in other countries. Items common to our everyday lives-such as the clothes we wear, the food we eat and the cars we drive-are all products of globalization (Encarta 2006).

The architect is part of this global society. To enhance his place in the global market, the Nigerian architect needs to improve his skills on ICT. This has to take effect from the training of the architect to equip him to face global challenges of the environment and his profession.

This paper points to the fact that a robust review of the curriculum in the schools of architecture in Nigeria and implementation of same will position the Nigerian architect for global competitiveness.

Definition of keywords

Adapt

According to Encarta Dictionary tools (2006), adapt is to change to meet requirements, to adjust to something; to become or make somebody or something become used to a new environment or different conditions. Adapt is to become adjusted to new conditions etc (Oxford advanced learners' dictionary).

Architect

According to Uji and Kparevzua (2004), an architect is the person who ,with due regard to aesthetics as well as practical considerations, possesses adequate skill and knowledge to enable him, following his engagement by the employer or client, in that behalf, to originate, design and plan buildings and to arrange for, and supervise the erection of such buildings, or other works ,calling for skill in design and planning as he might, in the course of his business, recognizably be asked to carry out, or in respect of which he offers his services as a specialist.

Competitiveness

According to Encarta Dictionary tools (2004), competitiveness is involving attempt to win, wanting to beat others; better than competition. Competitiveness is keenness, effectiveness.

Curriculum

Curriculum according to the definition by Tanner and Tanner in Mkpa (1987:18) is the "planned and guided experiences and intended

learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience, under the auspices of the school, for the learner's continuous and willful growth in personal social competence".

Globalization

It is a concept, a process and an action. It is a complex phenomenon that means many things to different observers, yet globalization points to greater interdependence and complex interdependence in the world system, which has become not just a global village but a single factor, a single office and a single market (Uhegbu and Aja 2001).

Reasons for globalization

Most experts attribute globalization to improvements in communication, transportation and information technologies. For example, not only currencies but also stocks, bonds and other financial assets can be traded around the clock and around the world due to innovations in communication and information processing. Advances in communication and information technologies have helped slash the cost of processing business orders by well over 90 percent. People can be almost anywhere and remain in instant communication with their employers, customers, or families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or 24/7 as it has come to be known (Tabb 2006).

Advances in communications instantly unite people around the globe. For example, communications satellite allows global television broadcasts to bring news of faraway events, such as wars and national disasters as well as sports and other forms of entertainment. The Internet, cellphone and the fax machine permit instantaneous communication. The World Wide Web (www) and computers that store vast amounts of data allow instant access to information exceeding that of any library.

Improvements in transportation are also part of globalization. The world becomes smaller due to same or next-day delivery by jet airplanes (Tabb 2006).

A major feature of this era of globalization is migration, both legal and illegal. Not only do goods, money and information move great distances quickly, but also more people are moving great distances as well. This has also made remittances (money sent home by workers to their home countries) to become an important source of income for many countries like Nigeria. There are underlying issues of architectural concern to be shifted from this situation (Anunobi 2006). This takes us to the Nigerian architect and ICT.

The Nigerian architect and ict

One of the tools of globalization is the information super highway made possible by the computer age. Here the Internet connects a world network of computers, sharing information with each other. The challenge that this development brings to bear on architecture is obvious. Architecture cannot be left behind in the face of modern information technology. (Anunobi 2006).

The Nigerian architect, began with simple elementary exercises in the organization of space, appreciation of forms and structure and it ultimately develops into creative designs of immense scales which manifest in the development of his awareness and skills. As an architecture student, the gradual inculcation of architectural knowledge helps the architect to discover the creative talent dormant in him or be equipped with one.

Obasi (2006) submits that in as much as computer knowledge is an essential tool in positioning the Nigerian architect to be relevant in the globalize world, it should not be to done to the detriment of developing the creative talent in the student which the gradual systematic manual production of design does. University/Polytechnic administrators should be encouraged to equip architectural laboratories in their various departments of architecture with computers while computer programme should be compulsory to help the student not only be just computer literate but also to be well trained and made proficient in ARCHI-CAD and other related tools which have taken architecture practice.

To the next level and still going further. This will position our architect graduates to compete effectively both in the global labor market to be relevant in the challenges of globalization.

The Nigerian architect is far behind in ICT but cannot afford to be left behind in the face of modern information technology. According to Anunobi (2006), networking by consultants in different countries working on the same project is now a standard practice. The curriculum of architectural education must recognize this development and improve in that direction.

The curriculum in the Nigerian schools of architecture

This paper is not going to clinically analyze the curriculum of each and every school of architecture in Nigeria. All the schools of architecture in Nigeria operate a near uniform curriculum. The differences are insignificant.

The current curriculum of school of architecture in Nigerian Universities is based on the NUC minimum academic standards described by Oji (1990) and the slightly different NIA/ARCON approved minimum academic standard also described by Nkwogu (2001).

While the NUC minimum academics standards is designed for a 6-year bachelor of architecture programme, the schools have since converted it to the two-tier bachelor and master's degrees in architecture of various nomenclatures and durations.

The curricula of the ND and HND programme, currently in use by the polytechnics was prepared by twelve (12) participants in 1989, after a critique workshop.

The participants were drawn from the academics and practice as follows;

- Five from the polytechnics, two from the universities, one from the ministry,
- Three from practice, one from NBTE (Ob'lama 2006).

A critical study of the curricula of both University and Polytechnic though a minimum guide, indicates that they are obsolete and need restructuring to meet the demands of modern practice and information technology and of course global standards.

Courses like computer applications, entrepreneurship and management courses are either totally non-existent or skeletally treated.

Different Schools of architecture in Nigeria currently run different curricula tailored to suit their different philosophies. These philosophies are patterned along different schools of thought in architecture. A close examination however will reveal four models of schools of architecture in Nigeria. They are the Beaux-arts model, the English model, the American model and the Bauhaus model of architectural education. Two examples here will suffice to buttress the above scenario. While the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is operating the British model, the University of Nigeria Nsukka is operating the American model. Though these models are different, they are taught under similar Nigerian environmental circumstances (Anunobi 2006).

It is obvious therefore, that the curriculum in the Nigerian Schools of architecture presently needs to be reviewed with a view to developing a uniform model and standards geared towards global challenges. The current debate challenging the existing dichotomy and discrimination between graduates of architecture from universities and those of Polytechnics further highlights the urgent need for such review and curriculum standardization.

Reviews and implementation of the curriculum in the Nigerian schools of architecture

Architecture is a course that lends itself to study from several points of view. Its course content is drawn from several subject areas. Curriculum planning and development for architectural education therefore need to be seen as the process of planning for learning opportunities that can meet the need of an individual, community, nation and the world at large. (Olagunju, Akande, Ayuba 2006). The table next page is a brief comparison of HND and BSc curricula.

Oluigbo (2005) submits that many architect-educators and practitioners have observed deficiencies in the curricula of architectural education in Nigeria and have called for its review in order to embrace developments in science and technology, reflect societal or national aspirations and meet socio-economic and cultural needs.

Udeh (1990) noted that the method employed in the training of architects in Nigeria evolved principally from European models and that local schools

of architecture, because of circumstances of their establishment, were fashioned after British and American curriculum and though it had been subjected to several reviews and modifications still remained a studio design-based Beaux-Arts education system which he argued, had rendered architectural education irrelevant to today's Nigerian needs.

Nkwogu (2001) described the curriculum of architectural education in Nigeria as 'obsolete', and called for its review and restructuring in order to elevate the profession to a full-fledged academic professional discipline such as engineering, medicine, and law. "Architectural education should provide a balance between the practicalities of the studio design and the acquisition of culture based behavioral knowledge, which enables students to relate properly to the society and environment" (Udeh 1990:24).

No doubt the WWW nay ICT has become one such global pervasive culture based behavioral knowledge.

Two major perceived weaknesses of the current curricula of most schools of architecture in Nigeria are:

- i. The emphasis laid on the architectural design studio at the expense of other technical and behavioral studies
- ii. The absence of vital areas of study which are of great importance to enhancing the ability of the architect to respond to societal needs and peculiarities (Oluigbo 2005).

These weaknesses constitute veritable impediments to the global relevance and competitiveness of the Nigerian trained architect.

Adeyemi (2000) has, in summary suggested a structural review of the curriculum to prepare the professional architect for new roles and to bring our socio-cultural peculiarity to focus.

Implementation

Sumaila (2006) posits that a curriculum reviewed has to be implemented to take effect. Resources are required for this and as observed by Adeyemi (1990) lack of such resources has hindered implementation of most proposals in the past. Of utmost importance is the human resources, which ironically is the most lacking.

A survey of architecture academics in the Nigerian schools of architecture indicates a sorry state of development. The situation is improving but there is still the need for aggressive staff development through regular training and retraining programme.

Another pertinent factor is inadequate staffing and facilities. Most of the schools of architecture in Nigeria are not adequately staffed compared to the growth in the population of students in architecture schools.

This affects the study of architecture, as some of the educators are grossly overstretched affecting the quality of teaching, they dispense Facilities like slide projectors, which are essential in environmental studies is (in short supply or in most cases) not available.

Studio furniture such as drawing boards is in poor state, where they are available. The studio supervisor/ student ratio exceeds 1:50 thus resulting in inadequate supervision of students and also leaving the lecturer with little or no time for research activities (Ogunrayewa and Agbo 2001).

Many schools teach technical subjects in classrooms rather than in workshops, laboratories or through direct experience on the construction sites (Adeyemi 1990).

The need to implement the reviews made in the curriculum is inevitable in the current state of affairs and for any envisaged improvement to take place.

Conclusions

The paper so far points to these major facts: (1) Globalization has created a new type of challenge in the field of information technology, especially in the use of the computer; (2) The Nigerian architect needs to enhance his place in the global market by improving his skills on ICT; (3) Architectural educators, in this globalize era, should decide on the kind of architectural education they want to pass on to the coming generation; (4) Therefore, there is need to adapt the curriculum in the Nigerian Schools of architecture, to accommodate the changing needs.

This paper has tried to scrutinize the present curriculum in the Nigerian Schools of architecture. It has also highlighted on the need of the Nigerian architect to be properly groomed to face global challenges.

Information technology has so united the practice of architecture through the Internet such that two or more architects can do a design in two or more different continents. The effectiveness and deficiencies of the curriculum have been highlighted and various suggestions including those by various authors have been presented. The suggestions are varied but are all relevant and appropriate.

The architectural educators, since the theme of this conference is "globalization and architectural education" should adapt the curriculum of the Nigerian Architectural Educational Schools to position the Nigerian architect for global competitiveness.

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Author(s) contribution

Oluropo Stephen Ilesanmi contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

Ojo Emmanuel Temitope contribute to methodology, supervision, and validation.

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