

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: A CAREER FOR ARCHITECT GRADUATES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract: *The challenge being faced by young architects in the present economic depression is so enormous that finding jobs seems a herculean task. This paper takes a look at facilities management as a career opportunity for architect graduates. It underscores its importance as a key area where services can be offered to clients. This paper discovers that there is a wide gap which needs to be filled for facilities management to gain relevance in Nigeria. Proper inventories and relevant data on facilities management and creating awareness are suggested as methodological approaches toward jobs creation for the architect-graduates. It asserts that, as a result of the changing world, architect graduates need to focus on other areas of human endeavour in order to develop a career in them. The paper concludes that due to changing needs and demands of the society, the contents of the education of architects need to be reviewed and up-dated. This, it opines, should accommodate facilities management into the curriculum of schools of architecture in Nigeria.*

Key words: *career, curriculum, education, facilities, management.*

INTRODUCTION

The world has been described as a place where new discoveries are emerging, throwing up challenges on the hitherto knowledge base of every individuals. It is a society where technology and innovation is on the high side; and old knowledge is on the decline and fast losing attention. Traditional architectural firms for long have been one-stop solution to offering employment to mostly the contemporary Nigerian architects. In this changing world, various opportunities are being considered in line with the global trend of advancement in technology.

Facilities Management (FM) is a broad area of human endeavour that brings many disciplines together, it can safely be regarded as a multi-disciplinary approach towards a better delivery of services. In Nigeria for instance, attention is only paid to project execution with very little or no effort on how the facilities would be managed and maintained. This is largely due to paucity of awareness from both the public and private sectors. This paper attempts to expose the architect graduates to facilities management as an alternative approach towards self-reliance and creating a responsive

Facilities management can be defined as the management of people, buildings and services. These services may range from hard to soft services within a building. Facilities management uses architects to integrate architecture, engineering and environmental sciences for public and private corporations, architecture and consulting firms. Facilities management, as explained by the Facility Management Association of Australia, "coordinates the strategic and operational management of facilities in public and private sector organisations. They range from those making very high level decisions within an organisation and contributing to strategic planning, to those managing the operation of the facilities. Facilities managers are key decision-makers in the areas of maintenance, utilities, communications and other workplace services. They control spending in these areas and are responsible for the outcomes".

Despite the enormous opportunities that facilities management brings, it is an irony that this area has not been identified by the architect graduates and who by the training he/she received should be versatile especially in related disciplines. This paper thus aims at introducing facilities

management to architect graduates which could be a roadmap to wider range of activities leading to career achievement and advancement.

Changing world and its challenges

Sa'ad (2001) cited in Obinna's paper identified that the end of 20th century recorded a tremendous explosion in the information technology and socio-economic restructuring with its attendant challenge both for the practice of architecture and the education of the future generation of architects. He maintained that "the trend is now more of flexibility patterns of work, focus on information gathering, processing and analysis". The crux of it is that inter disciplinary practices are gaining relevance and are expanding the frontiers of architecture and for which the young architect should not be an exception.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Zubairu (2001) has shown that facilities management is a relatively new profession which came into existence in the 1980s in response to several forces namely; the rising costs of accommodation, new information technology, increased competition between organisations, and rising expectations for a better educated and more professional workforce.

In Nigeria for instance, facilities management is little known or heard of which accounts for why architect graduates have not actually developed interest in it.

Studies reveal that about 44% of office managers have never practiced facilities management in their offices; while about 21% had no previous knowledge of facilities management, (Zubairu, 2004).

Thus, greater emphasis should be focused on facilities management for its relevance and practice within Nigeria's socio-cultural context.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT AS A CAREER FOR YOUNG ARCHITECTS

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) English Dictionary (1992) defines a career as "a type of job or profession that someone does for a long period of his/her life and in which he/she hopes to gain advancement". Succinctly put, a career is any kind of discipline which brings means of livelihood, success and advancement.

Ogbimi (2002) views career as a course of life endeavour expressed as a consecutive and progressive achievement in a field of interest wherewith the individual livelihood is intended. Invariably, the individual has records of educational successes in that field which warrants employment and a related job with a career ladder.

Ogbimi (2002) further identified the characteristics of a career as:

- (a) Identifiable course of life endeavour
- (b) Hard work
- (c) Educational success
- (d) Promotional steps (i.e. from consecutive and progressive achievement)
- (e) Full-time occupation
- (f) Life-time occupation
- (g) Means of Livelihood

For the young architects, they can offer services to clients in many ways, for example in the operating of facilities; space planning and layout planning for offices; corporate real estate; monitoring the performance of contractors (project management) landscaping and interior designs.

METHOD OF INCORPORATING FACILITY MANAGEMENT INTO ARCHITECTURAL CURRICULUM

Robertson (2000) affirms that all organisations have three key components-people, space and technology. These components are used throughout the organization and are considered important

to organization's operational success. Most organizations have developed corporate service functions to handle each of these key components. The human resources (HR) function handles the people issues; facilities management (FM) provides space; and information technology (IT) delivers the technology.

The role of the architect as a planner of a space indicates that the architect's position is strategic to the overall growth of any organisation and indeed, the Nigeria's built environments. In terms of space management, the young architect by his training should be responsive to the traditional role of providing a habitable setting that guarantees both the aesthetics and comforts of the users. Aside from planning the space, he prepares the blue print which acts as a guide for the periodic maintenance of the premises.

For facilities management to gain relevance, efforts must shift to creating awareness for young architects and adequately educated so as to assist in its practice and ultimately making a career out of it.

Moreover, proper inventory should be carried out which aims to serve as databases for facilities managers to render services to prospective clients. For example, the springing up of commercial complexes and corporate edifices around the country mean that these buildings would need to be maintained at a phased period. In addition, the environments where work is performed today emphasise beauty and aesthetics. Thus, landscaping services can also be offered to prospective clients.

FUNCTIONS OF A FACILITIES MANAGER

The functions of a facilities manager include:

1. Suppliers of corporate real estate: property investments, acquisition and disposal of buildings,

2. investment in property. Coordinates space planning and furniture, space studies, layout planning.
3. Operator of facilities: cleaning, ensuring building's air conditioning is operating efficiently, reliably and safely.
4. Project management: accommodating office moves and changes; monitoring the performance of contractors (e.g. builders, electricians).

IMPLICATIONS OF FACILITIES MANAGEMENT (FM) ON THE CURRICULUM

Olotuah and Adesiji (2005) date the history of architectural education to span 50 years in Nigeria. During these years, three remarkable periods were identified by Uji (2001) as period from 1952-1962; 1963-1979; and 1979 to date. The curriculum of architectural education which was developed over these years, for the schools of architecture across the country needs to be responsive to changing needs and demands as the society grows. Olotuah and Adesiji (2005) opine that schools of architecture strive to equip students to make contribution to the promotion of an orderly development of the human environment.

The 3rd National Development Plan in the area of education in Nigeria underscores the need for reforming the content of general education to make it more responsive to the socio-economic need to the country (FGN, 1975). The National Universities Commission (NUC) categorized various course titles into seven instructional modules from which specific subjects of study of schools of architecture in Nigeria are subsumed. These modules according to Olotuah and Adesiji (2005) are:

- i. Architectural Design;
- ii. Arts and Drawing;
- iii. Historical and Theoretical

- Studies;
- iv. Building Systems Technology;
 - v. Humanities and Social Studies;
 - vi. Environmental Control System; and
 - vii. Physical Sciences;

Facilities management is a complex and diverse discipline. Zubairu (2001) points out that these disciplines are mainly from environmental sciences; namely: space planning, architecture, building, buildings services and systems engineering, project management, interior design, real estate, information systems management, human resources management and environmental psychology. Therefore, a vast body of knowledge needs to grow out from these disciplines. However, within the context provided by the NUC, curriculum of schools of architecture should emphasize courses that should be taken in building system technology, environmental control system and humanities/social studies geared toward the requisite knowledge and skills necessary for facilities management as a discipline.

The curriculum has to be looked upon and the problem area that needs critical attention addressed. In this regard, this paper proposes that facilities management be taught at master's level so that students can have adequate and requisite skills necessary for the practice of facilities management as they prepare for a career after school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper having highlighted facilities management as a career option to young architects, seeks to make the following recommendations for enhancing the practice of facilities management in the country.

1. **Government intervention on maintenance culture.**

Maintenance culture in Nigeria has been seriously underplayed; government should

desist from paying lip service to the maintenance culture. Legislation should be put in place making it mandatory for every organisation, private or public, to carry out maintenance on their buildings and facilities as and when due and proofs of such should be documented. This would ensure that our buildings are not just cleaned but have long useful lives, including the facilities therein.

2. **Awareness of the public and students of architecture.**

In the course of the study, some people are not aware of facilities management being in existence. Hence, awareness is very important for both the public and the students of architecture and other environmental science students.

3. **Specialisation:**

Facilities Management should be run as a specialty area for architect graduates.

Graduates must receive additional trainings because of the wide scope of facilities management. The curriculum at master's level should emphasize the teaching of facilities management.

4. **Statutory body.**

A professional body should be established to coordinate and monitor the activities of facilities manager in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The world is changing with concomitant flood-gates of opportunities but it is only those who are equipped with modern techniques and skills of doing work that can adequately rise to the challenges of the modern world. Thus, facilities management as an area of opportunity needs

to be viewed and embraced by the young architects as a career for now and the future.

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