

## KEY WORDS:

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# Architectural Education and Practice in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the challenges of architectural education and practice in Nigeria. It further examines employment opportunities available to the architect. The paper identifies problems confronting architectural education and practice such as: inadequate practical education of architects to face the professional challenges ahead, lack of public awareness of the architect's role and responsibilities, lack of passion for the profession by some of the professionals, dearth of commissions, erosion and encroachment on the profession by non architects etc. The paper relied on secondary data. The paper opines that architecture is a noble and challenging profession that should not be left in the hands of charlatans and quacks. The paper recommends strategies such as educating the public, implementing the extant laws, regulating the profession in Nigeria, acquisition of more practical knowledge by architects to play their proper role in the building industry.

## Introduction

The word 'architect' is derived from the Greek word *arkhitekton* which meant 'master-builder' implying a broad background of knowledge in planning, design and construction, as well as the arts. Architecture may thus be defined not as a discipline per-se but as an umbrella of related disciplines. It has been recognized as the '*mother of all arts*' – a description that now seems to be something from the past (Meir, 2008). The architect was supposed to be an artist, a technologist, a designer, an economist, planner and a builder.

By the 19th century and especially due to the Industrial Revolution, processes of construction became sophisticated leading to separation of roles and creating many specialized fields of knowledge. Architecture became a subject of academic study in the university. There emerged specialists in areas such as- builder for management of construction process, quantity surveyor for cost estimation, structural engineer for sophisticated structural designs, and others responsible for placement of mechanical and electrical installations. This role of separation even extended to persons known as surveyors and planners who undertook preliminary tasks of planning prior to the commencement of the design and construction task proper (Olotuah, 2002).

In spite of this role separation of various specializations, all over the world, the architect continued to be recognized as the central figure in the building industry without whose initiative in design and specifications there would not arise any need for the impact of other professionals in the first place (Uji, 2011). But in Nigeria today, the architectural

profession has been seriously encroached upon by other professionals and non professionals.

The problem of architectural education and practice in Nigeria can be identified as follows:

- Poor appreciation of the architect's role by the public
- Non-engagement of architects in many projects
- Inadequate practical education of architects
- Quackery in the profession
- Lack of passion by the professionals

This paper examines the challenges of architectural education and practice in Nigeria. This is with the view of identifying the pitfalls facing the profession and articulate measures to ameliorate them. The paper examines the current architectural education and curriculum of the schools of architectural in Nigeria; see where the gaps are and make suggestions. The paper also looks at the employment opportunities for the architect and addresses the challenges of quackery and lack of passion in the profession.

## Architectural Education

Architectural education is the process by which architects (architectural educators) elicit desired behavioral patterns on the parts of the initiates (students). The training enables the students to possess the knowledge of science and art of building design, construction, supervision and development of human environment (Dimuna, 2009).

In architecture, education enables the students to acquire skills necessary for the challenges of the profession and it inculcates in the student certain ways of thinking and solving practical

architectural problems. This is very necessary because while talent may be inborn, skills must be learnt. There are ways of doing things in architecture which must be taught first and respected (Oruwari, 1988). The architectural education must prepare the students adequately for the challenges ahead in their chosen profession. Chendo (1991) states that an architect is always the product of his education.

The education of the architect has long been articulated by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in his treatise- *The Ten Books on Architecture*- a compendium of the essential architectural knowledge that was extant during the first century BCE. Vitruvius gave serious thought to the education of the architect and advocated thus:

*"let him be educated, skillful with the pencil, instructed in geometry, know much history, have followed the philosophers with attention, understand music, have some knowledge of medicine, know the opinions of jurists, and be acquainted with astronomy and theory of the heavens."*

-Vitruvius, On Architecture

Architecture till today appears to be one of the disciplines that derives its existence from all the spheres of the learning process. It is, at once, a science, an art and a key component in the environment, drawing its essence from the humanities. This is the uniqueness of the discipline of architecture (Uji, 2011). This reinforces the position of Vitruvius when he associated architecture with the understanding of the following:

- The physical sciences, especially those concerned with understanding of the nature of materials, structure, environmental

control, including the energies manifestation of heat, light and sound.

- The human science (humanities) including behavioural, cultural, sociological and historical studies.
- The normative sciences (or the arts) which give form in different value system related to the beautiful, the good and the true (i.e. aesthetics, ethics and logic).

### Relevance of Education for Practice

Vitruvius thus recommended that the architect should be equipped with knowledge of many branches of study and varied kinds of learning, for it is by architect's judgment that all work done by the other arts is put to test. This knowledge is the child of practices and theory. Practice is the continuous and regular exercises of employment where manual work is done with any necessary materials to gain skills. Theory, on the other hand, is the ability to demonstrate and explain the production of dexterity on the principles of science or art.

It follows, therefore, that architects who have aimed at acquiring manual skills without scholarship have never been able to reach a position of authority to respond to their pains, while those who relied upon theory and scholarship were obviously hunting the shadow, not the substance. But those who have a thorough knowledge of both like men armed at all points, have sooner attained their objective and carried authority with them. It appears, then, that one who professes himself as an architect should be well versed in both directions.

In summary, an architect ought to be an educated person so as to leave a more lasting remembrance in their work. He/ she must



*Figure 1: Studio Environment at the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria.*

have knowledge of drawing or geometry to readily make sketches of proposals. A wide knowledge of history is a requisite to explain the underlying ideas of the work. As for philosophy, it makes an architect just, honest and without avariciousness. This is very

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important, for no work can be rightly done without honesty and incorruptibility. The architect should be a person of integrity and have dignity by cherishing a good reputation. The architect should have knowledge of the study of medicine on account of the question of climate, air, and healthiness of dwellings. And as for principles of law, he should know the importance of all the prevailing building laws.

The National University Commission of Nigeria (NUC, 2006) listed as its expectations of a

graduate of architecture in Nigeria as follows:

- Ability to analyze design problems, synthesise various elements and provide solutions.
- Ability to understand the need of his client and users of the built environment and cater for these.
- Ability to produce appropriate and imaginative solutions that are technologically sound, economically feasible, environmentally acceptable and aesthetically relevant.
- Ability to grasp the practical and legal implications to his proposals and the impacts on users and the public at large.
- Ability to communicate his proposal in the appropriate medium to his clients, the public and members of the building team.

These expectations are high and demand that an architect must be well equipped for the challenges of the profession. But unfortunately in Nigeria today, particularly in Edo State many people claim to be architects and assume responsibility of an architect without possessing the requisite qualification or knowledge.

Chukwali (1990) states that anybody who offers services and claims expertise for what he is

	Instructional Modules	Percentage Distribution
A	Architectural Planning and Design	29.16%
B	Communication Skills	5.56%
C	History and Theoretical Studies	13.19%
D	Building construction Technology	24.60%
E	Humanities	3.17%
F	Environmental Control Systems	7.14%
G	Physical Sciences	8.73%
H	Management Studies	9.13%
		<b>TOTAL 100%</b>

Table 1: Instructional Modules and Percentage Distribution Source: NUC handbook (2006)

doing has a responsibility first to himself, second to his client and third to the society. This is even more important in architecture

**The departments of architecture in Nigerian Universities run two-tier programmes of B.Sc. or B.Tech and M.Sc. Arch or M.Tech architecture degrees with 4 or 5 years and 2 years duration respectively. In addition, after graduation, it is mandatory to acquire practical experience during two years of tutelage as a pre-qualification for the Professional Competence Examination.**

where errors in design or construction of buildings remain visible and permanent.

The Architectural Curriculum in Nigeria

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Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and National University Commission (NUC) guidelines. In addition, after graduation, it is mandatory to acquire practical experience during two years of tutelage as a pre-qualification for the Professional Competence Examination.

The curriculum of each department of architecture usually draws courses from the eight core instructional modules as set by ARCON and NUC. Students are equally exposed to on the job training through the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme. The curriculum is segmented into the core courses, the pre-requisite courses, the required courses and the elective courses. For purpose of clarity, the eight main areas of study or instructional Modules are shown in table 1.

The curriculum of any department of architecture in a Nigerian university is expected to be in line with ARCON and NUC recommended eight core instructional modules. The tables 2 & 3 reflect clearly the

	B.Sc. (Arch)				M.Sc (Arch)			
Module	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Total Credit Units	Total Credits in 2-Tier System
A. Architectural Design	- -	6 + 6	6 + 8	6 + 7	7 + 8	6 + 6	66	66
B. Arts And Drawings	4 + 4	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	8	16
C. Historical and Theoretical Studies	3 + 5	2 + 2	2 + 2	- -	2 + -	3	21	24
D. Building System & Technology	- -	6 + 6	4 + 4	6 + 9	5 + 2	5 + -	47	40
E. Humanities & Social Studies	2 + 2	2 + 2	- -	2 + -	- -	- -	10	14
F. Environmental Control System	2 + -	- -	4 + 2	- -	- -	- -	8	20
G. Physical Science	7 + 7	2 + 2	- -	- -	- -	- -	18	20
H. Management Studies and Electives	- -	- -	2 + 2	4 + 2	3 + 3	3 + 3	22	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	18+18	18+18	18+18	18+18	15 + 15	14 + 12	200	200

**Table 2:** Distribution of Courses by Semester: NUC course requirement for B.Sc. and M.Sc. architecture degrees, Source: NUC handbook (2006)

instruction module as recommended by the regulatory bodies.

The mission of the discipline of architecture is to produce quality professionals who clearly understand the complex relationship between human beings and the built environment, and who aspire to obtain excellence in designed and management of resources in the built environment for the greatest benefit of the users.

While philosophy of the discipline of architecture is attainment and sustenance of harmony and equilibrium in the built and natural environment,

philosophy of individual department of architecture varies from one another. Each department has her own aims and objectives that generally reflect their overall philosophy, but which are specifically dictated by peculiar factors surrounding their location and vision of the university towards achieving her mission. For instance, the Department of Architecture of Ambrose Alli University has her philosophy as “Towards Enhancing the Tropical Built Environment”, while that of University of Jos is, “Creation of Harmony between Architecture and Culture”. There is a need for a strong relationship between philosophy and curriculum.

<b>Module-1</b> Arch. Design/ facilities design	<b>Module-2</b> Communication Skills	<b>Module-3</b> Historical & Theoretical Studies	<b>Module-4</b> Historical Construction Technology
1. Introduction to architecture	1. Free hand drawing	1. History of Architecture	1. Building Materials
2. Architectural design	2. Architectural design	2. African Traditional Architecture	2. Building Construction
3. Live project	3. Live modeling	3. Japanese Architecture	3. Building Structures
4. Urban design	4. Photography	4. Islamic Architecture	4. Advanced Architectural Structures
5. Landscape design	5. Painting	5. Chinese Architecture	5. Architectural Frames
6. Site Planning	6. Mosaic mural design	6. Indian Architecture	6. Plants Equipment
7. Housing design	7. Sculpture	7. History of Humans	7. Land Surveying Photo- grammetry
8. Interior design	8. Ceramics & glass design	8. History of Western Architecture	8. Theory of Structure
9. Rural development & planning	9. Life drawing	9. Theory of Architecture	9. Working Drg & De- tailing
10. Industrial building design	10. Industrial building design	10. Pre-Colonial urbanism in Africa	10. Specification writing
11. Public & Institute building design	11. Wood work	11. Restoration & preservation	11. Components & Meth- ods
12. Furniture design	12. Metal work	12. Art History	12. Building Maintenance
13. Computer application	13. Descriptive geometry	13. Architectural Philosophy	13. Building Technology
	14. Textile design	14. Comp. studies of Built Environment	
	15. Scale & proportions	15. Evolution of Planning Thought	
		16. Nigerian Tradnl Architecture and Settlements	
		17. Mayan & Aztec Architecture	
		18. Japanese Gardens	

**Table 3: Instructional Modules and Percentage Distribution****Source:** NUC handbook (2006)

<b>Module-5</b> Humanities	<b>Module-6</b> Environmental Control System	<b>Module-7</b> Physical Sciences	<b>Module-8</b> Management Studies
1. Research Methods	1. Urban Climatology	1. Mathematics	1. Planning Principle & Practice
2. Elements of Economic	2. Environment Planning	2. Geography	2. Tendering
3. Elements of Sociology	3. Environment Science	3. Physics	3. Real Estate Management
4. African Societies	4. Building Climatology	4. Introduction to Computer Methods	4. Building Quantities & Costing
5. Philosophy	5. Air-Conditioning, refrigeration	5. Computer Application	5. Building Economics
6. History of Technology	6. Natural & Artificial Lighting	6. Statistical Methods	6. Contract Law and Arbitration
7. Art Education	7. Acoustics & Noise Control	7. Geology	7. Project
8. Anthropology	8. Environment Resource Management	8. Soil Mechanics	8. Contract Administration
9. Psychology of perception	9. Environment Impact Assessment	9. Strength of Materials	9. Professional Practice and procedure
10. Human Spatial Morphology	10. Services in Buildings	10. Probability Theory	10. Site Management
11. Development Eco- nomics	11. Water Supply & Drainage	11. Computer Programming	11. Project Management
12. People & Culture of Africa	12. Electricity & Gas supply	12. Mechanics	12. Feasibility & Visibility studies
13. Symbolic Logic	13. Natural & Artificial Ventilation	13. Chemistry	13. Development Policies Codes & Regulation
14. Archaeology	14. Horticulture & Gardening	14. Analytical Studies	14. Business Studies
15. Structure of Rural communities	15. Pollution Control	15. Calculus	
16. Nigerian History	16. Public Health Engineering	16. Trigonometry	
17. Economic History of Africa	17. Traffic Engineering	17. Material Science	
18. Traditional Industries	18. Disaster Control & Management	18. Cartography	
19. Use of English		19. Geology of Nigeria	



## Employment Opportunities

Good buildings matter, they are the family silver of a society and they are the tools with which we have always provided safe and civilized settlements throughout history. At best they offer dignity, quality of life and security (Roaf, 2008). The development patterns in Abuja and lately Benin City, since the architects started making impacts in the design and development of new layouts especially in the New GRA extensions will appreciate this

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assertion. Only the trained architect is capable of, and who has the capacity to move forward to face the challenges of the 21st century to build a safer and better world with better buildings and built environments to keep us all safe in the uncertain decade ahead, while promoting quality, comfort and the dignity of the people around the world.

The architects are employed in many sectors of the building industry and public services such as academia, civil and public services, banks and mortgage institutions and estate departments and in private architectural firms. For many years, the private architectural firms were the greatest employers of young graduate architects. The situation is no longer so due to the dearth of commissions and poor

patronage by governments. The situation is even worse now because most governments understand infrastructural development from the perspective of road construction. Most architectural firms especially in Benin City depend only on patronage from individual developers and practices subsistence architecture. Architectural firms are usually more successful through government commissions. Many firms find it difficult to employ many architects. Many of the young architects prefer to be on *'their own'* even when they are not fully qualified as architects. The reason for this is because many young architects are impatient and want better pay, neither ready to make sacrifices nor willing to crawl before walking. This has been made possible because the major uniqueness of architecture is its entrepreneurial nature, as it equips its graduates to become job creators rather than job seekers. It is not surprising therefore that architecture has traditionally remained the first choice of applicants seeking tertiary professional education (alongside medicine) in the applied science. This advantage should not be abused.

The 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria were expected to employ a minimum of one architect in their Development Control Department, which is supposed to be multi-disciplinary in nature. This presupposes that each state Development Control Department should compose of Town Planners, Architects, and Civil Engineers for effective monitoring of physical development.

## Policy Implications

Here we discuss some of the identified problems confronting architectural education and practice and their implications on the state of affairs in Nigeria.

### Need for Understanding of the Architect's Role by the Public

The role and place of every profession in any given society is determined by the extent to which the society perceives the benefits

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it derives from the services rendered. Even though it has been argued that the way a particular professional carries himself in relation to the society has an impact on how the society view him, it cannot be contested that it is what the society profits directly from such service that will influence them more. Since society knows and understands that the life of an individual could depend on the doctor or the medicine man, societies all over the ages have tended to revere the medical profession. With the evolution of modern society with its coded laws, the lawyer has become very important and relevant in many societies. Any society that takes its laws seriously looks up with a lot of respect to lawyers.

In Nigeria, the architect is one of the most misunderstood professionals (Oyekola, 2007). Many people do not know the role of the architect. People understand the Engineer on the construction site and often

times confuse his role with that of the architect. The evolution of the practice of architecture in Nigeria since 1960 when the Nigeria Institute of Architects (NIA) was formed has had its fair share of challenges. At inception the architect was the de facto head of the building team as it was supposed to be. However, over the years due largely to the inaction of architects, the status of the profession has been diminished with other professionals in the building industry claiming to be able to lead the team. A new term 'project manager' has been smuggled in to replace the traditional managerial role of the architect as the head.

Architects have not made a significant impact on society as they should have been given all the opportunities they have been given in the past. Some of the challenges facing architecture today, especially the issue of quackery could be traced to the mistakes of the past. Some Architects neither pay attention to details nor offer full services to the clients that would translate to direct or long-term savings etc. They have not always carried the client along and taken time to understand his needs and requirements so as to adequately proffer suitable solutions. Some architects still practice like the draughtsman. However, some architects have sought to carve a niche for themselves by meeting the needs of their clients and society and thus creating a direct impact.

This is in contrast with what obtains in some countries. A very good example is the way a renowned architect Frank Gehry, used the design of the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum to revitalize that part of Spain. The museum almost single handedly transformed the

world's perception of Bilbao from a separatist stronghold to a famous tourist destination. Over the years lots of cities following the example of Bilbao have had super star architects design show pieces as a means of revitalizing their communities and putting them on the world map.

Some communities have looked up to architects for succor when there has been a disaster. Examples of these are Iran and Turkey during the earth quakes, South East Asia during the Tsunami etc. The architects in America rose to proffer solutions to the disaster stricken

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areas of New Orleans in 2007. This was in line with the American Institute of Architects' (AIA) mission statement "service to society". Today, the AIA is pursuing the Integrated Project Delivery initiative which focused on the goal of ecologically responsible design and fully integrated project teams, which is for the benefits of the architects and the society (Andrejko, 2008). These activities have made them relevant in their respective societies. As a result of this, they have become a strong lobby group in politics, taking part in various social discourses and thus playing their part in the development of those societies.

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do, they cannot even complain, when architects fail. The government is one of the biggest losers in this respect as it by its own actions weakens the very structures it has set in place. The Federal Government by Decree No. 10 of 1969 (Act 1990 No. 43) has set up the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) to regulate the training, and practice of architecture in Nigeria. Under normal circumstances, only registered architects by ARCON should practice as architects in Nigeria. The role of ARCON among other things is to regulate the practice of architecture and be able to punish erring architects. Unfortunately there have been many cases when government has given big commissions to unregistered architects especially those from foreign countries. Such actions send the wrong signals.

There is therefore, the need of public awareness of the functional roles of the architects and their increasing roles in the building industry. An educated public appreciative of what is beautiful and recognizes what is ugly is essential to the growth and future of architecture.

In the words of Figueiredo (1997), it is our *privilege* to be in a position that influences the environment, in which people live and

work. It is our *duty* to go back to our roots and develop built forms that respects tradition while enhancing living condition for the under privileged majority. It is our *right* to contribute to policy formulation at the highest level and be leaders in shaping the built form. It has become imperative for the architect to re-establish the privileges, duties and rights of an architect in the community. This is very necessary as the general public do not understand the role of the architects, and in order to regain their position in the society.

### Need for Elimination of Quackery

Quackery is the activities of someone who pretends to be a qualified person. Quackery encourages disposable architecture because without proper planning and design principles and procedures, without proper costing,

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management and budgeting, shoddy projects are carried out. These do not benefit our environment –our habitat, our pride as a nation and a generation that is desirous at bequeathing something to unborn ones.

Our buildings, our environment shows how we value our life hence we need to handle them with utmost care. If architects practice

‘disposable Architecture’, environmental settlement or city planning chaos will bedevil our society as the city cannot function because of congestion, flooding and disasters associated with them. According to Encyclopedia of American Architecture, architectural design is the creative process used to translate the problems, needs and aspirations of potential building owners and users into drawings and other documents and eventually translate them into buildings. Architectural design also refers to building design which Fredrick and Ambrose (1989) defined as the process satisfying public health, welfare and safety requirement.

Most of the problems experienced in our urban and rural built environment can be attributed to poor building designs resulting in lack of day lighting and poor ventilation in some buildings, lack of efficiency in planning and design, uneconomic use of resources and poor project conceptualization leading to abandonment of building project (Dimuna, 2010). The reasons for these are not farfetched, firstly most of the buildings are designed by non- architects such as draughtsman, builders, artists, surveyors, geographer cum-town planners, and staff of town planning authority who parade as architects.

Secondly, the inability of the wider society to recognize the importance of trained architects in the design and execution of their building projects.

Thirdly, it could be that it was done by young architects who are supposed to be on tutelage but chose to engage in illegal practice, without fully comprehending the design processes and principles. These groups of architects need to realize that no formal

education can ever prepare a man for all the complexities, or practical problems that faces him in his profession. Experience in

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live design projects, contract documentation, tendering procedure and analysis, design report writings, coordination of site meetings are better learnt in practice than in the university. Unfortunately, most people do not realize that as professional men and women, they have a responsibility to their clients and to the society.

Fourthly, some building owners do not know what they really want in their building and are only interested in the cost of producing the building drawings and procurement approval.

ARCON Act (1990 No. 43) states that a person shall not prepare or take full responsibility for the erection or commissioning of architectural building plans or practice or carry on business (other than having relevance to ship construction, or landscape or golf links) under any name or style or title containing the word “architect” unless he is a Nigerian citizen and registered under this Act. It is very unfortunate that the responsibility of an architect who spent six years in the university and acquired Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in architecture and spent another minimum of two years post

qualification before registration could be done by a pretender or a quack with little or no education in the discipline.

#### **Need for Passion for the profession**

Passion is the emotional aspect of motivation. Very great professionals have passion for what they do. For an architect it could be passion for design, architecture and most importantly the environment and the total environment – the world. Maritz (2008) opines that if students cannot emerge from a school of architecture with a conviction and drive to change the world for the better that school has failed in its purpose.

When we have passion for our profession and the environment, we would realize that we have responsibilities to ourselves, our profession, to our clients, end users of our designs and the society at large. We would then practice our profession with integrity, dignity and would not collude with others to undermine our profession or professional bodies by encouraging quackery in whatever form, colluding with non architects to reap the benefits of our profession while we continue in penury, collude to abuse the laws such as ARCON Acts, Local Content Acts and others designed to check-mate and protect our profession. Architects should show interest in the effects and dangers of non compliance with building laws.

Buildings are by far the largest consumer of energy, it therefore follows that the profession has inadvertently contributed to this present environmental crisis, and architects have the potential, indeed the responsibility to play a leadership role in discovering solutions that

make a positive difference in how we shape our future. The AIA's Public Policy on Sustainability reads thus: "*The creation and operation of the built environment require an investment of the Earth's resources. Architects must be environmentally responsible and advocate for the sustainable use of those resources.*" The Nigerian Architects Association should borrow a leaf from the American Institute of Architects. ■

### Recommendations and Conclusion

What the future holds in store for individual human beings and nations depends largely on the wisdom with which humans use science and technology. That in turn, depends on the character, distribution and effectiveness of the education that people receive.

1. There is need a to broaden and enrich the scope of architectural education through more practical training. Practical training helps young graduates of architecture become competent professionals. The young architect must avail themselves of these opportunities of tutelage, just as young medical doctors acquire practical knowledge during the period of internship (housemanship).
2. The state and the Local Government Areas Development Control Department should be made multi-disciplinary in line with Urban and Regional Planning Act of 1992. This will lead to employment of more architects in the civil service.
3. There is an urgent need to domesticate the National Building Code; and enforce extant laws such as the ARCON Act and Urban and Regional Planning Acts to protect the profession and the built environment.
4. The general public must be educated about the architecture profession, because

an enlightened public is essential to the future growth of profession.

5. It has become imperative for the architect to re-establish the privileges, duties and rights of an architect in the community. This is very necessary as the general public do not understand the role of the architects in order to regain their position in the society.

In conclusion, since the study of architecture is so vast in extent, and enriched as it is with many different kinds of learning, this paper opines that no one have no right to profess themselves architects hastily, without acquiring the requisite professional knowledge and training of many arts and science, to reach the heights of architecture.

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