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RELEVANCE OF REAL ESTATE EDUCATION TO PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Attempts to define a common body of knowledge for real estate education have generated a lot of debate in recent years. Some people see estate management as an academic discipline, while others see it as an environmental discipline. This study therefore seeks to research into complaints over the quality of estate management graduates being sent into the labour market yearly, the shortfalls of the current curriculum and effectiveness of the current teaching techniques. The target population was the stakeholders comprising practicing estate surveyors, lecturers and final year students in the Department of Estate Management of three federal tertiary institutions. Two sets of questionnaires were administered in addition to in-depth interviews. The study found out that young graduates of estate management are deficient in valuation, agency, feasibility and viability appraisal, and property management. The study recommended the computer based teaching technique and a review of academic curriculum every four years.

1. Introduction

Real estate education has a big role to play in the production of professionals to meet the standard of what the society demands. The difficulty attached to the establishment of a common body of knowledge on real estate education has created a lot of controversies. Rabianski and Black (1999) noted that questions have been raised by professionals as to the relevance and effectiveness of the current undergraduate curriculum to the practice of estate management in USA and hence they are of the opinion that a lot could still be done to further improve the effectiveness of the current curriculum. Since knowledge comes about through both textual material and experience, comprehension and understanding are strengthened when students share their ideas and respond to colleagues' reactions. Many practicing estate surveyors, according to Akomolede (2007) in Lagos, are of the opinion that:

(i) young graduates are ill equipped for the industry especially in these days of globalization.

- (ii) Many people feel that the problem is with the current curriculum, some blame it on the methods of teaching while others see the problem as a greater complex issue.
- (iii) Many people are advocating a major shift in traditional curriculum development towards industry based activities.

2. Problem Statement

Manning and Roular (2001) argue constituent needs should be the driving force to guide the development of real property curricula. They also pointed out that real estate academic programs in the United States are often housed in the business schools and most often focused on finance and investment. Real estate programs in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand focused on built environment, which is a broader program that encompasses physical as well as financial concepts and are housed outside the business schools. Schulte, Schulte-Daxbox, Holzmann and Wiffler (2005) however see real estate as a multi disciplinary field. Further to these, programs in Europe center on the physical aspects of real estate (construction technology and engineering). Real estate profession in the U.S., on the other hand, include brokerage, asset management , property management, construction, planning laws, investment, finance, government regulation, forestry and natural resources, architecture, housing policy and numerous other jobs relating to the consumption of space over time. However, in Nigeria, the profession encompasses feasibility and viability appraisers, valuation, property management, agency, development and planning. From the foregoing, one is tempted to conclude that there is a lack of consensus about the boundaries of real estate as a discipline. It can be assumed to be an ill defined mutation that steals its identity from other disciplines such as finance and management that have well defined paradigms focusing research efforts and creating the desirable boundaries that give an academic/professional field its shape and substance. However, for real estate is to continue thriving long-term as a legitimate area of business school study, a strong curriculum that enhances students' ability to compete and succeed in the marketplace is a necessity.

Hakfoort, Berkhout and Manshanden (2003) were of the opinion that instructors adopt and teach only the materials in the currently available textbooks or outside assignments. They pointed out that the lecture-discussion model in which students may or may not become involved in the learning process and has a "limited ability to confront reality". If this could be the situation then what is the faith of the undergraduates majoring in real estate in higher institutions? Will they be prepared for the employers who want their new recruits to be able to "hit the ground running" while the market place wants technically proficient technologically trained and "socially" adept real estate entrepreneurs? The question that readily comes to mind is – How should Estate Management be taught in Schools?

3. Theoretical Framework

The possibility of expressing oneself actively in writing is a potent mode of learning. Technology is having a dramatic effect on colleges and universities, producing what may be the most challenging period in the history of higher education. One manifestation of the convergence of technology and education is distributed learning. *Distance* learning is a subset of distributed learning focusing on students who may be separated in time and space

from their peers and the instructor. Distributed learning can occur either on or off campus, providing students with greater flexibility and eliminating time as a barrier to learning. A common feature of both distance and distributed learning is technology. Distance education and on-campus instruction are converging, with online delivery systems and approaches being employed for distant, commuting, and residential students. Distributed learning extends the opportunities for interaction between faculty and student, incorporating simulations and visualizations, as well as collaborative learning. Distributed learning environments may augment traditional instruction through reinforcement—by providing the opportunity to explore a subject in much greater depth, allowing learners to study the material on their own time, or to gain additional experience outside of the defined classroom times or homework assignments. In distributed learning, the learning experience is no longer bounded by the length of the class session.

Distance learning is a subset of distributed learning. It focuses on students who may be separated in time and space from their peers and the instructor and can occur either on or off campus, providing students with greater flexibility and eliminating time as a barrier to learning. Distributed learning is much more than an online substitute for lectures rather it extends the opportunities for interaction between faculty and student, incorporating simulations and visualizations, as well as collaborative learning. Asynchronous learning allows all to speak at the same time. However, articulating oneself, which is an important mode of learning to which access is not limited as it is in a traditional seminar characterized by turn taking, is absent in asynchronous learning.

According to Frand (2001), new technology affords exciting opportunities for more effective learning and offers the prospect of reaching more learners. The web is seen by many as a transformative technology for learning. He identified attributes reflecting values and behaviors that make up “the information age mindset” in the belief that reality is no longer real and doing is more important than knowing. He also noted that trial-and-error or experimentation is preferable to logic with multi-tasking being considered as a way of life. The information age mindset prefers typing to handwriting with a zero tolerance for delays thereby blurring the lines between consumer and creator. Frand (2001) observed that although earlier scholars experienced formal learning in an authority-based, lecture-oriented environment, but now with incredible amounts of information available on the web, learning through discovery is becoming preminent. The web holds a number of implications for learning environments as well as for the type of students we are educating as an exploratory tool to access a plethora of information and resources; offers e-learners a comprehensive learning experience, from synchronous learning to threaded discussions to self-paced study. It captivates learners by enabling creative approaches to learning that foster collaboration and a sense of community while it is easy to use not only for learners, but for learning providers as well.

Talley (2001) was of the opinion that there is a general consensus that the use of the Internet in teaching economics can yield potential benefits to student learning and attitude. Coates and Humphreys (2001) observed that “cyber economics courses offered by academic units are substitutes for classroom-based courses” that guaranteed access to the students while immediate feedback Internet-based writing assignments and research force students to apply their critical thinking skills. He asserted that it enables students to do their course work

at any time during the day that was convenient for them thereby allowing serious students to work full-time and participate in extra curricular activities during the summer. The Internet also lets the student take responsibility for their learning. The statement above is supported by examples of flexible lecture delivery techniques as in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of Flexible Delivery

Delivery Technique	Advantages	Disadvantages
Print	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No special equipment required Wide range of versatile and flexible teaching and learning strategies. 2. Serves the needs of a wide range of learners, eg overseas, on/off-campus, second-language students 3. High level of learner independence 4. Economical option in terms of development and production 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited in the level and forms of interaction with teacher and other students 2. May only be used to present information 3. Often more effective when used in conjunction with other media and communication technologies 4. Requires publishing resources
Face-to-face instruction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enables variety of stimulating and informative methods 2. Presenter can stimulate and enthuse 3. Economical 4. Interactive 5. Enables questioning techniques 6. Enables students to clarify information and interact with each other 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Restricts students to being in a particular place, at a particular time Important information can be missed 2. Depends heavily on the skills of the teacher 3. Can be a problem for people whose first language is not English 4. Intensive note-taking may dominate the experience
Broadcast or Narrowcast Television/radio simul-casting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can be transmitted widely or specifically to a range of audiences 2. Instruction can be dynamic and stimulating. 3. Can be recorded and replayed at learner's convenience 4. Can utilize different instructional formats 5. Widely used as high literacy of the medium 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited interactivity 2. High expenses in the development of programs 3. Public nature of the medium may limit the format, style and specificity of content 4. Transmission costs may be high 5. Learners expect high quality television production
Computer Networks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time and location independent. 2. Provides learners with high degree of autonomy. 3. Can include a high level of interactivity. 4. Simultaneous use - many users on a range of computers. 5. Efficient and timely. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Users need a degree of computer literacy. 2. Poor quality telephone lines mean it cannot be used reliably in many locations. 3. Extended system use can become expensive. 4. Difficult to control the forms of use and communication.

	<p>6. Rapid and reliable.</p> <p>7. Can be used to broadcast to multiple users or targeted to specific learners or groups.</p> <p>8. Formal and informal networking allowed.</p> <p>9. Reduced sense of isolation, compared with print and video.</p>	<p>5. Issues such as security and privacy are a problem.</p>
Teleconferencing (audio, video, satellite)	<p>1. Shares advantages of television but adds interactivity</p> <p>2. Allows for questions, feedback, transmitting information, clarification</p> <p>3. Less isolation than one-way TV</p> <p>4. Allows teacher to respond to visual/auditory cues</p> <p>5. Enables conventional teaching to be delivered at distance</p>	<p>1. Can be difficult to establish infrastructure.</p> <p>2. Level of learner independence drops with instantaneous delivery and viewing</p> <p>3. The more people participating, the more confusing and less interactive it could become.</p>
Computer Based Learning - interactive multimedia	<p>1. Able to deliver an instructional program that is time and location independent</p> <p>2. High levels of interactivity and learner independence</p> <p>3. Dynamic learning environment</p> <p>4. Facilitates problem-based learning</p> <p>5. Can be tailored to individual needs</p> <p>6. Can include in-built assessment and feedback</p> <p>7. Suits a range of learning styles</p> <p>8. Potential to improve with new developments</p>	<p>1. Learners need access to appropriate computer technology.</p> <p>2. Expensive to produce</p> <p>3. Can be quite costly to alter</p> <p>4. Current computer systems can quickly become obsolete.</p> <p>5. Is more effective for students who already have some background knowledge</p> <p>6. "Naive" students may flounder.</p> <p>7. Students who need a lot of structure and guidance find simulations confusing.</p>
Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL)	<p>1. Enhances team performance</p> <p>2. Facilitates collective activities</p> <p>Mentoring capacity (especially over distance)</p> <p>3. Social - motivating, reinforces learning</p> <p>4. Prepares students for similar technology in business environment</p> <p>5. Contributions from experts</p> <p>6. General advantages of computer networks apply</p>	<p>1. Can be difficult to create a sense of community among a dispersed group</p> <p>2. People may prefer face-to-face interaction</p> <p>3. Requires people to have good group work skills</p> <p>4. General disadvantages of computer networks apply</p>

Source: Adapted from <mailto:huber@library.ucsb.edu>. June 2, 1997

4. Literature Review

Black and Rabianski (2003), in an attempt at defining a body of knowledge in real estate, surveyed 376 individuals around the world with the use of two sets of open ended mailed questionnaire to the international membership section of various associations, asking the respondent to list the twenty four topics they considered important for the real estate education and professional practice in the real estate industry. He realized through the study that there appears to be no clear cut consensus on the boundary lines of the discipline, either academic or professional. Hakfoort, Berkhout and Manshanden (2003) chronicled a two-year commitment made by the board of directors of the American Real Estate Society (ARES) to study the current state of the body of knowledge for real estate. He noted that the majority of academic real estate research is said to be out of touch with the reality of the market place, and in most cases in conflict with what those in industry truly find useful but that the definition of the real estate body of knowledge has been based on opinions of authors rather than survey research. Epley (1996) was in agreement with Weeks and Finch (2003).that at the graduate level, the course description, text, course assignments, and qualifications of instructors varied widely at the schools offering a terminal degree while the field examination questions revealed a significant difference in emphasis.

Schulte, Schulte-Daxbox, Holzmann and Wiffler (2005) published a review of real estate education and technology with some reference to technological changes in the classroom and the use of Internet information, mainly for practitioners. In the field of finance, articles concerning financial information were published on the web where real estate was treated as one aspect of available information. Also were some real estate information sources in their review. The advent of the Internet and the expansion of the number of websites pertaining to real estate have improved the ability of instructors to relate class material in real estate principles to the “real world”.

Redman (2001) was of the opinion that students tended to enjoy and assimilate information from the Internet more easily than from other sources. The web gives undergraduates a “hands-on” method of learning about the price, mortgage rate, valuation and location-related aspects of real estate that were once limited to textbook coverage or actual practical experience.

Black, Carn, Diaz, Rabianski (1996) noted that some basic skills and knowledge, such as negotiation skills, information gathering and processing, management of people and processes, communication, problem solving and knowledge about market evaluation and business environment, required of an estate surveyor are, in most cases, not learnt in school. Ghyoot (2000) however pointed out that issues like course design, teaching methodology and delivery mechanism have received less attention than should have been in literature. Course structure, content selection, presentation methods and evaluation criteria deserves more attention. Ghyoot (2000) went further to state that the Colleges of Business at Arizona State University in the USA learned from surveys that graduates’ knowledge was acceptable, but their skill were not. Writing has become a very important aspect of real estate that it becomes imperative that it is introduced in the curriculum. Rent demand notices, offer letters, real estate development proposals, are going to be a vital part of the profession. It can then be concluded that modification of an undergraduate course to incorporate the philosophy of

writing across the curriculum will help ensure the course writing requirements support the course's overall content objectives.

Researchers such as Wolverton and Wolverton (2003) noted that the asynchronous method allows the students to access stored educational material on demand. Born (2003) noted that distributed learning computer assisted, web-based resources might include visuals, well-organized prints, vicarious and virtual experiences, and applications to real-life situations. Used to its potential, it facilitates student learning. Self-learning implies that the learner assumes responsibility for specifying individual learning needs, goals and outcomes, planning and organizing the learning task, evaluating its worth, and constructing meaning from it. Wolverton and Wolverton (2003) reported that students learn more with the asynchronous and the distributed lecture delivery formats than the traditional delivery method. In the Washington State Department of Licensing, Real Estate Education Course Catalogue (January 2006) identified Computer Based Training, Live Lecture, Internet-based Instruction and Internet as the major teaching techniques.

In Nigeria, the real estate education in the three Institutions studied is patterned after each other in the areas of the courses offered, course duration, lecture delivery techniques and students exposure to real estate practice through a two- and six-month industrial training programme. At both the graduate and post-graduate levels, the course description, course assignments, qualifications of instructors and the field examination questions were tailored after one another. A cross fertilization of lecturers' ideas are vigorously pursued by Universities through regular consideration and acceptance of lecturers on sabbatical leave annually. Nigerian undergraduates are more than ever computer literate and the use of the Internet has exposed them to real estate happenings in the world.

5. Methodology

For the purpose of this research, a two-step approach to the study was adopted. Questionnaires were administered on estate management students and lecturers to the three levels of stake holders in the real estate education and practice sectors, using cluster sampling method.

- (a). Ten lecturers each involved in teaching estate management students were randomly selected in three federal tertiary institutions of Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Lagos and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The choice of the three universities was because they are the pioneering institutions producing the bulk of estate management students over the years. All other institutions offering estate management as a discipline took a cue from them.
- (b). Three estate surveyors in each of ten estate surveying firms in Ikeja, Lagos State were selected because Ikeja is the seat of Lagos State government and a major real estate business center in Lagos mainland.
- (c). Ten final year estate management students from each of the three tertiary institutions were selected. These set of students had undergone a six-month student industrial experience thus placing them at an advantage to appreciate the real estate business, its challenges and academic requirements.

The practicing estate surveyors were divided into two categories. The first sample frame were estate surveyors who have their own firms while the second sample frame were estate surveyors that have been in practice for over ten years. The choice of these frames was to establish the groups' opinion according to their level of understanding of the profession and their opinion on the body of knowledge.

6. Findings

The method by which information is imparted into students goes a long way in their assimilation and eventual practice in later years. The study has identified six course- delivery techniques from the literature review and these were presented for ranking by all stakeholders to rank in order of their preferences through the questionnaire. Analysis of the result obtained is contained in Table 2.

Table 2: Opinion on Lecture Delivery Techniques

Lecture Delivery Techniques	Stake Holders			Total	Ranking
	Rankings				
	Lecturers	Practicing Estate Surveyors & Valuers	Final Year Students		
Asynchronous argumentation	1	6	2	9	3
Distributed Learning	4	5	5	14	1
Live Lecture	6	4	1	11	2
Computer based	2	1	4	7	4
Internet based	3	2	4	9	3
Traditional Lecture	5	3	6	14	1

Source: Field Survey, 2006

The result of the analysis of study, s contained in Table 2 showed that all stakeholders were aware of all teaching techniques available in the world. This can therefore be taken as meaning that real estate education in Nigeria is in line with what obtains in other advanced countries. There were variations of opinions on the choice of lecture delivery techniques among the stakeholders but an overview showed that the traditional lecture and distributed learning approach were considered as better than live lecture followed by internet based and asynchronous argumentation delivery techniques. Computer based and internet based course delivery techniques allow instructions to be accessible at times outside scheduled class meetings as discovered from the literature review. This may account for the Lecturers shift to asynchronous augmentation lecture delivery technique. However, practicing Estate Surveyors and Valuers together with undergraduates opted for computer based, internet based and traditional course delivery techniques.

All stakeholders acknowledge the relevance of both computer based and internet based course delivery techniques as relevant. This is in line with Redman (2001) who is of the opinion that students tend to enjoy and assimilate information from the Internet more easily than from other sources. This is as a result of the enormous growth of computer-based education in recent years, primarily due to advances in key technologies such as telecommunications, computer technology, graphical user interfaces and the Internet. Also the computer literacy level is just beginning to increase in Nigeria thus it would take time before this can begin to be put to use in the country.

The study accumulated nine (9) anticipated performance enhancement courses from the literature review. Lecturers and practicing estate surveyors and valuers were requested to rank these courses in order of importance. The analysis of data obtained is as contained in Table 3.

Table 3: Anticipated Performance Enhancement Course Requirements

Additional Courses	Stake Holders		Total	Ranking
	Lecturer's Ranking	Practicing Estate Surveyors & Valuers		
Negotiation Skills	2	2	4	3
Information Processing	1	1	2	1
Communication	3	4	7	5
Problem Solving	5	3	8	6
Marketing	6	1	7	5
Computer	1	2	3	2
Report Writing	2	3	5	4
Use of English	4	4	8	6
Enterprise Remedial Skills	7	5	12	7

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Result of the study showed that both Lecturers and Practicing Estate Surveyors & Valuers were unanimous on the need for additional courses in information processing, computer, negotiation skills and report writing in order of importance.

6. Summary and Conclusion

The world is a global village hence real estate education and practice in Nigeria must be such that can cross regional and national boundaries. In line with this assertion, the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers need to fine tune real estate practice in line with international practices. Nigerian Universities should be provided with and ensure a 24 hour computer based and internet services that would allow instructions from lecturers and the

institutions to be accessible at times outside scheduled class meetings. At the same time, lecturers should be encouraged to put their lectures on the internet for students to view as a continuous way of enhancing their performance.

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