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# BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: LESSONS FROM ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STUDIO CULTURE

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## Abstract

The national policy on education in Nigeria has its cardinal objective to promote the acquisition of appropriate creative skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society. In most recent times the Nigeria educational system and governance are both at cross-road by contrast to what are obtained in developed nations of the world. Predicated on this basis that, leadership potentials can be activated and built through a systematic-induction process inherent in architectural design studio culture model (learning-by-doing, LBDM), and capable of engendering sustainable development across all fields of human endeavour, including governance. It employed mainly a feedback-mechanism based on the design studio process instruction model. The study drew heavily on the ethical values of this model to justify its potentials in enhancing leadership capacity building in Nigeria. The results revealed the values of optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation while hinged on core factors of dynamism, teamwork, specification, creativity, intelligence and innovation that are at the heart of sustainable development.

**Key words:** Governance, Learning-by-doing (LBDM), Architectural design studio and Sustainable development

## Introduction

Nigeria is still uncertain about the way out of prevailing educational and governance abyss. In other words, her destination is still unknown. The Nigerian citizenry had in recent times apportioned blame on the woes of Nigeria, and in particular that of the educational sector, to the many years of military rule. There is the common notion that the military neglected the universities because of their assumed opposition to military rule. But even with the re-emergence of civil rule the nation's educational institutions are still in shambles today, with university Teachers and other government public workers still not being paid on time. This act of misrule had rocked the societal boat by labor unrests prompted by nonpayment of salaries, students' riots, among other factors.

This study attempted drawing lessons from architectural design studio culture in order to achieve leadership capacity building for sustainable governance, with a view to: (i) bring out the ethical values at the nexus of architectural design studio and governance (ii) bring out the benefits that can be derived from the Learning-by-Doing (LBDM) instruction model that is capable of impacting on leadership and (iii) draw useful lessons from the architectural design studio culture of creativity to enhance leadership capacity building in Nigeria governance.

With facts, judgment and understanding of the issues facing the nation, the paper argues that the sustainable governance of Nigeria as a dynamic society will depend on the health of her educational institutions, and how well the ethical values of our education are incorporated to the nucleus of governance. The specificity here is the design studio aspect of architectural education curriculum.

The objective of this study epitomized the state of education and governance in Nigeria as a National-health issue. It also characterized a model of architectural design studio culture as learning-by-doing (LBDM) module, revealing its values and code of etiquette, as applicable to sustainable governance. This is not to force the studio culture on National governance system, but to propose its commitment, diligence, and civic engagement culture for sustainable governance (development). In this sense, the 'development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Originally, the culture of architectural design process has in its service rendition to meet users' needs.

#### **CONCLUSION** (Implications for sustainable governance practice)

For as many that shared in the culture of the LBDM, dynamism and creativity are the twin key watchwords. Societal issues are not always static but dynamic; therefore leadership capacity should be developed via educational channels either in school or in governance institutions. For a dynamic societal architect (or would be leaders), he ought to be an educated man so as to leave a more lasting remembrance in his treatises. Secondly, he must have knowledge of drawing (a sense of imagination), so that he can readily make sketches along the flow line of inspiration to show the appearance of the work he proposes. Creativity requirements in this regard, presupposes the synthesis of imagination and engage the analytic mind to work out plans by life applicable Geometry. Geometry, also, is of much benefit in architecture of governance, and in particular, it teaches us the use of the rule and compasses, by which especially we acquire readiness in making plans for buildings in their grounds, and rightly apply the square, the level and the plummet. A dynamically creative society is known in her architecture of governance dealing with tangible objects- the leaders, society, their culture and environment. Geometry, in societal architecture also explains societal optics, because a piece of architecture, by principle gets day lighting from fixed quarters of the sky, so also the society needs maximum up-to-date illumination from society leaders possible through their feed-back mechanism by updating them with prevailing issues, educate them with 'what', 'how', where, and when of their resources; not being passive in self-assuming. The act of being mute on critically sensitive issues can plunge the leaders, the citizens and the environment (society) into an unnecessary *chaotic state*. But creatively dynamic abilities, like brainstorming, peer review, one-on-one interactions through logistics and strategic sampling (random or specific) of opinion from the societal perspectives can help to govern well. In other words, society by this methodical resolution approach will experience creatively sustainable governance. Sustainable governance entails deliberate and conscious engagement in teamwork facilitated by corporate leaders by strategic involvement of citizens in the landscape of governance. The intention is not to bring everyone physically to the corridors of power but incorporating their interest in the agenda, policy making and execution.

It also submits that, experiencing the LBDM process as a way of finding and being in flow, by society leaders (whether in politics, business, education e.t.c) as students enrolled in the simile of architectural design studio, would be better positioned to transfer their wealth of knowledge across a wide range of challenging situations; In higher institutions of learning, governance institutes, public offices, companies, workplaces, and other leadership positions. The language-in-use of the participants about LBDM challenge us to look at the transfer of knowledge not just in terms of transfer of specific knowledge to different problems or tasks but life-applicable terms (pragmatic) of transfer processes to different work and social life situations.

Another practical implication of this understanding is that the LBDM process may help to control and develop and establish Leaders' emotional intelligence. Dealing with the emotion of anxiety that arises from confusion is part of emotional intelligence. Goleman (1996, pp. 43-44) considers emotional intelligence to have five dimensions namely: knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating one self, recognising emotion in others and handling relationships. LBDM learners (society leaders) can develop their emotional intelligence by not getting caught up in the anxiety or depression that can be part of confusion or the flatness of boredom but being aware of these negative feelings, and moving beyond them to use their awareness of emotions to help them in their learning and to enter flow (De Mello 1990; Goleman 1996).

Developing this type of emotional intelligence will help LBDM students (leaders) to face other challenging, unusually new, ever changing, demanding and confusing situations. Therefore, this paper suggested important

factors that should be built into the LBDM training process of our National governance system to foster leaders' capacity building and creativity. These include:

the use of large problems rather than the smaller two to three week long problems more commonly used in LBDM

democratic social relations

the LBDM process guide used as a reference rather than a straightjacket exercise

freedom and encouragement to define the parameters of learning and work in different media

allocated time for the team to reflect on the LBDM process

Leaders' induction and staff development programmes introducing the concept of finding and being in flow.

The benefits of developing leaders capacity and creativity include: "the undeniable increase in the rate of change or dynamics in educational curriculum and governance", the need to "enrich the future instead of impoverishing it" in relation to rapid globalisation and the importance of working at the interface of disciplines in the current climate of increased specialisation of knowledge" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2006, p. xiix).

The argument is that the potential of the LBDM training process to foster the building capacity and creativity of leaders and society has not been realised in many disciplines including education, and politics per governance. In this context there is a need to further research on the development of citizens and leaders' building capacity and creativity through learning-by-doing model (problem-based) processes in different university, Governance institute, policy and strategic institute programmes. Also inquisitively good for research are the specific factors such as enhancers and inhibitors of the development of creativity through the problem-based learning process in a range of disciplines.

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