

Professional training of real estate students: A study of academic curricula of three Universities in Nigeria

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The future of any profession is dependent on the students being trained to become members of the profession. Professional education is therefore often dictated by the educational curriculum of institutions. The Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) therefore stipulates the courses that must be taught in programmes based on specifications of professional bodies. Practitioners however often question the adequacy of this education. The adequacy of professional education of real estate students in the curricula of three Universities in South-West Nigeria is assessed using the standards set by Nigerian Universities Commission and the Nigerian Institute of Estate Valuers and Surveyors (NIESV). The results revealed aspects of professional education that are not yet addressed in the curricula of real estate students in the Universities investigated. A review of the curricula is recommended.

Keywords: Estate Management students, Nigeria, Professional training, NUC, NIESV

INTRODUCTION

Real Estate studies which is usually undertaken under the academic and professional discipline of estate management has been part of Nigerian tertiary education for over fifty years. During this period, the discipline has gone through a number of experiences. At various times and in different institutions, estate management was domiciled in such fields as engineering and technology, business administration and entrepreneurial development until it finally settled where it really belonged in the field of built environment studies (Ashaolu, 2012). Similar to what obtains in other built environment disciplines such as architecture and building technology, estate management draws extensively from the humanities, social sciences, business administration, science and technology. The eclectic approach to estate management education tends to create difficulties regarding the core area of competence of the real estate practitioner.

The Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers identified twenty areas representing the scope of professional services rendered by estate surveyors and valuers (NIESV, 2014). Accordingly, the core area of competence of the estate surveyor is valuation of landed property as well as that of plants, equipment and machinery (PEM) even though the latter has almost been taken over by the engineering profession. Other areas of competence include estate agency, feasibility and viability appraisal as well as property management. In order for the estate surveyor to perform credibility, a high degree of professionalism is required given the challenges confronting the real estate profession in Nigeria. Such challenges include unethical practices, contentious valuations, general practitioner syndrome, invasion of the profession by unqualified people, unfavourable government regulations as well as low level of ICT adoption and use (Oni and Adebayo, 2012; Oloyede, Ayedun and Ajibola, 2011; Kakulu, 2008).

Amidst the challenges, a number of authors have called for the repositioning of the profession through appropriate curriculum re-engineering. Ashen and Gambo (2012), underscored the value of inculcating the virtues of integrity, discipline and high ethical behavior. Kakulu (2008) elucidated on the desirability of acquiring relevant ICT knowledge especially in the area of automated land information systems. Oladokun (2012) advocated the overhaul of university/polytechnic curriculum to incorporate business and accounting knowledge in order to prepare real estate practitioners for corporate real estate management (CREM). Ashaolu (2012) advocated deeper development of the core area of competence – valuation given the spate of complaints regarding deficiencies in valuation services of estate surveyors.

The above point to the importance of curriculum in the training of real estate students..The purpose is to produce real estate practitioners who would be relevant to their environment. In the light of increasing criticism of the estate surveyors' services, there is need to examine the curriculum used in the training of real estate students with particular reference to aspects of the curriculum dealing with professional practice. Specifically, courses that target the professional integrity as well as technical skills are examined. The study is therefore aimed at investigating the professional practice content of real estate curriculum using three Nigerian universities as case studies. The study sought to provide answers to the following questions: which areas were stipulated by regulating bodies in the training of Estate Management student? How have these areas been addressed by the Estate Management Departments under study? Which areas have not been adequately addressed?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum is at the core of education at all levels as it acts as the vehicle through which the educational expectation of society is translated into reality (Alade, 2011). In this respect, curriculum applies to formal educational settings where learning is guided in content and structure and regulated by time. According to Omidiji (2011), curriculum can be understood as a body of knowledge to be transmitted to the learner, expected outcome of the transmission on the learner, process of transmitting the knowledge as well as application of the skills acquired. In summation of the above, Alade (2005) defined curriculum as “*a programme of education prepared for definite group of learners within a time frame in order to achieve the intended behavioural outcomes*”

From the foregoing, a good curriculum should possess a number of characteristics which include contextual relevance and responsiveness to societal needs (Kpee, Oluwuo and Baridum, 2012). In this respect, the structure as well as content of curriculum are also important. Curriculum flexibility both in structure and content is crucial to professional education and training because of the changing demands for professional services in a rapidly urbanizing country such as Nigeria. As observed by Fish (2003), “*curriculum is the public face of a profession's best educational thinking*”. The field of real estate studies as situated within the built environment discipline is vital to the overall development of a society.

In Nigeria, real estate studies started in the year 1957 as a preparatory programme for candidates intending to participate in the intermediate examination of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) of the United Kingdom (Ashaolu, 2012). Even when formal university training in estate management started in 1962, the curriculum was essentially modeled after the RICS curriculum. Today, estate management training in Nigeria has been totally indigenised with a

number of organizations playing key roles. The statutory role of regulating the practice of the profession and setting standards of professional training is vested in the Estate Surveyors and Valuers Registration Board of Nigeria established in 1975 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1975). In addition, the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV) established as a voluntary professional organization in 1969 is recognized as the umbrella organization of all estate surveyors and valuers in Nigeria. Similarly, the National Universities Commission (NUC) is responsible for establishing in consultation with the professional bodies, the benchmark minimum academic standards for all courses studied at university level including estate management (NUC, 2007). Academic and professional accreditations are undertaken by the NUC and the professional body respectively in order to ensure that standards are maintained.

In line with these, the NUC identified certain compulsory courses, which include Introduction to Estate Management, Introduction to Valuation, Principle of Town and Country Planning, Taxation and Rating, Principles of Valuation, Land and Resources and Applied Town Planning. Other compulsory courses include Arbitration and Awards, Property Management, Advanced Valuation, Feasibility and Viability appraisals, Estate and Development Finance, Project Dissertation, Land Economics and Professional Practice. In addition to these, other ancillary courses like General Mathematics, Architectural Graphics and Principles of Economics were also specified.

Notwithstanding the above quality control measures, there have been calls for a total restructuring of the curriculum of estate management in the universities in order to make the profession more relevant to the changing needs of the Nigerian society. In an appraisal of estate management curriculum in Nigerian polytechnics and universities, Falana and Ataguba (2011) observed that the current curriculum is tilted in favour of private sector careers at the expense of public sector career in land administration. It has also been observed that valuation remains the core of estate management practice as attested to by the preponderance of research in the area (Ashaolu, 2012). However, given the challenge posed by valuation both as a core course in the university and as a professional service, which has been attributed to low level of quantitative skill among students, there is need for specialization at the undergraduate level of estate management training (Ashaolu, 2012; Babawale, 2012; Falana and Ataguba, 2011).

The desirability of specialization was tacitly underscored by Oladokun (2012) where the importance of corporate real estate management (CREM) as an emerging sub-discipline in estate management in Nigeria was outlined. Subsequently, the skills required for corporate real estate management in Nigeria were identified in their order of relative importance as financial performance skill, investment in corporate strategy, productivity skill, space efficiency management skill as well as customers and employees' management skill (Oladokun, 2012). The implication of acquiring the skills above is that curriculum of estate management education should be restructured to accommodate business and accounting knowledge. It has also been canvassed that estate management as a discipline should be domiciled in the school of business in order to facilitate the acquisition of the requisite business and accounting skills (Ajayi, 2010).

The idea of specialization and the clamour for same requires proper attention not only in estate management but indeed in all the built environment disciplines in Nigerian universities especially as such specializations are being proposed for undergraduate programmes that are primarily meant to provide the learner with breadth of knowledge of the disciplines in question. However, recent developments in the real estate management sector point to the fact that the general practice syndrome is on the way to extinction. Accordingly, Falana and Ataguba (2011)

proposed four areas of specialization based on the eleven faculties of the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers as follows; property /facilities management, property valuation/management, property development and land administration/management. The above grouping is similar to that adopted by Ashaolu (2012) which indicated five areas of estate management services namely land administration, property consultancy, property brokerage/marketing, property development and property/ facilities management. In all the above, real estate should be seen as the main discipline with several branches or sub-disciplines with each sub-discipline being an area of specialization while recognizing valuation as the flagship of the sub-disciplines

It does appear from the foregoing that emphasis on specialization is predicated on the need for real estate profession to increase the skills base of the practitioners who will be products of the formal school system thereby increasing their market share and providing employment . However, beyond the acquisition of skills, the issues of integrity, trust, ethics and social relevance are equally important. This paper therefore looks at those aspects of the curriculum that helps the practitioner in training to imbibe the virtues of integrity and ethical conduct in the course of training aside from the technical skills that have dominated curriculum discussions.

RESEARCH METHOD

Three out of the six (6) accredited universities offering estate management in south-west Nigeria, were selected for this study. These were the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife and University of Lagos (UNILAG). The three universities selected have the same proprietor – the government of Nigeria; hence operation environments are similar. The curricula were qualitatively analysed with the aim of comparing their content with the core areas identified by both the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) and the Nigerian Institute of Estate Valuers and Surveyors (NIESV).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results as presented in Tables I and II reveal the areas as specified by NUC and NIESV respectively and the courses in the investigated schools which address those areas. Table I suggests that all the core areas as dictated by NUC appear to have been addressed by the curriculum of the Estate Departments in the Universities in the study. Different credit units have however been attached to some of the courses. One of such cases is in Introduction to Estate Management, which University of Lagos Estate Management Department attached four (4) credit units to over two semesters. The course however carried six (6) credit units in the other Universities investigated. A more glaring one is in the case of Land Economics, where the Estate Departments of UNILAG and OAU spread six credit units over three courses. The Estate Department students of FUTA however took the course in seven parts with a total of 15 credit units.

Valuation courses were introduced early enough into the contents of all the schools involved. They covered areas such as building and land valuation. It is clear from Tables I and II that valuation remains the main focus of estate management education in the selected universities. According to Table II, valuation accounted for six courses in each of the universities but the total credit units ranged from 12units in UNILAG to 18units in FUTA. However, plants, equipment

and machinery valuation did not receive prominent attention in the curricula under examination. While OAU offers three courses with a combined credit of 6units, FUTA and UNILAG each offer only one course of 2 credit units. Given the dominance of the engineering profession in plant, equipment and machinery valuation in Nigeria, the response of the curricula to this challenge is rather inadequate.

Other areas of emphasis in the curricula of the three universities include land economics and administration, advisory services on property rights and transfers as well as property management and development. FUTA's emphasis on land resource management is apparent from Table II with a total of seven courses totaling 15 credit units as against three courses of 6units each in UNILAG and OAU. Courses that deal with land economics are taught in all the schools both at lower and higher levels. They bring into lime light land-related issues, for example, land problems, land policies and programmes. In addition, Building Economics was covered in the curricula of all the schools.

The importance of land resource administration as reflected in the curricula appears not to be fully complemented by modern and innovative tools in land administration such as geospatial information technologies. The usefulness of automated land management tool like geographical information systems (GIS) has been aptly enunciated by authors such as Adeoye (2006), Osei, Merem and Twumasi (2006) as well as Kakulu (2008). Similarly, computer and ICT applications in estate management curricula in the studied universities appear to be limited to the NUC minimum standards prescription.

Table II also show that the curricula of Estate Management Departments in the Universities investigated addressed a substantial part of the core competencies expected by NIESV. The area of infrastructure and facilities management however, appear not to have received much attention. This is because none of the course descriptions highlights this as an area to be addressed by any of the Estate Departments investigated. The same was the case with the expected core competences of valuation of oil and gas installations, aviation and navigation installations as well as project analyses and surveying. It would therefore appear that if these aspects are taught in the Estate Management Departments investigated, it might have been at the discretion of lecturers. Estate Management Departments of UNILAG and OAU have courses that address construction project management. There is however no course that addresses this area in the curriculum of FUTA. Auctioneering was not also explicitly addressed in the course contents of UNILAG.

CONCLUSION

The training of professionals in every industry always determine how well they fit into the world of practice. The results of this study have revealed areas where Estate Management Departments of the Universities investigated have to focus on according to the standards set by NUC and NIESV. There is need for Estate Management Departments to carry out regular assessments of their curricula to ascertain if they address current issues in practice. However, the discipline of estate management is very broad in its areas of core competencies; hence the undergraduate curriculum cannot reasonably cover the various areas in depth. There is therefore need for specialization and continuous professional education of the estate management practitioner. The role of curriculum in addition to addressing the core area of valuation should provide enough breadth of knowledge to facilitate specialization and continuous professional education.

Table I: NUC Compulsory Courses and Courses in the Estate Management Departments

Core Areas	University of Lagos		Obafemi Awolowo University		Federal University of Technology, Akure	
	Course	Total Credit Units	Course	Total Credit Units	Course	Total Credit Units
1. Introduction to Estate Management	ESM101(2) ESM102(2)	4	ESM101(3) ESM102(3)	6	ESM101(3) ESM102(3)	6
2. Introduction to Valuation	ESM212(2)	2	ESM201(2) ESM202(2)	4	ESM201(3) ESM202(3)	6
3. Principle of Town and Country Planning	ESM111(2) ESM351(2) ESM352(2)	6	URP104(2) ESM305(2) ESM306(2)	6	URP203(2)	2
4. Taxation and Rating	ESM341(2) ESM342(2)	4	ESM303(2) ESM304(2)	4	ESM307(2) ESM308(2)	4
5. Principles of Valuation	ESM311(2) ESM312(2) ESM411(2)	6	ESM301(2) ESM302(2)	4	ESM301(3) ESM302(3)	6
6. Land and Resources	ESM521(2)	2	URP206(2) ESM503(2) ESM504(2)	6	URP206(2) ESM503(2)	4
7. Applied Town Planning	ESM551(2)	2	ESM511(2) ESM514(2)	4	URP501(2) URP502(2)	4
8. Arbitration and Awards	ESM541(2)	2	ESM307(2) ESM308(2)	4	QSV599(2)	2
9. Property Management	ESM401(3) ESM501(2)	5	ESM401(3) ESM505(2) ESM506(2)	7	ESM403(2) ESM505(2) ESM506(2)	6
10. Advanced Valuation	ESM511(3) ESM512(3)	6	ESM501(3) ESM502(3)	6	ESM501(3) ESM502(3)	6
11. Feasibility and Viability appraisals	ESM531(2) ESM532(2)	4	ESM507(2) ESM508(2)	4	ESM507(3) ESM508(3)	6
12. Estate and Development Finance	ESM461(4)	4	ESM403(4)	4	ESM405(4)	4
13. Project Dissertation	ESM581(3)	3	ESM509(3) ESM510(3)	6	ESM599(6)	6
14. Land Economics	ECN122(2) ESM221(2) ESM222(2)	6	ESM106(2) ESM205(2) ESM206(2)	6	ESM204(2) ESM212(2) ESM305(2) ESM306(2) ESM311(2) ESM313(2) ESM409(2)	14
15. Professional Practice	ESM591(2)	2	ESM512(2)	2	ESM415(2) ESM510(2)	4

Table II: NIESV Areas of Core Competencies and Courses in the Estate Management Departments

Core Areas	University of Lagos		Obafemi Awolowo University		Federal University of Technology, Akure	
	Course	Total Credit Units	Course	Total Credit Units	Course	Total Credit Units
1. Valuation of interests in land and buildings for various purposes: sale, mortgage, insurance, acquisition, probate, stocks and shares, balance sheet, taxation etc.	ESM211(2) ESM212(2) ESM311(2) ESM312(2) ESM511(2) ESM512(2)	12	ESM201(2) ESM202(2) ESM301(2) ESM302(2) ESM501(3) ESM502(3)	14	ESM201(3) ESM202(3) ESM301(3) ESM302(3) ESM501(3) ESM502(3)	18
2. Valuation of plant and machinery, equipment, fixtures and fittings, stock-in-trade, furniture, motor vehicles, engineering installations/ system and infrastructure.	ESM411(2)	2	ESM302(2) ESM515(2) ESM516(2)	6	ESM401(2)	2
3. Valuation of construction projects.	BLD405(2)	2	QTS305(3) QTS306(3)	6	QSV403(3)	3
4. Valuation of oil and gas installation.		0		0		0
5. Valuation of aviation and navigation installations, including aircrafts, ships and vessels.		0		0		0
6. Valuation for compulsory acquisition and compensation purposes.	ESM341(2) ESM342(2) ESM512(2)	6	ESM303(2) ESM304(2)	4	ESM307(2) ESM308(2)	4
7. Feasibility/viability appraisal of planned development/project.	ESM531(2) ESM532(2)	4	ESM508(2) ESM507(2) ESM505(2)	6	ESM507(2) ESM508(2)	4
8. Estate agency – Property sales and leases	ESM501(2) ESM592(2)	4	ESM505(2)	2	ESM415(2)	2
9. Advice on property rights, acquisition and transfer	PPL301(2) PPL302(2) ESM522(2)	6	JPL401(3) JPL402(3) ESM205(2) ESM206(2)	10	ESM303(2) ESM304(2)	4
10. Building maintenance management	ESM305(2) ESM304(2)	4	BLD305(2) BLD306(2)		QSV307(3)	3
11. Project analyses and surveying		0		0		0
12. Property management and development	ESM401(3) ESM501(2) ESM502(2)	7	ESM401(3) ESM505(2) ESM506(2)	7	ESM505(3) ESM506(3)	6
13. Infrastructure and facilities management		0		0		0
14. Land reform, land registration, planning and analysis	ECN122(2) ESM221(2) ESM222(2)	6	ESM106(2) ESM205(2) ESM206(2)	6	ESM204(2) ESM212(2) ESM305(2) ESM306(2) ESM311(2) ESM313(3) ESM409(2)	15
15. Construction/ project management	CIL201(2) BLD308(2)	4	ESM411(2) BLD312(3)	5		0
16. Project finance procurement and syndication	ESM461(4)	4	ESM403(4)	4	ESM405(4)	4
17. Environmental impact survey, analysis and valuation	ESM552(2)	2	ESM513(2)	2	URP502(2)	2
18. Property inventory and Audit	ESM512(2) ESM521(2)	4	ESM503(2) ESM504(2) ESM512(2)	6	ESM503(3) ESM504(3) ESM510(2)	8
19. Asset Management	ESM592(2)	2	ESM512(2)	2	ESM510(2)	2
20. Auctioneering		0	ESM505(2)	2	ESM415(2)	2

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