

THEORETICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL AND STYLISTIC LEANINGS OF ARCHITECT-EDUCATORS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The key distinguishing factors through which renowned architects made their mark is the theoretical and philosophical foundation on which their works stood, and the measure of distinctiveness and consistence in maintaining their style. Outstanding buildings in major cities in Nigeria reflect a variety of architectural expressions. However, there appears to be little to suggest the existence of distinctive and consistent stylistic and philosophical leanings by architects in Nigeria. Architect-educators are at the interface between theory and practice and are thereby in the best position to chart directions. They also constitute a major influence on their students who are the future architects. It is in this light that this study examines the theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leanings of architect-educators in Nigeria's schools of architecture. Questionnaires were administered at three schools of architecture. The data was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis and non-parametric tests. The result shows that only a few of the respondents demonstrated strong philosophical stance. Also, there was no significant difference in theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leaning between architects from the three surveyed schools. This calls for more dialogue to set agendas and ensure that architect-educators take their proper place in determining the character of the built environment.

Keywords: Analogy; Architect-educator; Philosophy; Style; Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Architectural theory and philosophy is the foundation of architectural design, and had over the years provided a framework for the discussion of trends and characteristics of architecture. In the design process, theoretical lineage guided the designers' treatment of building elements, and has been the key determinant of individuals' architectural style. According to Jencks and Kropf (2006) "theory is the engine of architecture, and like the concetto in the sixteenth century; the machine which invents new types of buildings, new responses to our cities" (p.4). Over five decades since the founding of the first school of architecture in Nigeria, and the Nigeria Institute of Architects (NIA), architectural practice in Nigeria can no longer be said to be at its infancy. The works of Nigerian architects are highly visible in the architectural landmarks and monuments spotting various cities in Nigeria and beyond. However, while many architects from

various parts of the world have gained international recognition and accolade because of their theoretical contributions, philosophical stance and outstanding architectural styles, very little is known about Nigerian architects. This apparent obscurity may be because of absolute focus on practice matters, with little or no attention being given to specialties such as architectural theory and criticism (Nkwogu, 2001). Other reasons include apparent lack of full grasp of the precepts of modern architecture in Nigeria evident in the variety of stylistic expressions (Qurix, 2007). An understanding of the works of Nigerian architects can only be fully achieved through the determination of the theories and philosophies behind them. As Breitschmid (2012) put it "most major figures who have shaped the course of architecture can be described as 'theoreticians' who build....what distinguishes these architects from their architect colleagues of lesser status is the philosophical apparatus they have apprehended and made subject to their disposition" (p. 4).

This paper argues that architect educators by their position should be architectural theoreticians who build. This places them in the best position to provide theoretical and philosophical direction for architectural

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practice in Nigeria, and for the future architects who they are called to form. Failing in this may be regarded as a failure in their calling. It is in this light that this study was undertaken to determine the path, which architect-educators in Nigeria are charting. This is of great importance in the face of the long-standing discourse on creating an identity for Nigerian architecture. Moves in this direction will enable Nigerian architects contribute to the global heritage of architectural theory. Jormmakka (2005) submitted that a building should be defined as architecture only if it thematizes one or more of its aspects to a degree that it contributes to an architectural discourse.

The paper addressed to answer the following questions:

- (i) What are the theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leanings of architect-educators in Nigerian Universities?
- (ii) Are there significant differences in theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leanings of architect-educators in different Universities?

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This study aims at examining the theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leanings of architect-educators in Nigerian universities. The objectives are:

- (i) To determine the level of importance architect-educators attached to architectural theory and philosophy;
- (ii) To determine the theoretical, philosophical and stylistic groups that individual architect-educators place themselves into;
- (iii) To determine the extent to which the works of architect-educators were guided by theories, philosophy, manifestoes and analogies.
- (iv) To compare the theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leanings of architect-educators in selected Nigerian Universities.

ARCHITECTURAL THEORY, PHILOSOPHY AND STYLE

Theory consists of a set of properly argued ideas intended to explain fact or events, or, the principles on which a subject or study is based (Crowther, Kavanagh & Ashby, 1998). Architectural theories consist of the body of knowledge that has been derived from history, interpretation, and the aims and ideas of architecture (Abdulkarim, 2005). Most of such theories are based on analogies. These analogies provide architects the basis for hierarchical organization of the design task. Some of the recurrent analogies in architectural theory include the mathematical analogy, biological analogy, romantic analogy, linguistic analogy, mechanical analogy, problem solving analogy, ad-hocist analogy, pattern language analogy, and, dramatic analogy.

Philosophy on the other hand connotes “a particular set or system of beliefs resulting from the search for knowledge, or a set of beliefs or attitude to life that is a guiding principle for behaviour” (Crowther et al, 1998). An architect’s attitude to design is most visible in the style since style usually creates the first impression of a building and its meaning.

Over the ages architectural theoreticians have fertilized architectural style and expression, engineered the decline of movements, and laid the foundation for new styles. The once canonical Modern Movement and its philosophy gave way to more vibrant and revitalizing styles as a result of consistent attacks on its foundation. Blake (1977) described the masters and followers of Modern movement as unconscious advocates and promoters of ugliness. While Portoghesi (1982) noted that the belief that technological civilization could remove itself from history was an illusion, and further declared that acceptance of the ideology of the Modern Movement resulted in the supremacy of time over place. These arguments were contributory to the decline of the Modern Movement and the dawn of the Post Modern era. Other theoretical and philosophical overtures which exerted great influence on architecture include: Le Corbusier’s *Towards a New Architecture* in 1923, Peter Eisenman’s *Post-Functionalism*, Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, and, Kenneth Frampton’s *Critical Regionalism* (Jencks and Kropf, 2006).

The philosophical stances of a few architects are stated below:

- (i) Adolf Loos described himself as not a designer of plans, facades or sections, but a designer of space. According to him, there was neither a ground floor, upper floor nor a basement. There were merely interconnected spaces, vestibules and terraces (Jencks, 1993);
- (ii) Frank Gehry believes that architecture is an art, thus he approaches each building as a sculptural object, a spatial container, a space with light and air, a response to context and appropriateness of feeling and spirit (About Frank Gehry, 2005; Gehry, 1989);
- (iii) Cesar Pelli believes that the aesthetic qualities of a building should grow from the specific characteristics of each project such as its location, construction technology and purpose (Cesar Pelli and Associates, 2005). His architecture, according to Corsbie (2005), achieves its expression through the building enclosure.

THE POWER OF THE ARCHITECT-EDUCATOR

Architects shape the built environment thereby shaping the society, and architect-educators shape the architect. This implies that architect educators exercise great influence on the structure of our environment. Olotuah (2001) noted that the role of the architect-educator encompasses that of a professional architect and that of an academic. This role puts the architect educator in the best position to propose, postulate, philosophize and propose theories on issues relating to what architecture is, what it should be, and how it should be approached. These ideas are disseminated to the society through writings and presentations, and architectural works. Another means of communicating this is through their other products - the students. Though the traditional master/pupil approach seems to have been jettisoned, the architectural design studio is still under the guidance of the architect-educators who exerts great measure of influence on the approach adopted by students. This means that the architectural philosophies and styles of architect-educators are

Table 1: Respondents’ Demographics.

A: Employer	
ABU	19 (52.8%)
UNIJOS	11 (30.6%)
FUT, Yola	6 (16.7%)
B: Gender	
Male	31 (86.1%)
Female	5 (13.9%)
C: Institution of Study	
ABU	19 (52.8%)
UNN	2 (5.6%)
UNIJOS	10 (27.8%)
UNILAG	1 (2.8%)
ATBU	1 (2.8%)
FUT, Akure	1 (2.80%)
Abroad	2 (5.60%)
D: No of Years as Architect Educator	
0 -10	21 (58.3%)
11 - 20	7 (19.4%)
21 - 30	6 (16.7%)
31 - 40	1 (2.8%)

Table 2: Importance Attached to Architectural Theory and Philosophy by Respondents.

Of No Use	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (5.6%)	20 (55.5%)	14 (38.9%)

probably coalesced into some of the student-architect’s works.

METHOD OF STUDY

Questionnaires were administered on architect-educators in three departments of architecture in Nigerian Universities in 2011. The universities were Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, which has the oldest school of architecture in Nigeria, the University of Jos, a second generation university, and Federal University of Technology, Yola, a third generation university. The questionnaire was largely closed-ended consisting of Likert scale and checklist type questions. The collected data was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis and non-parametric tests by the use of Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS

Demographic Distribution of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents across the three schools of architecture are given below (Table 1 A to D). This includes variables such as the employer (institution where respondent works), gender, institution which respondent graduated from, and number of years as an architect-educator.

Importance Attached to Architectural Theory and Philosophy by Respondents

Data from questionnaires shows that two respondents representing 5.6% were neutral on the importance of architectural theory and philosophy, 20 respondents, representing 55.5% believed that this was important, while 14 respondents, representing 38.9% believed that it was very important (Table 2). On whether respondents’ works were guided by these theories and philosophy, 29 respondents, representing 82.9% were positive, while six respondents, representing 17.1% were negative. This suggests that a high level of importance is attached to theory and philosophy by the respondents (Table 3).

Theoretical and Philosophical Leaning of Respondents

Results shows that majority of respondents (21, representing 65.6%) were inclined towards the problem-solving analogy. Others were inclined towards biological analogy (12.5%), mathematical analogy

Table 3: Whether respondent's works are guided by theory and philosophy.

Respondents' Institution	Yes	No
ABU	15 (83.3%)	3 (16.7%)
UNIJOS	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3%)
FUT, Yola	6 (100%)	0 (0%)
Total	29 (82.9%)	6 (17.1%)

Table 4: Analogy that most Influences Respondents' Works.

Respondents' Institution	Analogy						
	Mathematical analogy	Biological analogy	Linguistic analogy	Mechanical analogy	Problem solving analogy	Adhocist analogy	Pattern language analogy
ABU	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	9 (60%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)
UNIJOS	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	9 (81.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
FUT, Yola	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	3 (9.4%)	4 (12.5%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)	21 (65.6%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)

Table 5: Ideology that most Influences Respondents' Works.

Respondents' Institution	Ideology				
	Modern movement	Post Modernism	New modernism	Post modern regionalism	Green/ Eco/ Sustainable
ABU	3 (18.8%)	2 (12.5%)	1 (6.3%)	2 (12.5%)	8 (50.0%)
UNIJOS	1 (9.1%)	4 (36.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (54.4%)
FUT, Yola	2 (33.3%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (50.0%)
Total	6 (18.2%)	7 (21.2%)	1 (3.0%)	2 (6.1%)	17 (51.5%)

(9.4%), while linguistic, mechanical, ad-hocist and pattern language analogies each accounted for 3,1% (Table 4).

Results also show that the largest number of respondents believed that they were inclined towards the "green styles" (green, eco, sustainable architecture etc.) (Table 5). However this appears not to be adequately applied in their works as suggested by data from the open ended part of the questionnaire (see table 6). According to most of the respondents, their application of these philosophies and ideologies were through their spatial organisation (60%), followed by building form (28.6%).

Test for Significant Difference

One of the objectives of the study, as stated above, was to compare the theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leanings of architect-educators in selected Nigerian Universities. As a result, the study sought to determine whether there are significant differences in theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leanings of architect-educators in different Universities. This was done by

conducting a non-parametric statistical test on the collected data using the Chi-square (χ^2). The test was based on responses on the analogy that most influences respondents' works (Table 4), ideology that most influences respondents' works (Table 5), and respondents' key means of expressing their philosophy in architectural works (Table 7). A value above 0.05 indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. The result showed no significant relationship between respondents from the three universities on the analogy that most influences respondents' works ($p = 0.614$), no significant difference on the ideology that most Influences Respondents' Works ($p = 0.619$), and no significant difference on the key means through which respondents express their philosophy in their architectural works ($p = 0.962$). See Table 8. This suggests a lack of distinguishable philosophical path for individual schools of architecture.

Table 6: Sample of Respondents' Works and design Objectives.

	Key Objective of Design	General Philosophy
Mixed-use building	Maximise space utilisation	Functional proposition of spatial relationships
Motor/ bus terminal	Nil	Design should be attractive and cater for present and future needs
Church	Ease of circulation	Harmony with the environment, sustainability
Bank	Functionality	Nil
Residential	Nil	Rationalising and finding solution
Conference hall	Nil	Spatial design as a function of cultural and psychological needs of users
Office building	Nil	Space organisation and the use of materials
Church	Spatial organisation and scale and proportion	Combination of Brazilian style and Modern movement
Hospital; Church	Nil	Use of form to express architectural content
Open air theatre	Nil	Use of traditional styles in a futuristic manner
Commercial building; Hostel	Nil	Functionality and convenience
Hospital	Nil	Functionality
Governor's lodge	Nil	Architecture is foremost in the recognition of the function in the form...achieving structural integrity
Residential buildings	Nil	Simplicity, beauty and functionality
Hotel; Residential	Nil	Nil
Hostel; office	Simplicity and pragmatism	Architecture is an epitome of human life thus should be subordinate to man not man subordinate to architecture
Hostel; Educational	Sustainability	Functionality comes first
Residential; church	Functionality and beauty	Functional and psychological needs are key and beauty is one of such needs
Residential; Office	Functionality	Design should be realistic and socio-culturally, technologically and economically sustainable
Computer centre; commercial	Basic geometric shapes	Nil
Office; hostel	Nil	Dynamism based on functional needs
Office; Laboratory	Simple modernist;	Varies; generally modernist to postmodernist
Office; church	Nil	Economic use of space
Youth centre; residential	Nil	Nil

Table 7: Respondents' Key Means of Expressing Philosophy in Architectural Works.

Respondents' Institution	Key Means				
	Spatial organisation	Building form	Building elements	Finishes	Landscaping
ABU	11 (57.9%)	5 (26.3%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3%)
UNIJOS	7 (63.3%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
FUT, Yola	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	21 (60%)	10 (28.6%)	2 (5.7%)	1 (2.9%)	1 (2.9%)

Table 8: Pearson Chi-Square Test for Significance.

Items	P-Value
Analogy that most influences respondents' works	.614
Ideology that most influences respondents' works	.619
Respondents' key means of expressing their philosophy in architectural works	.962

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper examined the theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leanings of architect-educators in Nigerian universities. The result shows that most architect-educators recognised the importance of architectural theory and philosophy and believed in their centrality to architectural design; however, these appear not to have translated to design objectives for their architectural works. Also, while most respondents placed themselves under the green movements of architecture (green, eco, and sustainable architecture), there appears to be little reflection of this in their works. Result of statistical tests showed that there was no significant difference in theoretical, philosophical and stylistic leaning between architects from the three surveyed schools. This calls for more dialogue among architect-educators and between schools of architecture. This will set agendas and ensure that architect-educators and schools take their proper place in determining the character of Nigeria's built environment, and even become exporters of ideas and ideals. The paper therefore recommends the following:

- (i) Constitution of a committee to examine the philosophy of all schools of architecture in Nigeria by Association of Architectural Educators in Nigeria (AARCHES);
- (ii) Schools of architecture should ensure that their chosen philosophical leaning should guide their curriculum review and design studio.

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