
PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Construction is a development component as well as an agent of social change. It provides the sinews that the economy requires to create new jobs for the growing labour force, to maintain and strengthen its position in the international market and to meet the growing domestic demands for better living conditions. Another aspect of the industry is its negative impact upon the environment and on the society. Construction activities have led to depletion of scarce national resources, destruction of plants and animal species etc. The paper therefore, discussed the problems of construction industry in Nigeria.

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Among the recommendations was that adequate finance be provided for research and development of local materials so as to conserve the much needed foreign exchange.

Construction according to Agbataekwe (2005) is an age long art, and it involves scientific design. It concerns infrastructural development, which is the pivot for national economic growth. The construction industry covers most aspects of human endeavours including the construction of roads, dams, jetties, irrigations, offices, houses, airports, seaports, power stations, heavy engineering facilities (e.g refineries) and other environmental facilities.

It (construction) stands out vis-à-vis the manufacturing industry. However, every nature of activity of man on this planet - Solid and Semi-Solid, components into another. Construction is synonymous with production. However, production is more embracing than construction. For instance, it entails transformation and fabrication of physical components; we say production of cars, production of mill lamps, touches etc. however, we may not easily say, the production of roads, bridges, schools, homes etc.

Construction according to Okoro (2005), is physical and involves component-to-component manipulation and transformation of materials into another physical unit. It controls the nations Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) and accounts for more than 65% of total capital investment. Therefore, it contributes substantially to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation. It is a vast industry employing millions of workers and offers unlimited opportunities (Agbatakwe, 2005).

Nigeria's construction industry is modeled largely after the British system although since independence, it has taken into consideration, the style of other Western countries notably, Italy, France, Germany, United States of America etc.

Generally, the construction industry is a potent motivator of the national economy providing the driving force necessary for either sustaining a buoyant economy or reviving a depressed economy. Many developed countries have successfully revised their national economies by maintaining high levels of activity in the construction industry (Iroegbu, 2005).

Problems of Construction Industry in Nigeria

From research and experience, the following have been identified as prime factors affecting the construction industry growth in Nigeria, namely:

1. Job security is not always guaranteed in construction industry.
2. There is lack of accurate data of construction industries in Nigeria.
3. There is lack of management skill.
4. In Nigeria, most craftsmen enter the industry through the backdoor (informal training) and learn by practicing.

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5. There is no restriction to entry into the industry in Nigeria, because people get themselves trained and when they qualify, they enter into the industry. In developed nations, there are restrictions to entry.
6. In Nigeria, the construction industry lacks communication method in equipment and management.
7. There exist lack of trust and not much competition among the contractors-although there may be hidden competition.
8. The technology of repair and maintenance of plants and equipment are always lacking because, they are all imported.
9. A total lack of research in methods, equipment and mangement exists.
10. There exists, the weak base of coming together to examine problems and prospects of the industry.
11. We have not progressed in the development and use of equipment.
12. It is most unfortunate that adequate funds have not been provided for construction industry since independence and that is the cause of slow developmental pace in the country today.
13. There is total lack of local materials.
14. In Nigeria, the construction industry has witnessed years of frequent change in government – mainly the military periods, most affected the industry-and the effect is still there till date-especially, on the issue of delay in construction projects.
15. **Construction Industry Professionals:** All over the world, the trend is specialization. That is, it has been recognized worldwide that better performance, higher productivity and cost effectiveness could best be achieved through specialization. People now strive to become experts rather than quacks. This fact is noticeable in all professions that manage various industries of the global economy. The construction industry globally is not an exception; hence, Nigeria should not be an exception.

There are seven (7) statutorily recognized construction industry professionals in Nigeria, namely:

- i. **Architects:** Architects are charged with the responsibilities for architectural design, modeling, supervision, contract administration services of the built environment etc. Its professional body is called –Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA).
- ii. **Builders:** Builders are charged with the responsibilities for building production management. Its professional body is called-Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB).
- iii. **Engineers:** Engineers are charged with the responsibilities for engineering designs, supervision, construction and the like. There are various specific areas like civil (structural), mechanical, electrical, building services, geo-technical etc. Its professional body is called-Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE).

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- iv. **Estate Surveyors:** Estate surveyors are charged with the responsibilities for evaluations, land and property management. Its professional body is called – Nigerian Institute of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV).
- v. **Quantity Surveyors:** Quantity surveyors are charged with the responsibility for construction economics. Its professional body is called-Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS).
- vi. **Surveyors:** Surveyors are charged with the responsibilities for the measurement and survey of land. Its professional body is called – Nigerian Institute of Surveyors (NIS).
- vii. **Town Planners:** Town planners are charged with the responsibilities for orderly, social and economic utilization of land. Its professional body is called-Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP). The above, among others have been identified according to Adindu (1998); Iroegbu (1999); Iroegbu (2005) and Agbalaekwe (2005) as some of the problems associated with construction industry in Nigeria.

Basic Attributes of Construction Industry

A professional construction industry should possess the following attributes in order to be effective:

- a. There should be management science skills and contract administration skills.
- b. There should be communication capabilities, quality management information systems and systems orientation.
- c. Depth of field experience, technical capability and satisfactory completion of projects must always be considered.
- d. There must exist a financial strength.
- e. There should be stability in the industry and government of the nation. Instability in government brings about delay in project delivery.
- f. In the developing nations, in order to meet current and future housing needs, housing should progress at an annual rate of 10 units/1000 inhabitants as compared to at least one (1) unit/1000 inhabitants in developed nations.
- g. It is also important, we know the average demand of housing units per year in Nigeria, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the percentage (%) of GDP from the construction industries, the capital investment in construction and the future housing needs.

Conclusion

Construction industry-through man as an agent of social change, has developed tools and equipment that enhanced the development of housing in general and construction in particular. Efforts should be geared towards reducing problems associated with construction industries. To achieve this therefore, the afore-stated

recommendations and the basic attributes of construction industry which will boast effective and lay sound foundation in construction industry should be adopted.

Recommendations

Based on the identified problems of the construction industry in Nigeria and in addition the basic attributes of construction industry, the following recommendations seems justifiable:

1. Adequate financial support should be given to research and development on local construction materials to conserve the excess foreign currency on imported materials.
2. Specialization with respect to the construction professionals should be the order of the day.
3. In the light of the benefits accruing from the construction industry, government should make efforts to raise its expenditure, as the policy will have a multiplier effect on the rest of the economy.

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