

The Nation Building Code; Key to Sustainable Built Environment. The challenges of implementation and enforcement (A Case Study of Yobe State, Nigeria)

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Abstract

The National Building code, a key to a sustainable built environment, evolved from the planlessness of towns and cities, frequent collapse of buildings, fire infernos, and dearth of referenced designed standards for professionals, influx of non-professionals, use of sub-standard materials, lack of adequate regulations and sanctions against offenders. In view of the deplorable situation of the built environment, in 2021 the Yobe State Government had to step up to enforce compliance with of the town planning regulations in the state. This paper looked at the challenges of implementation, awareness level and strategies for enforcement of compliance with the National building code by professionals and contractors in Nigeria, with Yobe State as a case study. The survey conducted, revealed that with low level of awareness, the level of implementation of the National Building code and relevant building/planning regulations by professionals is low as most of them made no reference to these documents. The level of enforcement is low and ineffective, mostly due to lack of political will on the part of state authorities concerned. All states and local governments should enact legislation to make the code effective, enforceable and offenders sanctioned. The National Building code should be introduced into the school curricular so that it can be offered as a course in faculties/schools of environmental studies so that future professional knowledge would be acquired with the code.

Keyword: *Building Code, Implementation Code, Enforcement, Sustainable Building Code*

Introduction

Before building regulation came into being, construction practice was carried out in the way and manner the contractors were trained. There was no guide for construction practice. Imrie (1999) described building regulations as a technical and valuable neutral activity and part of bureaucratic machinery external to the design process. The national council on housing and urban development deemed it necessary to nurture the process of evolving a national building code to put a stop to incidences of building collapse, fire and high rate of rework/defects in the building industry. Ratified by the Federal government of Nigeria in (Federal republic of Nigeria national building code 2006), the National building code came into existence fifteen years after a draft was prepared by a committee of professionals set up by the government. It is noteworthy, however, that cities such as Lagos and Enugu have building bye-laws developed during the colonial era.

The National building code. (2006) set out the minimum standards on building pre-designs, design, construction and post-construction stages with a view to ensuring quality, safety and proficiency in the building industry.

Aim and Objective of the Paper

The aim of this paper is to examine the awareness level, implementation and enforcement of the national building code with Yobe State as a case study. The objective of the study is:

- To assess the awareness levels of the National building code by the stakeholder in the building industry.
- To determine the factors militating against the implementation and enforcement of the National building code by stakeholders in the construction industry.

Research Methodology

The method selected for this research is the descriptive approach. In the approach a field survey of 40 respondents was conducted. The sample was selected by random sampling of professionals and contractors in the building construction industry. The professionals are architects, builders, engineers, town and regional planners, estate surveyors, quantity surveyors and land surveyors practicing in Yobe State.

A well-structured questionnaire was specifically selected as a research instrument to collect data for this study. 32 questionnaires were returned, representing an overall response rate of 96.2 %. The method of data analysis employed is the descriptive one; also mean score and ranking of some factors were used.

Table 1: Awareness of Respondents of existing building/planning regulations and National Building code.

SN	Type of Building/Planning Regulations Code	Variables	No. of Respondents	% Respondents
	Yobe Town and County Planning regulations 2021	Yes	30	98
		No	2	2
	Urban and Regional Planning laws	Yes	32	100
		No	Nil	0
	National Building Code 2006	Yes	30	88
		No	2	12

Source: Field Survey (2022)

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Results and Discussions

Table 2 shows that 30 or 98% of the respondents are aware of Yobe town and county planning

regulations (2021). 32 or 100% of the respondents are having the awareness of urban and regional planning law while 30 or 98% are aware of the National building code (2006)

Table 2: Utilization of National Building code and Building/Planning regulations, and approval of building drawings before commencement of construction.

Sn	Activity	Variables	Yes/No No. of Respondents	% Respondents
	Utilization of national building code and relevant building/planning regulations.	Yes	8	25
		No	24	75
	Approval of building drawings before commencement of construction.	Yes	12	37.5
		No	20	62.5

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 2. Indicates that 8 or 25% of the respondents use National building code (2006) and planning regulations while 24 or 75% admit not referring to or using them. When constructing buildings. 12 or

375% of the respondents sought for approval of their drawings before embarking on any construction and 20 or 62-5% seek no approval.

Table 3: Visitation of sites by enforcement agents and their effectiveness

Variables	No. of Respondents	% Response
Excellent	0	0
Good	2	6.25
Fair	5	15.6

Source: Field Survey (2009).

Table 3 reveals that only (15.6%) of the respondents claim that enforcement agents visit their site while 27 (84%) said that after approval of the building drawings, agents rarely visit the sites.

Table 4: Rating of the effectiveness of urban and Regional Planning Board Authorities at enforcing National Building code and laws governing construction activities in Yobe State.

Sn	Factor Category	Number of Respondents				Mean	Rank
		5	4	3	2		
1.	Lack of political will on the part of state Authorities	19	7	3	1	4.467	1
2.	Involvement of non-professionals (quacks) in the construction of buildings.	16	9	1	1	4.300	2
3.	Monitoring of construction activities and visitation of sites by the planning authority is enforcement agents in law	15	9	3	2	4.276	3
4.	Utilization of National Building code and relevant Building/Planning regulations is very low among some professionals and contractors	15	1	3	2	4.267	4
5.	Getting building plan approval is Cumbersome and take long time.	14	9	3	4	4.10	5
6.	Professionals working on construction sites without relevant approval sighted	12	1	3	4	4.034	6
7.	Use poor quality construction materials and lack of quality control	12	9	2	5	4.000	7
8.	Professionals not ensuring compliance with the approval given for the project. Where alteration, amendment or additions are required necessary approval not obtained.	10	1	3	5	3.897	8
9.	Stage certification not enforced.	7	15	4	4	3.833	9
10.	Lack/inadequate site investigation and necessary soil investigation not conducted.	7	13	4	6	3.700	10

Source: Field Survey (2008)

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Table 4 shows that 6.25% or 2 respondents rate the effectiveness of the urban and regional planning board at enforcing laws governing construction activities as good while 5 or (15.6%) rated them fair. No one thought they are near effective.

Conclusion

The National Building Code has spelt out the basic standards on building with a view to ensuring quality, safety and proficiency in the building industry. The code is a regulatory instrument only. It needs a legislative backing for its effective implementation for development of Nigerian built environment. The professionals need to recognize the gains of working as a team to meet the challenges of implementation and enforcement of the National Building Code.

This paper gave a brief overview of the National Building Code. Using field survey, the level of awareness, implementation and enforcement of the National Building Code and relevant Building/Planning Recommendations were estimated.

Recommendations

1. All State and Local Governments must support the Building Code, with legislation to ensure the implementation and Enforcement. The laws enacted will ensure that violators are penalized.
2. All the professional bodies that participated in producing the code should ensure each member has a copy. Members should be enlightened to adhere strictly to the provisions of the code through seminars/conference.
3. The general public should be reminded through road shows and media campaigns (such as television, radio. Socia media plat forms and newspapers) that public security and safety is a collective responsibility and that is unlawful and unsafe to involve non-professionals in the procurement of buildings.
4. Unqualified persons (quacks) and their employers should be sanctioned when apprehended.

5. The National Building Code should be offered as a course in all Schools/Faculties of Environmental Studies so that future professionals will be aware of the code and be able to put it to practice.

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