RESEARCH ARTICLE

Transferring architectural management into practice: A taxonomy framework

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Abstract
This research aimed to develop a unique framework to help architects understand and apply architectural management (AM) in their practices. A comprehensive literature review identified several components belonging to different specialist fields. A pragmatic methodology for developing the framework was adopted by combining the methodology of Japareen for building conceptual frameworks with the Concept Mapping and Qualitative Met-Synthesis techniques. The resulting framework underwent a series of testing stages aimed at refining the framework further. The testing process targeted two groups (researchers and professionals) by adopting a mixed method approach, which included a facilitated workshop, interviews, and a questionnaire survey. The feedback from the testing phase was used to create the final AM Taxonomy Framework (AMTF), and served as an original and practical guide for practitioners, further extending their understanding of AM. Further validation and refinement are planned in the long term by applying the framework to selected architectural practices.

1. Introduction

Construction literature identifies many guiding frameworks that may inspire practitioners to achieve better practices,

improve their knowledge, and effectively deploy tools and systems for various tasks, including design, project, and quality management. In relation to this, several reports suggest that architecture practitioners must improve the way with which they manage their businesses. This argument can be traced back to *The Architect and His Office* [Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA, 1962)], which highlights the need for better management skills and knowledge among architects. This argument has been maintained over the years in the architecture management (AM) literature (e.g., Brunton

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et al., 1964; Nicholson, 1995a; Emmitt, 1999a; Alharbi et al., 2015). A comprehensive review of the small yet increasing volume of research in the AM field reveals that previous studies have primarily focused on the creation of a knowledge base, but not on how to bring such knowledge into practice. Although the need for improvements is acknowledged, the achievement of such improvements is not supervised by any guideline. Specifically, previous studies lack a mutual agreement on the normative focus of AM, its core components, and the intersection between these components, thereby limiting our understanding of such concept. Furthermore, previous studies have mostly failed to distinguish AM from other managerial fields (e.g., project management) and specify its requirements (see, e.g., Alharbi et al., 2015). Hence a clear set of guidelines for architects must be established considering that AM is a developing field and an important issue for architects working in a management-oriented construction sector.

Since its introduction over 50 years ago by Brunton et al. (1964) the concept of AM remains open to interpretation in the literature despite several studies that have articulated the importance of adopting such concept, especially by the CIB Working Group W096 Architectural Management (see Emmitt et al., 2009). Although CIB W096 is the only international network dedicated to examining and promoting AM, this group has yet to adopt a definitive definition of this concept; a criticism that can be made of their only book, *Architectural Management: International Research & Practice* (Emmitt et al., 2009). For clarity, this research adopts the following original and recent definition of AM, which is grounded in empirical research:

> Architectural Management (AM) is the strategic management of the architectural firm that assures the effective integration between managing the business aspects of the office with its individual projects in order to design and deliver the best value to all stakeholders (Alharbi, 2013).

However, providing a clear definition of AM is only part of a bigger challenge. The present definition does not provide the level of detail required to understand and apply AM into practice. Therefore, the current research aims to develop a practical and generic framework that can help architects apply AM in their professional practices to suit their specific contexts and requirements. A pragmatic framework can help architecture practitioners understand and manage their businesses effectively, thereby improving the services that they can provide to their clients.

2. Literature review

This literature review reveals the lack of a structured guideline for transferring AM from theory to practice. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a "framework" as any visual/written product for explaining factors, concepts, variables, and their presumed relationships. Based on this definition, three guiding frameworks have been identified at the abstract level. The definition of AM proposed by Brunton et al. (1964), which illustrates the relationship between the two components of AM (i.e., "Managing the Business" and
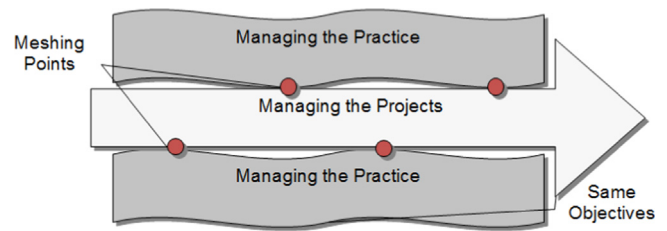

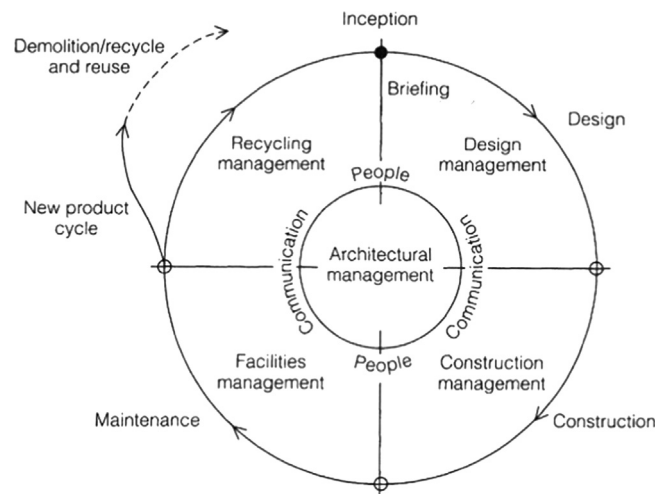**Figure 1** Graphical interpretation of the definition of Brunton et al. (1964).

Figure 2 Position of AM within the project lifecycle (Emmitt, 1999a).

"Managing Projects") is generally considered the first taxonomy framework (Figure 1).

> Architectural Management falls into two distinct parts, office or practice management and project management. The former provides an overall framework within which many individual projects will be commenced, managed and completed. In principle, both parts have the same objectives but the techniques vary and mesh only at certain points (Brunton et al., 1964, p. 9).

However, the framework proposed by Brunton et al. did not illustrate the sub-components and deliverables of AM; their work deliberately focused on only a single component of AM, which is Managing the Business. Based on Brunton et al., Emmitt (1999a, 2007) provided the first practical written guideline for applying AM in practice. Emmitt (1999a) offered another visual framework, which illustrated the central position of AM within the project lifecycle (Figure 2). This framework was conceived at a time when the components of AM were not clearly agreed upon. Moreover, the data for managerial tasks and the needs of architects used in this framework are now considered outdated. However, Emmitt distinguished and highlighted a principal difference between AM and design management, in which the former is a more comprehensive field of knowledge and practice that encompasses the issues of design process, architectural firm, architectural education, and architecture profession as a whole (Emmitt, 1999a, b,