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Revitalizing Nigeria's built heritage using Facility Management service delivery: The Lagos National Arts Theatre Complex

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Abstract

The bureaucratic approach to the management of the National Arts Theatre Complex (NATC) since inception has proved to be unsuitable and ineffective as indicated by its present maintenance status and public commentary over the years. Relying on observations made from a physical inspection of the NATC structure and its facilities, documented public commentary and information derived from questionnaire surveys, the moribund state of the complex is confirmed. Arguing that the complex is an investment in real estate and as well as a business property, this paper considers how it can be revitalized through the deployment of Facility Management (FM) service delivery which is a management concept suited to large facilities and multiple systems like the NATC. The findings are that the facility is in a moribund state as a result of which it has been unable for years now to serve the purpose for which it was established, that the mission-focused nature of FM service delivery has the potential to enhance its functionality as a centre for events and expositions as well as optimize its value as an investment property thereby serving to sustain this important component of Nigeria's built heritage.

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1. Introduction

The buildings and structures which constitute our environment will always be an index of our kind of society, our lifestyle and the choices which we make, as we continue to occupy and develop the earth and manage its resources. As mankind continues to stride ahead in all fields of endeavour, it accumulates and leaves behind as legacy, the physical evidence of its choices and their consequences. It is

evidence of these which exist as various structures which form our built environment and which we classify as built heritage.

Built heritage is innate to our environment. It is integral to, and therefore, an inherent part of the man-made, physical and tangible evidence of evolution. The significant structures, sites and places created in our March towards greater things constitute built heritage and it is those things which we must leave behind for future generations, but not without adequate provision for their sustainability. It is, therefore, apposite to say that built heritage are the landmarks of our existence. Collectively, they consist of those physical structures which we must preserve, protect and project, even if they are no longer fashionable, for their value in giving meaning and colour to our narrative.

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Nigeria's built heritage is varied and stretches across all categories of the built environment, from the historical relics of ancient times to the structures of the colonial era and those of the post-independence era. For instance, in Lagos, are examples of foreign architecture of Brazilian and British Victorian origin, the former being the work of returnee skilled masons from Cuba and Brazil, whilst the latter was introduced by the colonialists. Prominent built heritage structures of the post-independence era appropriately include the National Arts Theatre Complex (NATC), the Tafawa Balewa Square, the 23-storey Independence Building, the first high-rise building constructed in Nigeria, and the 32-storey NET (NECOM) building, once the tallest in West Africa. Also included as built heritage are the palaces and associated structures of the ancient kingdoms of Nigeria such as Benin, Ife and many others. This heritage derives its importance from historical, architectural and cultural reasons.

Facility Management (FM) service delivery aims at delivering least-cost services for the effective utilization of assets and their long-term durability for the benefit of the property owner. It is also an important function of FM to look beyond the physical structure to create within it a work environment which will boost productivity.

Consequent upon the public commentary (Nwakunnor et al., 2014; Fagbenle, 2015; Nigerianfilms.com, 2009; Uhakheme, 2013; Momoh, 2015) that the NATC, an important component of Nigeria's built heritage, is ill-managed, neglected and decaying, this study aims at investigating the status of the facility with a view to presenting solving measures. To achieve the aim, the objectives are to: investigate the current physical condition of the NATC; evaluate whether the current physical condition of the NATC constitutes a hindrance to its effectively serving not only the *de jure* purposes for its establishment, but also, its *de facto* role as a real estate investment and business property; and to ascertain if the NATC facility could be made more effective through the deployment of FM service delivery.

2. Origins and concept of FM

Gunner (2010) defines FM as: “an interdisciplinary field primarily devoted to the maintenance and care of large commercial and institutional buildings such as hotels, resorts, schools, office complexes, sports arenas and convention centres. Duties may include the care of air conditioning, electric power, plumbing and lighting systems, cleaning, decoration, grounds keeping and security”. There are other definitions of FM from individual practitioners as well as from the various professional institutes, but that of Gunner is an exact fit of the NATC situation, where the systems may be either below acceptable levels of functionality or are not functioning at all. FM recognizes that it is when these systems are

functional that the building can serve and enhance the business of the organization by enhancing productivity and minimizing costs, amongst other benefits. The goal of FM is to seek “a cost-effective way of maintaining multiple systems and technologies for the benefit of the owner” (Gunner, 2010).

From the websites of various bodies concerned with FM, definitions of the term have been given as:

“the integration of multi-disciplinary activities within the built environment and the management of their impact upon people and the workplace”

[British Institute of Facilities Management, 2015].

“the integration of processes within an organization to maintain and develop the agreed services which support and improve the effectiveness of its primary activities”

[The European Committee on Standardization, 2015].

“a profession that encompasses multi-disciplines to ensure functionality of the built environment by integrating people, place, process and technology”

[International Facility Management Association, 2015].

“the practice of coordinating the physical workplace with the people and work of the organization; it integrates the principles of business administration, architecture, and the behavioural and engineering sciences”

[United States Library of Congress in Chanter and Swallow, 2007].

From these foregoing definitions the common discernible features of FM are that: it addresses the needs of two classes of customer: viz: an internal customer (the employees or users of the facility) and the needs of the physical facility (the owner). It involves co-ordination and team work, it is integrative, long-term in outlook, support-giving, maintenance-centric, business-oriented, measurable in impact, seeks value, adds value and sustains value. According to Gunner (2010) the mission of FM is the “cost-effective long-term utilization and value preservation of owned assets”.

The challenge of financial and human resource scarcity in relation to organizational or corporate goals, objectives and requirements gave birth to Facility Management in North America in the 1980s, evolving in essence, from the reactions of large asset owners and their managers to the resource gap as it were. These responses coalesced into certain management practices and procedures found to be efficacious in achieving greater efficiency in resource management, and thereby, in profitability.

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