

Assessment of the Feud between the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria and the Nigerian Institute of Architects

Dr. J. A. Olanusi & Emmanuel A. Odo

Department of Architecture Joseph Ayo Babalola University Ikeji Arakeji Osun State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the history, causes, and effects of the unending feud between the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA) on architects and architectural practice in the country (Nigeria). It tries to provide and carefully looks into the analysis of the establishment, the roles, and the functions of these organizations and examines their impact on the professional development and regulation of architects in the country, it also provides an overview of the architectural profession in Nigeria, examines the origins and development of ARCON and NIA, analyzes the factors contributing to their feud, and explores the consequences of this discord on architects and the architectural industry as a whole. These are archived through the exploration of relevant literature, official documents, and a review of interviews with key stakeholders where possible as it aims to shed light on the evolution of these organizations and their influence on architectural practice in Nigeria, it also seeks to present a detailed account of the significance and influence of ARCON and NIA on the architectural profession within the Nigerian context.

By understanding the intricacies of this feud, policymakers, architects, and stakeholders can work towards finding a resolution that fosters a harmonious professional environment conducive to the growth and development of architecture in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The professional practice of architecture plays a crucial role in shaping the built environment and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. To ensure the highest standards of professional competence and ethics, the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA) were established. The roles and functions of these organizations have had far-reaching effects on the practice of architecture, shaping professional standards, fostering ethical conduct, and influencing the overall development of the architectural industry in the country.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

A quick look at the historical background with the aim of understanding the origin and context of the formation of both bodies (ARCON and NIA) will go a long way in ensuring clarity and give a perfect understanding of the expected roles of these bodies who are meant to have a common interest and work together towards archiving and succeeding in same.

Establishment Of Architects Registration Council Of Nigeria (Arcon);

The Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON), was established by the Architects (Registration, Etc.) Act of 1969, serves as the regulatory body for architects and architectural practice in Nigeria. The Act was enacted to ensure the registration and regulation of architects, maintain professional standards, and

protect the interests of the public. It aimed to enhance the credibility and competence of architects and promote the orderly growth of the architectural profession in the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1969).

The establishment of ARCON marked a significant milestone in the development of the architectural profession in Nigeria. Prior to its formation, there were no regulatory mechanisms in place to monitor professional practice and ensure adherence to ethical standards. ARCON's creation introduced a framework for the recognition and regulation of architects, setting the stage for the professionalization of the industry.

Establishment Of The Nigerian Institute Of Architects (Nia).

The Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), founded in 1960, is the professional association for architects in Nigeria. It provides a platform for networking, knowledge exchange, and professional development among architects in the country. NIA plays a crucial role in advocating for the rights and welfare of architects, promoting architectural education, and fostering collaboration and exchange of ideas within the profession (Nigerian Institute of Architects, n.d.).

NIA's establishment aimed to create a cohesive professional community that could collectively address the challenges faced by architects in Nigeria. By bringing together practitioners from various backgrounds, NIA fostered a sense of unity and provided a platform for architects to collaborate, share knowledge, and advance the architectural profession in the country.

Collaboration And Interaction Between the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria and The Nigerian Institute of Architects.

ARCON and NIA work collaboratively to regulate and advance the architectural profession in Nigeria. While ARCON focuses on the statutory regulation of architects, including licensing and registration, NIA serves as the professional association responsible for advocacy, continuing professional development (CPD), and fostering excellence in architectural practice.

The collaboration between ARCON and NIA ensures a balanced approach to the regulation and development of the architectural profession. ARCON's regulatory functions provide a framework for maintaining professional standards and ensuring public safety, while NIA's role in advocacy and professional development enhances the knowledge, skills, and overall competence of architects.

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF ARCON AND NIA.

Arcon's Regulatory Responsibilities. ARCON is responsible for maintaining a register of architects, setting standards for architectural education and training, conducting examinations for professional practice, and enforcing ethical conduct and discipline among architects. It ensures that architects meet the required qualifications and competencies to practice architecture in Nigeria (Architects Registration Council of Nigeria, n.d.).

ARCON's regulatory functions play a crucial role in upholding the integrity and professionalism of the architectural practice in Nigeria. By establishing clear standards for education, training, and professional conduct, ARCON ensures that architects possess the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality architectural services to the public.

ARCON, as the statutory regulatory body, has been instrumental in maintaining and raising professional standards within the architectural field. By establishing criteria for registration, conducting examinations, and enforcing disciplinary measures, ARCON ensures that architects in Nigeria possess the necessary

qualifications, skills, and knowledge to provide quality architectural services (Oladimeji & Ogunsoye, 2014). This focus on professional competence contributes to public confidence in the profession and promotes accountability among architects.

Nia's Role In Advocacy And Professional Development.

NIA serves as a professional body, promoting the interests of architects and the architectural profession. It advocates for the highest standards of professionalism, provides platforms for professional exchange and networking, organizes conferences, seminars, and workshops, and supports architects in their continuing professional development through various educational programs and initiatives (Nigerian Institute of Architects, n.d.).

NIA's advocacy efforts are focused on representing the collective interests of architects in Nigeria. Through engagement with government bodies, policymakers, and other stakeholders, NIA works to shape policies and regulations that promote the growth and recognition of the architectural profession. The institute also plays a pivotal role in organizing professional development activities, facilitating knowledge sharing, and fostering a sense of community among architects.

Overlapping Functions And Collaborative Efforts.

ARCON and NIA, as key organizations in the architectural profession in Nigeria, have overlapping functions and engage in collaborative efforts to advance the field. Their combined efforts aim to regulate the practice, uphold professional standards, and promote education and training while advocating for the interests of architects in Nigeria.

- **Regulatory Functions:**

ARCON and NIA both have regulatory functions related to the practice of architecture in Nigeria. ARCON is primarily responsible for the registration and regulation of architects, while NIA focuses on promoting professional excellence, ethics, and discipline within the architectural community (Agboola et al., 2019). These functions overlap as both organizations worked towards ensuring that architects adhere to professional standards, codes of conduct, and ethical guidelines.

- **Education and Training:**

Both ARCON and NIA recognize the importance of education and training in the development of architects in Nigeria. ARCON is responsible for accrediting architectural programs in universities and polytechnics, ensuring that they meet the required standards and curriculum guidelines (Awodele, 2016). NIA, on the other hand, collaborates with educational institutions to promote quality architectural education and advocates for continuous professional development among its members (Adegoke & Babalola, 2020). These collaborative efforts aim to enhance the knowledge and skills of architects and ensure that they meet the evolving demands of the profession.

- **Advocacy and Professional Development:**

ARCON and NIA collaborate to advocate for the interests of architects and promote professional development. NIA, as a professional body, actively engages with government agencies, policy-makers, and other stakeholders to influence policies and regulations related to the architectural profession (Odeyale, 2017). ARCON, as the regulatory body, works in conjunction with NIA to ensure that the voices and concerns of architects are represented in decision-making processes. This collaboration strengthens the profession's influence and supports the growth and development of architects in Nigeria.

- **Capacity Building and Research:**

ARCON and NIA collaborate in capacity building and research initiatives to enhance the knowledge and skills of architects in Nigeria. They organize seminars, workshops, and conferences to provide professional development opportunities and promote the exchange of ideas among architects (Alagbe et al., 2020). Additionally, both organizations encourage research and contribute to knowledge creation in the field of architecture, fostering innovation and improving architectural practice in Nigeria.

In overall; ARCON focused on registration and regulation, while NIA concentrated on professional development, advocacy, and promoting the interests of architects.

EMERGENCE OF CONFLICTS:

Over time, conflicts arose between ARCON and NIA, fueled by differing interpretations of their respective roles and powers. These conflicts escalated, leading to a protracted feud that has persisted to the present day.

CAUSES OF THE FEUD

- **Regulatory Authority And Professional Practice:** The feud between ARCON and NIA in Nigeria stems from the overlapping roles of regulatory authority and professional practice within the field of architecture. ARCON is the statutory body responsible for regulating the architectural profession, while NIA represents the interests of architects and promotes professional development.

The conflict arises due to the differing perspectives and priorities of these two organizations. ARCON's focus is on ensuring compliance with standards, licensing architects, and maintaining professional ethics and conduct. Their mandate is rooted in regulatory functions and maintaining the overall integrity of the architectural profession.

On the other hand, NIA's primary objective is to protect and promote the interests of architects. They provide a platform for professional networking, offer continuous education programs, and advocate for architects' rights and recognition. Their focus is more on the professional development and collective interests of architects.

According to Uwaegbulam (2023) The Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA) were enmeshed in another dispute following the inability of both parties to play by the rules governing the architecture profession. Efforts were made to manipulate nominations to ARCON council and litigation was instituted by members of the architecture profession seeking to stop the inauguration, which led to the cancellation of the inauguration in 2022. Essentially, the dispute grounded activities of the council which led to the establishment of a transition management committee and had planned to organise the 2022 Colloquium for architects and undertake Architects Professional Competency Evaluation (APCE) Exercise.

The composition of the council has seen several changes. All the states and the Federal Capital Territory, NIA, accredited schools of architecture and supervisory ministry are representatives in the new council of ARCON. Section 2 (2) of the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria Act, Cap A19 L.F.N 2004 provides for the constitution of a 49-member council. The government cancelled the committee's plans to undertake some of the functions that were core functions of the council until a new properly constituted one was in place.

The feud between ARCON and NIA may be fueled by disagreements over jurisdiction and authority. There

might be instances where both organizations believe their mandates overlap or clash, leading to conflicts regarding decision-making, policy formulation, and implementation. These disputes can involve issues such as licensing requirements, accreditation of architectural schools, or the definition of professional standards.

ARCON and NIA have clashed over the extent of ARCON's regulatory authority in defining the boundaries of architectural practice. NIA contends that ARCON's powers should be limited to registration and regulation, while NIA should have more influence in matters such as professional practice guidelines and ethical standards.

- **Dispute Over Statutory Powers:** The interpretation and application of the Architects (Registration, etc.) Act, Decree No. 10, which governs the architectural profession in Nigeria, has been a contentious issue. ARCON argues that it has exclusive powers derived from the Act, while NIA believes it should have a greater say in decision-making processes. The dispute arises due to differences in the interpretation and exercise of statutory powers. ARCON may assert its regulatory authority to set standards, accredit architectural schools, and enforce licensing requirements, while NIA may emphasize its role in advocating for architects' rights, promoting professional development, and safeguarding the collective interests of its members.

Competing Interests And Objectives:

ARCON, as the regulatory authority for the architectural profession in Nigeria, focuses on ensuring compliance with professional standards, licensing architects, and maintaining ethical conduct. Its primary objective is to regulate the practice of architecture and safeguard the integrity of the profession.

NIA, on the other hand, is a professional body representing architects and primarily works to protect and promote the interests of its members. It provides a platform for networking, offers professional development opportunities, and advocates for architects' rights and recognition.

The differing interests and objectives of ARCON and NIA have also influenced conflicts and disagreements. For example, disputes over licensing requirements, accreditation of architectural schools, or the definition of professional standards. ARCON's regulatory approach may prioritize strict adherence to regulations, while NIA may prioritize the interests and development of its members.

These differences in perspectives and priorities can fuel the feud between ARCON and NIA, as both organizations seek to assert their authority and advance their respective agendas within the architectural profession in Nigeria.

ARCON places a strong emphasis on protecting the public interest by ensuring qualified professionals and maintaining high standards. NIA, on the other hand, focuses on advancing the interests of architects, professional development, and promoting the profession's visibility.

Governance And Representation:

The feud between ARCON (Architects Registration Council of Nigeria) and NIA (Nigerian Institute of Architects) has also been influenced by governance and representation concerns. These issues include disputes over decision-making processes, the representation of different stakeholders, and the overall governance structure of the architectural profession in Nigeria.

Governance: Disagreements may have arisen due to differing views on the governance and decision-making processes within the architectural profession. For instance, conflicts can emerge if there are disagreements over the authority and powers of ARCON as the regulatory body and the role of NIA as a

professional association.

Representation: Another factor that has fueled the feud is the representation of architects' interests and perspectives. NIA, as a professional body, advocates for the rights and interests of its members. If NIA believes that the voices and concerns of architects are not adequately represented within the regulatory framework governed by ARCON, it can lead to conflicts and disputes.

Disputes have also emerged regarding the composition and representation of ARCON and NIA's governing bodies. Both organizations have sought to exert greater control over decision-making processes, leading to clashes over leadership and representation.

KEY POINTS OF CONTENTION.

Accreditation And Registration Processes: ARCON is responsible for accrediting architectural programs and registering architects. However, disagreements have arisen between ARCON and NIA regarding the criteria and procedures for accreditation, resulting in disputes over the recognition of qualifications and registration status. According to Ali A. (Ali, 2016); Accreditation of architectural programs involves the evaluation and approval of educational institutions offering architecture courses, ensuring they meet established standards set by ARCON. Disagreements arise when there are differences in opinion between ARCON and NIA regarding the specific criteria and procedures used for accreditation. Furthermore, the criteria for accreditation may include aspects such as curriculum content, faculty qualifications, facilities, and student outcomes.

Disputes can arise when there are varying interpretations or disagreements on the weightage given to specific criteria (Akintoye, 2017).

One of the key points of contention is the level of involvement and influence of NIA in the accreditation and registration processes. NIA, as a professional body representing architects, would advocate for certain criteria or procedures that align with their perspective on professional standards. Conflicts can arise when there are disagreements between ARCON and NIA on the appropriate level of influence and decision-making power (Olawuyi & Alagbe, 2019).

These disputes over accreditation criteria and registration processes have significant implications for architects and the architectural profession in Nigeria. Architects from programs or institutions that are not accredited by ARCON may face challenges in obtaining professional recognition and participating in certain projects or opportunities. Disagreements over registration status can lead to confusion and limitations on the practice of architects (Ola, 2020).

Resolving these disputes requires effective communication, collaboration, and a willingness to find common ground between ARCON and NIA. It is crucial for both organizations to engage in open dialogue, address concerns, and work towards a shared understanding of the accreditation and registration processes. This collaboration can contribute to a stronger and more unified architectural profession in Nigeria.

Scope Of Professional Practice: The delineation of architectural practice has been a contentious issue. ARCON seeks to define the scope of architectural services to maintain professional standards and protect the public, while NIA argues for greater flexibility and recognition of architects' expertise in related fields. This disagreement over the scope of practice has fueled the feud between ARCON and NIA.

ARCON emphasizes the need for a clear and narrow scope of architectural practice to maintain professional standards and protect the public interest. They argue that defining a specific scope ensures that architectural

services are provided by qualified professionals who possess the necessary expertise, training, and experience (Onabanjo, 2017). ARCON believes that a precise scope of practice protects the integrity of the architectural profession and safeguards the welfare of clients and the public at large (Adewale, 2019).

On the other hand, NIA advocates for a broader scope of practice that recognizes the versatility and multidisciplinary skills of architects. They argue that architects possess expertise beyond traditional architectural design and should be allowed to offer services in related fields such as interior design, urban planning, and project management (Ejikeme, 2018). NIA believes that a flexible scope of practice allows architects to fully utilize their knowledge and skills, promoting innovation and meeting the diverse needs of clients (Olajumoke, 2020).

These differing perspectives on the scope of professional practice have fueled the feud between ARCON and NIA. ARCON's emphasis on a specific scope of practice is seen by NIA as restrictive and inhibiting professional growth (Ejikeme, 2018). NIA argues that architects should have the freedom to expand their services into allied fields, which they believe would enhance their value and contribute to the development of the built environment (Oduwaye, 2016).

The disagreement over the scope of practice has resulted in legal disputes, regulatory challenges, and a lack of consensus between ARCON and NIA. The clash of perspectives regarding the boundaries of architectural practice has intensified the feud between the two organizations, leading to fragmentation within the architectural profession in Nigeria (Olawale, 2021).

Code Of Conduct And Ethics: Differences in opinion regarding the code of conduct and ethical standards have contributed to the feud. ARCON aims to enforce a unified code of conduct for architects, while NIA believes in greater autonomy for architects to develop their own ethical guidelines.

ARCON, as the regulatory authority, has the responsibility of setting and enforcing professional standards, including a code of conduct and ethics for architects. Their objective is to maintain uniformity and ensure that architects adhere to a consistent set of ethical guidelines across the profession.

On the other hand, NIA, as a professional body representing architects, advocates for a more flexible approach, allowing architects to have a certain degree of autonomy in developing their own ethical guidelines. NIA may believe that architects should have the freedom to address specific ethical considerations or contextual factors within their practice.

These differences in opinion regarding the code of conduct and ethical standards have also deepened the tensions between ARCON and NIA, as they represent contrasting viewpoints on how ethical guidelines should be established and implemented in the architectural profession.

- **Advocacy And Policy Influence:** Both ARCON and NIA aspire to influence policies and regulations impacting the architectural profession. However, conflicts have emerged over which organization should have a more prominent role in shaping policy, leading to tensions and disagreements.

ARCON, as the regulatory authority for the architectural profession, holds a position of authority in formulating and implementing policies and regulations that govern architectural practice in Nigeria. They aim to ensure compliance with professional standards and maintain the integrity of the profession.

On the other hand, NIA, as a professional body representing architects, often seeks to advocate for the interests and concerns of its members by influencing policies and regulations that affect the architectural profession. NIA may aim to shape policies that enhance the professional development of architects, address

industry challenges, or promote architects' rights and recognition.

Conflicts arise when both ARCON and NIA have differing views on their respective roles and influence in policy-making processes. Disagreements may emerge regarding the extent of involvement, decision-making power, or the level of representation that each organization should have in shaping policies and regulations impacting the architectural profession.

ATTEMPTS AT RESOLUTION

- **Mediation and reconciliation efforts:** Various attempts have been made to mediate and reconcile the differences between ARCON and NIA. These efforts include interventions by government bodies, professional associations, and prominent individuals within the architectural community (Aina, 2019).
- **Legal interventions and court rulings:** The feud has also been the subject of legal interventions, with both ARCON and NIA seeking legal recourse to assert their respective positions. Court rulings have provided some clarity on certain matters but have not completely resolved the underlying conflicts (Akintoye & Aduwo, 2018), as at the time of writing this paper the court is expected to further address more of the underlying issues between ARCON and NIA presented before her.
- **Calls for collaboration and cooperation:** Many architects and stakeholders have called for greater collaboration and cooperation between ARCON and NIA. Recognizing the shared objectives of both organizations, these calls emphasize the need for dialogue and compromise to advance the architectural profession as a whole (Odeyale, 2017).

International Perspectives And Comparative Analysis.

- **Similar conflicts in other countries:** It is worth noting that conflicts between regulatory bodies and professional associations are not unique to Nigeria. Similar disputes have arisen in other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Australia, highlighting the challenges inherent in balancing regulatory authority and professional autonomy (Gupta, 2020).
- **Lessons learned and best practices:** Examining international case studies can provide valuable insights into successful conflict resolution strategies and best practices for fostering collaboration between regulatory bodies and professional associations. These lessons can inform potential approaches to address the feud between ARCON and NIA (Gupta, 2020).

Future Outlook And Recommendations

- **Strategies for conflict resolution and reconciliation:** To resolve the feud, ARCON and NIA should engage in constructive dialogue and negotiation. Mediation by neutral parties, such as government agencies or respected professionals, can help facilitate a compromise that addresses the concerns of both organizations (Odeyale, 2017).
- **Strengthening regulatory frameworks and governance:** There is a need to review and update the existing regulatory frameworks governing the architectural profession in Nigeria. Clear guidelines and delineation of powers can help prevent future conflicts and establish a more harmonious relationship between ARCON and NIA (Akintoye & Aduwo, 2018).
- **Enhancing professional collaboration and cooperation:** ARCON and NIA should actively seek opportunities for collaboration and joint initiatives. By working together on issues such as policy advocacy, professional development, and public outreach, both organizations can demonstrate the value of a unified architectural profession (Aina, 2019).

Effects On Architects And Architectural Practice

- **Division and fragmentation within the profession:** The ongoing feud between ARCON and NIA

has created divisions among architects in Nigeria. This division weakens the collective voice of the profession and hampers efforts to address common challenges and advance the interests of architects (Odeyale, 2017).

- **Impact on professional standards and regulations:** The conflicting interpretations of the roles and powers of ARCON and NIA have led to inconsistencies in professional standards and regulations. This lack of clarity hampers the effective regulation of architectural practice and undermines the credibility of the profession (Akintoye & Aduwo, 2018).
- **Influence on education and training:** The feud has also affected architectural education and training in Nigeria. Disputes over accreditation processes and recognition of qualifications have resulted in uncertainties and challenges for architectural students and institutions (Odeyale, 2017).
- **Implications for public perception and trust:** The prolonged feud between ARCON and NIA has had negative implications for the public perception of the architectural profession. The lack of unity and conflicting messages erode public trust and confidence in architects' abilities to uphold professional standards (Akintoye & Aduwo, 2018).

CONCLUSION

- **Summary of key findings:** The feud between ARCON and NIA has had significant implications for architects and architectural practice in Nigeria. The conflicts arise from differences in regulatory authority, professional practice, and governance, leading to division within the profession and posing challenges in maintaining standards and affecting public trust in the architectural profession.
- **Final thoughts on the feud's impact and potential resolutions:** Resolving the feud requires a commitment to dialogue, compromise, and a shared vision for the architectural profession. By strengthening regulatory frameworks, enhancing collaboration, and learning from international experiences, ARCON and NIA can work towards a harmonious relationship that benefits architects and architectural practice in Nigeria.

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