

NAME:

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TITLE OF INAUGURAL LECTURE:- HOUSING NIGERIANS: A PARADOX

ABSTRACT

Inadequate access of majority of Nigerians, especially the low- and medium-income earners, to adequate housing persists in the nation despite existing vast documentation of the challenges and various strategies proposed to arrest the challenges. This inaugural lecture set out to contribute to existing literature in efforts to tackle this apparently intractable challenge.

Concepts of ‘housing’, ‘adequate housing’ and ‘paradox’ were used to anchor the study and current relevant literature were used for the study. Trends in housing and housing shortage in Nigeria was traced in the country’s three main historical era: pre-colonial era; colonial era; and since the nation’s political independence. Pre-colonial Nigeria comprised of empires and chiefdoms in which the traditional norms, social and cultural practices guided housing production and ownership. In this era, housing development process was guided by available resources, culture, social and traditional values. Access to housing development input had no significant financial implications and no significant housing shortage existed. In colonial era, introduction of Christianity, currency coins, imported building materials, erosion of cultural values and adoption of urbanization as development paradigm brought about rapid urbanization and massive rural-urban drift leading to housing shortage and proliferation of slums and shanties in the cities. Land commodification was introduced, and new imported building materials requiring specialized skills in handling were introduced, necessitating emergence of ‘professional’ building artisans. Putting up building became more capital intensive. The government did not have significant mass housing programme for Nigerians. Post-independence era, especially after the Civil War, is noted for government’s diverse programmes to produce mass housing for the low- and medium-income earners. Strategies adopted varied from the government being sole providers of mass housing (from 1971 to 1999), to encouraging private sector developers (since 1999) which all failed to arrest the persistent spiraling housing shortage for the no-, low- and medium income earners in the nation. Hence, housing Nigerians becoming a paradox.

In tackling the housing paradox, two major determinants of housing market, tagged ‘drivers of housing demand’ and ‘drivers of housing supply’ were identified. Failure of previous governments’ programmes to arrest housing shortage in Nigeria was attributed to governments’ persistent failure to give adequate attention to drivers of housing demand exemplified by population dynamics, especially, prevailing rapid urbanization and massive rural-urban migration in the country. Adopting regional development planning for the country was proposed as a strategy to arrest prevailing rapid urbanization, mass rural-urban migration, and persistent housing shortage in Nigeria. The need for the government to have the political will to ensure proper implementation of various housing supply strategies contained in the nation’s National Housing Policy; and conduct census on population and housing in the country, ensuring that the census data are made available for national development planning were emphasized as being highly required to ensure the success of the advocated regional development plans for the country and achieving the targeted dream of making every Nigerian have access to adequate housing either as renters or owners as contained in the nation’s National Housing Policy.

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