

BUILT ENVIRONMENT PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BUILDING CONTROL MEASURES IN LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study assesses building control practice in Lagos state due to the alarming rate of building collapse. It examines the effectiveness of the building control practice and it also identifies the factors limiting the building control practice capacity. In achieving the objectives, quantitative technique was adopted in which 61 questionnaires were distributed among selected professionals from contracting firm within the built environment. The sample was selected using purposive sampling technique. Data collected are processed using Mean item score, percentage and Anova respectively. The study reveals that all building control measures were not thoroughly observed. It was discovered from the findings that, aside the processing and scrutinizing of building plans for approval' measure which was duly observed, all other measures were not observed and they are all equally significant. The study also identifies factors militating against the building control practice, among others corruption and bureaucratic process were ranked highest. The hypothesis postulated reveals that there is no significant difference among the professionals on their perception of the effectiveness of building control practice. In conclusion, the study recommends the need for regular auditing of the activities of the building control agencies due to the prevalence of corruption cases among their members.

Keywords: Building Control, Sustainability, Lagos State, Built environment, building construction.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Lagos state without doubt is one of the developing cities in Africa. Filani (2012) affirmed that Lagos is the economic bedrock of Nigeria and West Africa sub-region yielding 32 percent of national gross domestic product (GDP). Osinbajo (2004) cited in his paper titled 'problem and prospect of development control' that Lagos was indicated to join the league of mega cities by 2015 with a projected population of 24.5million by the World Bank Organisation. However, irrespective of the projected population of Lagos, there has not been corresponding plans for the provision of social amenities that will accommodate the increasing population. Quest by individual inhabitants of the state to meet their housing need has led to personal housing development in which building regulation is not totally given top priority. Negligence of the building regulation has culminated into various challenges such as incessant rate of building collapse, building infernos, land pollution and so on in our built environment. In order to curtail the challenges confronting the built environment, there is a need to control building construction works. Control and order are of necessity for all things in existence as these two factors define the sustainability of our environment. The Built environment relevance as cited by Hossein, Farah and Leila (2012) as being a key player in upholding sustainable development to preserve life quality, comfort, security and health among others can only be achieved under a control environment.

Moreover, any developments which never consider the health, welfare and quality of life should not be encouraged; therefore it is necessary to control building construction activities. Building control is aimed at ensuring health and safety of building users and also to facilitate sustainable development. According to Pedro, Meijer and Visscher (2009), building control is an indispensable tool that ensures the application of the minimum requirements set for building construction works as to guarantee safe, healthy and accessible buildings. Alexander (2011) affirmed that building control system is meant for regulating buildings design as to ensure safe, healthy, accessible and sustainable building facilities for current and future generation. However, the safety and sustainability of our built environment can be questioned due to the various reports on the performance of our built structures and the use of our landed resources. The use of our buildings and the activities that brought them into existence does not put into consideration sustainable principle for safety of the present and coming generation. Also

abuse of our landed resources is evidenced in the activities that are carried out on it and such can deny the generation to come of this monumental wealth.

Also preservation of our built environment is not an option as it accounts for man's existence. Pedro et al. (2009) revealed that developed nations are conversant with the relevance of the building control system and it is a tool which is in use to ensure the sustainability of her built environment. Similarly Van der Heijden and De Jong (2013) cited the importance of building regulations and its enforcement in the developed world in overhauling unhealthy practice that has caused poor housing conditions, unhealthy environment and so on in their built environment in the past years. However, it is a different ball game in our society as we experience mismanagement of our landed area, recurring decimals of building collapse, building inferno, sick buildings, urban defacing and so on. As such, Lagos state government in 2010 established building control agency to control building construction activities within the state. Creating a system to respond to some needs within the environment also demands the necessity of consistently check for its adequacy. As such it is pertinent for this study to carry out organized enquiry into effectiveness of the building control system in Lagos state. This paper dwells on the measures of enforcements of building regulations within the built environment with the use of building control tool. The study is aimed at examining the professionals' perceptions of the effectiveness of building control as an enforcement tool in achieving building regulation standard, also to identify factors confronting the implementation of building control practice. The study also hypothesises that there is no significant difference among the professionals on their perception of the measures of enforcement of building control.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Building constructions are very essential in the development of every nation around the world. It accounts for the measure of standard of living and wellbeing of every inhabitant of a society. Buildings create a platform through which most activities that aid development are being executed, therefore the significance of building in every nation of the world cannot be denied. However, as the building has been a blessing to some environment, it's not applicable to others. The production process and the planning of buildings on land have been questionable issues due to the prevalence of abuses that are evident within our environment. Built environment abuse in our nation is highly evident with the increasing rate of structural failure, massive buildings of infernos due to limited spacing between buildings, flooding due to development of structures on drainage path and so on. It was affirmed by Dauda, Abdulazeez and Abubakar (2012) in their study that built environment abuse in Nigeria is second-to-none as human activities in the environment are carried out in a disorderly manner. A development that cannot guarantee safety, health and increases condition of living of the populace and generation to come is not a worthy development. Therefore, the need to enact legislation to deal with the excesses observed within the built environment is very pivotal. According to Snelling (1997), building regulations are formulated to ensure health, safety and convenience of people in or about the building are guaranteed. Meacham (2010) further affirmed that 'building regulations are instruments which established rule of conduct, intended to ensure that buildings when constructed and operated in consonance to regulations, also to provide standardized performance with respect to the building and safety of its occupants and the environment in which the building is situated. Building regulations ensure the built environment is adequately preserved by dealing with the scrupulous practice within the ambit of the law.

However, building regulations are not enough to install the built environment which we desired and the need for enforcement of regulations has been an issue in every sphere of our nation. On this need, Lagos state Government sign to lawful establishment of building control agency on the 5th of July 2010 to install the lost sanity back into her built environment. Before the introduction of building control agency, the only existing body is community health workers who oversee the health affairs of residential buildings in the state. The complexity of the state with respect to population growth and high building construction activities overtime had outgrown the efficiency of the state health workers. The gap created due to lack of building control agency in the past has led to the alarming rate of building collapse in recent times. Windapo and Rotimi (2012) carried out a survey on building collapse across all states in Nigeria between 1974 and 2010 and it is interesting to know that 51% of the cases of the collapsed building were predominant in Lagos. Dogma (2014) also cited in his report that between 2007 and 2012 there were 130 cases of building collapse in Lagos and he went further that more than 135 cases of building collapse were reported in 2013 alone in Lagos state. Negligence of the state in controlling development activities in the past culminated to present rate of building collapse. Lagos State Building Control Agency (2011) however affirmed that the embarrassing rate of building collapse within the state birth her body to forestall the continuous and future occurrence of building collapse.

The function of the agency is narrow down to ensure adherence to regulation by upholding the established laws within the built environment. The rule of law has been an issue in our country as it is evident how individual, corporate bodies and so on negate what has been established by the law. This act of impunity has to crawl and find its way into the built environment and it is impacting the environment negatively. The prevalence of some practice which is not in consonance with international standard or building regulations has been on the increase due to the negligence of enforcement of building regulations. Also, Osinbajo (2014) identify non enforcement of relevant laws as the major problem confronting our environment. To checkmate issues relating to enforcement of certified laws within the built environment. It is therefore necessary to use a tool to monitor the effectiveness of enforcement of building regulation. Report from building control performance standards (2006) indicated building control as a tool used in achieving the objectives of building regulations. Similarly Low (2011) opined that building control is an indispensable tool which defined the minimum standards which must govern the operation of the stakeholders in the built environment in consonance with the existing law. Building control is highly encompassing as it ensures the three phases in construction which entails designing, construction and completion and handing over are checked within the ambit of established regulations (Pedro et al., 2009). Building control is more concerned with enforcement of regulations within the built environment. Compliance to building regulations is not solely depends on the existing regulations alone due to offenders of the law, as such the enforcement with the use of building control tool delivers a synergy that can help achieve the built environment we desired.

Building control has a massive role to play in the infrastructure development and sustainability of the built environment. Building control is thorough and flexible as it dictates the structural soundness of the building during construction and occupational health and safety of people in the building process (Low, 2011). Control and sustainability are two inseparable words in which the former is to preserve the latter. Building control relevant in the built environment cannot be denied as it ensures realism of the proposed state of the environment. It guarantees an ideal environment in which orderliness and sustainability are a primary factor in any development work. Like any other tool that has a definite procedure of use, the building control tool is not an exemption. Building control performance standard (2006) revealed the processes in carrying out building control activities and they include; assessment of planning, site inspection and issuance of a certificate of completion. In achieving the procedures, it further buttresses each of the stages. At assessment of plan level, it was revealed that effective and continuing control of building works can be guarantee at the design stage by ensuring certification of the following; intended use of the building, floor area, cubic capacity, number of storey's, fire precaution consideration and accepted floor loading provided. Compliance with building regulations is being ensured, and also modification due to non compliance is being established. Department of community and local government (2012) further affirmed the need to use legal tool in putting right non-compliant work. Control of building works at assessment of Plan stage is very vital as it dictates the success of the building control processes. Negligence of planning assessment will amount to an uncontrolled situation at the latter stage of construction works and aftermath effect of such may be very disastrous.

Site inspection stage takes into full account the following; the degree of detail in the design assessment process, experience of the builder, nature of the work and statutory arrangements. The inspection stage is the most vital stage in the building control process as it amount to over sixty-five (65) percent of the whole procedure of the building control system. Without doubt it is the stage that building control tool plays a pivotal role in ensuring safety, health and sustainability of our constructed environment. The least of the building control procedures addressed is the issuance of certificate of occupancy. This stage affirms the fitness of the structure for habitation and it marked a milestone in the building control procedures.

Moreover irrespective of lying potentials in building control practice, it will be surprising to find out that there are factors that still inhibit its sanitizing ability in the built environment. Building standard division (2010) findings reveals that low level of personnel and lack of knowledge among building control personnel is the striking factors affecting building control practice. Building control personnel without doubt must be enriched knowledge wise in her area of specialization because of the complexities of operations that revolve around buildings during construction and post construction stage. Knowledge gap among building control personnel can affect the efficiency of the building control practice. Finally Simon, Samuel and Edu (2015) in their study identify corruption and bureaucratic process as factors causing the gap between building regulation and its enforcements. Corruption has been a pandemic that has ravaged every sphere of our society, it's significant as a prominent factor affecting building control practice does not come as a surprise. The bureaucracy in the process of building control

practice is another factor which must be subject to change by simplifying the process if we are to have the expected sanity in our built environment.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study was to assess the effectiveness of building control tool with a view to addressing the gap between the existing building regulations and enforcements in Lagos state. In attempting to achieve the objective, data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected with the aid of structured questionnaires administered to the built environment professionals in selected contracting firm and they include the architect, quantity surveyor, builder, civil engineer, electrical engineer and urban and regional planner. The sample was selected using purposive sampling technique one of the non-probabilistic techniques. The tool was used to be able to elicit controlled response. The professionals' view was sorted due to their proximity and involvement with building control processes. A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed among the professionals in contracting firms in Lagos while 61 was returned and they were scrutinized for errors, omissions, completeness and inconsistencies and were found to be adequately completed. The calculated response rate is 76% indicating a good response rate.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections, section one examined the characteristics of the respondents, the second section addresses the frequency of the enforcement of building control measures and they are placed on the likely scale of 1-5 to be scored accordingly. Respondents were to score in accordance to the level of frequency where; 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often. The third section addresses the factors affecting implementation of building control practices and respondents are to attest to the degree of effect of the factors in the following order on the likely scale; 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, 5 = very high.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the respondent's characteristics. Why mean item score was used to analyze the frequency of the building control measures and factors affecting its implementation. The hypothesis was analyzed with Anova and the confidence level was set at 5%.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

In this section, the personal information of the respondents used for the study was analyzed using percentage. The result obtained are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Ages		
<20 years	28	45.9
31-40 years	27	44.3
41-50 years	4	6.6
51-60 years	2	3.3
Total	61	100
Academic qualification		
HND	5	8.1
B.Sc/BTech	37	60.7
M.sc/MBA	18	29.5
PhD	1	1.6
Total	61	100
Profession		
Architect	5	8.1
Quantity surveyor	10	16.4
Builder	22	36.1
Civil engineer	10	16.4
Urban and regional planner	1	1.6
Electrical engineer	6	9.8
Others	7	11.5
Total	61	100

Table 1 shows the summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The age bracket, 21- 31 years represents 45.9% of the total respondents. 25% of the respondents are above 31 years of age. Less than 30% of the respondents fall within other age brackets. The age bracket of over 50 years is the least on the table and it is followed by the age bracket of respondents less than 20 years. The result shows the maturity of the respondent's age wise.

It was also revealed that over 60% of the respondents have B.Sc/BTech as their academic qualification. Also 29.5% of the respondents have MSc/MBA and 8.1% have HND at their highest academic qualification. Respondents with PhD as their highest academic qualification were the least on table. The aggregate of the respondent's academic qualification offer quality response to the study.

It is observed from the findings that 36.1% of the respondents were professional builders and distance followed by the quantity surveyor and civil engineer with respondent rate of 16.4% respectively.

Table 2: Professional affiliation and grade of membership

Membership status	Graduate Frequency	Percentage	Corporate Frequency	Percentage
Nigeria Institute of Architect (NIA)	3	5.8	1	7.1
Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE)	15	28.8	5	35.7
Nigeria Institute of Building (NIOB)	19	36.5	5	35.7
Nigeria Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS)	10	19.2	2	14.3
Others	5	9.6	1	7.1
Total	52	100	14	100

Table 2 shows that the graduate and corporate members are well represented in the study. Among graduate group, NIOB has the highest percentage of 36.5% and it has the highest numbers of respondents, it was followed by NSE to 28.8%. Among the corporate group, NIOB and NSE are the highest and they are tied in the matter of their percentage score of 35.7%. It is evident that at corporate level both NIOB and NSE are well rooted. The next to the highest in the corporate group is NIQS with a 14.3%. After critical review of the respondents' professions, it is evident that the knowledge base is good for the study.

4.2 Enforcements of building tools

This section reveals the varying measures of building control enforcements tool. These measures are identified and ranked accordingly as presented in Table 3

Table 3: Assessment of Effectiveness of Building control Measures

Building control measures	Mean	Rank
The processing and scrutinizing of building plans for approval.	4.05	1
The inspection of building work in progress.	3.49	2
The inspection of building completed according to approved building plans for the issuance of certificates of occupancy.	3.32	3
The taking of action on unauthorized, dangerous and contraventions of statutory requirements related in building.	3.07	4
The keeping of records in relation to building and related approval.	3.00	5
The co-ordination with other statutory bodies to meet their requirements e.g. roads, fire safety, environmental requirements etc.	2.87	6
Establishing a legal framework for immediate and continuous audit and certification of existing buildings.	2.51	7

From Table 3, the frequency of enforcements of building control measures is in the following order as presented in the table from the study conducted. Processing and scrutinizing of building plans for approval is most often measure that is observed for enforcements of building control with a mean score of 4.05. It justifies that most buildings plan was approved prior to commencement of construction works. It was followed by the inspection of building works in progress with a mean score of 3.49 and the inspection of building completed according to the approved building plan for the issuance of certificate of occupancy with a mean score of 3.32. This is an indication that building inspection is one

of the core measures necessary during control of building works. Taking action on unauthorized, dangerous and other contraventions of statutory requirements related to building was among the top four with a mean score of 3.07. It signifies the zero tolerance for negligence of statutory requirements and dangerous structures that are a threat to human safety and health. The keeping of records in related to building and related approval, building control agency co-ordination with other statutory bodies in meeting requirements and establishment of legal framework for immediate and continuous audit and certification of existing building are the three least ranked with a mean score of 3.00, 2.87 and 2.51 respectively.

4.3 Factors affecting building control practice

This study identifies the various factors impacting on the building control practice and they are ranked according to their order of significance as presented in Table 4.

Table 4 :Factors affecting building control practice

Factors	Mean	Rank
Corruption.	4.65	1
Bureaucratic process.	4.40	2
Lack of coordination by agencies.	4.10	3
Greed.	4.05	4
Inadequate building control legal framework.	3.85	5
Lack of enforcement mechanism.	3.75	6
Lack of training.	3.50	7
Inadequacy of building control specialist.	3.45	8
Lack of personnel.	3.30	9
Inadequate fund for agencies.	2.80	10

Table 4 reveals the varying factors affecting building control practice, among the factors, corruption and bureaucratic process ranked high with a mean score of 4.65 and 4.40 respectively. This response indicates that corruption and bureaucratic process affects building control practice strongly. Despite the presence of the building control tool, the reports garner from our built environment are not encouraging due to the limitation of the tool caused by the varying factors. Lack of coordination by agencies and greed is other striking factors affecting building control practice with a mean score of 4.10 and 4.05 respectively. Inadequate building control legal framework and lack of enforcement mechanism ranked 5th and 6th with a mean score of 3.85 and 3.75 respectively signifies weaker authority tool. Lack of training, inadequate building control specialist and lack of personnel with mean scores of 3.50, 3.45 and 3.30 respectively ranked at the bottom of the table. Such findings reveal that building control agency effectiveness is dependent on the availability of people with technical capacity. It is however surprising to find out that inadequate fund for agencies is the least factor militating against building control effectiveness with a mean score of 2.80.

4.4 Research hypothesis

The hypothesis postulated for this study is that there is no significant difference among the group of professionals on their perception of building control measures. The result garner from the group of professionals respondents are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: ANOVA results for significant level of professional opinion on effectiveness of building control measure

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The process of scrutinizing of building plans for approval.	Between Groups	3.659	6	.610	.836	.548
	Within Groups	37.186	51	.729		
	Total	40.845	57			
The inspection of building work in progress.	Between Groups	6.692	6	1.115	.905	.498
	Within Groups	64.054	52	1.232		
	Total	70.746	58			
The inspection of building completed according to	Between Groups	5.789	6	.965	.965	.458
	Within Groups	50.987	51	1.000		

approved building plans for the issuance of certificates of occupancy.	Total	56.776	57			
The taking of action on unauthorized, dangerous and contraventions of statutory requirements related in building.	Between Groups	5.471	6	.912	.886	.512
	Within Groups	53.512	52	1.029		
	Total	58.983	58			
The keeping of records in relation to building and related approval.	Between Groups	9.245	6	1.541	1.233	.305
	Within Groups	63.738	51	1.250		
	Total	72.983	57			
The co-ordination with other statutory bodies to meet their requirements e.g roads, fire safety, environmental requirements e.t.c.	Between Groups	8.152	6	1.359	1.392	.236
	Within Groups	50.763	52	.976		
	Total	58.915	58			
Establishing a legal framework for immediate and continuous audit and certification of existing buildings.	Between Groups	11.129	6	1.855	1.213	.315
	Within Groups	79.515	52	1.529		
	Total	90.644	58			

The professionals group which includes the builders, quantity surveyors, engineers and architect perceptions on the effectiveness of building control measures were put to test and the result is presented in Table 5. The statistical level of testing of significant has been set to 5%. Table 5 reveals that the significant difference of all the processes of building control are above 0.05 which signifies no differences among the builders, quantity surveyors, engineers, architects and urban and regional on their perceptions, as such the alternative hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis which says there is no significance difference among the professionals on their perceptions of the effectiveness of building control measures is accepted.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study indicated that the state of building control practice in Lagos state is very porous. It was evident from the study that most of the measures of building control are not kept to the latter. Among the building control measures, it was only 'processing and scrutinizing of building plans for approval that was thoroughly observed from the study. Every other measure that was equally important was not monitored thoroughly. Inspection of ongoing construction site work was not carried out adequately by building control agencies from findings and such can result into sub-standard execution of construction works. Negligence in upholding such relevant measure was among the reason why the alarming rate of building collapse is on the increase within the state. In the same vein, the study revealed that thorough action was not taken on unauthorized, dangerous and other contraventions of statutory requirement in the building due to the observed result. Buildings constructed against statutory requirement. Dangerous buildings are a threat to human health and safety and inability of the agencies to strongly uphold such measure will amount to environmental catastrophe which is obtainable in our state today. The study also revealed the various factors confronting the building control practice as corruption and bureaucratic process ranked high from the study. The surfacing of corruption as the highest ranked among other factors is not surprising due to preset state of the country at large. According to the corruption perception index, Nigeria was ranked 136th out of 176 countries in the year 2014. It was evident that there is a correlation between the site of corruption at the macro and the micro level. To set every sector of the country back on the right track, corruption has to be nipped in the bud. Bureaucratic process is another striking factor challenging building control practice and it was due to the insensitiveness of the agency to the environment. Lack of coordination by agency and greed also stands as a threat to capacity of the building control agency as revealed from the study. Inadequate building control legal framework and lack of enforcements mechanism are other striking factors incapacitating building control agency performance. Such findings revealed how vulnerable our building control system has been due to lack of legal tool and enforcement mechanism. The study also revealed that lack of training, inadequate of building control specialist and lack of personnel is an urgent issue that must be given attention among others. The built environment is an industry whose technical and skilled requirements is second to none, in the same vein building control agents

technical and skillful capacity should not be lacking to be able to deliver as required by them. Inadequate fund for the agency is the least factor; nevertheless it is highly instrumental in the success of the agency function. The hypothesis tested revealed that there is no significant difference among the professionals which are architect, builders, engineers, urban and regional planners and quantity surveyors on their perception on building control practice in Lagos state.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

From the study conducted, it is evident that sustenance of the built environment is dependent on the effectiveness of the building control tool. It is revealing to know that side of the process of scrutinizing of building plans for approval measure which ranked highest, most of the measures of building control fall within three in the frequency range which signifies 'sometimes' on the likely scale.

The inspection of building works in progress which un-arguably cannot be denied as one of the relevant measures within the range of specified measures of building control tool was on a medium scale. The findings negate the perception of Building Control Performance Standard (2006) which cited that for there to be effective building control process, thorough and frequent site inspection should not be compromised.

Another significant measure which was not given a high priority from the findings is 'the taking of action on unauthorized, dangerous and contraventions of statutory requirements related to buildings' as it ranked below the expected range. To attain a healthy, safe and sustainable built environment. Adherence to the building control measure should be second to none.

The study also reveals the varying factors wrestling with the implementation of building control practice. It is not surprising to know that corruption is the most striking factor affecting the building control practice. Corruption is a pandemic that can be identified with our society as it cut across every sphere of our nation. Like a normal saying in our nation, 'if we do not kill corruption, corruption will kill us'. Without doubt the second line of the statement is what is obtainable in our environment today. The alarming rates of negative report like building collapse, massive flooding, building infernos and so on are majorly product of corruption.

Bureaucratic process was also ranked high among the factors affecting building control. This is impacting negatively on the environment due to the fact that many people get discouraged to make proper application prior to construction work. Negligence of individual and bodies to make intention known to the statutory body contributed to the ugly occurrence being experienced in our built environment.

In concise, the study reveals weakness in the enforcements of the existing regulations in our built environments. As adherence to most of the building control measures in our built environment are very feeble. The gap that exists between building regulations and its enforcements is evident with the occurrence that is still prevalent in our built environment such as incessant rate of building collapse, buildings inferno, environmental defacing and so on.

From the study, the following recommendation was made as to improve the gap that exists between building regulations and its enforcements in Lagos state.

- I. There should be regular auditing of the performance of the building control agency as to ensure that standards have not been compromised and to put authority in check due to the prevalent cases of corruption.
- II. Government should intensify in her fight against corruption, if corruption can be nipped in the bud, most sector of the economy will be set right including the built environment.
- III. The process of building control practice should be simplified and the objectives should not be compromised.
- IV. The legal framework and its implementation should be second-to-none in building control practice.
- V. Availability of skilled personnel should be ensured in building control practice.
- VI. Funding of agencies should be given high priority as it helps in achieving other recommendations.
- VII. Coordination among agencies should be encouraged as this will help in augmenting inadequacy of personnel and otherwise.

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