



Assessment of Functional Competency Exposure among Architectural Interns in Southwest Nigeria

¹Ndashiru Martins, ²Atolagbe Anifowose Michael Oladele, ³Odunjo Oluronke Omolola, ⁴Akewusola Ridwanullahi Abiodun

¹Kwara State College of Education (Technical), Lafiagi, Nigeria

^{2&3}Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho, Nigeria

⁴University of Abuja, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Architectural internships play a crucial role in developing functional competencies by bridging academic learning and professional practice. However, empirical evidence on the extent of competency exposure among architectural interns in Nigeria remains limited. This study assesses the level of functional competency exposure among architectural interns in Southwest Nigeria. A quantitative survey design was adopted using structured questionnaire. Final-year students (2025 set) across nine selected institutions, who undertook internship in the previous academic session were sampled. The assessment was based on four functional competency domains classification – Design, Construction technology and material knowledge, construction management, and practice management. A total of 263 valid responses were obtained and analysed using frequency, percentage, mean and relative exposure index (REI). Findings indicate moderate exposure across all competency domains, with the highest composite exposure recorded in Construction Technology and Material Knowledge (REI = 0.580), and the lowest in Professional Practice Management (REI = 0.508). Interns were most engaged in 2D CAD drafting tasks, whereas obtaining client briefs and observing tendering process emerged as tasks with the least exposure levels. The study revealed that interns were more involved in technical tasks than in managerial and administrative roles, which stress a need for more structured and comprehensive exposure to all aspects of professional practice to enhance balanced competency development.

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INTRODUCTION

Architectural internship programmes serve as critical transitional experiences between academic training and professional practice, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. In Nigeria, internship training is primarily implemented through the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) to provide students with practical industrial experience and professional skill acquisition (ITF, 2018). Competency-based education has increasingly become central to professional training across disciplines,

emphasising the ability of individuals to apply knowledge, skills, and behaviours in performing specific job roles.

Functional competencies, a dimension of professional competency, are occupation-specific capabilities that enable individuals to apply knowledge and skills in performing job roles and responsibilities (Mulder, 2014). Architectural competency frameworks emphasise functional capabilities such as design capabilities, construction knowledge, project coordination, and professional administration knowledge required for professional practice (RIBA, 2014; ARCON,

Corresponding author: Ndashiru Martins

ndashirum@gmail.com

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2017). Internship as a work-integrated learning scheme provides the experiential platform through which these competencies are acquired and reinforced.

Despite the acknowledged importance of internships in professional competency development, empirical evidence on the specific patterns of functional competency exposure among architectural interns remains limited, particularly within the Nigerian context. Existing studies have largely focused on general internship experiences, with relatively little attention given to the extent to which interns participate in specific professional activities that contribute to functional competency development. As a result, the actual level of exposure to key architectural tasks during internship placements remains insufficiently documented. Addressing this gap is essential for improving the structure and effectiveness of internship programmes within architectural education.

Consequently, the aim of the study is to assess the level of functional competency exposure among architectural interns in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, the study evaluates the extent to which interns participate in core professional activities associated with architectural practice to provide empirical evidence on the nature of internship training experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is a pedagogical approach that integrates academic learning with practical, hands-on experiences in the workplace. The integration of theory and practice is increasingly recognised as essential in preparing students for the demands of the contemporary workforce (Ferns, 2018). The significance of workplace-based learning in professional competency development has been widely discussed within the literature on work-integrated learning (Jackson, 2015; Adegbite & Hoole, 2024; Ferns *et al.*, 2024). Experiential learning theory (Kolbs 2015) suggests that meaningful professional learning occurs when students actively engage in authentic work

situations by applying knowledge and skills to real problems.

Internship, as a WIL approach, can be vehicles for both learning and development in several aspects of students' lives. It aids easy transition from school to work and the real world and provides students with an opportunity to gain practical experience as well as develop the competencies needed to succeed in their future careers (Jackson, 2015). Internships also help in setting realistic expectations of entry-level graduate jobs and play a significant role in enhancing students' employability and personal growth (Hassouna & Zaazou, 2024). Undergraduates with adequate internship experience are found to have greater potential for full-time employment after graduation, as internships provide both practical skills and professional confidence valued by employers (Musa, Nurhayati & Boriboon, 2025). Interns who perform strongly are also more likely to attract favourable employment offers and enhanced early career prospects (Zhao & Liden, 2010).

However, the quality of internship experiences could vary significantly. Several studies have identified structural challenges that limit the effectiveness of internship programme to include inadequate supervision, limited mentorship opportunities, poorly structured internship programmes, poor coordination between institutions and host organisations, as well as restricted participation in diverse project activities (Gündeş, 2017; Baghel *et al.*, 2018; Guglani *et al.* 2022; Musa, 2023). Additionally, factors such as placement, organisational size and structure influence competency exposure (Eble-Hankins *et al.*, 2021; Yoo *et al.*, 2025).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study covers all departments of architecture that have existed for a minimum of 10 years in universities within the Southwest region of Nigeria. Nine universities fall into this category (Table 1). The benchmark of a decade is to ensure that schools included in the study have developed a stable academic programme structure and have produced sets of students for architectural internship over time. Specifically, 2025 final-year

Corresponding author: Ndashiru Martins

ndashirum@gmail.com

Kwara State College of Education (Technical), Lafiagi, Nigeria.

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students who undertook mandatory internship in the previous academic session were sampled. The study employed quantitative survey method using structured questionnaires. The sample size was derived through Yamen's formula ($n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$) at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. (Table 2). A set of 330 structured questionnaires were randomly administered to students across the nine schools that fulfil the selection criteria, however, only 263 questionnaires were deemed valid for analysis.

The questionnaire was designed based on Ndashiru (2025) competency classification. The framework conceptualised functional competency into four domain – Design, Construction technology and material knowledge, construction management, and practice management domains – representing the core curricula focus of architectural training (Figure 1). Respondents rated exposure levels to specific activities within each domain using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = To no extent, 2 = To a small extent, 3 = To a moderate extent, 4 = To a great extent, and 5 = To a very great extent.

To strengthen the quality of the data collected, the questionnaire was carefully examined for both validity and reliability. A pilot test was carried out with a small group of students who were not part of the main study, in order to check that the questions aligned well with the intended competency categories. This step also

helped confirm that the structure of the instrument was logical and easy to follow. In addition, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, and all sections produced values above 0.70, indicating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for the study.

Data from the survey were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using item Mean Score (MS), which was computed as the average of all ratings for each competency item. Furthermore, the Relative Exposure Index (REI) was computed to normalise and rank the items in relative order of exposure using the expression:

$$REI/RDI = \frac{\sum WV}{N \times S_{max}}$$

Where:

WV = Weighted Value

N = Total number of respondents or participants

S_{max} = Maximum possible score

The following classification framework was adopted to interpret REI values:

- $REI \leq 0.40$: Low exposure
- $0.41 \leq REI \leq 0.60$: Moderate exposure
- $REI \geq 0.61$: High exposure

This classification approach aligns with established methodologies employed in similar empirical studies assessing skills and competencies in professional education contexts (Toyin & Mewomo, 2023).

Table 1: Universities that Offer Architecture in the Southwest

S/N	Name of School	Establishment Year of Architecture Department	Ownership Type	Existed up to 10 Years
1	Afe-Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti	2019	Private	No
2	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	2016	Private	No
3	Bells University of Technology, Ota	2010	Private	Yes
4	Caleb University, Lagos	2009	Private	Yes
5	Covenant University, Ota (CU)	2003	Private	Yes
6	Crescent University, Abeokuta	2016	Private	No
7	Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA)	1989	Public	Yes
8	First Technical University, Ibadan	2021	Public	No
9	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji (JABU)	2008	Private	Yes
10	Lagos State University (LASU)	2023	Public	No

Corresponding author: Ndashiru Martins

ndashirum@gmail.com

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S/N	Name of School	Establishment Year of Architecture Department	Ownership Type	Existed up to 10 Years
11	Ladoke Akintola University of technology, Ogbomosho (LAUTECH)	1990	Public	Yes
12	Lead City University, Ibadan (LCU)	2017	Private	No
13	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife (OAU)	1982	Public	Yes
14	Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu (OU)	2019	Private	No
15	Olabisi Onobanjo University, Ago-Iwoye (OOU)	2003	Public	Yes
16	Redeemers University, Ede	2019	Private	No
17	University of Ibadan (UI)	2018	Public	No
18	University of Lagos (UNILAG)	1971	Public	Yes

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents across Institutions

S/N	Name of School	Sampling Frame	Calculated Sample Size	Number of Questionnaire Administered	Number of Valid Responses
1	BELLSTECH	62	23	30	24
2	CALEB	110	40	50	40
3	CU	55	20	30	23
4	FUTA	112	41	50	41
5	JABU	53	20	30	21
6	LAUTECH	85	31	40	33
7	OAU	62	23	30	24
8	OOU	72	26	30	26
9	UNILAG	82	30	40	31
Total		693	254	330	263

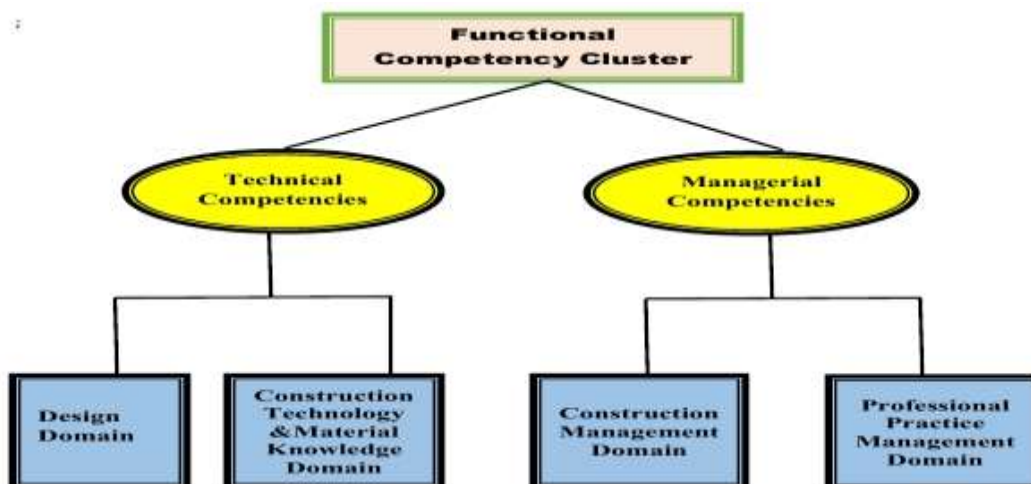


Figure 1: Functional Competency Domain Classification

Corresponding author: *Ndashiru Martins*

✉ ndashirum@gmail.com

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic distributions of the students. Gender distribution of respondents shows that 59.7% were male, while 40.3% were female. This indicates a higher representation of male students among the participants. The observed gender disparity aligns with trends commonly reported in architectural education in Nigeria and other developing countries, where male enrolment typically exceeds female participation in the discipline

(Enwerekowe & Mangden, 2019; Olayeni & Adisa, 2019). The distribution of the respondents based on level of study indicates that 62.4% were in 400 level, while 37.6% were in 500 level. This implies that the majority of the participants were enrolled in four-year architecture programme, whereas the remaining respondents were in five-year programme. The focus on these levels is consistent with the study's objective, which targeted final-year students who had undergone their mandatory internship during the penultimate year of study.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S/N	Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender		
	Male	157	59.7
	Female	106	40.3
	Total	263	100.0
2.	Level of Study		
	400	164	62.4
	500	99	37.6
	Total	263	100.0

Domain-Based Tasks Assessment of Functional Competency Exposure

The analysis of the degree of exposure to specific tasks under each domain as shown in Table 2 are presented as follow:

Design Domain

Exposure within the design domain is clearly skewed toward production-oriented tasks. Activities such as 2D CAD drafting (REI = 0.724), 3D visualisation (REI = 0.644), and preparation of working drawings (REI = 0.634) dominate interns' experiences. This indicates strong involvement in technical documentation and visual communication stages of design. However, this

level of engagement drops as tasks move toward more conceptual and interactive roles. Activities like design presentation (REI = 0.494) and obtaining clients' briefs (REI = 0.384), which require communication, judgement, and direct client interaction, rank lowest. This pattern suggests a structured segmentation of responsibilities within firms, where interns contribute primarily to execution phases rather than early-stage design thinking or client interfacing. Such limited exposure may stem from firms' tendencies to restrict interns' involvement in sensitive client communications or conceptual presentations in order to maintain professional confidentiality and hierarchical boundaries.

Table 2: Exposure across Functional Competency Domains in Architectural Internship

Skills and Knowledge Area	NR	ΣWV	MS	SD	REI	Ranking	Remark
Design Domain							
2D CAD drafting	263	952	3.62	1.026	0.724	1 st	High
3D visualisations	263	846	3.22	1.180	0.644	2 nd	High
Working drawings and Specifications	263	833	3.17	1.050	0.634	3 rd	High

Corresponding author: Ndashiru Martins

ndashirum@gmail.com

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Skills and Knowledge Area	NR	ΣWV	MS	SD	REI	Ranking	Remark
Design documentation and approval	263	766	2.91	1.190	0.582	4 th	Moderate
Creating design proposals	263	746	2.84	1.182	0.568	5 th	Moderate
Sustainable design practices	263	728	2.77	1.028	0.554	6 th	Moderate
Pre-design planning activities i.e. site information gathering	263	685	2.60	1.071	0.520	7 th	Moderate
Design presentation	263	649	2.47	1.066	0.494	8 th	Moderate
Obtaining clients' briefs	263	505	1.92	1.036	0.384	9 th	Low
Construction Technology and Material Knowledge							
Structural construction activities	263	846	3.22	1.127	0.644	1 st	High
Selection and application of materials	263	787	2.99	1.136	0.598	2 nd	Moderate
Building finishing and detailing	263	783	2.98	1.188	0.596	3 rd	Moderate
Building services installations	263	766	2.91	1.171	0.582	4 th	Moderate
Introduced to pre-construction activities such as site investigation, site analysis, surveying, etc.	263	708	2.69	1.188	0.538	5 th	Moderate
Construction Project Management Domain							
On-site safety measures	263	892	3.39	1.099	0.678	1 st	High
Coordination of different trades on-site	263	749	2.85	1.095	0.570	2 nd	Moderate
Post-construction activities such as project delivery, maintenance, etc.	263	742	2.82	1.199	0.564	3 rd	Moderate
Quality control checks	263	737	2.80	1.213	0.560	4 th	Moderate
Resource allocation and cost control	263	712	2.71	1.060	0.542	5 th	Moderate
Construction scheduling, monitoring and project evaluation	263	669	2.54	1.209	0.508	6 th	Moderate
Procurement process	263	659	2.51	1.084	0.502	7 th	Moderate
Professional Practice Management Competencies							
Administrative support functions such as document organisation and filing.	263	756	2.87	1.127	0.574	1 st	Moderate
Professional ethics and codes of conduct	263	709	2.70	1.003	0.540	2 nd	Moderate
Relevant building codes and bye-laws	263	683	2.60	1.047	0.520	3 rd	Moderate
Preparation and review of contract documents	263	682	2.59	1.010	0.518	4 th	Moderate
Tendering process	263	508	1.93	1.160	0.386	5 th	Low

Corresponding author: Ndashiru Martins

ndashirum@gmail.com

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- a. NR = Number of Respondents.
- b. ΣWV = Sum of Weighted Values derived from respondents' ratings for each activity.
- c. MS = Mean Score, indicating the average level of exposure in each activity.
- d. SD = Standard Deviation, reflecting the variability in respondents' responses.

Construction Technology and Material Knowledge (CTMK) Domain

Interns' exposure in the construction technology and material knowledge domain is strongest in observing on-site structural activities (REI = 0.644). This include activities such as foundation works, framing, wall construction, and roofing. Interns indicated moderate exposure to building finishing and detailing processes (REI = 0.598), material selection and application (REI = 0.596), as well as mechanical and electrical services installation (REI = 0.582). Meanwhile, Pre-construction activities such as site investigation, analysis, and surveying (REI = 0.538), as well as setting-out works (REI = 0.524), recorded the lowest exposure. This points to minimal engagement in site preparatory and layout procedures. The observed disparity further suggests a pattern where interns are more exposed to "what is built" rather than "how and why decisions are made before construction begins."

Construction Project Management Domain

In construction management domain, on-site safety procedures recorded the highest level of exposure (REI = 0.678), showing that interns are regularly engaged in compliance-related practices that are central to day-to-day site operations. Moderate exposure was recorded in other project management functions such as, coordination of multiple trades (REI = 0.570), post-construction activities (REI = 0.564), quality control inspections (REI = 0.560), and resource allocation and cost control (REI = 0.542). Meanwhile, interns were least exposed to **construction scheduling and monitoring** (REI = 0.508), as well as **procurement process** (REI = 0.502). The findings indicate that interns' participation in project management is largely operational rather than managerial, revealing a gap between observational learning and active managerial competence. Although interns are

present within project environments, their roles do not sufficiently support the development of higher-order project management skills.

Professional Practice Administration Domain

Interns' engagement in activities within this domain is predominantly concentrated in routine administrative functions, with document organisation and filing (REI = 0.574) ranking highest. Exposure progressively declines in more specialised areas such as professional ethics and codes of conduct (REI = 0.540), contract documentation (REI = 0.518) and building regulations (REI = 0.520). Whereas, the least exposure was observed in tendering processes (REI = 0.386). These findings aligns with Şekerci *et al.*, (2021), who equally observed that interns are more frequently engaged in routine office operations and production-oriented tasks, with comparatively limited involvement in higher-level professional responsibilities. The limited exposure to tendering processes reflects the sensitive and confidential nature of procurement procedures, combined with the likelihood that tendering events occur infrequently or outside typical intern placement periods.

Comparative Analysis of Domains within the Functional Competency Cluster

The comparison of overall composite REI values shows a relatively narrow spread across all four domains, indicating broadly similar levels of intern engagement. Construction Technology and Material Knowledge records the highest composite REI (0.580), followed closely by the Design Domain (0.567) and Construction Project Management (0.561), while Professional Practice Management records the lowest (0.508). The findings reflect that intern experienced moderate range exposure across all domains with a slight tilt toward technical activities, while professional and managerial areas remain comparatively less pronounced. The small

Corresponding author: Ndashiru Martins

ndashirum@gmail.com

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differences between values therefore point to variation in emphasis rather than distinct levels of access across domains. This aligns with empirical studies indicating that internship learning typically

spans multiple areas of practice but is more strongly developed in technical roles than in professional and managerial functions (Erbaş, 2023; Gundes & Atakul, 2017).

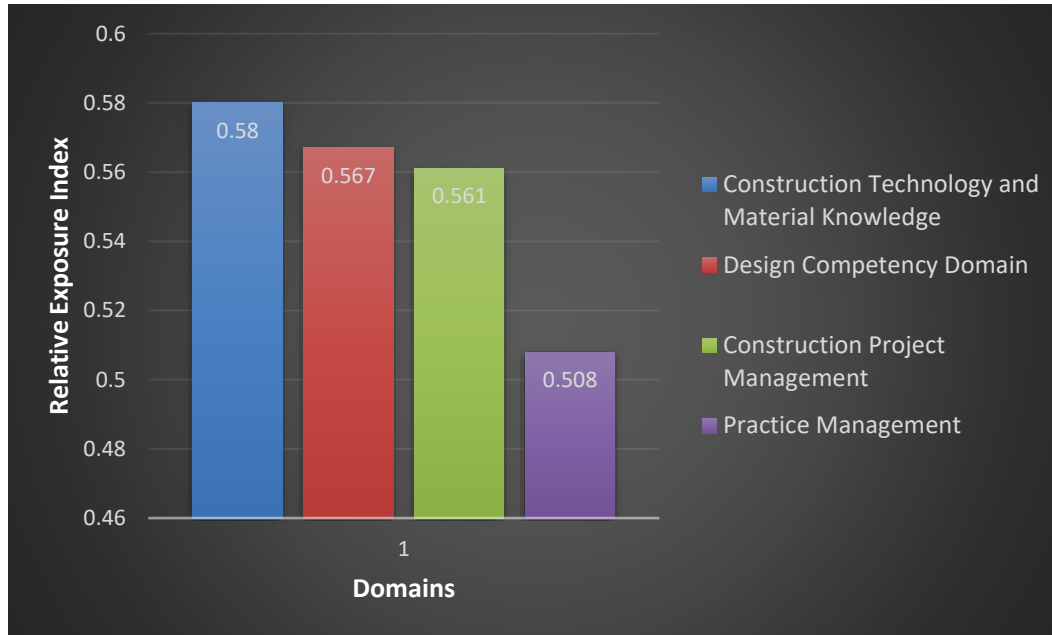


Figure 2: Overall Exposure levels of Domains within Functional Competency Cluster

A cross-domain assessment of all tasks and knowledge area under the four domains indicate varied levels of exposure among interns (Figure 3). The highest levels of engagement are recorded in 2D CAD drafting (REI = 0.724), 3D visualisation (REI = 0.644), structural construction observation (REI = 0.644), and preparation of working drawings (REI = 0.634). In contrast, the lowest exposure is observed in obtaining clients' briefs (REI = 0.384) and participation in tendering processes (REI = 0.386). **These findings further imply** that interns are most engaged in hand-on design related activities and **less** involved in client-facing and procurement-related functions. A key pattern emerges when comparing domain-level and task-level findings. Although

Construction Technology and Material Knowledge records the highest composite exposure, the most frequently performed tasks are concentrated in the Design Domain. This indicates that while interns interact with construction-related activities across projects, the most consistent hands-on engagement remains within design production tasks. This pattern is consistent with the observations of Sudha and Premkumar (2023), who noted that architectural interns often spend the bulk of their time on drafting and 3D modelling tasks, with considerably fewer opportunities for site visits or broader professional practice engagement.

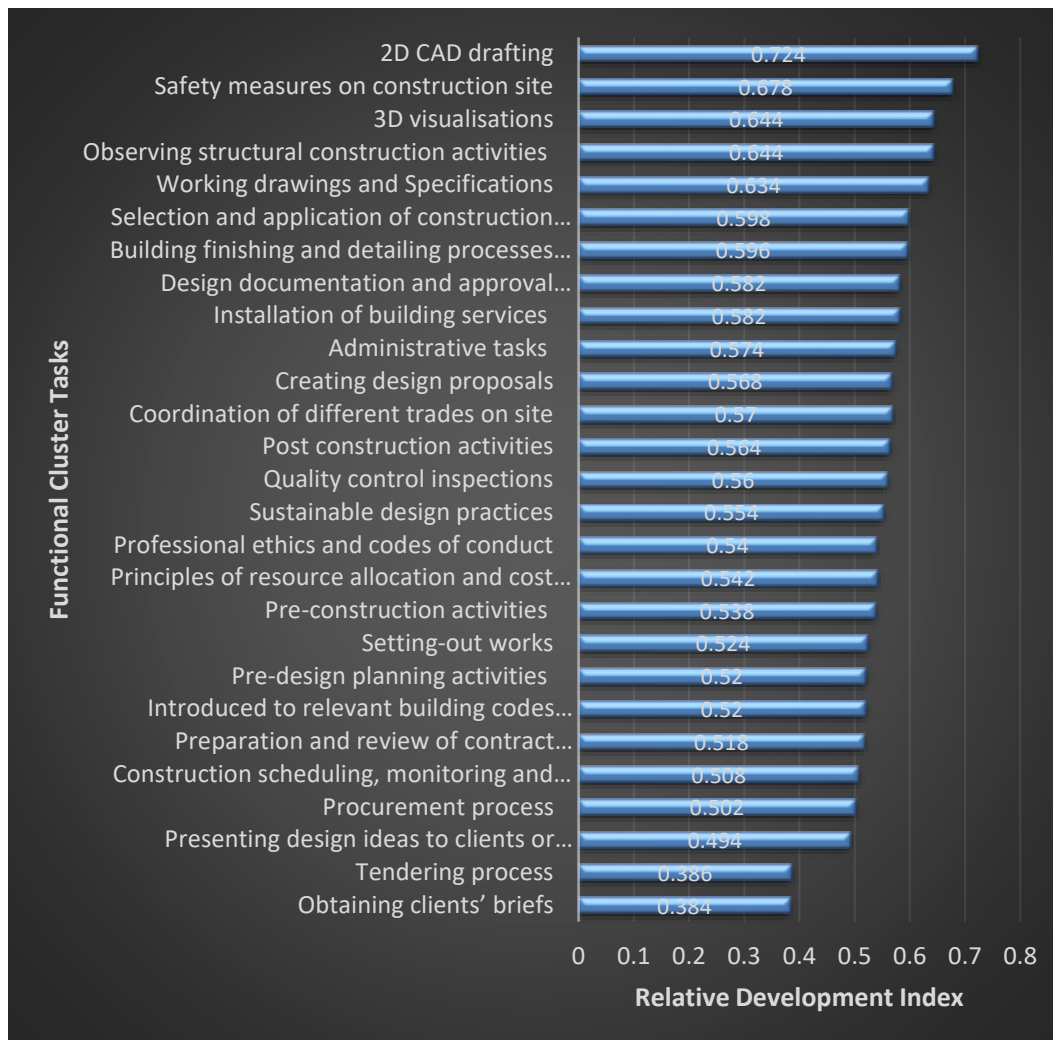


Figure 3: Exposure Levels across Tasks within Functional Competency Cluster

CONCLUSION

This study examined interns' exposure to functional competency tasks within architectural internship and found a generally uniform but mid-level distribution of engagement across all domains. Interns are involved in all four competency areas – Design, Construction Technology and Material Knowledge, Construction Project Management, and Professional Practice Management – but their experiences are largely concentrated in routine design production and site observation tasks. In

contrast, exposure to client interaction, procurement, contract administration, and other core practice management functions remains limited. This pattern indicates that current internship structures prioritise technical production over holistic professional development, resulting in graduates who are relatively strong in operational skills but less exposed to higher-order competencies required for independent practice, including judgement, coordination, and professional responsibility.

Corresponding author: *Ndashiru Martins*

ndashirum@gmail.com

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To address this imbalance, internship regulation should shift from duration-based requirements to a competency-based framework, where minimum exposure levels are defined across all functional domains. Professional bodies should also strengthen monitoring mechanisms such as structured logbooks, competency tracking, and firm accreditation standards to ensure balanced training experiences. At the curriculum level, architectural education should be more deliberately aligned with professional practice through simulation-based learning in areas such as procurement, contract processes, project scheduling, and client engagement. Stronger school–industry collaboration is also needed to better prepare students for the breadth of tasks encountered during internships. In practice, firms should adopt more structured internship models that include task rotation, supervised participation in meetings and coordination activities, and deliberate mentorship. These would ensure more balanced competency development and better preparation of graduates for full professional responsibility.

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Corresponding author: Ndashiru Martins

ndashirum@gmail.com

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Corresponding author: Ndashiru Martins

ndashirum@gmail.com

Kwara State College of Education (Technical), Lafiagi, Nigeria.

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