Original Research Article

An Investigation into the Training Needs of Interior Design Diploma Graduates: A Kenyan Perspective

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Abstract

Interior Design (ID) development and growth is being appreciated by many people today than it was in the past. This paper discusses the findings of a study that sought to investigate the training needs of the Kenyan Interior Design Diploma Graduates (KIDDGs). Employing a descriptive survey research design, the study was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya. The target population was KIDDGs who graduated within the last ten years and were practicing in the Interior Design Industry. Snowball sampling was used to select 120 KIDDGs. Self-administered questionnaires, interviews, and observation were the methods of data collection. Data was coded according to emerging patterns, analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25) and presented using tables and histograms as well as written reports. This paper demonstrates that most of the KIDDGs reported of their inability to positively perform in areas such as analyzing their clients' needs, goals, and life and safety requirements, inadequacy in the formulation of the preliminary design concepts, and lack of knowledge to collaborate with other licensed design practitioners in the technical areas. This forces them to retrain on areas such as lighting and lighting designs, visual language of design and properties of colour and colour psychology for them to be effective in the IDI. Other training needs are working out costs, preparing estimates and how to advise client on the use of fittings, furniture, fabrics, and wall and floor coverings. The paper recommends that to address this dire scenario, the government and the public technical institutions need to expand the contribution of interior design to society through the exchange and development of knowledge and experience in education and practice. In addition, Institutions offering ID Programs need to equip their computer labs and workshops with essential modern equipment, sufficient and effective training personnel and provision of adequate supplier of instructional materials. Technical institutions should focus on education that gives designers access to internships and regular industrial visits to interact with other designers with real-world experience.
Keywords: Training Needs, Interior Design, Diploma Graduates, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION
Interior Design: An Overview
Over time, what began as the art of decorating, embracing form and function, has evolved into today's world of highly specialized areas of Interior Design (ID) that require years of intense training [1]. In order for one to become a successful Professional Interior Designer (PID), one needs a well-rounded education and the skills to work within many ID disciplines (architecture; graphic design; decorative arts and textile, furniture and furnishings, finishes and lighting design). An interior designer should therefore be able to use his abilities to make interior places attractive and fascinating after undergoing the training [2].

Globally, ID training programmes should provide students with fundamental concepts which would contribute to the life of an educated person and would be useful in all fields of endeavour. In the United States, the Interior Design Industry (IDI) is a vibrant one and there is a high demand for the skills needed in ID from fields such as architecture [3]. The ID discipline of art has also been professionalized by the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). This provides an opportunity for those trained in the IDI

to get opportunities relevant to their skills. According to research carried out by US Bureau of Labour of Statistics, the IDI is growing at a rate of 19% [4]. The study projected that by the year 2020, there would be about 10,000 new jobs for Interior Designers (IDs). This demand was, at the time of study, as a result of new buildings coming up in the public and private sector both commercial and residential which had opened up opportunities for IDs. One of the areas which clients looked for was the level of expertise that an interior designer had and this was determined by the kind of training they had. In the US, ID training programmes have the ability to give one the necessary skills to make training relevant to the IDI [5]. An example is the New York School of Design which offers training and skills in ID for the market.

Research [6] had revealed that in the UK, 80% of ID students found employment six months after graduating, 35.5 % of ID students work as interior decorative designers and 47% of the students engage in art, design and media disciplines. An estimated 17% go into retail and 8.9% work as technicians in the IDI. According to the National Careers Service 2014 in the UK, one needed a high level of design skills to become an interior designer, which usually means completing a higher education course in an art- or design-related subject at foundation degree, higher national diploma or degree level.

In Africa, the IDI is growing in popularity but the industry faces one challenge; it has not yet been professionalized. Most African countries are yet to recognize it as a full time profession [7]. ID training programmes in South Africa are offered at both diploma and degree level and impart skills needed for the market in the IDI. Despite the lack of professional recognition, in 2006, the South African Institute of the Interior Design Professions was formed. Its aim was to establish, promote and maintain expertise, professionalism, sound business practice and high standards throughout the industry. The IDI in South Africa strives to expand the contribution of ID to society through the exchange and development of knowledge and experience in education and practice. Most IDI opportunities occur in the architectural field where landscape and interior architecture are common.

The IDI in Kenya has been determined by the fast growing real estate sector. Mwangalwa [7] observes that IDs are cashing in on retail, commercial and residential spaces as real estate investment continues to grow in Kenya. The rapidly expanding middle class in the country is searching for affordable and secure living space that meets their housing needs. This means more infrastructure and more opportunities for ID who depend mostly on properties such as houses, malls and work spaces. According to the National Housing Corporation, there is a housing deficit of more than 200,000 units per annum for the low to middle-income market. Demand for housing means that there are more opportunities for those involved in ID. In Kenya, most training for IDs is done at Certificate and Diploma level in institutions of higher learning. Most ID training is confined to private institutions [8].

The Kenyan Government's commitment to the provision of quality education and training to its citizens at all levels is paramount. Vision 2030 singles out education and training as the vehicle that would drive Kenya into becoming a middle-income economy (Government of Kenya [9]. Jones [10] points out that technology has brought new changes in design forcing a conceptual shift in ID and creation. Hence this has challenged educators to evaluate and re-evaluate ID programs. In addition, there is need to enhance the competence and proficiency of sufficient training centres that were strengthened in terms of infrastructure. In other words, if ID programmes, along with other education programmes were to be adequately adhered to and the curricula re-aligned within skills and competence framework, the aspirations of Vision 2030 would be met [11].

In view of the above observation, Bashir [12] advocates for a more flexible and comprehensive structure for Kenya's education system and curriculum reform to specify the expected competences at every level of learning. In addition, a Task Force from the Ministry of Education [9] recommended major reforms of the curriculum to align it with the Constitution and to ensure that the aspirations of Vision 2030 are met. This, the taskforce avers, could be achieved by structuring the curriculum within skills and competences framework that identifies the knowledge, skills and competences all learners would acquire, and which would provide both vertical and horizontal coherence. Hence the researchers identified the need for an evaluation of the training needs of interior design diploma graduates in Kenya.

Training Needs of Interior Design Diploma Graduates – Current Views
Training needs refers to ways of thinking and acting that workers lack or which causes them to perform below the required standard [13]. ID is a multi-faceted profession in which creative and technical solutions are applied within a structure to achieve a built interior environment. It includes a scope of services performed by PIDs, who are qualified by means of education, experience, and examination, in order to protect and enhance the life, health, safety and welfare of the learners and the public [1]. The PIDs need a higher standard of education in order to stay ahead of times and advance their career to meet the market demand [14].

The profession of ID is a field that provides a broad understanding and focuses on the theory and processes of design as well as practice. This profession prepares workers to understand the wide variety of

ideas, concepts and solutions to ID projects. PID has become essential for best business practice. There is a design specialization that deals with almost all areas of industry and commerce (Awards for Creative Achievements (ACA) [15]. Whether it will be in manufacturing, the building industry or in media and communication, there is a PID who can help grow a business because they get to the heart of the issues and design interiors that have function, aesthetic and quality that the client is looking for [16].

A professional is a person with a high degree of expertise in their chosen vocation. They should be able to provide advice to customers free from commercial or personal bias. A professional is knowledgeable and ethical [17]. Being a professional requires a continuing commitment to education. Not only is it important to acquire initial thorough educational grounding in the knowledge and practice of your vocation, but it is essential to continuously add to your knowledge and skills as new knowledge and techniques become available [1]. PIDs bring to projects extensive training and a wealth of experience. They use expertise and product knowledge to expand client ideas, solve problems, offer unique solutions, and save time and money [18].

ID recognizes the benefits of higher levels of education within the profession [19]. There must therefore be access to design education through a range of pathways and flexible study options in the higher education and vocational education sectors, along with expanded opportunities for postgraduate study, professional development and lifelong learning [18]. Among the ID programs goals are to foster design excellence, to encourage design research projects in collaboration with Kenyan educational institutions, and support the development of postgraduate education generally [16]. PID will provide a balance of technical and subjective skills that match the business needs of many industry areas. Whether in manufacturing, furniture, banking, building cars' interiors or selling wine, there is a design professional to help in the improvement of business [20].

The best way to gain the knowledge and skills you need to become an interior designer today is by gaining an accredited qualification. The disciplinary perspectives share a common pedagogy within the College of Architecture divisions, engaging in creative and technical skills that prepare new graduates to solve problems related to global challenges facing the profession of ID [21].

The Division of ID faculty provides a professional undergraduate and graduate education in ID within a collaborative, multidisciplinary learning environment [14]. The undergraduate programme is a post of professional degree with areas of concentration in architectural lighting, design process management or

sustainable design. Learning is interdisciplinary: the location of the ID programs within a college that shares teaching pedagogy across the disciplines of the built environment provides ID faculty and students with an environment where team contributions are sought and disciplinary expertise is valued [10]. Without an accredited qualification, a practicing interior designer may not be adequate in terms of training.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out within ID firms that had employed Kenyan Interior Design Diploma Graduates (KIDDGs) and adopted a descriptive survey research design [22]. Majority of ID firms are located in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. These firms include: Kinslay Interiors, De'cole Galore Designs Ltd, Whitsky (Arteree Handique Kassam), Castle & Gardens Designers, Kenya Interior places, Creo Interiors, African Eye Crafts, Concept & Details Factory Ltd, Zidaka Interiors, Smart *focus* estate, Gypsum Ceilings & Interiors Kenya Ltd, Lemorgan Designs, Space Burst Interiors Ltd, Unity Makers Designs, Terry Interior Designers and Noble Blue Design Ltd-Kenya.

The study population was made up of PIDs who were diploma graduates from Kenyan training institutions, practicing in IDI and graduated within the last ten years. PIDs refer to all trained individuals concerned with all aspects of ID. The study sought information from this particular group because they had gone through the ID diploma training from Kenyan institutions and were practicing in the IDI. They therefore had knowledge on the Kenya's institutions that offer diploma programs. They could also relate the program's relevant training to the IDI manpower needs where they were practicing.

In Kenya, about six private technical institutions and two universities had IDDPs. The private technical institutions were Nairobi Institute of Technology, Buruburu Institute of Fine Art, Unity College of Design, Everlin College of Design, Uzuri Institute of Design, and Regina Pacis University College. The two universities were: University of Nairobi and Maseno University and also Technical University of Kenya when it was Kenya National Polytechnic. Each of these institutions graduated an average of 15 candidates per year. The study estimated the total number of diploma graduates from the Kenyan ID institutions within the last ten years to be 1200. The study therefore selected a sample representative of 10% of the 1200 graduates which came to 120 IDs.

The study sample was selected using purposive and snowball sampling. The researchers purposively selected the diploma graduates from Kenyan institutions offering Kenyan Interior Design Diploma Programmes (KIDDPs) who were working in the IDI [23]. Snowball sampling was used to identify the KIDDGs. The study

initially identified 35 known KIDDGs who then identified the rest (85).

The study used self-administered questionnaires, interviews, and an observation checklist to collect data from the respondents. The quantitative data was coded and analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). The analysed data was given as frequency distributions and percentages where applicable. The qualitative data was compiled and coded according to the emerging patterns and it was categorized and explained under the relevant categories. The results of the analysis was presented in form of tables, charts, bar graphs and written reports.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Respondents' Demographics
The study sought to gather information regarding the respondents' background including gender, nature of employment, job designation, work experience and any other ID related work done by the respondents. This was determined by the interior designers who responded to the questionnaires given. As illustrated in Table-1, 60% of the respondents were men while 40% of the respondents were women. This shows that men embraced a positive attitude towards ID work, unlike in the other related design fields such as fashion design and textiles where in Kenya women dominate [24].

Table-1: Respondents' Background Information

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender of the respondents		
Male	72	60
Female	48	40
Total	**120**	**100**
Nature of Employment		
Self-employed	54	45
Contract	42	35
Employed	24	20
Total	**120**	**100**
Job position held		
Supervisor	42	35
Worker	78	65
Total	**120**	**100**
Work experience		
Above 5 years	66	55
Below 5 years	54	45
Total	**120**	**100**
Other related work done		
Had related work	82	68
Did not have other related work	38	32
Total	**120**	**100**

Source: Field Data (2016)

In addition, majority of the respondents were self-employed at 45%, whereas 35% were working on contract terms as well as 20% who were permanently employed. From the study, it was clear that ID was an avenue of self-employment and therefore a source of livelihood. The statistics showed that those on contract were likely to move to either self-employment or get permanently employed but still this showed strong pillar that supported continuity of IDI in Kenya.

At the time of the study, 35% of the respondents were supervisors whereas 65% were sub-ordinate workers. The study showed that the graduates were self-reliant therefore able to meet the needs of the IDI. This is in line with Bromley [16] who reported that the skills offered to designers met the clients' demands. From the study, it was noted that the skills and knowledge acquired from an accredited college of interior design assured employers and clients that designers have got the necessary skills and experience to provide creative solutions to design problems. Hence

the KIDDGs have been able to maintain the professional practice, managerial practice and product design which equip most trainees to find work as managers or competitive workers in places of residence, entertainment and other public offices.

According to the study findings, respondents with work experience beyond 5 years were more (55%) compared to those with experience below five years who were 45%. However, from the study, this figure is likely to go up given the fact that those with many years of experience had already been established unlike their colleagues who graduated in the last five years who are yet to be established economically meaning some are yet to begin their business in their own small ways. Further, as shown in Table-1, among the respondents, 65% had other related work such as architecture; graphic design; textile designs and furniture and lighting design while 35% concentrated on interior design only. In addition, the study showed that ID is such a vibrant and a creative profession where designers

can work all round. This concurs with the findings of Parker [25] that designers are in demand for their wide scope of skills at creating inviting, liveable interior spaces, utilizing their knowledge of texture, colour, composition, design, lighting, as well as creating spaces that can be environmentally-friendly and safe for the public.

Training Needs of the KIDDGs: Findings from the Field

The researchers determined the training needs of KIDDGs by enquiring on the relevance of the acquired training compared to what is expected in the ID field. The KIDDGs rated the diploma training in terms of what was lacking in its adequacy and relevance

to the IDI. In addition to what they had done to improve performance they had to enrol for extra training or training on the job. The respondents' personal views on any area in KIDDPs that needs urgent attention to enhance ID training in Kenya were also sought.

The KIDDGs training needs according to this paper is the inadequacy to undertake some tasks due to inadequate training, hence one need to retrain first in order to have the capacity to carry on with the ID tasks. ID generally is a multi-faceted profession in which creative and technical solutions are applied within a structure to achieve a built interior environment. Figure 1 presents the training needs of KIDDGs.
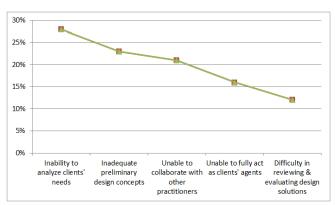

Fig-1: Analysis of the KIDDGs Training Needs
Source: Field Data (2016)

From the study, the researchers noted that the training needs of the KIDDGs hindered their performance at the IDI. From the results in Figure 1, majority (28%) of the respondents reported that their main training need was their inability to analyze their clients' needs, goals, and life and safety requirements especially when they interact with clients who are partially informed. Analyzing the client's needs meant to integrate findings of what the clients wanted with the knowledge and skills of the interior design graduates and the experience they gained during practice. This implied that the training in this area was within a limited scope.

From Figure 1, 23% of the respondents reported that they felt being inadequately prepared in areas concerning formulation of the preliminary design concepts such as aesthetic, appropriate, functional, and in accordance with codes and standards. Due to this limitation, the designers were not perfect in developing and presenting final design recommendations as required. Hence, they were compelled to train further in order to be able to prepare working drawings and specifications for non-load bearing interior construction, reflected ceiling plans, lighting, interior detailing, materials, finishes, space planning, furnishings, fixtures, and equipment in compliance with

universal accessibility guidelines and all applicable codes. The findings of this study implied that what the respondents acquired from KIDDPs was insufficient as far as formulation of preliminary design concepts was concerned.

Twenty one (21) percent of the respondents reported that they were not adequate on knowledge to collaborate with other licensed practitioners in the technical areas of mechanical, electrical, and load-bearing design as required for regulatory approval. Some (16%) of the respondent agreed to have lacked the required skills in the preparation and administration of bids and contract documents when acting as the client's agent until they had their training on the job which gave them power to enhance their working experience. Further, 12% of the respondents agreed to have lacked adequate knowledge and sufficient skills to enable them work on the review and evaluation of design solutions during implementation and upon completion of the given project.

The researchers found out that further training of the respondents made them aware of their training needs. The following are some of the areas that KIDDGs had to retrain or train on the job.

Table-2: Areas KIDDGs had to Retrain or Train on the Job

Areas Trained on the Job	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lighting and Lighting design	78	65
The visual language of design	75	63
Modern design styles	68	57
Colour	67	56
Interior finishes training	64	53
Furniture, art and accessories	60	50
Visual communication refresher course	60	50
How to Work with clients	58	48
Interior design portfolio	52	43
Drawing and composition	46	38

N=120
Note: Multiple responses were allowed
Source: Field Data (2016)

From Table-2, the study showed that KIDDGs had to train in different ID areas before they become competitive in the IDI. Sixty five (65) percent of the respondents agreed that they retrained on lighting and lighting designs. This training gives IDs the skills to be creative and visualize into reality by using natural and artificial lighting. It also enables IDs to create a stunning effect in interior projects and how to communicate ideas clearly to electricians, builders and suppliers by specifying the correct products.

The retraining was done also on the visual language design as reported by 63% of the respondents. This enabled KIDDGs to develop a 'designer's eye'. This finding confirmed the study by Behrens [1], who states that the designer's eye enables IDs understand how to apply the acquired knowledge and create inspirational designs for home and work environments. Modern design styles that were reported by 57% of the respondents indicated to have needed more training on this subject. The modern design styles helped KIDDGs to develop knowledge of different structures, common problems that occur during practice and their solutions so that they could communicate clearly with clients, suppliers and manufacturers.

Colour also was viewed as an important area that needed retraining by 56% who reported to have attended more courses to give them more knowledge on properties of colour and understand how it can change the mood of a space, alter perceptions and create the intended style. This practical experience made them discover the effect of natural and artificial light on colour and also on surface textures. The researchers also found out that the retraining on colour by the KIDDGs enabled them to learn more on the history, beauty and luxury of decorative textiles and fabrics and their affinity to colour. Further training on interior finishes that was reported by 53% was noted to be essential course because it equipped IDs with the required skills of discovering the importance of ensuring quality finishes on the floor, walls and ceiling in order to create a striking and functional backdrop for furnishings and window treatments.

Other areas that needed retraining included; furniture, art and accessories (50%) and visual communication an additional training that was supported by 50%. Some of the respondents also agreed that working with clients needed professional skills. Further training on the tips on how to work with clients was mentioned by 48% of the respondents, Interior design portfolio by 43% and Drawing and composition by IDs was indicated by 38% of the respondents.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has demonstrated that most of the KIDDGs reported of their inability to positively perform in areas such as analyzing their clients' needs, goals, and life and safety requirements, inadequacy in the formulation of the preliminary design concepts, and lack of knowledge to collaborate with other licensed design practitioners in the technical areas. The paper has further noted that the KIDDGs needed to retrain on areas such as lighting and lighting designs, visual language of design and properties of colour and colour psychology for them to be effective in the IDI. Other training needs were working out costs, preparing estimates and how to advise client on the use of fittings, furniture, fabrics, and wall and floor coverings.

Furthermore, most of the Kenyan institutions offering Diploma in ID are privately owned, where every service is dearly paid for, hence it is expensive and only a few can afford. The acquired knowledge from the institutions attended by graduates is inadequate and the acquired skills insufficient. Courses concerning communication skills, business management skills and entrepreneurship are not offered in the institutions. Such courses would enable graduates communicate effectively with the clients and help IDs to work out costs and prepare estimates giving them prior knowledge on how to meet clients to discuss their requirements and ideas, developing designs to suit clients' needs, their budget and the type of building.

Most of the ID offering institutions have inadequate computer software facilities such as; Arch-

CAD drawing, regular practice of Software applications for 2D & 3D computer-aided design (CAD) and Building Information modelling (BIM). They also do not have well-equipped computer labs and workshops with essential modern equipment like 3D printers, laser cutting machines for easier model making as well as reliable and updated libraries. The institutions have insufficient well-trained staff that is committed to service delivery. There are also insufficient training institutions that have affordable terms.

From the foregoing, this paper recommends that to address this dire scenario, the government and the public technical institutions need to expand the contribution of interior design to society through the exchange and development of knowledge and experience in education and practice. In addition, Institutions offering ID Programs need to equip their computer labs and workshops with essential modern equipment, sufficient and effective training personnel and provision of adequate supplier of instructional materials. Technical institutions should focus on education that gives designers access to internships and regular industrial visits to interact with other designers with real-world experience.

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