



The Nigerian Society of Engineers

PORT HARCOURT BRANCH

e-newsletter

2008 / VOLUME 34

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27TH SEPT. 2008

Interview with Engr. Felix Atume, FNSE, MNI, Registrar, COREN on COREN and Engineering Regulations in Nigeria

E-Newsletter: Please sir, tell us about your profile, your career, your contributions to Engineering profession. Our reading audience would appreciate your experience in the profession.

Engr. Atume: My name is Engr. Felix Atume. I am the Registrar of COREN. I obtained my Bachelor and Master degrees in Civil Engineering. I also have Master degree in High-way engineering, and a Master degree in Business Administration, still planning to go further in education. I worked in the public service and rose to the rank of Director in the Benue State Civil Service. I was one time Commissioner for works in Benue State. I was Director, Benue State Road Agency. I had the opportunity of attending the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies. While in service I was lecturing, in the Civil engineering department at the Federal University of Technology, Makurdi. I left the Benue State Service and went to serve the Nigerian Society of Engineers but before that I was the Chairman for Makurdi Branch of the Nigerian Society of Engineers from 1994-2000. In 2000, I left for the Director Membership services at Nigerian society of Engineers Headquarters. I become the Executive Secretary in 2003-2005. Thereafter I left, and I was appointed senior lecturer in Minna and I lectured there for two years and then got appointment as the Registrar of COREN. In a nutshell that is my profile.



established to pursue ERM. The target is to ensure that the impact of engineering profession is felt. I must confess to you that there have been tremendous achievements. I always tell people that in developing economies, over 80% of the expenditures of government are on engineering, so it is difficult to stop people coming into the occupation, it is very difficult but we are doing it and we are succeeding. So I have talked about COREN accrediting institutions, ensuring that product from those institutions are qualified, COREN ensure that when you finish, you register in the various registers of COREN and then regulating the practice through the Engineering Regulating Monitoring. These are the areas where COREN has been doing its job and I can say that with all due humility it has been a lot of success. So we can go further to say, this is the 17th Engineering Assembly, every year for quite a long time now COREN organizes the engineering assembly to bring all different cadres to interact, this will help bring solutions to our problems. I think that the assembly has created a lot of awareness. If you know in an organization that every year you must have to come to COREN Engineering Assembly, you come back and impact positively into the organization; I think that's a good thing. To answer your question, the communiqués have actually been improving the practice of engineering.

E-Newsletter: Thank you very much. It has been an extensive experience. As the Registrar of COREN, can you tell us the impact of all the 16th engineering Assemblies so far held to the profession, on the part of Government, Engineering Personnel and Employers of Engineering Personnel?

Engr. Atume: I will like to thank you for that question. It is not just engineering assembly; I think the question broadly is COREN which has been in existence since 1970, what is its Impact? That's the fundamental question.

E-Newsletter: Yes of course.

Engr. Atume: It is good to trace its history. COREN is the Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria. It was established by the Decree 55 of 1970, which was amended in 1992 by Decree 27. Now it is an act of Parliament CAP B11 of 2004. COREN has its major mandates in three areas. These are the training of the University engineering students; then registration; and lastly regulating the practice of engineering profession. Since inception COREN has ensured that facilities at the Universities and staffing are adequate to produce good engineering products. And that has been going on and this has become the standard practice. Many institutes, universities, polytechnics are aware that if you produce a product, graduate from an Institution that is not Accredited by COREN, COREN will not register such graduate. All is to ensure that by the time we send the product to the market the industry will say "yes, this is a good product." COREN has been doing that quite meticulously and but for the obstacles, I can say that it is a very successful story. Then in the Registration, COREN has Five Registers. The First Register is that of the Professional Engineers. The second is that of Technologists, the third one is that of the Technicians, the fourth one is that of Craftsmen and the fifth is that of Engineering Consulting firms. COREN ensures that before you are allowed to carry out any engineering job in this country, you must be registered by COREN. And this is gaining quite a lot of grounds. At the federal level you can not be promoted to the post of Principal Engineer unless you are registered by COREN. Recently, the new Government procurement act, you can not get any engineering job as a consultant unless you are registered by COREN. In the area of Regulation, COREN has established the Engineering Regulation Monitoring (ERM) and it is all over the country. More branches and zonal offices have been

E-Newsletter: Thank you very much. Let us look at the engineering Monitoring exercise; we have discovered that most employers are not complying to the terms of the decree established by COREN. In so many industries engineering personnel are not registered. What is COREN doing to enhance this ERM exercise as well as the welfare of our engineers?

Engr. Atume: I like to say that some organizations are still not complying with the act. ERM is out for that. It is established in all the zones now, the six geo-political zones of the country. Three zonal offices have been established in each political zone. This is to ensure that all organizations employing the services of engineers comply strictly with the act. Ignorance of the act is not an excuse. As I was making a contribution, during the technical session our own engineers have a very critical role to play in ERM. I said this when I was contributing, if 80% of the expenditure of government are engineering, that 80% mostly is for public service and the public service is made up by our engineers. I gave an example. In drawing up terms of reference, it is the engineers that sit down to draw up the terms of reference. They must make sure that in the terms of reference engineering is pronounced because they are engineering products, that is how to become relevant. They must ensure that in the terms of reference registered engineers are included. Our engineers that call themselves directors in engineering organization are the ones to ensure that engineering is promoted. I give an example, if a governor gives a contract, calls contractor A to do the contract, as an engineer you may not be in the position to say no but once the contract is signed and it comes to implementation, you can say well, let me see your personnel, those people that are going to execute this project. Are they registered by COREN? If they are not registered, you can tell the contractor that "I give you two weeks to bring registered engineers and registered personnel by that, that director is helping in the regulation of engineering. The contractor will then know the relevance of COREN and there is need to get registered before one can execute a job. The contractor can not, go back to the owner and say that after you have given me the job, they

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are saying I should bring qualified engineers but sometimes our engineers keep quiet. The ERM is doing a lot to ensure that the act is implemented. It is a collective thing. All Engineers should have hands on board. Once you find yourself in an engineering organization, you are the one to promote engineers. The senior engineers should help mentor the younger engineers in the area of contract management. You must make sure that the engineers under you undergo continuous professional development and this is one of them. We have senior engineers who are heading various organisations, I call on them any time I have the opportunity, and please let the younger ones grow. I also said this morning that engineers who have found themselves in government must promote consultancy because that is where actual engineering is done. I am using this medium to tell our directors in government to encourage engineering consultants. If you have a job of N20million or N30million you can advise the government, look we require a consultant to supervise this job as it is being done in other professions. This will promote consultancy, we monitor the consultant. How many engineers does a consultant have in employment? By the time all of us to this, you will see that the impact of the engineering will be felt. Engineers will be in short supply but once you come and you are a director in the office and they bring a job of may be N50m and you just look at it and say 'oh we can do the job internally', they will now look at it that engineers have no value. At times the government will say that they are so many, we can reduce them. So the bottom line, Engineering Regulation, we are doing our best. It is the engineers' business.



up to date and the courses you have attended. Like all the names here now, we will and update this list, these people have credit scores in the continuous professional development. When we are issuing the annual practicing license, if you have not attended something like this or Nigerian Society of Engineers conference, you will not be issued. We insist on that. Now in the ministry, if you don't have annual practicing license as I consult, they will not look at your submission for promotion. And I thank you for bringing up that issue. I will now write to corporate affair commission that they must ensure that there is annual practicing license to be considered along side with registration. We are doing it.. We are now saying that for you to be registered as a consultant, you must bring your annual returns to corporate affair commission.

E-Newsletter: The last question we want to ask is; what strategies do you have in place as the registrar to achieve optimum performance in the practice of our noble profession?

Engr. Atume: The strategy number one is the issue of curriculum in the universities. It is worrying COREN. How relevant are our graduates in the industries? We are worried to hear only 15% of our graduates in the industries are employable. It is really worrying us. We are looking out how we will improve a new syllabus to reflect the realities on ground. We are now looking at the review of curriculum in the university with the Nigerian University Commission, so that we will have relevant courses for our product, and in other to do that, we have to intensify our accreditation process. In fact we have lined out courses from January to see how we can have new method of carrying out accreditation. That is one strategy. Then Registration I am happy that you have said that there are many improvements. We have facilitated, if you have all your documents in other, in less than three months to get registered. But we insist that you must bring all the documents. We have a data bank where we can reach our registered engineers and we are developing more. In terms of Regulation and Monitoring, we have told you that we have established more zonal offices. We have purchased Hillux vehicles for the various zones to strength them, and I believe that by the time we put all these in place, the impact of COREN will be felt.

E-Newsletter: Thank you very much for the audience you have given us.

Engr. Atume: Once again I also want to thank NSEPH for making effort to put something down on paper for people to read. Please keep it up.

E-Newsletter: We appreciate COREN in the area of registration. Some of us have seen many none engineers running to us pleading that we allow them use our certificates for registration in the Corporate Affairs Commission. This has been able to place engineers on the Board of such companies. You need to see how people troop in now for registration. We want to appreciate that fact and we pray that you will do more. We would want CREN to alert Corporate Affair Commission, any engineering activity must be carried out by registered engineers. If they do not see that certificate, not staled ones, they should not approve. This brings us to the issue for how you handle staled certificate, those ones that are not continuously updated.

Engr. Atume: Yes we have annual practicing license. We have told all agencies of government that, "Don't deal with any engineer who doesn't have annual practicing license". So every year we issue

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Nigerian Society of Engineers, Port Harcourt Branch, invites all Engineers to her Annual General Meeting scheduled to hold as follows:

Date: Thursday 2nd October, 2008

Time: 5. 00pm.

Venue: NSE, Secretariat #3 Bernard Carr Street, Beside State Library, Water Works Yard, Port Harcourt.



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Many thanks to Point Engineering for donating internet facility to NSEPH Mini Secretariat.

INVITATION LETTER TO NSE NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING "YANKARI 2008"

The National Engineering Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Society of Engineers will hold from **24th – 28th November, 2008** at the **Multi-purpose Sports Complex, Bauchi**.

The **theme** of the conference is **"Strategies for the Attainment of Vision 20/2020"** The Conference registration fee which also covers the Conference materials is N20,000 for Members who register before 31st August, 2008, and N25,000 after August 31st, 2008.

NOTICE! NOTICE!! NOTICE!!!

All members of NSE PH should pay their **annual branch dues** of N4000 and **compulsory levy** of N5000 towards the Engineer Resource Center to UBA ACC. NO: 0802080000194 (Port Harcourt main Branch). Also pay **National Annual Subscription** of N5,500.00 directly to AFRIBANK ACC No. 1420202215613 & forward all tellers to the secretariat for reconciliation. All payments should be made at the Bank