

ABSTRACT

Prefabrication has been used extensively and widely for many years around world. Pre-assembly, prefabrication, modularisation, system building and industrialised buildings are the terms frequently used to describe that the manufacture of building components are constructed either on-site or offsite in a factory covering manufactured, modular and pre-cut or pre-engineered systems. Although the terms, are often interchangeably used, their precise definitions depend heavily on the users' experience and understanding, which vary from countries to countries.

Off-site fabrication is adopted worldwide as the ideal means of producing an immense array of elements from structural members, cladding units, and bathrooms to fully-finished modular buildings. Prefabricated building construction systems have been widely adopted not only in public houses but also in private building projects. Prefabrication together with the increasing use of standardisation and mechanisation has brought a substantial change in the development of the construction industry worldwide over last few decades.

Though the development and use of prefabrication in building construction comes a bit late for Kenya, the drastic increase in the application of this technology in building projects in the recent years does regain certain momentum in this leaving-behind area. Besides the accompanying of the related advancements to the local construction industry with the adoption of more mechanisation, computer aided manufacturing, and intelligent management systems, the use of prefabrication also contributes to sustainable development by using cleaner and more resources saving production process.

As many prefabrication technologies deliver a better product because building is done in a quality controlled, sheltered environment, the move to more prefabrication in construction industry is inevitable. It is seen as one of the tenets of improving construction in the 21st century (Egan, 1998; Yeung, Chan and Chan, 2002). This is also echoed by Raysford (2000), "a much greater emphasis on off-site assembly was one of the key ingredients to changing the construction culture to retain and recruit talent and at the same time deliver improvements in performance required by increasingly demanding clients." This paper is cantered on a comparison between prefabricated building systems and conventional building practices that have been adopted by the building industry in Kenya.