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The Quantity Surveying Profession in Identity Crises and National Development

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A b s t r a c t

The transformation of quantity surveying profession from a vocation of 'Measurers' who rendered services as employees of master trades men to specialists whose services earn 'fee' from clients, remains dynamic. The quality of services rendered in giving effects to clients needs and requirements basically depended on the academic training, acquired skills and knowledge of competitive competencies. Furthermore, as the needs and expectations of construction clients change giving credence to evolution changes from measurement to management and from cost to value, the readiness of Nigerian quantity surveyors to challenge the challenges of the moment remains contingent. This work examined quantity surveying profession in identity crises and found that the construction industry which provides operational environment for quantity surveying practice is in crises of near insignificant performances and contributions to National Development occasioned by government ineffectiveness, poor capital budget implementation policies, among others. Resultantly, the practice of quantity surveying became exposed to negative financial empowerment with attendant incapacitation to acquire new technology, additional skills and knowledge through training, attractions of new comers and even the resistance to drift to alternative source(s) of livelihood among practitioners. Finally, recommendations such as policies of transparency in budgeting affairs, professional institutions, development of national cost data, bases, improvement on the functionality of financial and capital markets et cetera aimed at ensuring sustainability of automated value for money and result-oriented services by quantity surveying profession were proffered.

Keywords: *Quantity surveying profession, Construction industry, Crises and latent competencies.*

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Background to the Study

Metamorphoses, a transformational change seeks to ensure that the dynamism of life constantly produce desired effects needed for optimal relevance and performance.

This perhaps, explains why the quantity surveying profession a divine creation, was earthly put to use as 'measurers' who calculated the cost of completed works and paid as employees of master tradesmen. The production of cost plan and other tender documents which enabled the client to select a master builder through tendering processes transformed them to a professional status and earned 'fee'

This new status became contractually bestowed and charged with the responsibilities for cost, time and contractual matters in the construction industry whose attributes and authority remain her identity. The dynamic needs of clients' requirements occasioned by market demands often require improvement through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge to bear on the traditional competences so as to achieve sustainability of the professional identity for results-oriented, high quality, automated and value for money services.

The economic activities in construction which provide the much needed empowerment for the profession to maintain relevance and identity in the society appear to have continuously experienced leakages and distortions occasioned by government ineffectiveness and poor budget implementation policies. Resultantly, practitioners lack the resources to acquire new technology, additional professional training, showcasing diminishing interests among new comers and drift among practitioners to other sources of livelihood culminating to unpleasant identity crises of near irrelevance of the quantity surveying profession in the built environment and the society at large.

The identity crises is further aggravated as the potentially undeveloped ability not only remained unused but got additionally challenged by inability of the profession to acquire new frontier knowledge for use in the increasingly automated services towards providing and expanding range of new and more sophisticated services.

Objective of the Study

The inability of the construction industry to provide adequate empowerment through opportunities for quantity surveyors to to optimally contribute to national development remains worrisome. Perhaps, unfavorable macro-economic forces and institutional lapses injected crises in the industry.

Resultantly, quantity surveying profession which rely on the construction industry to practice experiences crises and incapacitation, unable to acquire new skills and knowledge technology and relevant competencies needed to perform its responsibilities for cost, time and contractual matters in the built environment.

This work attempts to identify factors which have far reaching contributions towards making good the anomalies with a view to repositioning construction activities to be favorable to quantity surveying practice for significant positive contributions to National development.

The Quantity Surveying Profession

History

The story of quantity surveying profession was divinely brought to eminence when it was quoted in the Holy Bible according to Saint Luke, chapter 14 verse 38, "would any of you think of building a tower without first sitting down and calculating the cost, to see if he could afford to finish it. Otherwise, if he has laid down foundations and is not able to complete on lookers will laugh at him and say there is the man who started to build and could not finish"

The challenge of first calculating and effecting approval prior to construction was individually and collectively practiced especially in Egypt where civilization of notable magnificent structures and monumental buildings remain unchallenged.

Sometime in 17th century, after the Great fire, the restoration of London perhaps compelled the relevance of calculating costs firsts before construction in England. The exercise was undertaken by some interested and knowledgeable tradesmen referred to as "measurers and worked for the master tradesmen. They measured completed work elements culminating to the submission of final accounts to the clients.

The client was not optimally benefitting from this approach especially as it was devoid of cost plan, cost limits and other documents needed to obtain competitive tenders. Furthermore, the measurers' were employees whose aim was to satisfy the master tradesmen who paid them.

To achieve the above objectives the clients now commissioned the 'measures' to produce cost plan, cost limits and tender documents for use by chosen selected master builders to submit tenders for the total price instead of a collection of prices from master tradesmen.

By 1820, this new functions earned 'FEE' instead of salary thereby transforming the "Measurer" (vocation) to a 'Quantity Surveyor' (Profession).

Sir Henry Arthur Hint who was involved in work on the Houses of Parliament stands as one of the earliest persons that practiced quantity surveying (www.asaas.co.za publichistory).

There were no known processes of who actually qualified to be identified as a quantity surveyor. Then came early in twentieth century when the Royal Institution of chartered surveyors (RICS) London developed the early modalities of becoming a quantity surveyor which later gained global recognition.

Foreign members of the RICS later established similar professional bodies in their countries. One of these is the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS).

The NIQS was founded in 1969 as a parallel body to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) of United Kingdom. In 1986, the Federal Government recognized the NIQS through the Quantity Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN) Decree No. 31 of December 1986. Chief Osuigwe Nwogu a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, London is recorded as the first Nigerian qualified quantity surveyor and he is still in practice as Osuigwe Nwogu & Partners at Enugu.

The Mandate

Historical data reveal that the quantity surveyor contractually derives its mandate from the tripod of responsibilities in a construction project namely Quality, Quantity and Time.

The quality in any construction comprises the aesthetics, structural stability, services, functionality, and etcetera. The architect, structural engineers, electrical/mechanical engineers in related ways undertakes these responsibilities.

On the other hand, the quantity, often referred to as 'Cost' is exclusively of the quantity surveyors responsibility.

The responsibility of managing time is shared among architects and/or engineers and the quantity surveyor.

It follows that the quantity surveyor is primarily in pursuit of achieving a timely delivered construction project at an approved cost.

The quantity surveyor, NIQS (2009), is the expert who is concerned with the financial probity in the conceptualization, planning and execution of development projects both new and refurbishment works. He is the development cost adviser in the building, civil and other engineering projects.

As a submission, Badu and Amoah (2004) opined that the quantity surveying profession in the construction industry is one who has the ability to analyse both cost components and practical physical construction works of a project in a successful way so as to be able to apply the results of these analyses in solving problems peculiar to each project.

Seeley (2007) submit that the quantity surveyor is essentially a cost expert whose prime task is to ensure that the project is kept within the agreed budget and the employer obtains value for money. He further stated that construction costs, construction management and construction communications are all key problem areas for an employer who has commissioned an important building or engineering project. A quantity surveyor is professionally trained, qualified and experienced in dealing with these problems on behalf of the employer.

The following, though not exclusive, represents the traditional functions of the quantity surveying profession as articulated in www.johnaustier.co.uk

a. Preliminary cost advise/feasibility report
b. Cost planning
c. Advising on contractual methods
d. Advising on selection of other consultants
e. Preparing tender documents
f. Obtaining or negotiating tenders
g. Reporting on tenders received or package deal/design and build offers
h. Evaluating construction works
i. Preparing expenditure statements for tax accounting purposes.
j. Periodic financial reporting
k. Technical auditing
l. Assessing replacement value for insurance
m. Project management related services
n. Giving expert evidence in arbitration
o. Preparing defense against construction contract claims.

Arising from above, if it follows that the quantity surveying profession is mainly practiced in the construction industry environment.

Construction Industry

The construction industry, according to Onwusonye (2006), is associated with infrastructure projects whose products include roads, water servage, power, railways, airports, etcetera. These products ensure the availability of public goods and services whose attributes penetrate and nourish the roots of most human needs, significantly stimulate positive macro-economic activities whose multiplier effects lead to a healthy economy.

Hillebrandt (2000) submitted that an investment in construction project generate wages for those who produce it which, in turn, generates consumer spending among those wage-earners and so generates profit for manufacturers of consumers goods, and so on right through the macro economy. It follows that the activities of construction projects have multiplier and accelerator capabilities whose effectiveness lead to increased investments critically needed to boost a nation's economy.

However, the realization of these benefits from the construction activities revolve on the functions of functions such as Reliable Feasibility Report, Contract Awarded at the Least Evaluated Responsive Tender, timely release of fund, peaceful and friendly construction environment, political will and consistency in policy, etcetera. Any distortions and/or leakages in any or a combination of these will be counterproductive, affecting the quantity surveying profession directly.

Identity
The term "Identity" has been variously defined. According to navigation search, identity is defined as the distinctive characteristics belonging to any given individual or shared by all members of a particular social category or group. Weinreich (2006), submit that identity is the totality of one's self-construal in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past, and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future.

Identity, according to Jenkins (2006), refers to the ways in which individuals and collectiveness are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities. Thus, the quantity surveying profession in collectiveness parades distinguishable attributes which earns them social identity in the built-environment and the entire society.

These distinguishable attributes, submit Badu and Amoah (2004) were developed since the transformation from a trade-based vocation into a fully fledged profession remained widely accepted in the construction industry. They held that these changing roles had been occasioned by the educational system received by the quantity surveyor. As a profession, they now hold the identity charged with the responsibility of cost management of construction project.

Crises
Crises, Webster (2003), is a turning point in the progress of an affair or a series of event, a critical moment; and sudden change or decisive change in the course of an events favourable or unfavourable. Since the 21st century, the quantity surveying profession like some notable professions has been facing major but related challenges. These challenges are attributable to the rapidly changing economic, technological, political and social environment charecterising the world.

Political/Economic Challenges
Fundamentally, the identity of the quantity surveying profession is not only dependent but made relevant in the construction industry. In recent times, the efficient contribution of the construction industry to national economy appears to be in crises.

This is explained as the role of Nigerian government in effecting relevant structural changes in the construction towards boosting the economy has proved inadequate. The following represent some examples:

(a) Government Ineffectiveness
(I) The inefficiency of public facilities such as various governments' agencies of Housing Authorities, Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria, Urban Development Bank of Nigeria, etc. is a set back to the boosting of the economy through the construction industry.

(ii) The contribution of the construction industry to the national economy has not been encouraging as most planning laws, regulations and minimum quality of materials have been poorly enforced by government thereby contributing to building collapses and other economic loses.

(iii) The Gross National Product of Nigeria is yet to benefit significantly from government encouragement of exports of contracting services and building materials.

(iv) The Training of personnel's including research development work, social services and public goods produced by the construction industry and its impact on the economy is insignificant.

(b) Government Budget Implementation

Budget implementation is the function of the executive arm of the government. Members of this executive are mostly politicians.

According to Nwosu (2000), most Nigerian politicians are noted for unparallel intolerance, lawlessness, greed, idleness, thievery, sectional, tribal rivalry and selfishness that opened the way for and sustained the persisting political and economic backwardness of the country, and the destitute condition of the majority of its people.

In Nigeria, the implementation of approved budgets have experienced retrogressive forces such as lack of administrative machinery, capacity to implement, transition problems, poor or vague and ambiguous project documentation, bad fiscal habits, political will and to a reasonable extent, uncontrolled government spending, policy summersault and other unfavourable internal and external macro-economic forces.

Illustrations abound. According to www.budgetmonitoring.ng.org President Obasanjo in October, 2005 stated that only 20 percent of funds allocated for infrastructure development was released. The implementation of 2006 budget was not encouraging as 10months into the financial year, no money was released. Charles Soludo, then Governor of the Central Bank in November 2006 described the situation as a logjam in government spending.

The 2007 budget was passed in haste. This perharps is to enable expenditure to take place as much as possible before a new government. In reality, at the end of October 2007, all unawarded construction projects were cancelled.

According to Nigeria Labour Congress, only 40 percent of 2008 budget was implemented. Some of these unspent money for construction projects went back to government treasury, some funds experienced misappropriated while the outstanding was reportedly shared among officers of the government.

The 2009 budget experienced worn some implementation. This is explained as a result of tumbling price of crude petroleum and global meltdown. In 2010, budget for

infrastructure development experienced policy summersault as a few months after signing into law, 40 percent reduction on funds allocated to infrastructure was effected.

The 2011 experienced less than 65 percent of allocated budget released for infrastructure. According to Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Nigeria's Finance Minister, only N739.3 billion was released out of N1.339 trillion approved for capital projects.

The release of funds budgeted for 2012 and 2013 infrastructure development remained insignificantly impressive relevant and modestly stated, worrisome.

Resultantly, glaring crises exist in the construction industry to the extent that inherent attributes for the generation of economic activities experience leakages, distortions and inefficiency occasioned by non implementation of budgeted funds and government ineffectiveness among others.
The quantity surveying profession by direct dependence on the construction industry is in crises resulting to:

a. Reduction in employment of practitioners
b. Inadequate funds for professional development
c. Lack of motivation towards self actualization.
d. Diminishing relevance among professionals and even in the society.
e. Diminishing interests among candidates for the study of the profession.
f. Drift of professionals to other areas as survival strategy.

Technological Challenges
The bedrock of the practice revolves on our fundamental skills of measuring and valuing works. The profession is further noted traditionally in the use of these skills and knowledge to wide definitions for the measurement of works and the maintenance of meaningful cost data.

However, Lowry (2010) submit that contemporary technology demands the need to extend the skills to adding cost definitions to objects in consistently understandable ways and to creating cost breakdown structures and architectures that will become of international standard.

The realization of these objectives would have further positioned quantity surveyors towards becoming information brokers, maintaining cost data, and adding value in meaningful ways at project and high level. In this regard, the profession would have developed sophisticated cost models that will deliver increasing accuracy in cost planning and subsequent high demand for cost planning services.

The non possession of these skills and knowledge which is in demand technologically places the profession in crises. In any case, the Quantity Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN) appears to have identified the need and are addressing the crises through her Institutional Development of National Cost Data Centre, Cost Data Bases, etcetera.

Effect of Globalization
The skills and knowledge as presently possessed by most quantity surveyors are inadequate in becoming facilitators, building and managing a team of experts often needed globally to manage complex project.

According to Hannah (2010), the complexity of projects dictates that no one professional group can lay ownership to the project. Increasingly, the practice is that multi-professional groupings are being created to generate holistic complete life cycles solutions so as to avoid the risks of becoming marginalized into providing technical services but with little high end management oversight.

At the moment, the readiness of Nigerian quantity surveyors to suit in the above requirements remains contingent. It may be difficult especially as the need is ripe to redefine succinctly the core skills expected to be acquired by members which must be clear, coherent and relevant to the bestowed identity of the profession. The present crises situation perhaps has contributed to the poor public recognition of the profession and to a great extent caused the inability of quantity surveying programme to attract a full quota of students in their tertiary Institutions.

Sub-Standard Services
It is observed that a disturbing number of quantity surveyors have virtually failed to deliver a truly professional services. These according to Hannah (2010), is because they are no longer capable of using appropriate (often new) technology to solve a problem or because they have failed to adapt a new legislative or environmental requirements.

Furthermore, Procter (2007), stated that as the needs and expectations of construction clients have changed especially since the decades of the nineties so have their expectations of professional services in the built environment. He further stated that whereas professional services have been engaged in the past without hesitation, questions about relevancy in terms of value added to the project are now being asked. Thus, according to Seeley (2007), the services of a quantity surveyor have been affected by evolution changes from measurement to management and from cost to value.

The crises situation, observed Shafier and Said (2008), is that despite being recognized since 1836 as professional discipline distinct from architecture and civil engineering some parties in the construction industry have been critical about the quality of works and services provided by most quantity surveyors. Some even question the importance of appointing quantity surveyors as project consultants. These, in the opinion of this paper showcases the degree to which the identity of quantity surveying profession is in crises and all hands should be on deck to make good urgently.

Conclusion
Government effectiveness towards the workability of structural changes and timely release of funds needed to generate macroeconomic activities in the construction industry would financially empower quantity surveying practitioners to acquire new technology, additional professional training and skills needed to update their competencies for the near elimination of crises affecting her professional identity.

Recommendations

In furtherance to the modest successes already in existence, the following serve as recommendations:

1. Government should exhibit transparency in its policies especially on budgetary affairs so as to inject desirable macroeconomic activities in the construction industry. These will release appreciable financial empowerment to quantity surveying practice to enable them update their competencies and virtually eliminate identity crises.
2. These are relevant as non release or late release of funds from the budge will be counterproductive to the objectives of infrastructure development.
3. The Quantity Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN) should as a matter of urgency achieve results in her drive in institutional development of National Cost Data Centre, Cost Data Bases, and etcetera.
4. It is hoped that the realization of these project would enable quantity surveyors to possess technologically based skills and knowledge basically required to become information brokers, develop sophisticated cost models that will deliver increasing accuracy in cost planning and subsequent high demand for cost planning services.
5. The curriculum of the quantity surveying programme should be revisited with a view to redefine succinctly the core skills expected to be acquired by members.
6. This has become necessary as the complexity of most projects demands the creation of multi-professional groupings to generate holistic complete life cycles solutions. The present acquired rational competencies place the profession at the risks of becoming marginalized into providing technical services but with little high end management oversight.
7. Quantity surveying profession should sustain the upgrade of competency level of practicing quantity surveyors who offer their services to clients through Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Educators who produce yet to be registered quantity surveyors should through the development of a comprehensive course syllabuses cover the whole spectrum of knowledge cognitive, functional and behavioral competencies so as to produce competent and employable quantity surveyor for Nigeria.
8. These are explained as disturbing number of quantity surveyors have virtually failed to deliver a truly professional services, and are still deeply entrenched in the traditional competencies rather than the newer and more novel services and skills that suit the evolution changes from measurement to management and from cost to value.
9. Government should improve on the functionality of the financial and capital markets especially the specialist banks such as the Bank of Industry, the Urban Development Bank, the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria etcetera through improvement of the regulatory environment, business climate and privatization.
10. These action, are viewed advantageous as it will enable the construction industry benefit from low cost of capital, timely and uninterrupted flow of funds during site activities and hence the realization of the objectives of result-oriented projects.

11. Most parts of Nigeria are associated with unrest, abduction and unfriendly environment for construction activities and/or rendering quantity surveying services.
12. Hence, there is need for government to ensure peace, poverty eradication stability and rule of law so as to provide the much needed environment for the construction project development to generate significant macroeconomic activities known for its benefits to the quantity surveying.
13. These actions, if well effected will ensure that in the longrun the identity crises as suffered presently by the quantity surveying profession, if not completely eliminated are reduced to tolerable level.

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