

A Study of the Compliance of Practising Quantity Surveyors with the Professional Code of Conduct in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examined the compliance of Quantity Surveying practitioners in Nigeria with the existing professional code of conduct, and the assessment of the efficacy of the existing code of conduct. Literature from both indigenous and foreign scholars and authors in the subject area were reviewed. Questionnaires were randomly administered through the use of the internet and hand delivery in the Lagos metropolis to Quantity Surveyors in active practice private and public, consulting and contracting organizations. Eighty Questionnaires were returned analyzable and thus processed using Mean Item Scoring (MIS). Results obtained formed the basis of the conclusion and recommendations of this study which include the assertion that the general public is not aware of a code of conduct for the practice of Quantity Surveying and the likelihood of the possibility that Quantity Surveying Professionals often compromise the professional code of ethics for personal benefits probably because the code is not self-regulatory. It was generally opined that operating a client's account for each client, adequate benchmarking in line with best global policies and strict adherence to the codes of practice as obtained in some climes will promote the integrity of the professional practice of Quantity Surveying in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Quantity Surveying, Professionals, Code of conduct, Ethics, Practice.*

I. Introduction

A Professional code of conduct is a set of guidelines and rules that regulate the statutorily acceptable moral standard expected in the conduct of business transactions of every profession the world over. The construction industry is an assemblage of various but distinct professional bodies. Every profession has its own code of ethics which are subject to review from time to time depending on the dynamics of socio, political and technological advancements within the society. Practicing members of the individual professional bodies should comply with these codes. The need to check implementation of the codes is imperative. This is to ensure that the provisions as contained therein are fully utilized and grey areas identified and thus reviewed. {[1]; [2];[3]}.

Within the construction industry, ethical misconduct of practicing professionals is common. The high level of corruption in the construction subsector signals substantial deviation from compliance with the professional code of conduct.

The Quantity Surveying Profession is saddled with the cost accountability of the construction industry. The practice is advanced and regulated by the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS) and the Quantity Surveyors' Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN)

Thus, this study aims at investigating the parameters for measuring compliance with ethical requirements and their effects on the Quantity Surveying practice in Nigeria.

II. Literature Review

Ethics permeate every activity embarked upon by man and unethical conduct does not eventuate from a man's upbringing but rather, a part of the process of learning the practical aspect of the business. Ethics is that branch of philosophy which studies human conditions in terms of its being right or wrong. Ethics are very important for professionals even as there is no universally accepted definition of the term in practice. Professionals are usually held in high self-esteem by the society and many occupations seek to attain professional status. This automatically ties up with the more practical expectations from the public encompassing issues such as competence, responsibility, integrity and willingness to serve the public. Adequate implementation of frameworks, policies and strategies in Nigeria has been an issue of serious concern in almost all sectors of the economy over the years and this has left a gap in the growth and development of the economy. {[4], [5]; [6]; [7]; [8][9]; [10]; [11]; [12].}

Viewing ethics holistically from the perspective of personal, organizational and professional ethics, it is worthy of note that unethical may not mean illegal, however, the requirements of the public as to high ethical standards cannot be taken for granted hence the profession loses its value. A professional body must thus be able to demonstrate that it is taking adequate steps to guard its reputation by requiring the highest standards of its

members. Only by such measures can the public confidence be maintained. The concept of ethics is to define and publicize professional values as members of a profession and to properly and effectively discipline members who fall short of these exacting standards. The core of professionalism has been defined as the possession and autonomous control of a body of specialized knowledge which when combined with honorific status, confers powers on its holders. Professionals have as such been linked with the notion of “service” and thus the altruistic spirit of a genuine profession cannot be achieved without an ethics component. Professionalism is pivoted by the cardinal duo of technical core skills and acceptable moral standard in practice. {[13]; [14]; [15]; [7]}

The image of professionals in the Nigerian construction industry is not better than in most parts of the world. [13]presents the scenario in neighboring South Africa and discovered fraud, bribery, conflict of interest and collusion as some of the commonest unfair conducts of construction professionals. History suggests that the advancement of professional ethics in this industry is very much dependent on the implementation and policing of ethical guidelines and policies of both professional bodies and private organizations together with the leadership of public sector procurement agencies. The study explains that as the number of professions and professionals increase and the work environment becomes more ethically sensitive, the adoption of ethical principles and enforcement of standards become matters of increasing importance to the society because when lapses occur, the credibility of the entire profession is endangered.

[8]relate from Malaysia that the industry consists of many sectors including client groups, federal, state, councils, private organizations, individuals, developers, contractors, suppliers, manufacturers, professionals and sub-contractors. Professionals exercise their own skills and judgment. They are accountable to the client and bound by their code of ethics. Contractors in the other hand are keen to make a profit and hence their actions are inclined to their own interests and business gains which are often divergent and competing in nature this might affect quality. Quality is dependent on ethical behavior whereby ethics and quality have a common care premise which is to do the right thing and it is a right way to reduce costs, improve competitiveness and create customer satisfaction. [16]

There is a need for Nigerian Professionals to adequately learn these new measures and benchmark effectively with the best practices of the profession as we see in the developed economies. Public interest is the single largest factor sustaining the existence of professions in construction and this is largely dependent on client’s satisfaction encapsulated in the image of professionalism in the industry. Client’s satisfaction is increasing by the day with the client getting wiser, knowing more of his rights and kingly sovereignty in the industry as it is the only opinion which matter at the end of the day and every professional is there to work for him. As the industry gets more dynamic and developed, it is imperative for the industry to sustain and improve on its public interest, trust and confidence reposed in her with time. {[17]; [18]}. A living code requires the organization to be reflective and self-critical, and to evaluate on a regular basis, collective and individual values.

III. Research Methodology

III.1 Method of Data collection:

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey. The study area was Lagos state. One hundred questionnaires were administered to both consulting and contracting firms. Eighty two questionnaires were collected back. Two were not valid. Therefore eighty were used for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using Mean Item Scoring (MIS) tool in the SPSS version 14 package.

IV. Tables And Figures

IV.I Analysis And Discussion Of Findings

Table 1: Demographic Analysis of Respondents.

Freq (%)	Percentage	Cumm. Percent (%)			
1. Type of Organization (N=80)					
i.	Private Consulting	15	18.75	18.75	
ii.	Private Contracting	18	22.50	41.25	
iii.	Public Consulting	22	27.50	68.75	
iv.	Public Contracting	25	31.25	100	
2. Specialty of Organization (N=80)					
i.	Buildings	26	32.50	32.50	
ii.	Civil Engineering Works	20	25.00	57.50	
iii.	Engineering Services works	14	17.50	75.00	
iv.	Specialist works	15	18.75	93.75	
v.	Others	5	6.25	100	
3. Academic Qualification (N=80)					
i.	OND	12	15.00	15.00	
ii.	HND	18	22.50	37.50	
iii.	BSc.	35	43.75	81.25	
iv.	MSc.	12	15.00	96.25	
v.	Other	3	3.75	100	

4.	Professional Experience (N=80)			
i.	1-5 years	19	23.75	23.75
ii.	6-10 years	24	30	53.75
iii.	11-20 years	22	27.50	81.25
iv.	Over 20 years	15	18.75	100
5.	Duration of Company's life (N=80)			
i.	1-5 years	5	6.25	6.25
ii.	6-10 years	16	20	26.25
iii.	11-15 years	39	48.75	75
iv.	Over 15 years	20	25	100
6.	No of QS staff in firm			
i.	1-3	9	11.25	11.25
ii.	4-6	28	35	46.25
iii.	7-10	16	20	66.25
iv.	Over 10	27	33.75	100
7.	Position of Respondent			
i.	Partner	8	10	10
ii.	Senior Management staff	18	22.50	32.50
iii.	Junior Management staff	40	50	82.50
iv.	Part time Employee	10	12.50	95
v.	Others	4	5	100

From the TABLE, the respondent's type of organization was considered. Also, the operational fields of the individual companies were also examined to cover for Quantity Surveyors working in building, civil engineering, services and specialist works. The academic and professional backgrounds and experience of the respondents were also investigated as well as the duration of the company's existence and the position of the respondent in the organization. This is to give the totality of the respondent's background.

Table 2: Mean ranking of variables for measuring ethical compliance with the code of conduct for Quantity Surveying.

	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Rank
The Public is not aware of the existence of a code of conduct for quantity surveying practice.	80	4.05	0.39	1
Quantity Surveying professionals often compromise the professional code of Ethics for personal benefit.	80	3.87	0.47	2
Quantity Surveying Professionals will rather Compromise the Professional code for their organizational ethics especially when there is a conflict.	80	3.69	0.85	3
Compliance with the NIQS code of professional conduct is presently an issue of personal conviction.	80	3.55	0.84	4
The code is not self-regulatory.	80	3.38	0.59	5
In practice, I often feel bound by the Ethical code as against rules of thumb	80	3.38	0.62	5
The existing code of conduct has not been able to inculcate ethical behavior in Quantity Surveying practitioners.	80	3.34	0.48	7
The Code will not function effectively in government and public circles until there is a change in the public's perception of Government & public projects.	80	3.34	1.02	7
Senior Management is more likely to compromise on issues of ethical misconduct.	80	3.24	0.62	9
I have noticed unethical practices or non- implementation of professional codes in this office.	80	2.85	1.01	10

As presented in the TABLE which measures compliance, the general public is not fully sensitized with the existence of the code of conduct. This is quite peculiar to the construction industry in Nigeria as there is a restriction to advertise professional services as reported in the code of conduct. It is expected that professionals should not go about touting and/or marketing themselves as their products should rather market themselves. This view is rather archaic and should be modified as it does not help the naivety

of the client but rather makes him go after quacks in ignorance. It was also noted that Quantity Surveying professionals often compromise the professional ethical codes for personal benefits. This agrees with the opinion of [19] that Quantity Surveyors are most susceptible to ethical misconduct in the industry as they recommend the contractor for payment/valuation. It was also observed that Quantity Surveying professionals tend to rather compromise the professional ethics code for their organizational ethics especially when there is a conflict.

Table 3: Measuring the effect of the NIQS Professional codes on Quantity Surveyor's practice.

N	Mean	Std Deviation	Rank	
80	4.35	1.07	1	Operating a client's account for each client promotes the integrity of the Quantity surveyor in practice.
80	4.29	0.46	2	Strict adherence to the codes of practice is one of the essentials of good practice
80	4.23	0.53	3	Non adherence to the standard codes of practice lowers the collective integrity of the professional body
80	4.14	0.57	4	Non adherence to the standard codes of practice lowers the perceived public trust of a professional organization
80	4.08	0.62	5	The existing codes of conduct do not provide an enabling environment for Quantity Surveying practice
80	4.08	0.83	5	Adherence to the codes of conduct will breed improvements in the personal life of the Quantity Surveyor
80	3.78	0.97	7	Strict adherence to the codes of conduct yield better project output for the client, end users and the general public
80	3.71	1.05	8	A feedback mechanism is required for the efficient working of the code.
80	3.71	0.89	8	Non adherence to the standard codes of practice lowers the quality of output of construction product.
80	3.70	0.80	10	The code does not meet the changes and current demands of the industry

The operation of a client's account for each client promotes the integrity of the Quantity Surveying firm in practice. This yearning is not peculiar to the Nigerian construction environment as it also obtains in the republic of Ireland, Canada and other developed economies. It was also collectively agreed that strict adherence to the ethical codes of practice is one of the essentials of good practice thereby implying that non adherence to the standard codes lower the collective integrity of the professional body as one and the public perception on the other hand. This fact speaks for itself as ethical imperatives cannot be jettisoned at this point.

V. Conclusion

This study has concerned itself with assessing the ethical practice of Quantity Surveying Practices in the Nigerian Construction Industry. The general public is not adequately sensitized of the existence of a code of conduct for Quantity Surveying practice in Nigeria and that compromise of professional ethics for personal benefit thrives in the industry resulting in either poor quality of job outcome or escalated construction cost. Operating a client's account, keeping an effective register for the practice and effective benchmarking of our policies are imperatives for efficient cost management and for promotion of congenial relationship with clients within the framework of the code of conduct of Quantity Surveying practice.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the result of the data analysis from the field survey among quantity surveyors, it can be recommended thus that

- (a) NIQS and the QSRBN should be up to task in sensitizing Quantity Surveying practitioners on the specifics in unethical practice on one part and sensitizing the general public on the code thus the responsibility of sensitization rests with the Media/Publicity unit of the institute and the Board.
- (b) For the purpose of accountability, an account should be operated for every project undertaken for the clients. That is every project should be accountable.

- (c) The QSRBN and NIQS should ensure ethics and ethical behavior be made a core philosophy of the institution and an integral part of the educational curricula at all levels of Quantity Surveying education and early years of practice so as to ensure that new breeds respect the integrity of the institute and practice.

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