

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DECLINE IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN QUANTITY SURVEYING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.

(A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ILARO)

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Abstract

Quantity Surveying (QS) as a course is still a very young career in Nigeria compared to courses such as Law, Medicine and Engineering amongst others. The study investigates the factors responsible for the decline in youth participation in Quantity Surveying Education in Nigeria. The National Diploma 1&11(ND1&11) and Higher National Diploma 1 &11(HND1&11) students of Federal Polytechnic Ilaro for 2015/16 academic session were adopted as the population sample for the study. A total of Seventy-Five Structured questionnaires were administered to the total population sample, sixty (60) questionnaires were returned which represent Eighty percent (80%) response rate. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean item score and relative importance (RII). The results revealed that the students' choice of career in QS was as a result of change of career choice by the students or by the institution, different from the initial choice of career desired. Another influencing factor identified was parental / family influence. The result ranked media coverage / awareness and early school counselling very low despite the prospect of the profession. It was concluded that parental / family influence and change of course option drives the career choice of youths rather than genuine interest and passion for Quantity Surveying Education and Training.

Keywords: *quantity surveying, education, youth participation.*

Introduction.

The choice of career is one of many difficult tasks that students usually faced when seeking admission into tertiary institutions (Egunjobi, Salisu and Ogunkeye, 2013; Gambo, Osagie & Ogungbemi, 2012). Studies showed that new entrants are usually faced with the dilemma of choosing a career path (Issa and Nwalo, 2008; Macgregor 2007; McMahon and Watson 2005).

If the choice is not carefully made, it can jeopardize the future of an individual (Egunjobi et al., 2013). According to Peter, Oni, Ibisola & Amusan (2016) and Prince, Adebimpe & Abiola (2002), career selection is a very sensitive and lifetime decision that does not just stop at the school/institution level but goes a long way to determine the future and employment suitability of a student. Therefore, adequate care must be taken in career selection to ensure the right choice is made.

Over the years in Nigeria, it is evident that many students are offered admission to study courses they may not be interested in as a career (Ekung and Okonkwo, 2015). Such students may know little or nothing about the course neither interested in the course but for the sake of admission accepted such offer. Quantity Surveying is one of such courses. Many of such students either drop out or performed woefully in the core foundational subjects of the course and struggle through with poor grades (Egbenta, 2008 and Godbey, 2011).

A career can be defined as a lifelong endeavor that has become a part of an individual's identity. A career is an activity you choose to pursue, enjoy or specialize in, for which you set goals, make plans and carryout as a fundamental part of life (Peter et al., 2016). A career is a profession for which one undergoes regulated education and training over a period of time with the intention to practice throughout one's life, it is the way in which the individual expresses himself and relates to society through life. Brown (2002) opined that career choice

can be described as the process of selecting a career based on estimation of the candidate's capability, values, and skills prerequisite to generating success in a given profession. It involves preparation and development of mental image by an individual in matching personal strength and weakness to the requirements of selected profession (Beauregard, 2007). A conceptual model of career development comprised of four phases: awareness; exploration; orientation; preparation; and continuous advancement education (Nneka, 2013). While the first four stages can be influence from elementary through secondary school, the fifth dimension is limited to individual aspiration and interest.

The declining trend in the number of new entrants enrolled for Quantity Surveying Education is worrisome and required urgent attention to reverse the trend. The sustainability of the profession is about the future and must be rooted in education, training and investment in human capital. This must significantly be built around the beginners and not limited to the established professionals in the field. Genuine interest and passion are critical to the future of the profession. Contextually, how young entrants contact the profession is deemed to impact on the interest and passion of the students. Balogun, Matori, Hanaruzaman, Lawal & Chandio (2012) had found that young graduates are abandoning the quantity surveying profession and prospective students lack self-motivation to enroll for the profession.

It is against the foregoing that the study proposed the following questions: What informs student choice of Quantity Surveying course or what prevailing circumstance makes a student studied Quantity Surveying? The study investigates the factors responsible for youth participation in Quantity Surveying Education. It also identified the key motivating factor, that is, the prospect of students after graduation.

Quantity Surveying as a Career.

Quantity surveying is concerned with cost and financial management of construction projects. Its expertise enhances the design process through logical use of cost parameter to sustain viable links relating to price, utility and forms which assists in attaining the employer's objectives within the predetermined budget. The responsibility of the Quantity Surveyor includes cost assessment, evaluation of economic and contractual arrangement of the project. Experience over the years underpinned the significance growth in practices and procedures of the quantity surveying since establishment, many decades ago. Basically, the expertise of the quantity surveying profession is anchored on key knowledge including: construction technology, quantification convention, construction economies, financial management, business administration and construction law (Ekung et al. 2015).

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) defined quantity surveying as the profession concerned with ensuring that the resources of the construction industry are utilized to the best advantage of society by providing, amongst others, the financial management for projects and a cost consultancy service to both clients and contractors during the whole construction process (Awodele, 2006).

The profession originated in the United Kingdom in the 17th century out of the need to value the works of tradesmen after they were completed. The Quantity Surveying profession was introduced to Nigeria as one of its colonial heritages from Britain. Before Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the profession was practiced in Nigeria by British firms of Quantity Surveyors. After independent, however, some Nigerians on-the-job Quantity Surveying training in Britain began to return home so as to contribute their quotas to national

development. In fact, some of them were seconded by foreign firms to work in their offices in Nigeria and manage their on-going construction projects (Kadiri and Ayodele, 2006). More recently, Kadiri and Ayodele (2013) found that 82.8% of the 430 respondents surveyed in Osun State, Nigeria misunderstood Quantity Surveyors for either Land or Estate Surveyors. The study also concluded that only 8.1% of young school leavers were aware of the role Quantity Surveyors play on construction projects.

Career choice influence

In a survey related studies (Muggonzibwe, Kikwilu, Rugarabanu & Ntabaye 2000; Apori, Zinnah & Annor- Frempong 2003; Morenikeji & Shuaibu, 2006) identified the following factors as influencing student's choice of career. The factors are: individual student characteristics and inert innovations, career prospects and nature of industry as well as career counselling. Egunjobi et al. (2013) acknowledged that, the choice of career can also be influenced by various factors ranging from internal to external such as ignorance, gender, interest, parental/relationship influence, advice from friends, school's influence (peer and curricular content), religion, child's upbringing, teacher's council, family values, prestige and societal perception accorded a particular profession, employability; an individual's characteristics, environment, salary and so on. Balogun et al. (2012) opined that an average Nigerian youth with high school education is conscious of the prestige and respect that comes with certain professions. Professions like medicine, law, engineering, information technology, military services etc are popular among them. The dream of every child is to be addressed as a Doctor, Barrister, Engineer, General etc in future. This is largely due to the respect accorded these professions by members of the society. The portrayal of these professions by the mass media as noble professions encourages many parents to convince their kids to enroll for such professions upon graduation from high school. Egunjobi et al. (2013) stated that, it is interestingly to know that some individual are attracted to a career because of the mode of dressing of the practitioners of that profession such includes, lawyers, physicians, accountants, pilots, and engineers among others.

According to Pafili and Mylonakis (2011), two theories are prominent in the study of career choice: sociological and deterministic school of thoughts. The former asserts human beings are free agent in the market place with freedom to choose while the later enthused human beings are regulated by societal influences. From these theories, two perspectives are derived namely: choice based on personal enthusiasm and influences imposed by people above a subject. Selecting an occupation or career is therefore subject to a range of factors. Job preference is at the centre of career choice influences in all works of life. Millward, Houston, Brown & Barrett (2010) decried skills shortage in construction and allied profession due to preference to 'service-oriented and information based jobs'. Family or parental influence is another popularly opinionated research finding in career studies.

Family of origin influence on career choice is widely acknowledged in the literature (Kisi, Shields & Sheresstha, 2011; Beauregard, 2007 and Brown, 2006). Millward et al. (2010) found that family members' employment in construction related industry influences both the decision to study and interest in pursuing a career in construction. According to Brown (2006) this influence impact also the decision-making process and the career an individual chooses. The potency in the snarls increases in a collectivist culture. In this culture, respect for and obedience to one's parents is significantly prioritized, and the attitudes of family members are therefore a strong determinant of career choice (Beauregard, 2007). The criticality of family influence is anchored on it pivotal role as the most important agent of

socialization (Gambo et al., 2012). Other factors according to Koch, Greeman & Newton, (2009); Fried & MacCleave, (2009) and Gambo et al., (2012) are Hands-on-type work activity, Career placement, Family business, Potential job placement at completion, Status and prestige, Media coverage, Desired course/personal interest, Parental influence, Peer influence, Previous work experience, Early school counselling, Change of admission by institution.

Research Methodology.

Structured questionnaire was adopted for the study and was administered through personal contact and Telephone interview to all the students of Quantity Surveying Department from ND1 to HND11 levels in Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. The questionnaire assessed the student's opinion on the factors responsible for their career choice of Quantity Surveying and their choice of workplace upon graduation using five (5) points Likerts scale. The measure of central tendency, weighted Average and Relative Importance Index (RII) was adopted for the study. A total of 75 questionnaires were distributed across the four levels of ND1, ND11, HND1 and HND11 respectively. Sixty (60) questionnaires were retrieved and used in the analysis which represents eighty percent (80%) success rate. The data analysis therefore employed the following statistical steps:

- a. Computation of the mean using the weighted average formula

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f}$$

Where:

\bar{x} = Means

x = Point on the Likert's Scale (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), f = Frequency of respondents' choice of each point on the scale

- b. Computation of the relative importance index (RII) for each item of interest, using the formula.

$$RII = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f} \cdot \frac{1}{k}$$

$$= \frac{\bar{x}}{k}$$

Where k = Maximum point on the Likert's Scale (in this case, k = 5)

- c. Ranking of the items under consideration based on their RII values. The item with the highest RII value is ranked first (1) the next (2) and so on.
- d. Interpretation of the RII values as follows:
 $RII < 0.60$, item is assessed to have low rating; $0.60 \leq RII < 80$, item assessed to have high rating; $RII \geq 0.80$, item assessed to have very high rating.

Interpretation of Results

Table 1 i- ii represent the demographic information of the students (respondents), Table 2 represent the respondent's Influences on Career Choice in Quantity Surveying while Table 3 represent the respondent's choice of Workplace upon Graduation.

Table 1 : Characteristics of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage.
I Level of Respondents		
ND1	20	33.33
ND11	14	23.33
HND1	18	30
HND11	8	13.33
Total	60	100
ii Gender of Respondents		
Male	42	70
Female	18	30
Total	60	100

Source: Field Survey (October 2016)

Table 1(i – ii) above shows that the respondents ND1 students were representing 33.33%, ND11 students representing 23.33%; HND1 students representing 30% and HND11 representing 13.33%. Majority of whom were Male (70%) and Female (30%).

Table 2: Respondent's Influences on Career Choice in Quantity Surveying.

Influence Factor	Weighting (x)/Response					Σf	\bar{x}	RII	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5				
Change of Course within the institution by the students.	0	4	11	25	20	60	4.017	0.803	1st
Parental/Family Influence.	2	9	15	15	19	60	3.667	0.733	2th
Change of admission by the Institution	2	7	17	23	11	60	3.567	0.713	3nd
Personal interest in Construction	3	9	18	19	11	60	3.43	0.686	4th
Potential job placement / prospect.	3	11	19	12	15	60	3.417	0.683	5th
Media Coverage / Awareness	2	11	17	21	9	60	3.4	0.68	6th
Peer Influence	5	14	23	11	7	60	3.017	0.603	7th
Early School Counselling.	5	13	25	12	5	60	2.983	0.596	8th

Source: Field Survey (October 2016)

1 = strongly disagreed, 2 = disagreed, 3 = undecided, 4 = agreed, 5 = strongly agreed

Table 2 revealed 'change of course within the institution by the students', 'parental / family influences' and 'Change of admission by the Institution' as the major factor responsible for their career choice in Quantity Surveying with the Relative Importance Index (RII) of 0.803, 0.733 and 0.713 respectively. The least responsible for their career choice in Quantity Surveying was 'early school counselling' with RII value of 0.596

Table 3 : Choice of Workplace upon Graduation

Choice of Workplace	Weighting (x)/Response					Σf	\bar{x}	RII	Rank
	Frequency (f)								
	1	2	3	4	5				
Private Companies (Mobil, Cadbury, Julius Berger, etc)	1	3	16	23	17	60	3.867	0.773	1 st
Public Sector (Ministry, other Govt. establishments)	0	6	24	19	11	60	3.583	0.716	2 nd
Private practice (Quantity Surveying firms)	2	7	27	16	8	60	3.35	0.67	3 rd
Personal Business (Buying and Selling of Goods).	3	13	18	15	11	60	3.3	0.66	4 th
Others (Specify)	9	13	22	7	9	60	2.9	0.58	5 th

Source: Field Survey (March 2015)

1 = strongly disagreed, 2 = disagreed, 3 = undecided, 4 = agreed, 5 = strongly agreed.

The dream workplace upon graduation of the students were Private Companies like Mobil producing company among others with RII value of 0.773, Public Sector like Ministries and Government Departments with RII value of 0.716.

Discussion of Findings.

The study sought to identify the factors responsible for the decline in youth participation in Quantity Surveying (QS) Education in Nigeria using the students of Quantity Surveying Department of Federal Polytechnic Ilaro to sample the opinion of youths in Ogun State.

The results from the study on ND and HND students of QS department in the institution reveals that their choice of career in QS was as a result of change of career choice by the students or the institution different from the initial choice of career desired. Another influencing factor identified was parental / family influence. This is in agreement with similar study by Ekung, (2015) on “trends in influences on career choice in Quantity Surveying and its implications”. He affirms that career choice among the undergraduates in Quantity Surveying is driven by family influence, that is, parental influence and family business factor.

In a related study by Gambo et al., (2012) on “students’ perception of career choice in Estate Management: A study of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Nigeria”. It was revealed that some of the estate management students had to opt for Estate Management because they could not get admitted into the institution based on their course of first choice.

In agreement with the findings of Peter et al., (2016) on “building a career in estate management: the perspective of covenant university students”. The study reveal that the students of Quantity Surveying have the prospect of working with multinational oil producing companies and construction companies like Mobil, Julius Berger and others. It is amazing why the youths are not embracing the education and training in the profession. Probably, lack of awareness and lack of early school counselling as revealed in the study.

Conclusion and Recommendation.

The study examined the factors responsible for the decline in youth participation in Quantity Surveying Education in Ogun State. It was concluded that parental / family influence and change of course option drives the career choice of youths rather than genuine interest and passion for Quantity Surveying Education and Training.

Based on the perceived declined interest among youths in participating in Quantity Surveying Education and the need to stir genuine interest to sustain the profession, the study recommends that the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyor (NIQS, the regulatory body of the profession) should embark on public awareness programs through media, workshops, career seminar / symposium etc. for high school students and the society, to inform them of the prospect of the profession.

The body should exploit a better way of marketing the services rendered by the professionals rather than relying on Government patronage alone.

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