

## Registration Challenges of Built Environment Professions into Professional Institutions

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### ABSTRACT

*Tertiary institutions offering Built Environment courses yearly produce graduates but few of these graduates are registered as professionals or are full members of professional institutions in Nigeria. This insufficient registered professional is therefore creating room for quacks and all comers to operate in the construction industry resulting in building failures, substandard work, rework and various quality issues. This study examines the registration challenges of built environment professions in becoming full members of professional institutions. The study adopted a quantitative and qualitative method of research targeted at different professions in the built environment. The results were analysed using percentages, mean response analysis, ranking and narrative analysis. The study revealed the overbearing cost of registration, examinations and interview charges, complexity of examination and interviewing processes/procedures, Imposed of pledge/donations on incoming professionals, rigorous practical work and technical report writing, overbearing cost of providing maximum numbers of CPD certificates of past workshops, seminars and conference and Insufficient link between professional bodies and academic institutions etc. as the major challenges hindering Built environment professions from registering into professional institutions. These challenges pose a great danger to the built environment professions and the construction industry because professionals are a valuable resource for achieving project delivery and their availability in large numbers will curb the activities of quacks, reduce poor workmanship and underperformance in the construction industry and also reduce economic loss and underdevelopment in the country*

**Key Words:** Built environment, Construction industry, Professionals, Professional Institutions.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The construction industry is one of those sectors that brings together a variety of professionals that operate in one or more roles with overlapping duties to attain a shared goal. These professionals are involved in the construction processes at one point or the other depending on the type and nature of construction projects. [1, 2] observed that the availability of professionals in construction projects is one of the most important critical success factors in achieving project delivery. The services rendered by professionals in the construction industry are major contributions to pushing the services sector and propelling the economy up the income scale. Virtually all the other sectors of the economy depend on their service to function effectively in terms of the provision of buildings and other infrastructure facilities.

The built environment is made up of various professionals such as Architects, Builders, Civil, Structural and Services Engineers, Quantity Surveyors, Estate surveyors, Land surveyors and Town planners. The conduct and activities of these professionals are governed by professional associations/ institutions which are made of a group of people of the same professions, created purposely to achieve specific objectives, services and to enhance the career development of its members. [3] describe professional bodies as groups of individuals whose beliefs and ideals about sustainable development are influenced by their training and education, as well as by their professional experience and networking with colleagues. Professional bodies generally control the conduct and activities of professionals by specified codes, ethics, and conduct. In the built environment, there are various professional institutions and professional regulatory bodies as shown in Table 1. These professional bodies work hand to hand for

the successful provision of buildings and infrastructures in the construction industry. These professional institutes give power and credibility to the built environment professions, it is also a platform for collecting ideas and thoughts and giving its member a sense of belonging and voice in the profession. Professional institutions as becoming an avenue for sharing knowledge, ideas, thoughts and findings, it has also become an information warehouse for professionals and stakeholders to obtain information and direction in the construction industry. [4] observed that the primary function of a few professional institutions is to oversee the issuance of professional qualification certificates and even licenses to practice, while others play a more disciplinary role for those who work in that field to uphold ethical standards. The activities of the members of professional associations are guided by their regulatory bodies through the provisions of the relevant Acts, which empower them to make rules and regulations to self-regulate the practice of their members. Professionals can only offer their service to the industry after registration approval is given by the registration boards, which will enable them to practice under the rules and regulations set by the regulatory bodies.

**Table 1: Built Environment Professional Bodies and their Regulatory Bodies**

<b>Professions</b>	<b>Professional Institutions</b>	<b>Year of Establishment</b>	<b>Regulatory Bodies</b>
<b>Architect</b>	Nigeria Institute of Architects (NIA)	1960	Architect Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON)
<b>Builder</b>	Nigeria Institute of Building (NIOB)	1970	Council for the Registration of Builders (CORBON)
<b>Engineer</b>	Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE)	1958	Council for the Registration of Engineers (COREN)
<b>Quantity Surveyors</b>	Nigeria Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS)	1969	Quantity Surveyor Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN)
<b>Land Surveyors</b>	Nigeria Institute of Surveyors (NIS)	1934	Surveyors Registration Council of Nigeria (SURCON)
<b>Estate Surveyor</b>	Nigeria Institute of Estate (NIESV) Surveyors and valuer	1969	Estate Surveyors and Valuer Registration Board of Nigeria (ESVARBON)
<b>Town Planners</b>	Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP)	1966	Town Planners Council of Nigeria (TOPCON)

*Source: Professional institutions' websites*

In the construction industry, professional institutions are crucial because they foster knowledge development and raise professional standards. They also improve the workforce's and management's capabilities by encouraging best practices and sharing the most recent advancements in the field of practice [5], They also establish and manage educational institutions to guarantee that their degrees and courses stay relevant to changing industrial and economic demands. [6] highlighted the objectives of professional bodies in Nigeria as the establishment of a communication channel between all members and other organizations involved with the profession, the issuance and promotion of rules of behaviour for its members, furthering the interests and status of its member, creating degrees of competence among members by defining intellectual and practical criteria according to membership grade and promoting education and research.

Although professional institutions provide enormous benefits to the built environment professions and construction industry, a significant portion of graduates does not belong to professional institutions, even though many of these young professionals are consistently produced by Nigeria's higher education institutions. [7] reveals that most graduates and trained personnel find it difficult to become registered members of their professional bodies. As a result giving room for quacks, charlatans and all comers to take over leading to an incessant collapse of buildings, shoddy construction works and unsatisfactory standards of work [6]. Also, couple with this challenge is the insufficient number of young professionals, the construction industry is facing ageing professionals and a workforce without replacement my young ones [8]–[10]. As a result of this development, the construction industry now faces an urgent need for a qualified workforce capable of delivering transformational change over the next decade. To meet the upcoming needs and difficulties, the construction industry and professional institutions must be able to attract and maintain a sufficient number of professionals. This study will thereby examine the challenges of registration of Built environment professions into professional institutions in Nigeria with a view to suggesting ways of improving and enhancing professional participation in the construction industry.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

A pilot study was carried out to elicit the views of members of six (6) professional associations in the Built environment in Osun state in South Western Nigeria, which include the Nigeria Institute of Architects (NIA), Nigeria Institute of Building (NIOB), Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE), Nigeria Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS), Nigeria Institute of Surveyors (NIS), and Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP) on the challenges faced in registration into professional institutions. Pilot studies also give preliminary data to researchers, allowing them to get insight into the prospective outcomes of their proposed experiment [11]. This research adopted quantitative and qualitative research methodology. Using a convenient sampling technique, Fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed to elicit a response from the public and private sector professionals in the built environment. The semi-structured interview was conducted on six (6) respondents from different professions via telephone conversation. The respondents were selected based on the purposive sampling method, in which the researcher-identified individuals who have relevant information on the subject under consideration. A 5-point Likert scale was used in this study to measure the level of agreement of the respondents on the identified challenges of registration into professional institutions. The ratings were as follows: (1) = not challenging, (2) = less challenging, (3) = moderately challenging, (4) = challenging and (5) = Very Challenging. The statistical tools used for analysis include the mean, percentage and relative significance index (RSI) used for ranking the factors studied.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the personal information presented in table 1, out of the 50 questionnaires sent out only 30 were returned. 73% of the respondents are from the public sector, 17% of the respondents are from the private sector and 10% of the respondents are from both sectors. The respondents comprise Architect (17%), Builder (13%), Quantity Surveyor (17%), Land surveyors (13%), Estate surveyors and valuers (13%) and Town planners (10%) with affiliations with NIA, NIOB, NIQS, NSE, NIS, NIESV and NITP associations respectively.

77% of the respondents are fully registered professionals members of their various while 33% of the respondents are yet to be registered with their regulatory bodies. This result shows even though some of the respondents are registered with the professional association, they are yet to proceed to be licensed by their professional regulatory bodies for one reason or the other. The duration of their registration as presented in table 1 shows that 43.3% are from 0-5yrs, 33.3% (11-15yrs), 20% (6-10yrs) and 3.3% (16yrs above).

**Table 1: Questionnaire Respondents' profile**

Category	Respondent's No	Percentage (%)
Sector		
Public	22	73
Private	5	17
Both	3	10
Profession		
Architect	5	17
Builder	4	13
Quantity Surveyor	5	17
Land Surveyor	4	13
Engineer	5	17
Estate Surveyor	4	13
Town planner	3	10
Professional Association		
NIA	5	17
NIOB	4	13
NIQS	5	17
NSE	4	13

NIS	5	17
NIESV	4	13
NITP	3	10
Level Of Professional Registration		
Licentiate	1	3
Associate	2	7
Graduate	4	13
Corporate	23	77
Duration of Registration		
0-5yrs	13	43.3
6-10yrs	6	20
11-15yrs	10	33.3
16yrs above	1	3.3

The interviewees are selected from Six (6) different professionals in the built environment professionals who are fully registered members of their professions and are past and present executives of their various professional associations having experience in the subject matter. Their duration of registration as shown in Table 2 includes Architect (22yrs), Builder (10yrs), Quantity surveyor (23yrs), Land surveyor (12yrs), Engineer (18yrs) and Estate surveyor (8yrs).

**Table 2: Interviewees’ Profile**

Profession	Level Of Professional Registration	Duration Of Registration
Architect	Corporate	22yrs
Builder	Corporate	10yrs
Quantity Surveyor	Corporate	23yrs
Land Surveyor	Corporate	12yrs
Engineer	Corporate	18yrs
Estate Surveyor	Corporate	8yrs

### 3.1 Registration Challenges into Professional Institutions

The study then sought to identify the challenges that are not attracting graduates and trained personnel in registration as a professional. Tables 3 and 4 show the results from the questionnaire survey and the interview with construction professionals on the challenges militating against the registration of members into professional institutes.

**Table 3. Challenges of Registration into Professional institutes**

Challenges	Archit.	Builder	Q.S	Land Surv.	Engineers	Estate Surv.	Town Planners	Av. mean	Ranking
Overbearing cost of registration, examination and interview charges.	4.60	4.75	3.80	4.50	5.00	4.50	4.33	4.50	1st
The complexity of examination and interviewing processes/procedures	4.60	4.25	4.80	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.33	4.28	2nd
Imposition of pledge/donations on incoming professionals	4.00	4.50	2.60	4.50	5.00	3.25	3.33	3.88	3rd

Rigorous practical work and technical report writing	4.00	4.00	4.20	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.33	3.79	4th
Overbearing cost of providing maximum numbers of CPD certificates of past workshops, seminars and conference	4.00	4.50	3.20	3.25	5.00	3.00	3.33	3.75	5th
The insufficient link between professional bodies and academic institutions	3.20	4.00	4.00	2.50	5.00	3.25	4.00	3.71	6th
Lack of encouragement from Senior professionals	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.00	2.00	2.75	3.00	3.04	7th
The rigidity of the professional body from allowing free movement from one profession of study to another in the built environment	1.80	3.25	3.40	3.00	2.00	2.75	4.33	2.93	8th
Difficulties in accessing the institutes for registration.	2.20	3.75	3.00	3.50	1.00	2.00	3.00	2.64	9th
Insufficient manuals/templates for training before induction into full practice	2.60	3.25	2.80	2.00	2.00	3.50	3.00	2.45	10th

The result in Table 3 shows that the overbearing cost of registration, examination and interview charges was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the challenges in registration as a professional in their field of studies. The majority of the interviewees agreed that this is the major factor limiting most graduates from joining their various professional bodies. This is depicted in the following statements:

*“Majority of these professional bodies impose a lot of financial burden in the progressing for registration”*

*“Many of these applicants are jobless, how will they get money for high registration and processing fees”*

*“Many applicants’ passed the professional exams but they don’t have money to continue the next stage of registration and induction”*

The study by [12] supports this claim, that the level of fees charged by professional institutions is one of the barriers hindering young professionals from joining professional institutions. However, some of the interviewees were of the contrary opinion that, *“finances should not be a limiting factor for registration”*. They argued that *“Professional registration is part of the academic programme, so finance should not debar any graduate from registration, if one could have finance for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, one should be prepared to finance their registration in the profession they had to choose to study”*.

Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with the mean value of 4.28 is the complexity of examination and interviewing procedures. Most of the respondents acknowledge that the exams and interview procedures are tough, and many applicants find it difficult to pass in the first sitting. One of the interviewees blamed this factor on the competence of the applicant, that most graduates are not prepared and competent to face professional exams, and they are afraid they might fail when they write the exams. This finding agrees with [13] and [14] that most graduates of tertiary institutions are less knowledgeable and lack the skills needed in the construction industry.

Another major challenge limiting built environment professions from registration as professionals is the imposition of pledges/donations on incoming professionals as shown in table 3-ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>. Most of the respondents admitted that they were asked to pledge or donate to their institutes; without which they cannot be inducted. Some of the interviewees express displeasure in this regard:

*“It is like the professional institutions are only interested in money”*

*“The institutions have been monetized, they ask you to make compulsory donation/pledge, without it you wouldn’t be able to proceed with your registration”*

As shown in table 3 other registration challenges includes rigorous practical work and technical report writing and the overbearing cost of providing maximum numbers of CPD certificates of past workshops, seminars and conference ranked 4<sup>th</sup>, Overbearing cost of providing maximum numbers of CPD certificates of past workshops, seminars and conference (5<sup>th</sup>), Insufficient link between professional bodies and academic institutions (6<sup>th</sup>), Lack of encouragement from Senior professionals (7<sup>th</sup>), Rigidity of the professional body from allowing free movement from one profession of study to another in the built environment (8<sup>th</sup>), the difficulties in accessing the national body of the institutes for registration is ranked 9<sup>th</sup> and ranked 10<sup>th</sup> is insufficient manuals/templates for training before induction into full practice.

Another major challenge identified by the interviewed respondents is that senior professionals in the institutions are not doing enough to encourage the young ones to register as professionals. They believed that the senior ones in the profession set the bar high in terms of qualifications for registration, making it difficult for the upcoming professionals to close ranks with them in the professional practice. Improper sensitization and enlightenment about professional institutes is also a challenge identified by the interviewees. They observed that most applicants are not aware of the need to register before and after graduation. Awareness is key to raising positive perceptions of professional bodies and influencing new entrants into the institutes. [15] studies align with the study findings that improper interaction between the construction industry with the institutions of learning could result in poor career information. Therefore, professional institutions need to communicate with the built environment professions in higher institutions, this will highly influence how young professionals are educated and give a better understanding of legal, ethical standards and culture that could shape their approach to the construction industry.

Lack of financial benefit or incentives derived from being registered was also identified as the registration challenge, they believe many applicants do not see the need to register because they are not going to get anything from it, except for promotion for those in the public. They stated that many registered professionals have never used their seal or that their registration has not earned them any money. This situation is likely to put the construction business in a negative light and make it unappealing to young people.

**Table 4. Challenges of Registration Identified by Interviewees**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Archit.</b>	<b>Builder</b>	<b>Q.S</b>	<b>Land Surv.</b>	<b>Engineers</b>	<b>Estate Surv.</b>
Financial burden of registration/interview	*	*	*	*	*	*
Imposition of compulsory donations	*	*	*	*	*	*
Lack of Encourage by Senior Professionals	*	*	*		*	*
Improper sensitization and enlightenment about the professional institutes		*		*	*	
lack of financial benefit or incentives derived from being registered		*			*	
Unpreparedness of Applicant			*			
In-fighting between the professional association and the regulatory body	*					

**4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study has identified the challenges that are limiting built environment professions from registering to become professionals. Notable among the challenges that are common to all professions in a built environment is the overbearing cost of registration, examination and interview charges, the complexity of examination and interviewing processes/procedures and the imposition of pledge/donations for new entrants. It is therefore vital to tackle these concerns as quickly since allowing quacks into the construction industry poses a huge risk of underperformance, not achieving project objectives of cost, time and quality, economic loss and underdevelopment of the nation resulting from poor workmanship, abandoned projects, poor workmanship and building collapse. It could also plunge the built environment professions and professional institutes into contempt and public distrust, giving them a negative image. To curb these registration challenges into professional institutions, this study, therefore, recommends as following:

- a) To create room for more professional participation, the institutes should subsidy the registration fees and make donations voluntary.



- b) Since professional associations have chapters in states, Exams/interview centres should be decentralized into zones, preferably each in the six geopolitical zones.
- c) More enlightenment and sensitization should be done by professional bodies to create awareness among the public and policy on the benefits and purpose of professional bodies/institutions.
- d) There should be increased collaboration between the professional institutes and the academia to attract and retain young graduates in the built environment professions
- e) To give the built environment profession more relevance and acceptance, the government of Nigeria should speed up the signing into law of the National Building Code.

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