

EMPIRICAL STUDY OF STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACH TO QUANTITY SURVEYING EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Quantity surveying is a profession that undertakes the total cost management of a nation's infrastructure by ensuring prudence of all resources committed in a project, and above all giving maximum value for money. Clients' growing demand and sophistication of contemporary services has led to the evolvement of QS roles from measurement to management, and from cost to value but the extent to which the profession responds methodically to this demand appears discretionary instead of deliberate policy enactments. The study highlights the application of strategic planning competency in the education curriculum and professional certification of Quantity Surveyors for improved role performance. The methodology involved a critical exposition of existing relevant literature and empirical research. The result of the study showed low knowledge and scanty application of the strategic planning competency in QS training and certification. The study concludes that strategic planning has potentials of improving Qs's skills and competence. The study recommends a deliberate education and practice certification that intensely emphasizes strategic planning approach for improved and sustainable role performance by quantity surveyors.

Keywords: Development, education, practice, policy, quantity surveying, strategic planning

Introduction

Professional development is primarily aimed at promoting growth within the body of knowledge of a profession. It involves building on previous efforts to emancipate a profession; moving from a present unsatisfactory position to a preferred one that provides a better and more robust opportunity by making a greater impact, and establishing superior intellectual and professional leadership among best of class.

Competition, innovation, policies, technology, and human resources are major concerns of today's quantity surveyor s' work. Many professions follow traditional methods as their preferred competitive strategy. Unfortunately, such orthodox approaches fail on the long-run. Strategic planning approach to Quantity Surveying education and professional development will provide a radical, proactive, result-oriented way to clearly define objectives, goals, internal resources, external factors and would assist in the evaluation of the overall spectrum of challenges confronting education and training for the sustainable existence and growth of the profession.

Strategic planning is simply the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating

strategies to support cross functional decisions of an organization, institution or system. Strategic planning driven reforms to Quantity Surveying education fundamentally comprise the following basic components:

1. Stating Quantity Surveying Vision and Mission
2. Conducting Quantity Surveying Internal Audit
3. Conducting Quantity Surveying External Audit
4. Formulating Preferred Quantity Surveying education/ professional development strategy
5. Implementing Quantity Surveying education/ professional development strategy
6. Evaluating Quantity Surveying education/ professional development strategy outcomes.

This study aims at applying strategic planning tools to drive the teaching and learning of quantity surveying to enable quantity surveyors in practice render world class professional services in a globally competitive environment.

This research is significant to all quantity surveyors and project development stakeholders in the strategic repositioning of the quantity surveying profession at stage of training in order to

render cutting-edge services that creates value at stage of practice.

Theoretical framework

Strategic planning practice approach to Quantity Surveying Professional Development policy is primarily concerned with positioning the QS resources and capabilities within its operative environment for superior services and sustained relevance, reliability and profitability. It fundamentally involves an appraisal of the operational scope of the business, resource allocation, selection of a competitive approach, the determination of the optimal synergy between operating units (Ramsey, 1989). Due to the volatility of the marketplace, the complexity of production, and the organizational constraints imposed from past strategic decisions concerning products and services; institutions, firms and organizations often develop and implement strategic plans on an incremental and adaptive fashion (Ramsey, 1989). Strategic planning

originates from planning as a major element of management. It is expected to be an on-going institutional or organizational process and must not be seen as a ‘once and for all’ activity, but rather, one that spans into the future.

Strategic planning has an expanded focus beyond an internal assessment of capabilities of an organization to an extended evaluation of its external environment. It has evolved from mere extension of a firm’s past efforts into future trends to the charting of an organization’s course in a complex and changing environment. Hasso (1996) research found widespread (84%) use of strategic planning in his study of sixty-two small to medium sized engineering and construction firms operating in Northeastern United States of America. Adindu (2010) study on the ‘Application of TOWS Matrix Strategic planning model in manufacturing firms in Nigeria’ revealed that the level of the industry’s commitment to strategic planning in the South Eastern Nigeria was low.

Table 1: Firms commitment to strategic planning

S/No	Enquiry Code	Response Status	Value label	frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	A11.i	valid	to a great extent	20	5	5
2	A11.ii	valid	to a considerable extent	56	14	19
3	A11.iii	valid	to a moderate extent	89	22	41
4	A11.iv	valid	to a fair extent	131	33	74
5	A11.v	valid	Not at all	102	26	100
6		Total		398	100	

Source: Adindu (2010) field Survey on the ‘Application of TOWS Matrix Strategic planning model’ in manufacturing firms in Nigeria

Adindus’ study revealed that only 24% of the firms are committed to SP to a considerable extent. The Study concluded that the low level of adoption of SP by manufacturing firms is attributable to low knowledge or high ignorance of the concept. The study further revealed that the low adoption of SP accounts for the high level of conservatism in firms as they lack ability to break loose from their traditional structures, and as such, cannot

reposition their organizations/practices to occupy strategic leadership among best of class in the industry. Limited local research exists on the sectoral application of strategic planning in Nigeria. Knowledge of the Strategic Planning concept is likely to increase among some built environment professions like Quantity Surveying considering its high business studies or management science content. The focus of

strategic planning has shifted from a corporate function with large staff driven process to strategic business units with corporate involvement and responsibilities minimized (David, 2001; Wilson, 1994).

The scope of strategic planning has moved beyond the creation of initial plan to the development of tactical plans that guide day-to-day actions for implementation, evaluation and control (Wheelen and Hunger, 1998; Macmillian and Tampoe, 2000). The whole essence of strategic planning is the allocation of resources (Hamermesh, 1986) and the recognition of a firm's inseparability from the environment (Chaffee, 1985). It involves a comprehensive and a systematic identification and evaluation of present and anticipated environmental opportunities and threats in the light of organization's perceived strengths and weaknesses with the goal of optimizing performance (Thompson and Strickland, 2001; Steiner et al., 1983).

Strategic planning process and elements

The strategic planning process revolves around three key variables- environment, organization and leadership. These components are highly independent and inseparable (Byars, 1984).

The content analysis of strategic planning literature reveals that it is an iterative process involving three major elements, namely:

- i. Establishing objectives- including vision, mission and long term objectives and establishing policies, programs, and short term operational objectives to achieve the desired end, or strategic intent.

- ii. Environmental scanning-this involves an evaluation of an organizations resources and strategic alternatives in relation to its external operating environment
- iii. Implementation, Evaluation, and Control- implementation of strategic and tactical plans necessary to achieve the desired objectives, and the development of evaluation and control mechanisms.

Oladapo (2004) outlines the following as comprising a model strategic plan:

- values a firm should create
- ii. critical issues/concerns
- iii. strengths in the eyes of the industry
- iv. weaknesses in the eyes of the industry
- v. weaknesses in the eyes of the profession
- vi. trends threatening the profession
- vii. opportunity areas/trends for quantity surveying professional practice
- viii. scenario for professional quantity surveying practice in the next decade

Oladapos' study showcased the broad areas the Qs education and professional curriculum is expected to address, and by so doing all the weaknesses in the current curriculum will call for attention as they constitute potential threats to the sustainable existence of the profession, while the strengths in the present training guidelines will have to be taken advantage of and converted to opportunities. A suggested strategic planning algorithm for the repositioning of the subsisting Qs education and practice curriculum derives its fundamental theory from the work of strategic planning scholars and practitioners and is hereunder indicated.

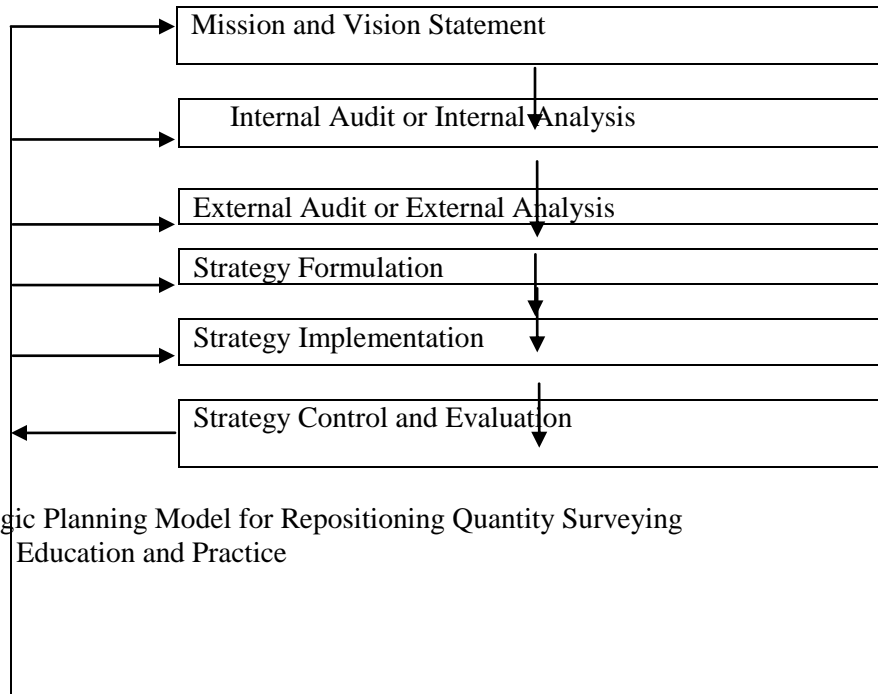


Fig.1: Strategic Planning Model for Repositioning Quantity Surveying Education and Practice

Qs mission and vision

The Qs profession as an organized body of Knowledge would first and foremost state its missions and Visions unambiguously. A good mission statement identifies the basic purpose or function or tasks of an organization. It is the vision that the professional practice is striving to become in a significant period of time (Oladapo, 2004). Every organized operation has a mission or purpose for its existence, thus, the need for a mission that strategically places the QS profession at competitive advantage among best of class in the built environment industry. The Qs new training mission is expected to capture succinctly the following professional reform components:

1. Customer market
2. Branded Services
3. Geographical domain
4. Technology
5. Concern for survival
6. Philosophy
7. Self-Concept
8. Concern for public image

In sum, the Qs mission and vision is the very heart and soul of the profession.

The Quantity Surveying Professions' visions will form the roadmap to determining the professions' long-term objectives in terms of scope, range of services, business opportunities, and clientele, human resource capacity (skills, abilities and competences).

Qs internal audit

The Qs internal audit aims at objectively assessing the professions strength and weaknesses. The strength comprises those activities or services the profession does well. It is also indicative of those valuable resources the profession controls in the normal discharge of duties. The resources are necessary for the profession to take-up new and emerging opportunities in the construction market place. The weaknesses are those activities or services the profession does not do well or the resources it needs for improved performance but do not currently possess.

Thus, internal analysis or audit provides important information about the profession's specific assets, skills, and work activities. Core competences are those skills or resources that are exceptional. The core competences are the profession's major value

creating skills, capabilities and resources that determine her competitive weapons.

Efforts must be made to convert all identified weaknesses to strengths. A strategic planning tool known as Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix (IFEM) would be appropriate in the analysis of the Critical Qs Skill & Competency (CQSS&C).

External audit

Every profession grapples with two major environments, namely-internal and external environments. The internal environment can be controlled by members of the profession taking necessary steps and desirable actions to mitigate identified challenges. Unfortunately, same cannot be said of the external environment variables as they are often outside the control of the profession's members and interface with many variables. The external environment variables include- political, legal, social and technological issues. A change in one or more of these variables would have a consequential impact on the performance of the profession in aggregate terms.

Formulation of strategy

Strategy is the roadmap to achieve a set of goals and objectives. The result of the internal and external audits will enable the Qs educators and practitioners to develop feasible strategies by taking into consideration her strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities that exist in the broader construction market place, and the threats that must be overcome to take advantage of the available opportunities for Quantity Surveyors.

For Quantity Surveyors to render superior and better service among best-of –class, emphasis would have to be on the strategic development of its core competences. This is only achievable by a pragmatic and deliberate effort that takes into account the outcomes of the internal and external audits.

Implementation of Qs development strategy

The people that implement strategy are important in the success of a strategy. They must adequately know the objectives of the strategy they plan to implement, as this is important to avoid a

misunderstanding and /or misapplication of strategy procedures in the wrong direction. Finally, they must be focused and work as a team to achieve desired results.

Evaluation of professional Qs development strategy

The implementation of Qs professional development strategy should be regularly monitored to ensure full compliance. Any deviations from predetermined plans should be noted and corrective actions taken to bring plans back on track. The evaluation of individual strategy phases must meet expected quality accreditation criteria to minimize or eliminate elements that mar preferred outcomes. The evaluation of strategy can revert back to any phase of the planning process and strategy feedback cycle for correction and improvement and this iteration would where necessary continue until the preferred 'Qs education and professional development quality' is achieved.

Research methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used in conducting this empirical study.

The population of study involved the 137 fully registered south-eastern Nigeria Quantity Surveyors (source: NIQS Year 2013, Directory of Members). The Qs's were engaged in either the academia or professional practice in the five states that comprised the geopolitical zone, namely-Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The study's sample size was computed using Yamane (1964) statistical formula for selecting samples from a finite population and this yielded 102 at 5% margin of error. The 102 registered quantity surveyors selected for the study represented the wide variety of typical Nigerian Qs professionals and with an average experience spanning over 8 years. A personal interview method was used for the purposes of primary data collection with the aid of a well structured questionnaire. The analyses were conducted using frequencies, percentages and means; while the student t –test statistical technique was used for testing the research hypothesis earlier formulated.

Decision Rule: Reject the null hypothesis, h_0 , if $t_c > t_1 \alpha / 2$, or if $t_c < - t_1 \alpha / 2$, for $n_1+n_2 - 2$ degrees of

freedom, otherwise accept the alternate hypothesis (H_a), indicating existence of significant difference between the two proportions.

Results and discussion of findings

A total of 84 responses were received out of a sample size of 102 fully registered quantity surveyors selected for the study, thus, representing 82%. This response rate was considered reasonable for an empirical study of this magnitude. The basic enquiries sought included ‘the extent to which the

application of strategic planning would positively impact on quantity surveying education and in consequence practice development’ in Nigeria. The following strategic planning processes were surveyed.

- i. Company Vision and Mission (CVM)
- ii. Internal Audit (IA)
- iii. External Audit (EA)
- iv. Strategy Formulation (SF)
- v. Strategy Implementation (SI)
- vi. Strategy Evaluation (SE)

Table 2: Extent of respondent’s knowledge of Strategic Planning

S/No	Inquiry code	Response Status	Value label	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	B.i	Valid	to a great extent	8	9	9
2	Bii	Valid	to a considerable extent	17	20	29
3	Biii	Valid	to a moderate extent	40	48	77
4	Biv	Valid	to a fair extent	19	23	100
5	Bv	Valid	not at all	0	0	100
			TOTAL	84	100	

Source: Adindu field survey, 2014

An enquiry into the extent of Quantity Surveyors knowledge of Strategic planning as shown in table 2 revealed that only 38% have considerable knowledge of strategic planning process. The study

showed that Quantity Surveyors are not completely ignorant of strategic planning despite their apparent low depth of knowledge of the competency.

Table 3: Extent of respondents' agreement on the positive impact of Strategic Planning processes on Quality Surveying Education in Nigeria.

S/Code	Description.	Agree			Neutral			Disagree	
		SA	A	%	UND	%	D	SD	%
CVM	Company Vision and mission	39	21	71	9	11	9	6	18
IA	Internal audit	33	37	83	6	7	5	3	10
EA	External audit	25	40	77	13	16	2	4	7
SF	Strategy formulation	29	34	75	19	23	0	2	2
SI	Strategy implementation	36	33	82	8	10	3	4	8
SE	Strategy evaluation	26	27	63	12	14	13	6	23
	Total response	188	192		67		32	25	
	Average Response			380/437 = 87				57/437 =13	

Source: Adindu field survey, 2014

From table 3 above, discarding data from the undecided (neutral) respondents, 87% of the respondents agree that strategic planning processes has positive impact on Quantity Surveying education, while 13% disagree.

Test of hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the application of strategic planning to quantity surveying education and the Quantity Surveyors' achievement of superior performance during practice.

H_a: There is a significant relationship between the application of strategic planning to quantity surveying education and the Quantity Surveyors' achievement of superior performance during practice.

achievement of superior performance during practice.

A test of significance between proportions was carried out on the proportion of respondents that agreed P₁, and the proportion of those that disagreed P₂ while discarding the proportion of those who were neutral (undecided), P₃.

h₀: P₁ = P₂

h_a: P₁ > P₂

Since the result yielded t_c = 15.4915 > t_t = 1.645 at α/2, α = 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H₀), which says there is no significant relationship between the application of strategic planning to quantity surveying education and the Quantity Surveyors' achievement of superior performance during practice.

during practice, and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_a), and conclude that there is a significant relationship between the application of strategic planning to quantity surveying education and the Quantity Surveyors' achievement of superior performance during practice.

Conclusion

Quantity Surveying like other built environment professions is an evolving field and as such, confronted with the challenges of conservatism and long established traditions of role performance. Contemporary Quantity Surveying services demand proactive and cutting edge services that deliberately seek to give maximum value for money to clients. The subsisting academic curriculum for the training of the nations' Quantity Surveyors is expected to consistently apply methodologies that aim at addressing areas of inherent weakness that currently do not meet the contemporary requirements of acceptable role performance in industry. The chosen methodology must have the potentials of converting real and perceived weaknesses to strengths for sustainable existence and superior performance among best of class. The Strategic Planning competency considering its landmark achievement in other fields has the potential to reposition the Qs profession to occupy strategic leadership if methodically applied. SP has the capacity to convert the weaknesses in the subsisting academic and professional training curriculum of the Qs that currently pose threats to the sustainable existence of the profession to strength, in order to take due advantage of emerging global construction opportunities through cutting edge service delivery.

Recommendations

1. Adoption of a repositioning methodology that proactively seeks to improve the knowledge base of Quantity Surveyors to render cutting edge contemporary services
2. Application of strategic planning processes to the existing Quantity Surveying curriculum of tertiary institutions in order to tap the benefits of the competency to improve teaching and learning of the profession.

3. A commitment to Strategic planning practice as a deliberate repositioning strategy and policy of organizations for sustainable service delivery.
4. A vigorous pursuit of strategic planning knowledge improvement by Quantity surveying professionals right the point of training
5. A policy inclusion of Strategic Planning as a separate course of instruction in the quantity surveying curriculum for academic and professional certifications in Quantity Surveying.

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