

Conflict of Interest within Construction Practitioners: Quantity Surveying, Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The instinct of decision making is the pride of professionalism in the construction industry and professionalism is a function of demonstrable skill, competence and professional ethics, it is predicted by professionals' academic background, length of time in practice and professional status. The research is aimed at identifying ethical perceptions of practicing Quantity Surveyors across the levels of professional status. It was discovered that young or new entrants into Quantity Surveying practice own up to self-interest while senior members always consider public interest. The implication is that this proportionality affects the image of professionalism in Quantity Surveying practice unpleasantly as well as the future of the profession. It concludes by recommending feasible panacea for implementation by professional bodies and education authority.

KEYWORDS

Professional Ethics
Professional Interest
Professional Status
Quantity Surveying Practice

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INTRODUCTION

Professional services are largely created and sustained by the continued interest, expectations and demand of the public. Moreover, professionalism is imperative of certain core values; competencies, responsibility and willingness to serve public interest (Chalkley 1990; Carey and Doherty, 1968). The view of the public determines the continuous recourse to, demand for and continued existence of any profession; through trust, confidence as well as the pride and respect for the quality performance of services rendered. The systemic complexity of the construction industry with respect to project performance is not only targeted at meeting clients demands through the dynamism of technical competencies and innovative skills but the behavioral pattern of professionals to protect client's interest and sustain public-industry harmony (Chalkley, 1990; Poon, 2004a; Nkado, 2000).

The construction industry can not afford to ignore the imperatives of professional ethics among the practitioners, which in recent years has been under very serious criticism. This makes the redemption of her image inevitable, if she chooses exists. Egan (1998) reports that over thirty-three percent of clients are dissatisfied with contractors and consultants' performances. Reporting a recent survey conducted by Construction Clients Forum in the United Kingdom, Poon (2003) reports that fifty-eight percent of the respondent clients experience program over-run with an average of forty-eight days delay in anticipated delivery, while thirty-two percent experience cost over-runs. Ridout (1999) adds that fifty-seven percent of clients experienced defects on their projects. Therefore, this study affirms the need for the industry to equip the practitioners technically and address the pertinent need to further institutionize the new paradigm of reliable, flexible and mixed public-industry transaction strategy through professionalism as

operational ethos. Unfortunately, the cultural misalignment between the construction industry and public interest through professional ethics has been proved to be the single largest factor leading to poor quality of work and client dissatisfaction in the industry (Pollington, 1999). Nonetheless, balanced professionalism has been seen as the most important antidote (Poon, 2004 a and b).

Professional misconduct in the construction industry has not just affected public confidence and respect for the pride of professional competencies, professional bodies are aware that there had been unwarranted concern on the state of professionalism in the construction industry in government's special discourses (Latham, 1994; Egan, 1998; Fan et al., 2003; Ho et al., 2003; CIRC, 2001). Also, apart from other erroneous violations involving surveyors in the UK with which most clients passionately resolved to be silent because of ignorance or socio-political reasons, a fraction of over two thousand and seven hundred misconduct cases were reported to professional conduct panel (Poon, 2003). Ho et al., (2004) also report that Hong Kong recorded a whopping loss of over HK\$600,000,000 on two barely completed 34-storey buildings later demolished for severe irredeemable structural problems. There were other reported cases of 'short piling' and salt water construction scams, poor service quality of work and so on in the Hong Kong and UK construction industries which were pivoted by unscrupulous professional misbehaviours. Ultimately, the industry has failed over the years to satisfy client's desire to create maximum value for money (HKEDC, 1996; Ho et al., 2003).

Like many anecdotal evidences in the literatures, Poon (2003), referring to the Steven Gould - RICS Regulations' Director, says there are some Quantity Surveying firms who unintentionally don't seem to understand how to handle clients money and are culpable

of certain actions that could be severely damaging to clients' interests. Nonetheless, Nkado (2000) gives an overview of the ubiquitous need of certain professional skills in quantity surveying that are pertinent to meeting clients' demands, which in stochastic analysis of Olatunji and Ogunsemi (2006a) and Vee and Skitmore (2003) reflect conflict of interest. Pearl et al (2005) and Poon (2003) attribute this ugly phenomenon that has robbed quantity surveying profession the much expected pride of place of professionalism in the industry to the conflict of views of the various cadres of practicing quantity surveyors as regards certain ethical principles and the systemic complexities that make it difficult to justify certain culpable conceptions and practices. Therefore, the significance of addressing conflict of interest in professionalism in the construction industry (especially in quantity surveying practices) is to encourage high quality industry performance and proliferate positive awareness of the improving image of the profession by the doubting public.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND QUANTITY SURVEYING PRACTICE

Quantity surveying practice enjoys uniqueness and ubiquitous expertise in construction cost management to generate value for client's money all through the construction process and other duties wherever adaptable. Despite Quantity Surveyors' traditional expertise in feasibility and viability appraisal of construction investments; drafting, compilation and documentation of construction contracts; preparation and subsequent analysis of construction contract bids, quotes or tenders; contractor selection advice and financial management of all construction works and allied reporting, including auditing, cost planning, cost indexing etc, they are also very relevant in construction project management,

value management, facilities management, management contracting, construction dispute resolution, research consultancy (Seeley, 1996; Abdullah and MBQIC, 2005; Nkado, 2000). Interestingly, quantity surveying practice is gaining more relevance in asset management, project management, taxation, law, insurance, banking and manufacturing – especially oil and gas (Yakub, 2005), yet the profession still needs a lot of publicity (Poon, 2004b; RICS, 2002) through enterprising packaging and marketing of an attractive image of professionalism, not only in technicalities but in ethical discipline.

Traditional ideals of quantity surveying practice and professional conduct have been challenged by recent social, political and technological changes (Fan et al., 2001). It is inevitable that as the profession expands rapidly in relevance and demand within and outside construction, there is the need to sustain the growth as it changes with time and demand proliferation with enterprising service attitude and the right mind of professional indemnity through the duty of care to sustain productivity exclusively in the industry.

Professional ethics therefore, justifies the acceptability of abstract standards of behaviour against practical tasks, not exclusively limited to technologies, transactions, activities, pursuits and assessment of institutions, but includes more of practical conceptualization and public expectations in the interest of responsibilities, willingness to service the public and astute competencies (Fan et al., 2001; Carey, 1968; HKEDC, 1996; Chalkley, 1990; Poon, 2003; 2004a). However, as requisite responsibilities increase and the professionals produced by academic and professional establishments proliferate, there is the need to sustain the maintenance of public trust and confidence in quantity surveying professional practices of both the new entrants and old generation practitioners, the duo of whose professional perceptions are always

dichotomous. Conducts of practitioners have to be correlated with intentions, means and ends (Ray et al., 1998) of constituent members in relation to perception instinct and variables like self, employer/company, clients, superiors, colleagues, family and general public (Poon 2004b).

For instance, new entrants; junior, technician, graduate and associate members with minimal professional exposure differ in technical and ethical perceptions compared to more experienced, senior members with higher academic and professional qualifications and experience especially during systemic dilemma and economic recessionary period. This may be as a result of different academic exposures and backgrounds, length of time in professional practice, age and cumulative exposure of Quantity Surveyors to systemic challenges, position in organization hierarchy as it affects corporate decision making instinct and so on (Fan et al., 2001). Further, Carroll (1978) adds economic influence through continent rewards and organizational policies, while Nyan and Ng (1994) opine that the nature and role of professionals in establishment's business may affect their professional disposition to ethical discipline and conscientiousness.

Therefore, as challenges and ubiquitous demands expand with new entrants of quantity surveying practice professing with different goals, it may be difficult to hold them under serious legal obligation to uphold ethical practices. This is because they may not be recognized as members of professional bodies until they are duly examined and registered, which may not be a mandatory requisition to operate within their delimited scope. Also, except in exceptional cases, academic establishments are not so keen in monitoring the ethical conducts of their products out of school. Moreover, there are no serious legislation co-relating employment conditions and fundamental or statutory professional obligations with the legal powers

of professional bodies, who are specifically monitoring practitioners' conducts in conformity with ethical standards, other than individual's personal decisiveness whether or not to uphold ethical standards. In other words, practicing quantity surveyors are better made to be more responsive to better ethical decisions through personal convictions established through timely, consistent, interactive and best practice trainings that are well packaged to arouse proactive involvement at personal and corporate levels (for both practicing quantity surveyors and other practitioners, construction and non-construction related) and not mere extenuative compulsive calls commonly paraded by professional bodies. Moreover, available educational facilities are set up to produce more of technical skills in graduates than the ethical aspect (Fan et al., 2003). At large, it has also been difficult for professional bodies to track down incidences of professional misconducts because there are no incentives or reward by either government or professional bodies to recognize or applaud practitioners' desire or attempts to challenge serious ethical confrontations.

There had been various brilliant scholarly attempts to define ethical conceptualizations and the routenization of its application to demystify what constitute professional misconducts and the corresponding effects on the image of professionalism in the sensitive roles of Quantity Surveyors in the construction industry. Vee and Skitmore (2003) and Tranfield and Gleadle (2003) study ethical dilemmas of construction managers. Fan et al (2001; 2003) study factors affecting ethical perceptions and decision instincts of construction administrators. Poon (2003; 2004 a & b) also examines the relationship between behavioural or professional ethics in quantity surveying, construction management and project performance. Although, Badger and Gay (1996) believes in personal ethics wherein everybody is treated with the same level of sincerity, Borkowski and Ugras

(1992) opine that the ethical perception of Quantity Surveyors can be affected by some demographic variables which are likely to cause intrinsic conflict of interest between practitioners operating in the identified variables. Such include age, position in organization, education level, nature of business and nature of assignment in business in relation to strictly guided employment conditions and gender. Mehta and Keng (1984) add annual personal income, while McDonald and Pak (1996) opine that size or organization is also a prime potential worthy of recognition in this regard. McDonald (1995) also considers experience as a very important variable that marks practitioners out in ethical judgment.

PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCTS IN QUANTITY SURVEYING PRACTICE

Based on the foregoing, it is possible to considerably identify professional misconduct and where to attribute them in the ethically polarized cadres of Quantity Surveyor. Ferrell and Weaver (1978) identify negative tendencies like Quantity Surveyors' frequent temptation to provide trade secret in exchange for unscrupulous inducements, compromise to dispense professional service with very despicable low level of honesty, especially when faced with competency challenges traceable to negligence and stern denial of fault. Also common is the tendency to exaggerate services provided to deceive client into paying more than necessary. There are reported cases where Quantity Surveyors, employed to protect client's interest connive with greedy contractors to defraud the unsuspecting clients (McDonald and Zepp, 1998).

Notorious Quantity Surveyors also falsify reports frequently to favour selfish interest without considering professional implications and employer's ambition. They also conceal

systemic errors to justify negligence, 'adapt' trade/contract figures for unprofessional reasons or compromise to pressure by inducement or expressed threat to doctor professional opinions and standards. They also help to 'save' other consultants' neck whose roles are vivid and tantamount to causing project failure (Newstom and Ruch, 1975, Albratt et al., 1992, Izraeli, 1988; Olatunji et al 2006a).

Because of Quantity Surveyors' ubiquitous relevance in construction cost management, they are more prone to 'conscience auction' through undeserving bribes, inducements and gifts, most especially during site visitation and valuation at the inception of construction such that the erudity of the professional responsibility is fouled and pocketed at the "payer's" will. There have also been reports of abuse of office especially in cases like misappropriating organization or official time and resources for personal use (Dubinsky et al., 1980), waste longer time on job than envisaged (Ferrell and Weaver, 1978) and exhibit indolence at work (Albratt et al., 1992). Dolecheck and Dolecheck (1984) also add the tendencies to compromise personal standards or professional principle to fulfill employer's demand at the expense of the client or the public at large. Dubinsky et al. (1980) also confirms illegal collusion between Quantity Surveyors to arrange cover prices for cartels and hamper the free flow of virtuous competition.

Apart from vices identified from literatures, experience shows that some consultant Quantity Surveyors can stoop so low to change tender figures for contractors in order to win client's interest, especially under lowest bid atmosphere where contractor selection is subjectively driven by price-data-only paradigm. There are also cases whereby there are allegations of releasing very delicate and confidential contract secrets, while a good number of client's Quantity Surveyors engage in bid pricing for candidate contractors at

the expense of consultant Quantity Surveyors, while others refuse to whistle-blow the defaults of corrupt senior executives perpetrating illegal deals with contractors.

There are possible cases where disciplinary panel members have a backlog of unreported unethical/criminal cases hunting their shadows but poised to the unsuspecting professional bodies clean. In most developing countries where the profession is just growing, professional sins are covered to sustain huge quantum of membership, while grievous ones are settled by diplomacy, leaving behind despondent history. From latent records, it is predictable that professional bodies in some countries may be politicized in the future to nail or indict members unjustly, in which case the professional body is hired or pressurized to dent the image of members aspiring in bigger politics. Judicial procedures have been helpless in many circumstances of like manner in some developing countries.

RESEARCH MATERIAL AND METHOD

A total of eighty (80) questionnaires were received from the sum of one hundred and forty-seven (147) administered, both as hard copies and e-mails, to randomly selected quantity surveying firms in Hong Kong, UK, Singapore, Malaysia and Nigeria. The contact details of 40 target respondents from Hong Kong and UK were retrieved from the websites of surveying professional bodies (RICS and HKIS) in the two countries, while 47 questionnaires were administered to target respondents retrieved from renown authors and surveying practitioners from Singapore and Malaysia being participants at the biennial international convention of Malaysian Quantity Surveyors held in the Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2005. 60 hard copies were administered to Nigerian Quantity Surveyors in practices ranging from the academics to other facets

of professional practice. The questionnaire administration, spanning seven months (November 2005 – May 2006), allowed snowball approach in which respondents were advised to pass questionnaires to their colleagues whose opinions they think might be of good interest.

After repeated reminders through e-mails and telephone calls, about fifty-four percent of the targeted respondents were received from practicing Quantity Surveyors in all categories in private and public sectors irrespective of service specialty. There was no significant disparity in the responses, though from different locations and specialties. This is largely due to the fact that the aim of the study is not to establish the ethical conflict of interest in the different locations where the questionnaires were administered but in the various cadres of quantity surveying practice in those places which, in the opinion of the researcher, are some of the places that portray the best practices in quantity surveying in the developed and the developing countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. Another research is ongoing to address the concept of ethical perceptions of Quantity Surveyors in the three continents earlier identified as well as the correlation of same between different construction practitioners. Table 1 shows the analysis of questionnaire distribution and responses received from the identified places, while Table 2 shows the analysis of the responses from the identified cadres of quantity surveying practice.

From Table 1, 41% of the respondents are resident in Africa (Nigeria), 26% are from Asia, out of which 7 respondents (representing 27% of the responses from Asia) are from Malaysia; 10 respondents (representing 39% of the responses from Asia) are from Singapore, while 9 (representing 34% of the responses from Asia) are from Hong Kong. Moreover, 28% of the respondents are resident in the UK.

Table 1 The country/continental bases of the respondents

| Practice Group | Africa | Asia | Europe | Total |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Industrial Trainees | 9 | 5 | 2 | 16 |
| Technician Members | 8 | 5 | 2 | 15 |
| Graduate Members | 5 | 4 | 5 | 14 |
| Registered Junior Members | 4 | 4 | 4 | 12 |
| Registered Intermediate Members | 3 | 4 | 2 | 9 |
| Registered Senior Members | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| Fellows | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Percentage Total | 33 (41%) | 26 (33%) | 21 (26%) | 80 (100%) |

Table 2 Analysis of Questionnaire Distribution and Responses

| Practice Group | Distributed | Responses | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Industrial Trainees | 20 | 11 | 7.5% |
| Technician Members | 25 | 10 | 6.8% |
| Graduate Members | 22 | 18 | 12.2% |
| Registered Junior Members | 20 | 13 | 6.8% |
| Registered Intermediate Members | 20 | 12 | 8.2% |
| Registered Senior Members | 20 | 10 | 6.8% |
| Fellows | 20 | 06 | 4.2% |
| Total | 147 | 80 | 54.4% |

From the received questionnaires, 7.5% are Industrial Trainees who are under compulsory practical training in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degrees and diplomas. Their contributions were not voided because the program takes a great influence on their ethical training and subsequent practice beliefs. While striving to reconcile classroom trainings with the intricacies of practice odds – mostly very strange to most of them, they also contend with their career

objectives which may not be at par with the practice or life styles of their senior colleagues.

Moreover, 6.8% of the respondents are Technician Members who are experienced members but with less academic qualifications. Their passion and seasoned techniques to sustain keen professional practice necessitate their pride of place in the wealth of the research materials. The 12.2% of the respondents are Graduate Members,

who are graduates with higher academic qualifications but aspiring for full professional recognition through a number of competency assessments. The 8.8% of the respondents are Junior Registered Members. They are recognized practitioners with limited years of experience, which in most cases can be referred to as Associates, who have passed professional examination and registered as practitioners. Intermediate members have more years of experience than the Junior Members. They have 8.2% of the responses for this research. Senior Members are more of experience than the Intermediate Quantity Surveyors, while Fellows are the highest cadres achievable, both having 6.8% and 4.2% of the responses in the study. Their tendency for very tight schedules as senior executives in practice and scarcity account for the low response received from Fellow members.

Although, many members are of the opinion that the ethical standard of their practice have not changed in the past 10 years, many still believe that there is room for improvement. A larger population of newer or younger practitioners believe that even when the perception have not changed, professional opinions of Senior Quantity Surveyors are often affected by external pressures, and the unchanged standards may not be changing with client's demand in the interest of the larger public, especially when confronted with dilemmas. 76% of the respondents opine that there are numerous unethical practices in the profession, which may mar the image of her professionalism in no distant future if proper attention is not paid to the contemporaneity of public's ethical demand in the interest of sustained trust and confidence in professional competence, willingness to serve and the sense of responsibility (Chalkley, 1990).

Regrettably, traditional pedagogy encapsulated in professional training through academic institution is more into core skill development than ethical enhancement. The industry needs behavioral repositioning in order to improve the

image of professionalism. Professional bodies recognized this and support the aggressive mobilization for Change (RICS 2003b) through campaign and training. However, most trainings are only fancied by candidates seeking professional recognition, only a fraction of which are considered, leaving a bulk demoralized in the pain of frustration and failure.

Further analysis reveals that 68% of the respondent have not attended any professional training that discusses updates of ethical issues in the past 18 months that is packaged well enough to convince them that certain contemporary practices are unethical. 78% strongly agree that the nature of higher education they receive is not well packaged enough to prepare them for ethical challenges faced in the practice, and would prefer that schools' curricula be modified to accommodate more of ethical training as much as technological or technical trainings in quantity surveying professional occupation. 54% of the respondents also blame the public as the single largest factor that is responsible for the misalignment in ethical perceptions and understanding of quantity surveyors because the client reserve the god-like position including the right to undermine professional standards and opinions as well as exhibit debilitating behavioral instincts like vices associated with lowest bid syndrome and undervalue the input of professional services of quantity surveyors in the consideration of professional fees.

The upkeep of ethical standard should bother more of younger Quantity Surveyors than the Senior Members, because they reserve the role to sustain the profession better than it was met. However, attending ethical training is at will and in most cases, there are no enough facilities and time to accommodate all persons and problems. It is also dependant on employment condition, in which case, the traditional positioning might be anti-ethical. Even when Senior Members refuse to loose their ethical grounds, they loose their firm tastes

to time, while their fractional population may reduce their passion for the stand, especially when professional corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of practice polity. Therefore, the situation has polarized the entire professional state as intrinsic interests are in conflict. Table 3 analysis respondent's ratings of the decision factors affecting ethical milestones in Quantity Surveying practice against the identified groups in the system.

From the analysis presented in Table 3, average rating shows that respondents believe more on company's goal or interest than

the client interest. This is justified by the fact that the respondents mostly operate in profit oriented set-ups and will only agree with client's interest as long as it does not contravene with corporate goal or opinion as firm are under increased pressure to declare more profit in the phase of competition than ever (Ho et al., 2003; 2004). Employees and corporate organizations would only sustain their desire to exist in business, only in this regard - delimiting clients interest to company growth.

Moreover, respondent considered more paramount, Superior's interest rather

Table 3 The respondents' ratings of decision factors affecting ethical milestones on Quantity Surveying practice.

| Demographic Variables | Industrial Trainees | Technician Members | Graduate Members | Registered Junior Member | Registered Intermediate Members | Senior Registered Members | Fellows | Average Rating |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------|----------------|
| Self Interest | 1.82 | 4.55 | 4.36 | 4.72 | 2.20 | 2.20 | 2.50 | 2.94 |
| Company's Interest | 3.25 | 3.46 | 3.81 | 4.18 | 4.82 | 1.80 | 1.10 | 4.13 |
| Client's Interest | 2.65 | 3.61 | 3.82 | 3.96 | 4.51 | 4.61 | 4.81 | 4.00 |
| Superior's Interest | 4.22 | 3.85 | 4.71 | 2.05 | 4.68 | 4.72 | 0.0 | 3.46 |
| Colleagues' Interest | 2.83 | 3.71 | 3.96 | 1.25 | 1.20 | 1.20 | 0.51 | 2.09 |
| Family Interest | 4.05 | 2.60 | 1.65 | 2.82 | 2.75 | 1.80 | 1.00 | 2.38 |
| Public Interest | 1.95 | 2.40 | 2.60 | 2.65 | 3.86 | 4.55 | 4.85 | 3.27 |

The respondent ranked importance factors on 5 – 0 rating Scale. 5 being very important, 0 being not important at all.

than public interest. This is because most administrative decision are top-to-bottom and learning practitioners believe or are made to depend mostly on superior's opinions, since contravening this may be insubordination. Superior's motives drive company's goals and so company's interest must be respected by all in the interest of firm harmony. Some respondents believe in public interest, however quite a large number has little understanding and respect for what it stands to be. Most people believe respecting public interest may not give immediate economic gain and so serving the interest of the public may be too complex to observe and un-enterprising.

They expect the public to understand their corporate goals in order to sustain their existence. Some respondents believe that foul practices have little or no effects on public interest, however, its gains are needed to remain relevant in a society where social status are delineated by economic possession. Ranked least in order of significance are; family interest, colleagues' interest and self-interest. Respondents assert this to the fact that culturally, personal interest is easily influenced in young people by their closer families than colleagues. For instance, one may respect one's wife's view than a colleague's view, when faced with certain dilemmas. Only a few experienced professionals can absolutely separate official matters totally from family influence, even when they are under pressure.

However, each group of the respondents have different ethical perception. Fellows believe more of public interest, then client interest than company interest (confirming Fan et al., 2003). Very negligible in order of importance are family interest, self-interest or colleagues' interest. This is because they are mostly top management executive and so may not be influenced by any superior rather they affect corporate opinions and perceptions tremendously. On the other hand, Senior Registered Members are prime movers of company's interest and so must remain

loyal to Superior's opinions to satisfy client desire within delimited scope of corporate perception. Public interest is equally more important, but should not outrage clients interest, who they are paid to support. Also, being family prime-directors, they are least affected by family and self interest and more unlikely affected by colleagues' interest, since they are obliged to corporate statutory standards rather than self opinion.

Moreover, Registered Intermediate Members also believe in company's interest, then Superior's interest than client interest. Like their senior counterparts, their respect for the public is delimited to corporate statutory milestones and operational standards. In most cases, family interest is more potent on them than self interest and are least affected by colleagues' opinions. Registered Junior Members however, have personal goals (self interest) that are considered more important than the goodwill of their organizations (Fan et al 2003). Next in importance to Junior Members is to stay within limits to sustain corporate goals, which is delimited by client's interest. Empirical survey in this study shows that they are more prone to family influence, than public interest and least affected by superior's influence. Even when this may not be interpreted as insubordination, it is evident that private and personal goal is what dictates their choice of career.

Graduate Members are perpetual learners of professional conducts, getting ready to achieve professional recognition. Automatically, superior's influence principally affects their goal in this regard and so must hold superior's interest in higher esteem than self-interest. Most graduates learn through collaborative network of peers and in most cases when faced with difficult situations not exposed to superiors, they tend to respect colleagues' advice, who deem to understand better. Apart from those milestones affecting Graduate Members' innate competencies, they respect client interest. Rarely, they are more prone to flout corporate statutory standards because of lack

of experience and vision misalignment. They are mostly exposed to most serious difficult situations against ethical standard and so may seldom public interest except possessing very good passion for the profession and may not be affected by family pressures.

However, Technical Members cherish self-interest because of their inclination to core technical competencies. They also consider closely, superior's interest in relation to client interest within the scope of corporate interest. They are less susceptible to family pressure and public interest. Industrial Trainees, however have no personal instincts other than what they were exposed to learn in the organization. They fear more of superior's interest, then culturally, family interest than company interest and colleagues' interest. Public interest has no meaning to them because they depend on immediate exposure to dictate their ethical perceptions.

From all indications, the professional motives of the different cadres of Quantity Surveyors identified in this study are greatly influenced by their dispositions to the variable interest identified in the study. For instance, the ultimate goal of professionalism in the construction industry is the amount and the gross value of respect professionals have for public interest. The more deviated professionals are to these ideals, the more deviant they are to professional ethics. This explains why new entrant professionals are more susceptible to abhorrent misconducts than the older generations. It is more pathetic in quantity surveying because of the ubiquitous relevance of the profession in cost management.

In furtherance to a recent survey reported by Olatunji and Ogunsemi (2006 a) where the ethical perceptions of the various cadres of quantity surveying practitioners were analyzed and their operational interests juxtaposed with public interest, the researcher considers it imperative to measure the relationship between practitioners' interests and public interest with

the empiricism of professional misconducts. Therefore, to define the conflicts of interest in the practice, respondents were persuaded to rate, through the scale of 0 – 5, how rampant the 14 commonest or sample misconducts are as identified from literatures. 0 being not rampant at all and 5 being very rampant.

Table 4 shows how the respondents ratings of the illicit practices.

From Table 4, it is evident that respondents have different levels of ethical perceptions and disciplines based on different levels of exposure; while the Younger House has not fully developed a full sense of professional identity (Knight and Morledge, 2005), the Older House has very strong will to operate in the highest level of professionalism with very good understanding of the industry (Fan et al., 2003). The correlation of the Mean Rating of the Younger House and the Older House is not significant. This implies that even when the wrong practices are in the day-to-day transactions of the groups of surveyors used, it is evident that the Younger House is not fully convinced that those acts are absolutely immoral, while the Older House unwittingly conceive them as part of amorality needed to season professionalism, without considering the long-term gravity of the consequences or possess no real recognition that in a worst case scenario; certain actions could be very damaging to clients' interests (RICS, 2002b; Ray et al., 1999; Vee and Skitmore, 2003; Pearl et al., 2005).

Ordinarily, all unethical practices are not intended for money rewards. Some are committed (like stern denial of fault and trying to cover others' faults and so like, by quantity surveyors) in the mind of protecting the image and respect of professionalism in their occupation. Regrettably, because of the contemporary ways those abhorrent practices are packaged, there are systemic evidences that most professionals are often confused or always find it very difficult to correlate their stands with Professional Codes of Ethics. Moreover, results

Table 4 Respondents' ratings of unethical practices in quantity surveying practice

| Unethical Practices | Industrial | Technician | Graduate | Registered | Registered Intermediate | Registered Senior |
|--|------------|------------|----------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | Trainees | Members | Members | Junior Members | Members | Members |
| Divulgence of trade/official secrets | 3.05 | 3.45 | 3.85 | 4.05 | 2.75 | 0.75 |
| Promiscuity at work and abuse of office | 2.85 | 3.55 | 3.65 | 3.88 | 2.15 | 1.25 |
| Poor instincts of demonstrating good understanding of ethics | 4.25 | 3.85 | 4.20 | 1.95 | 1.00 | 0.25 |
| Illegal collaboration with other firms to detest statutory and procedural standards | 4.05 | 4.25 | 4.40 | 4.55 | 3.80 | 1.25 |
| High level of professional dishonesty | 3.85 | 4.10 | 4.25 | 4.30 | 2.95 | 1.95 |
| Falsification of transaction figures | 3.86 | 4.15 | 4.04 | 4.24 | 1.98 | 1.35 |
| Income defraud | 4.26 | 4.38 | 4.40 | 4.44 | 1.35 | 0.55 |
| Bribery susceptibility | 4.35 | 4.55 | 4.50 | 4.54 | 2.44 | 0.15 |
| Compromising personal principles to favour organization's expectation | 3.96 | 3.98 | 4.04 | 4.24 | 3.95 | 4.85 |
| Perpetrating anti-organization vices | 2.83 | 3.91 | 3.97 | 4.01 | 2.51 | 0.35 |
| Conspiring/collaborating to cover indecent practices of self, colleagues and superiors | 4.28 | 3.76 | 3.56 | 2.15 | 1.86 | 0 |
| Outright denial of fault | 1.35 | 3.82 | 4.18 | 4.65 | 3.26 | 0.34 |
| Professional negligence | 4.56 | 3.24 | 4.21 | 3.51 | 1.98 | 0.22 |
| Conniving with external forces to defraud the client | 3.88 | 4.36 | 4.05 | 2.11 | 1.25 | 0.65 |

from empirical analyses in this study shows that most of these illicit practices are partly related to systemic motivation and more importantly, social inclination to ethical uprightness, public's understanding of the industry, client's consideration of surveyors' interests in relation to other practitioners in the industry and the enforcement of rules and guidelines of professional conducts. For instance, most modern bribes and unscrupulous inducements or acts liable to simple financial improprieties are given to most quantity surveyors as 'gifts' on unofficial considerations, which any young professional might be tempted to surreptitiously consider as contingent reward for extensive hard-work or goodwill for diligence, especially when professional fees are not good enough to commensurate with professionals involvements.

Therefore, even if the ethical perceptions of older surveyors have not changed over the years, the systemic change has repackaged the practice into a different scenario such that the focus of the new entrants (about 15% annually) (Olatunji and Ogunsemi, 2006) needs to be re-orientated by both the government, educational institutions and professional bodies. In like manner, the public need reposition itself not to be fertile for professional corruption through abhorable vices like price-data-only and lowest bid syndrome that fuel collusion and imperfect competition in the industry and inadequate trust, understanding and support for good professional opinions (Olatunji et al, 2006 a).

CONCLUSION

Client's satisfaction is a function of professional ethics in relation to respecting public interest with respect to the willingness to serve the public, good sense of responsibility and practice technical competencies. Professional ethics has not only been strongly linked to projects performance, it establishes the existence and subsequent sustenance of such profession.

Quantity Surveying is one of the professions that has attracted unprecedented ubiquitous demand in the construction industry in the recent past with increasing opportunity for service diversification and adaptive applicability. To this, the profession faces more challenges to satisfy clients and public interest than ever.

This study analyses the demographic variables influencing ethical perception of Quantity Surveyors with a view to establishing the conflict of interest intrinsic in the cadres of quantity surveying professional membership. It confirms previous researches that the higher a Quantity Surveyor is in professional experience and recognition the more public interest is respected. As new entrants increase the practitioner population over an average of 15% annually, ethical perception and standard get more polarized and detestable due to the influx of professionals not well grounded in the requisite ethical standards, thereby endangering the much needed desire to sustainably brighten the image of professionalism in quantity surveying practice. It is thereby recommended that:

1. Professional examinations should deemphasize promoting core technicalities above candidates of ethical discipline to achieve an equitable balance in the corollary of behavioral and technical conceptualism of practitioners.
2. Frequent training and retraining is inevitable to season members with current trends in ethical development and uncertainties, not only to equip members' competencies but to give the much needed rebirth to nurture and protect the goal of the professionals serving the public interest to exist.
3. Professional bodies should keep a record of professional dilemmas for future reference to appraise members and commend or encourage faithful crusaders in order to convince new entrants and members at large that honesty counts as much as hardwork.

- Educational institutions should consider it imperative to monitor the ethical performance of their product in and out of school.

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