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**PROFESSIONALISM IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN NIGERIA: A NEW FRONTIER FOR QUANTITY SURVEYORS**

**FAMILOYE, OLAJIDE  
PRINCIPAL PARTNER  
STEVE-TIME ASSOCIATES  
LAGOS**

**ABSTRACT**

*There is confusion about who a public procurement expert is. There is general claim between professionals involved in procurement process to believe that they are public procurement experts because often times they are engaged to serve as consultants or committee members in the various procuring entity. This paper looked at professionalism in public procurement with a view to discover who is really a public procurement expert. The paper adopted content analysis method to achieve its objectives. The result indicated that a public procurement expert is a professional certified by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management of Nigeria according to the extant law. For quantity surveyor to function properly as public procurement professional as envisaged by both Public Procurement Act 2007 and the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management of Nigeria Act 2007, a registration with the Chartered Institute and the sitting and passing of the pre requisite examinations conducted by CIPSMN is desirable. It is recommended that our Universities and Polytechnics should include public procurement studies in the curriculum of Quantity Surveying. The QSRBN too should encourage younger generations of quantity surveyors to expand their competencies by seeking admission to membership of CIPSMN.*

**KEYWORDS**

Nigeria, chartered institute of purchasing and supply act 2007, professionalism, public procurement, public procurement acts 2007.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Nigeria Public Procurement Act 2007 became a law regulating public procurement process in Nigeria, like any other Country developing and/or developed nations with the same extant law, with the signing into law of the Act by the then President, late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar Adua on the 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2007. By this law, Nigeria joined the League of Nations with a regulated public procurement process (Anago, 2011). According to Anago (2011), the Act remains a comprehensive piece of legislation that aligns with best practices anywhere in the world. Adewole (2014) states that the Nigeria Public Procurement Law 2007 is a commendable institutional reform agenda that the country embarked upon in recent years. Ameyaw, Mensah and Osei-Tutu (2012) says of Ghana Public Procurement Law 2003 (Act 663) as a comprehensive legislation designed to eliminate the shortcomings and organisational weaknesses which were inherent in procurement in Ghana. The Act 663 is to promote fairness, transparent and to ensure that public procurement is non-discriminatory (Ameyaw, Mensah and Osei-Tutu (2012). Jacob (2010) states that the PPA 2007 is to ensure transparency, competitiveness, value for money and professionalism in the public sector procurement system.

The need to reform the public procurement process of most nations especially developing nations became stronger in the 1990s. The International financial institutions were no longer willing to extend aids to national governments without a reformed public procurement process and also these national governments too were equally desirous of good governance. Reforming their public procurement process was a key step towards achieving good governance and obtaining value for money.

The steps taking towards the reform process were similar in almost all the nations. The national governments engaged the International financial institution in conjunction with the indigenous consultants to carry out the assessment of the existing public procurement process in the country. In Nigeria the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo constituted in 1999 the Country Procurement Assessment Committee comprising of the World Bank and indigenous professionals to carry out the necessary study to assess the existing public procurement process. The report showed that there was no specific law or other act of parliament regarding public expenditure or procurement in Nigeria and that what existed was 'Financial Regulations' (FR) which regulate and delegate the responsibilities of public and financial management at the Federal level (World, 2000). The FR was an administrative document which could be amended by the Minister of Finance, has no permanent measures for surveillance and control, relies almost solely on a high degree of self-control within the Ministries, department and agencies; no permanent body outside the purchasing entities monitoring and controlling the procurement process; no central policy making entity in the area of public procurement; no provision for filing of complaints concerning public procurement and no permanent body independent of the procuring entity where contractors/suppliers can file complaints regarding public procurement process (World Bank, 2000).

The World Bank report made two key recommendations related to improving the existing legal and regulatory environment. In the short term, the establishment of a Public Procurement Commission and the medium term the introduction of a Public Procurement law based on United Nation Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) (Familoje, Ogunsemi and Awodele, 2015). The Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligent Unit (otherwise known as Due process) was immediately established and the process of enacting the required law was set in motion which led to the enacting of the Act in 2007.

According to Thai (2009) public procurement is a system that consists of

- Procurement laws and regulations, procurement organizational structure (central procurement agencies, procurement offices in user departments)
- Procurement processes (from procurement authorization, appropriations to contract formation, contract administration, etc.)
- Procurement methods (invitation to bid or request for bids, request for proposals, request for quotations, etc.)
- Procurement techniques (life-cycle costing, evaluation, negotiations, etc.)
- Procurement professionalism and workforce.

Thai (2009) further compressed the above and said that a procurement system is built on four pillars: **procurement laws and regulations, procurement workforce, procurement process and methods, and procurement organizational structure**. This paper will be considering procurement professionalism and workforce and the position of the quantity surveying professionals in the successful operation of the Nigeria Public Procurement Act 2007.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions will guide the paper:

1. Who is a public procurement professional?
2. Is quantity surveyor a public procurement professional?
3. What additional qualification is required for the quantity surveyor to become a public procurement professional?

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Under section 60 of the PPA 2007, the interpretation given to procurement is simply "acquisition" and there is nowhere in the Act where Public Procurement is defined like the Acts of other nations. Boswel and Walker (2004) as cited by Familoje (2012) defines procurement as a process that an entity initiating a project uses to achieve delivery of a project by obtaining services from both third parties and in-house providers, in conformity with applicable laws and regulations. On the other hand, Trinidad and Tobago (2004) defines public procurement as the process of acquiring property and services using public money to accomplish specified public purposes. Public procurement is the designated legal authority to advise, plan, obtain, deliver, and evaluate a government's expenditures on goods

and services that are used to fulfill stated objectives, obligations, and activities in pursuit of desired policy outcomes (Prier and McCue, 2009). Public procurement therefore is about spending tax payers' money for the provision of services for the good of the citizens. Onyema (2011) states that the Nigeria public procurement practice, before the enactment of the Act, has been known to be unprofessional, inefficient and ineffective. For public procurement to be professional, efficient and effective it must be handled by seasoned professionals in the field of public procurement. According to OECD-DAC (2006), a sound procurement system must have a competent professional workforce equipped with defined skills and knowledge for specified procurement jobs. The workforce must permeate virtually every effort within an agency, including successfully acquiring goods and services and executing and monitoring contracts" (Government Accountability Office (2005). Unfortunately, public procurement has been a neglected area of study even though governmental entities and public procurement practitioners have diligently worked to improve public procurement practices (Thai, 2001). In Nigeria today public procurement personnel are mostly drawn from various professions and are given two to three-week training to function as public procurement practitioners. To become a core professional should be more than short training and this has been responsible for lackluster performance of procurement function in the Country. A key recommendation of Uganda Country Procurement Assessment Report (2004) was to establish a procurement cadre in the civil service and restoring professionalism in the procurement function (Kalinzi, (2014).

Appelbaum & Lawton, (1990) as cited by Basheka and Mugabira (2008) defines a profession as a group of people organised to serve a body of specialised knowledge in the interests of society. Wikipedia citing New Statesman (1917) defines a profession as a vocation founded upon specialized educational training, the purpose of which is to supply disinterested objective counsel and service to others, for a direct and definite compensation, wholly apart from expectation of other business gain. In the light of the above definition, quantity surveying is a profession in the building and engineering construction by their specialized educational training. Basheka and Mugabira (2008) say all professions like medicine, law, engineering, architecture, project management, and marketing among others have a duty to protect the professionalism demanded of those professions. Wikipedia says some of the characteristic traits of a profession are: **EXTENSIVE TRAINING** of an intellectual character, providing services vital to society's wellbeing, core practitioners usually with a high degree of autonomy in deciding how to carry out their job, practitioners who have undergone a process of certification or licensing by the state in order to be eligible to carry out certain tasks or provide certain services and Professionals are usually organized in "societies."

The Quantity Surveyor has been described as the expert who is concerned with financial probity in the conceptualization, planning and execution of development projects (refurbishment works inclusive) (NIQS, 2003). Quantity surveying, according to Marouf and Habib (2011), is concerned with controlling and managing the construction projects. A prospective quantity surveyor requires a specialized training in either a university or a polytechnic for about four to five years. To be professionally qualified the graduate trainee must write and pass the professional examination of the Nigeria Institute of Quantity Surveyors. Having passed the examination, the newly qualified approaches the Quantity Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria for registration as a quantity surveyor. These steps must be complimented by attending the training and workshop organized by the Board and/or the Institute and/or any of the local chapters of the Institute spread across the nation. Anybody who practices quantity surveying without these training and certification is regarded as quack.

The role of quantity surveying profession in the procurement of public sector projects cannot be over emphasized. The quantity surveyor plays a central role in procurement process as consultants in both building, civil and heavy engineering works. According to Maarouf and Habib (2011), the traditional role of quantity surveying is concerned with contracts and costs on construction projects and quantity surveyors control construction costs by accurate measurement of the work required. Quantity surveyor produces cost estimates which enables budgetary and finance control, provides advice concerning contract strategy and taxation and prepares contract documents for procurement of consultants and contractors. Unfortunately, the above important roles in the procurement of infrastructural development of the Nation has not made the quantity surveyor a public procurement professional in the eye of the law.

Public procurement, on the other hand, is much more than the procurement of public sector projects. Public procurement is much more all-encompassing from the provisions of consumables in the offices to provision of medical supplies in our hospitals/instruction materials in our education institutions to construction of large dams, road networks, rails and airports among other projects a government needs for good governance. A public procurement expert is that profession so certified by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management of Nigeria (Establishment) Act, 2007 (CIPSMN Act, 2007). The CIPSMN Act 2007 in section 1 sub section 1(a) is empowered to determine and review, from time to time, the academic standards, knowledge and skills that shall be attained by persons seeking to qualify as registered members of the Institute and in subsection 1(c) says the Institute must ensure that its members maintain high standard of behaviour expected of any professional in purchasing, **PROCUREMENT**, store, materials, warehouse, logistics management or supply chain management in Nigeria.

By the letters of CIPSMN act 2007 anybody without a formal training and certification by the Institute must therefore not parade himself as a procurement professional either public or private. This is not to say that the quantity surveyor cannot function as a consultant in the realization of a procurement process. The Public Procurement Act 2007 does not help matters in the definition of who a public procurement practitioner is. In the appointment of the Director General, Bureau of Public Procurement in section 7 sub section 2 (c) the person to be so appointed should be a person who possesses the relevant and adequate professional qualification and shall have been so qualified for a period of not less than 15 years. This is ambiguous. Will the professional qualification be in Law, Medicine, Quantity Surveying, Engineering, or Procurement? The Delta State Procurement Assessment Report (2007) falls short of the expectation of the CIPSMN by a detailed comment on Delta State Public Procurement Law as cited by CIPSMN (undated) "Limitation of Persons to be appointed Director General of the Commission read thus "It is recommended that the provision of S. 9 regarding appointee to the office of the Director General should be expanded to include persons from outside the civil service of not less than 15 years post qualification experience in law, engineering, accounting, purchasing and supply, economics or related fields. This position is widely criticized by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management on the expansion suggested by a Law firm on who can be engaged as the Director General of Delta State Public Procurement Agency. This seems to clarify the letters of section 7 subsection 2 (c) of the PPA 2007 which states that a person who possesses the relevant and adequate professional qualification and shall have been so qualified for a period of not less than 15 years shall be appointed as the Director General of BPP. This must be the reason why the former Director General of BPP, Engr Emeka Eze was so appointed on the basis of his qualification as COREN registered Engineer and Engr Ahmed Abdu who is also a member of the Nigerian Society of Engineers, Nigerian Institute of Building and Procurement Professional Association. None of the two Director Generals ever possess any qualification or ever be certificated by CIPSMN. The Bayelsa State Public Procurement Law (2009) says of the qualification of the Director General (DG) of the State Bureau of Public Procurement Act (2009) in section 7 subsection 1 (b) that the person to be appointed as the DG shall have the qualification to contest for the State House of Assembly. This is the worst provision in all the procurement laws. The Constitution of the Country only requires someone to have School Certificate to contest into the house of assembly even the presidency. This position of the PPA 2007 has always been contested by the CIPSMN that a professional qualification in any profession either Architecture, Law, Quantity surveying, etcetera does not make a person a public procurement personnel.

The above scenario does not mean that the other professionals like Medicine, Architecture, Engineers, Quantity Surveyors, and etcetera cannot act as Consultants in their related field of competencies. The Architects, The Engineers and the Quantity Surveyors will still play their expected roles in the procurement of infrastructures while the Medical Doctor or the Pharmacist will partake in the procurement of medical supplies purely as consultants. These roles which are specialized professional callings where individual is licensed to practice does not make them public procurement professional by virtue of the provisions of the CIPSMN Act 2007.

The World Bank Procurement Assessment Report (CPAR) 2000 as cited by CIPSMN (undated) reported that "The procurement function is not generally performed by professionally qualified staff. Although, there is a shortage of such staff in the public service, even the few available are not properly utilized. The ad hoc training given to professionals in other fields to become public professionals are hardly enough to make them core public procurement professionals. This is why the profession suffers from the hand of the Management because it is believed to be a profession for anybody. There is a tendency to believe that the procurement function can be performed by anybody and hence the procurement function is held in low esteem (World Bank, 2000). World Bank 2000 states that the majority of practitioners of public procurement in the Nigeria today cannot be said to possess the needed specialized knowledge to function effectively because majority of them underwent only about two to three weeks training. According to Kalinzi (2014), all professions like medicine, law, engineering, architecture, project management, marketing, quantity surveying among others have a duty to protect the professionalism demanded of those professions. Procurement too, is one of the new and interesting professional disciplines with an ethical code to protect; but the profession is still in its infancy. It must be stated that procurement borrows

heavily from other professions to make it comprehensive, for example; it borrows from law, business management, management, organization behaviour and human resources, finance, marketing and others. Therefore, two to three weeks training program are definitely not enough to produce a sound professional by the definition of who a professional is.

The report of the World Bank (2000) states further that procurement training is offered by few institutions in Nigeria and that the Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management of Nigeria is the only organization which has, for many years, provided training in public procurement and promoting professional standing of procurement staff, and their skills. If what Goode (1960) as cited by Hurd (1967) that the core characteristics of a profession are a prolonged **specialized training** in a body of abstract knowledge, and a collectivity or service orientation is to go by, the only competent professionals to undertake public procurement administration are those certified by CIPSMN (2007) as administrators.

Recently a firm offering to provide services to Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) as procurement process auditors was disqualified on the basis of not registering with Council of Registered Engineers of Nigeria (COREN). This according to the firm was wrong and not in accordance with the letters and spirit of PPA 2007 and CIPSMN 2007. It should be stated that procurement process audit is quite different from core engineering services which can only be undertaken by registered COREN members. IBIAM OGUEJIOFO & ASSOCIATES (2014) states that procurement process audit is the systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining procurement process evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which criteria are fulfilled.

The functions of a procurement officer, according to Kalinzi 2014, include regular spot check of procurement transaction including the files, goods and services with all suppliers to ensure they are bona fide companies, ensure adequate procurement planning such as identification and assessment of risks, capacity to address such issues in the business unit and preparing annual reports on procurement activities and reporting instances of fraud and corruption on a timely manner among other functions.

It must be agreed that there is confusion over who a public procurement expert should be. Familoje, (2012) and Nigeria Institution of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS), Gombe State Chapter as cited by IBIAM OGUEJIOFO & ASSOCIATES (2014) solicited for the inclusion of Quantity Surveyors in the Nigerian Council of Public Procurement. The Quantity Surveying Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN) too had submitted for an amendment to the PPA 2007 to include Quantity Surveyors to the Nigeria National Assembly. There is nothing wrong in the inclusion of quantity surveyor on this list where we have Nigeria Bar Association, Civil Society and even the Media. It was even recommended the inclusion of a Chartered Accountant in the Council because the Minister of Finance may not be an accountant (Familoje, 2012). Any member of the Council cannot on the basis of their inclusion parade himself as procurement personnel as they play advisory role to government.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This paper adopted content analysis research method which is the analysis of what is contained in a message. The research was essentially documentary. In this regard, the Public Procurement Act 2007, Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management Act 2007, Bayelsa State Public Procurement Law (2209) and other literature materials were used to answer the questions arising from the research. Content analysis is a method where the content of the message forms the basis for drawing inferences and conclusions about the content. This, according to Prasad (2008), is a scientific study of content of communication.

## FINDINGS

There is confusion about who a public procurement expert is. A public procurement expert is a professional certified by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management of Nigeria. The mere fact that many professionals contribute to public procurement process should not be confused with the expertise in public procurement. The core competency of a public procurement expert includes regular spot check of procurement transaction including the files, goods and services with all suppliers to ensure they are bona fide companies, ensure adequate procurement planning such as identification and assessment of risks, capacity to address such issues in the business unit and preparing annual reports on procurement activities and reporting instances of fraud and corruption on a timely manner among other functions. This is different from the core competency of either the Engineer, the Quantity Surveyor, Architect, Estate Surveyors, etcetera whose functions have been defined by their respective professional bodies. It has been established that adequate staff training influences compliance to Public Procurement and Disposal Act in Kenya (Ndumbi and Okello (2015). There is therefore the need for a formal training in public procurement as required by the law setting up the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management of Nigeria Act (2007) for anybody to be recognized as public procurement expert.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Quantity surveyors as both the legal experts and the accountants of the construction industry must widen their scope in the total procurement process by diversifying their expertise to areas like public procurement among others to ensure that they not only function as Consultants in the building and Civil Engineering procurement but in the total government procurement. A time will come when the letters and the spirits of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management of Nigeria Act 2007 will be followed and the heads of the BPP and all the procurement committees must be headed by core professionals certified by the CIPSMN. Governments too must have the political will to obey their laws because law is useless if it is not obeyed (Jacob, 2010). Our University and Polytechnic must not only include public procurement courses in quantity surveying curriculum, they must emphasize public procurement as area of specialization in quantity surveying to take the advantage of the new emerging markets.

Therefore, quantity surveyors, especially the younger generations, by our vintage position in procurement process must strive to become public procurement experts. Let us expand our competence by registering with the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Management and proceed to take their prescribed examinations. This is necessary because quackery is evil that must be fought by all professional either in quantity surveying or supply chain management.

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