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Building a Career in Estate Management: The Perspective of Covenant University Students

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Abstract:

The practice of estate management is influenced by processes developed over many years and worked out by a profession that has been established since 1975 by Decree No. 24 in Nigeria with all the strength and weaknesses inherent. The study examined the perception of estate management student about a career in the profession of Estate Surveying and Valuation. Estate management students of Covenant University students from 100 to 500 levels were adopted as population sample for the study. Structured questionnaires were analyzed and the simple descriptive statistics and mean item score were used for analysis. The outcome of the study shows that some of the students are not fully aware of the course- Estate Management but were compelled to study it. Some others willingly choose to study the course having heard about the prospect and some others just dabbled into it in a bid to avoid time wasting. One of the recommendations is that more orientation should be given to students about the different profession and its prospect so as to enhance their knowledge before venturing into them. It also recommended that there should be more interaction between the university system and the professional practice to enable students have better exposure of the real practice after graduation.

Keywords: Estate management, perspective, students, career

1. Introduction

Several studies show that new students especially all over the world are usually on the horn of a dilemma of choosing a career path (Cherian 1991; Issa and Nwalo 2008; Macgregor 2007; McMahan and Watson 2005). Most often, choosing the right subject combination for the right profession can make the difference between enjoying and detesting the career in future. Career which is one's occupation or profession in life is often influenced by the training the individual receives from school and the ambition of that individual. Career selection is a very sensitive matter that does not just stop at the university but goes a long way to determine the future of a student. Prince, Adebimpe and Abiola (2002) opined that career is a lifetime affair and a contributory factor in determining employment suitability. Therefore, there is need for adequate care in career selection to ensure the right choice is made.

It is evident in many Nigeria tertiary institutions that students are offered admission to study courses they may not be interested in as a career. They know little or nothing about the course neither do they have interest in them. Estate management is one of such courses that appear students have inadequate information about before selecting or being given as their course of study in the tertiary institution. Many of such students are usually unable to cope with the course all through the duration of the 5-year programme. There are also cases of high failure rate in some of the subjects, some other students drop out of school or the programme while some others struggle through with poor grades (Egbenta, 2008 and Godbey, 2011). It then means that there is need for a good grasp of what a particular career entails before making it one's choice. Early and Bright (2007) buttressed this with their opinion that 'an employee's knowledge of the field of study is an important ingredient in achieving excellence in the work environment'. Estate management happens to be one of those courses that are young in most Nigerian universities and there is the tendency of most students misconstruing what the course is all about.

Based on the above, it is advisable that institutions, professional bodies, secondary schools organize symposiums, career talk, mandatory continuous professional development trainings and conferences that students can and must be compelled to attend before embarking on the career path or while undergoing training on their chosen career for better exposure. The study therefore seeks to examine students' perception of a career in estate management.

2. Conceptual Framework

According to Juntunen, Barraclough and Broneck (2001) a career can be defined as a lifelong endeavour that has become a part of an individual's identity. A career is an activity you choose to pursue, enjoy or specialize in, for which you set goals, make plans and carryout as a fundamental part of life. This can be regarded as "the backbone of an individual's life" (Paulter, 1995). Usually, individuals spend the early years of their life preparing for work, the major section of life doing chosen work, and the last part of life retired from work (Powlette, 2006). However, job or work can be said to be different from a career because job is what you engage in to survive and can leave the present one for another at any time whereas a career is what you intend to do into the future- for a lifetime. Popoola (2004) considers a career as the way the individual expresses himself and relates to society through life. He opined that it is a profession for which one undergoes regulated education and training over a period of time with the intention to practice throughout one's life (Oyetade, 2001).

Obviously, choosing a career path requires a career decision-making process. The effectiveness of an individual's career decision-making relies heavily on the available information at the persons' disposal as at the time of making the decision. Often times, inability to choose a career path over another tend to indicate that one is lacking in adequate information. The pathway to choosing a career starts from childhood till death. At the early stage, the individual is not well able to conceptualize his/her potentials but over time, the individual is abler to appraise himself/herself with potential jobs. This second phase span from the end of primary school to secondary school while the third stage is the most realistic phase of career selection and is usually the period when the individual is out of secondary school and requires a job to do or a discipline to study at higher institution which dictates the path he/she wants to follow.

It has been observed that many people fail in jobs for psychological reasons, as just having the requisite skill is not a sufficient condition for success in a job. It then means that the impact of career development upon young individuals cannot be over-emphasized. Career development process is a long-term and inestimable process through which an individual fashions a work identity for his/herself. For the young, this decision is critical in determining the outcome of their lives (Hoyt, 1977). Some others further opined that career education helps students investigate vocational, domestic and civic outlets for developed interests and abilities (Super, 1976; Bojuwoye, 1985 and Wollman, 1975) and therefore vital that this education is well taught as a determining factor in the students' future.

2.1. Factors that can Influence Career Selection

People have different reasons for working or seeking a career path and this range from economic to social reasons. The influencing factors that play a role in ones' choice of career can be said to be as follows: personality, traits, needs, self-concept, talent, gender, and child -parent relationship amongst others. In addition, Weiler (1997) and Santrock (2005) are of the opinion that school teachers and counselors can exert influence on children's career development on the ground that school is a place where students first encounter the world of work. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) also noted that humans as free agents being ruled by societal structures have the capacity to make their own decision. The role of the family cannot be ignored in education and choosing of career paths since it is the first agent of socialization through which the child gets his/her first contact with the social environment. It follows that when parents work and enjoy their jobs; adolescents learn work ethics from them. Psachoropoulo & Kazimias (1985); Kassimati (1998) buttressed this point by noting that the role of the family which consist of reproductive, economic, educational and psychological role affects the individual, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly to its occupational choices. Further, Wright (1979) opined that the education and occupation of the father affects the educational aspirations of his children.

Another vital factor that can influence an individual career decision is the relationship among peers. Education is yet another factor that plays a major role in the career of individuals as shown in empirical researches from different societies such as Pafilis (Blau & Ducan, 1967 and Mylonakis, 2011) and Greece (Kassimati, 1998). The studies exposed the strong relationship between the level and type of education an individual receives and the profession he/she practices. Ukwugwu (1997), and Abdullahi (1997) asserts that the quality of the teaching personnel, the learning atmosphere (situation), mastery of the subjects' matter by the teacher, the teaching process, drawing studios, instructional and educational items are all important ingredients in students' performances as well a factor in their choice of career (Eyibe, 1987; Edem, 1982; Okoh, 2001). This is because a students' performance in courses related to a certain field say science related course that involves more of calculation like mathematics, physics and the like will impact on the career path of students whether they will like to pursue a career path in science related fields or simply switch to other areas that may not involve calculations like fields in arts or social sciences such as English, linguistics, psychology, law, international relations and the likes.

Some other factors highlighted by Osakinle and Adegroye (2008) that influence choices of career are: sex, location of choice maker, environment and religion. Betz (2002) and Gates (2001) observed that many females have restricted their career choices to careers that are gender biased while some other female make choices based on their experiences socially and the ways the social forces structure opportunities available to them. Falias (1978) noted further that the employment of individuals was the focal point of social structures. According to him, the distribution of persons in various professional roles and developments over time defined the character of each society. It then means that the choice of career an individual make does not end with him but goes further to impact on the society and the nation at large. There is need for adequate care and assurance in career selection. Therefore, the paper seeks to examine students' perception of a career in real estate and to prepare them to identify 'right' actions, to take towards a successful career in real estate. The questions agitating the mind of the researcher are: What informs student choice of a career in estate management? What prevailing circumstance makes student opt for estate management? To what extent is the student interested in estate management?

2.2. Building a Career in Estate Management

Estate management is a multidisciplinary course that provides a broad and balanced foundation of the knowledge of land and buildings and their exploitation and use. Estate management develops students' ability to apply their analytical skills to the solution of theoretical and practical land resource problems. It develops graduate's entrepreneurial skills and value. In essence, Estate management is geared towards training future graduates of Estate Management with the requisite academic and practical background for professional practice of estate surveying and valuation in both private and public sectors of the economy as well as in academics. The main thrust of estate management is: real estate valuation and appraisals, plant and machinery valuation, landed property investment and facility management, feasibility and viability appraisals, land administration, land use planning and development, project management, among others.

Having a degree in estate management prepares one for many work opportunities that is not limited to the property sector; and one is also equipped with highly desirable and transferable commerce and business skills. Some career possibilities for graduates in estate management are as follows: site supervisors, practice as estate surveyor and valuers, and work in property department of any organization such as financial institution, multi-nationals, oil firms, among others. They can also work as facility managers, realtors, conservation officer, and rural practice surveyor, amongst others. Almost half of graduates employed in the UK work as chartered surveyors, with five of the top ten occupations being related to estates or property management and surveying (AGCAS, 2014).

It is also possible to specialize in particular areas of estate management, for example, taking postgraduate courses in property development, property investment, surveying, property management, environmental conservation, planning and environment, town and country planning, amongst others. Further, it is possible to combine careers. One can have a career in estate management and secure another career in law, architecture, town and regional planning, geology amongst other fields.

2.3. Requirements in Building a Career in Estate Management

Embarking on a career in estate management requires in-depth knowledge of all facets of the real estate practice. The requirement in the professional practice include skills such as communication skill, personal and management skills as well as intellectual skills in economics, law, financial mathematics, investments analytical, valuation, planning and building, among others (Fraser et al. (1994). Personality traits with devotion to honesty, a calm disposition, creativity, patience, assertiveness, foresight, and perseverance is very essential for any professional not excluding real estate professional (Egbenta, 2008 citing Janik & Rejnis, 1994). The profession also demands a graduate who is sound and can adapt to the professional environment not just with technical skills but has soft skills as well such as "attitude, people interactions and have a good team spirit" (Blake and Susilawati 2009). In essence, the profile of a successful graduate of estate management who intends to outperform on the field, in real life practice must read a combination of intellectual ability, good work ethics, resilience and confidence among other skills.

Furthermore, Blake and Susilawati (2009) noted that the university has a role to play in ensuring a more seamless transition to professional employment for students of estate management. The following roles were suggested:

- a) Students should be exposed to industrial practice in the early years of the program. This is already in operation in most Nigerian institutions offering Estate management.
- b) More exposure to industry practitioners across the program. There could be seminars and symposiums where the professionals are invited to acquaint students with more information from the field of practice.
- c) Group assignment should be reduced and individual assignment encouraged ensuring individual report writing skills are developed.
- d) There should also be exposure to market research and professional report writing to ensure skills are developed to a professional standard.
- e) Promote the understanding of market fundamentals and factors (both macroeconomic and microeconomics) influencing the property market
- f) Introduce a greater coverage of valuation fundamentals and financial analysis

In summary, it means that a choice of career in estate management is one that should be carefully made.

3. Study Area

Covenant University as an institution was established in the year 2002. The School of Environmental Sciences in the College of Science and Technology has only three departments which are Building, Architecture and Estate Management. The department of Estate Management is among the departments established from the inception of the university. The course is a 5-year programme in virtually all universities where it is offered and the same is applicable in Covenant University. Reasons for the 5-year duration of the course as against the regular 4 (four) year duration of most courses can be attributed to the periods of Industrial Training embedded in the curriculum where the students have to be away for a certain period of time to compare what is taught in school with life practice of the profession. Students are expected to go for Industrial Training in year three (3) for three months and year four (4) for six months respectively.

4. Methodology

Structured questionnaire was adopted for the study and was administered to all the students of Estate Management Department from 100 to 500 levels in Covenant University, Ota. This was done with a view to assess the level of understanding of the students about all the processes there are in the making of an estate surveyor and valuer. The simple descriptive analysis was adopted using frequency and percentages. Mean item score was also used to derive the agreement index for the responses. A total of 98 questionnaires were

distributed across the three levels of 100, 200 and 500 respectively. As at the time of administering the questionnaire, the 400 level students were on industrial training and were not captured. From the total distributed only 77 were retrieved and used in the analysis which represents seventy-nine percent (79%) success rate.

5. Findings

Nine (9) vital questions were asked as they related to the perception of students in their choice of career in estate management, their responses were analyzed below.

Gender of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	37	48
Female	40	52
Total	77	100
Level of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
100	9	11.7
200	25	32.5
300	1	1.3
500	42	54.5
Total	77	100
Academic Path in Secondary School	Frequency	Percentage
Sciences	56	72.7
Arts	6	7.8
Commercial	7	9.1
Others	8	10.4
Total	77	100

*Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents
Source: Field Survey, 2015*

Table 1 above reveals the characteristics of Respondents. 37(48%) are males while and 40 (52%) are females which shows that there are more female students in estate management department of Covenant University than the males. This is rather surprising because estate management has been known to be a male dominated course as women may not want to go through the hassle that comes with the field; but the above result clearly indicates that females are picking interest in the profession perhaps not willing but compelled. The table also shows the level of the respondents; 9(11.7%) of the respondents were in 100 level, 25(32.5%) of respondents were in 200 level and 1(1.3%) was in 300 level having the least number of respondents, while majority of the respondents 42(54.5%) were in 500 level. This does not seem to follow the normal trend which is that the larger numbers of students in the department are found in the lower level while fewer numbers in the higher levels. 400 level students were on industrial training and as such were not in school when the questionnaire was administered. Regarding their academic path in school, the result showed that 56(72.7%) of the respondents were in Sciences, 6(7.8%) majored in Arts, 7(9.1%) were in Commercial and 8(10.4%) were in others areas. This clearly shows that there is more science inclined students' in the department of estate management. Considering that majority of the students had their background in sciences, one would expect that majority of the students may have heard some information about estate management before choosing to study the course owing to the fact that estate management is also in the line of sciences as a field of study.

Awareness of ESM as a Course	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	56	72.7
No	21	27.3
Total	77	100
Level of information on ESM	Frequency	Percentage
Adequate information	24	31.2
Little information	32	41.6
Indifferent	13	16.9
No information	8	10.3
Total	77	100
Opportunity of Choosing ESM	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	39	50.6
No	38	49.4
Total	77	100
Ranking of Choice of ESM	Frequency	Percentage
First Choice	18	23.3
Second Choice	25	32.5
Third Choice	26	33.8
Fourth Choice	3	3.8

None	5	6.6
Total	77	100
Opinion of ESM as a Course	Frequency	Percentage
Very Interesting	18	23.4
Interesting	37	48.1
Undecided	16	20.8
Not interesting	3	3.9
Regrettable	3	3.9
Total	77	100
Opinion of ESM as a Course	Frequency	Percentage

Table 2: Respondents' Level of Awareness and Interest in Estate Management as a Field of Study

Source: Field Survey, 2015

***ESM = Estate Management

In line with the observation above, the students' level of awareness about the course was sought to confirm the above findings, the result is clearly stated in Table 2 which shows that 56(72.2%) responded that they had some sort of awareness of the discipline while 21(27.3%) of the respondents did not have any awareness of the course. This shows that majority of the student in Estate Management department of Covenant University were aware of the course before making their choice. The extent of information the students had about the course is very vital in determining their choice and as such their opinion was sought on the extent of information they had about Estate Management. The findings showed that a larger percentage of them 56(72.8%) had some level of information about the course before opting for it and were not total novice as at the time they were admitted. However, there are still some 21(27.2%) who had no bit of information about the course before venturing into it. This is risky on the part of the student because there is every tendency that it will impact on the student performance. Take for instance, if the student has no adequate background in calculations and science inclined perspective, he/she may have challenges with architectural courses, valuation courses, building courses and many sciences inclined courses offered in the study of Estate Management. Perhaps, those who had no information about the course were compelled or had to choose it for some other reasons. Finding out whether the students actually chose the course or dabbled into it, the result showed that 39(50.6%) of them chose the course while 38(49.4%) did not select the course. Perhaps, those that did not select the course were given as an alternative or some other persons make the choice for them. It became necessary to find if estate was actually their first choice of a course to study in the university or not. The result showed that a larger number of the students 54(70.1%) did not choose estate management as their first choice, it was either their second or third choice while only 18 (23.3%) of the respondents' choose it as their first choice. Those who opted for the course are not expected to have challenges with the course and also with the practice after graduation but is it really the case? It is those who were forced into the course that are expected to have hitches here and there with the course and with the practice. It became needful to find out their opinion of the course so far. The findings revealed that 55 (71.5%) of respondents rated the course as being interesting while a negligible percentage of respondents found the course either not interesting or regrettable. Only 16 (20.8%) respondents were indifferent. This implies that although the students were science inclined, were aware of the course and had good knowledge of the course, and actually chose to read the course, it was not their preferred course. Perhaps they were denied admission into the course of their choice and resorted to study Estate Management. They however, have made up their mind concerning the course as seen in their opinion of the course as interesting with only a lesser fraction considering it as regrettable or uninteresting.

Incidence of Coming to Estate Management	SA(5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	MeanRank
The decision to study ESM was made on my behalf (by either counselors, my parent, friends)	10	17	7	30	13	77	3 rd
	$a_i n_i = a_i n_i = a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	2.75	
	50	68	21	60	13	212	
Estate management was my personal discovery and decision	6	26	6	24	15	77	2 nd
	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	2.79
	30	104	18	48	15	215	
I had to change to ESM due to academic incapacitation and advice of the university	8	15	3	23	28	77	4 th
	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	2.37
	40	60	9	46	28	183	
I am studying ESM because I am attracted by the perceived prospect of the profession	7	32	16	16	6	77	1 st
	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	3.23
	35	128	48	32	6	249	
I had to resort to ESM not to stay idle nor while away time	6	12	6	23	30	77	5 th
	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	$a_i n_i =$	2.23
	30	48	18	46	30	172	

Table 3: Students' Experience in the Choice of Estate Management

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2015.

Table 3 shows the students' experience in the choice of estate management as a course of study in Covenant University. Their perceived prospect of Estate Management as a course of study ranked 1st. This corresponds directly with previous results in table 2 where 73% of the respondents submitted that they were aware of Estate management as a course of study while they were still in secondary schools. The decision based on personal discovery ranked 2nd with a mean score of 2.79. This is followed by the decision made as influenced by counselors, parent and friends. This position also supports the previous studies that education and occupation of parents affects the educational aspirations of their children. The 4th ranked factor responsible for the choice of Estate management by the respondents was the academic capacity and advises of the university. This also reflects the 73% of the respondents as science based students in their secondary schools (see table 1). The least ranked factor was to avoid waste of time or remain idle while writing another UTME for admission into the preferred courses other than estate management.

Upon graduation where would you like to work	SA(5)	A(4)	U(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Rank
Private Companies (oil firms, manufacturing companies like Cadbury, P&G, property development companies like Julius Berger, etc.	45	19	6	5	2	77		
	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	4.29	1 st
	225	76	18	10	2	331		
Public sector (ministry, other government establishments)	12	25	24	7	9	77		
	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	3.31	3 rd
	60	100	72	14	9	255		
Private practice (Estate Surveying and Valuation firm)	17	24	16	8	12	77		
	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	3.33	2 nd
	85	96	48	16	12	257		
Trading (everyday buying and selling in the markets)	11	10	11	32	13	77		
	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	2.66	4 th
	55	40	33	64	13	205		
Others (specify)	3	4	7	10	53	77		
	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	a _i n _{i=}	1.62	5 th
	15	16	21	20	53	125		

Table 4: Ranking of Choice of Workplace upon Graduation

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2015.

Table 4 indicates the ranking of choice of workplace upon graduation. The table shows that majority of the respondents prefer to work in private companies not necessarily an estate firm. This ranked first with a mean score of 4.29. Those that prefer to work in the private real estate firms ranked second with a mean score of 3.33 while those that preferred to work in public sectors such as ministries, bureau, agencies and other government establishments ranked third. A few of the respondents intended to go into everyday buying and selling in the market/store. The mean score of 2.66 depicts this and it therefore ranked fourth. Some of the respondents prefer to work in some other areas not specify. This is last in the ranking.

The result above follows the norms that most Nigerian graduates prefer to work in banks and multi-national companies not necessarily on job or schedule relating to their course of studies. The result was also in line with the position of the majority of the respondents that they were attracted to choose /study estate management because of their perceived prospect of the profession of estate surveying and valuation.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study focused on the perspective of Covenant university students towards building a career in estate management. As stated earlier, estate management happens to be one of those courses that are young in most universities and there is the tendency of most people misconstruing what the course is all about. Based on the above, the level of awareness of the respondent with respect to the course was sought. Findings from the study reveal that most of the students have an awareness of the course but not all planned on studying it as a career choice.

The study therefore recommends that more orientation should be given to students about the different profession and its prospect so as to enhance their knowledge before venturing into them. It also recommended that there should be more interaction between the university system and the professional practice for students to have better exposure of the real practice after graduation.

The duo of NIESV and ESVARBON should as a matter of urgency visits secondary schools for career talks and engaging in other public enlightenment programmes to promote estate management as a viable and lucrative course to secondary school students and the entire population at large.

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