

OPTIMIZING PROFESSIONALISM IN THE NIGERIAN TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS SECTOR: THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS OF THE REGULATORY BODIES.



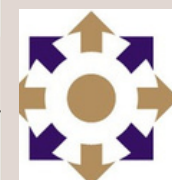
The Nigerian transport and logistics sectors are no doubt characterized by bundles of components spreading across all sectors of the economy, administration, and government that drive and propel all facets of national endeavors, especially at government levels, industry, and academic sub-sectors with appropriate professional bodies moderating and regulating both the profession and the professionals (Salisu, Fasina, Akanmu, Sanni, & Olatunji, 2020). Specifically, the transport and logistics industries, being the engine of growth and undisputable pivot that sustains all forms of spatial and non-spatial interactions, require the vibrant engagement of appropriate and qualified personnel for every strata that are strategic to the overall growth of the country.

However, the efficient operational performance, administration, and management of every sphere of transportation systems brings the involvement of transport and logistics expertise to the forefront. While transport and logistics policies, laws, regulations, and governance are statutorily governmental in nature, the implementation and administration of the aforementioned falls to an expert (professional) with the required specialized skill and knowledge of transport and logistics (Kirkpatrick, Aulakh, & Muzio, 2021). Like other professions in the built environment such as building, architecture, engineering, town planning, quantity surveying, surveying and geo-informatics, the relevance and imperatives of regulatory bodies in the transport and logistics professions are indisputable in ensuring professionalism and operational efficiency and performance of the profession.

Despite the importance of professionalism in any economic sector and discipline, the transport and logistics sectors have taken the issue of professionalism and professionalism with a carefree hand and given less priority (Salisu, Akanmu et al., 2020). Consequently, the weakness in professionalism has generated myriads of problems, including unprecedented and unguided operations; professional marginalization irregularities and unethical professional practice; professional quackery; intractable and poorly regulated administration and operational coordination, among others (Salisu, Fasina et al., 2020; Kirkpatrick et al., 2021). These weaknesses have contributed to the poor performance of the transport and logistics index, the congestion and mobility crisis, transport insecurity and crime promotion, and unclear regulations, among others.



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The perceived weaknesses of transport and logistics professionals are:

Poor regulatory power and recognition, skill gaps and wrong placement area, lack of motivation and professional rewards, low visibility and misconception of the profession, professional conflicts and rivalry, inconsistent government policies and programmes on transport systems, poor optimization of processes and resources by the regulatory bodies, politicization of appointments and professional engagements, poor mentorship and leadership style, no potential growth and low remuneration, trust issues and sabotage among professionals.

Others include a lack of/weak technology support, fragmented communication and networking, a lack of effective communication among professionals in the public and private sectors, a poor work-life balance and engagement, unclear professional development guidelines, and poor process and resource optimization by regulatory bodies.

Based on the foregoing, it becomes necessary for the professional bodies in the transport and logistics sector to evolve mechanisms to transform these weaknesses into opportunities, potentials, and strength for themselves and the members of their profession.



Challenges of Transport and Logistics Profession in Nigeria

The major challenges of transport and logistics profession in Nigeria are classified into four (4) distinct groups.

The first categories, which are the most pressing challenges, comprise professional rivalry among members, absence of operating national transport and logistics policy and plans, poor and low engagement of indigenous transport and logistics professionals, operational proliferation in the profession, inadequate transport and logistics institutions, and proliferation of expatriates on transport systems.

The second category tagged with severe challenges consists of lack of advanced technologies for operation and management, unnecessary government interference, lack of uniform administrative structure in the profession, rivalry and excesses of other professional bodies, and low public enlightenment on the profession,

while the least challenging categories include poor involvement of private sector participation, unbundling of MDA, shortage of qualified manpower and capacity building, and inadequate government and constitutional support.

The last category, which are remaining challenges that consist of poor cooperation and competition among MDAs (poor position and harmony on transport regulations and operations, lack of adequate skilled workers, and poor planning strategies, are less impactful and, as such, are not seen as challenges by respondents.

The most prominent challenges are fundamental to the successful operations and sustainability of professional bodies in the transport and logistics sector in the country, while the severe challenges require immediate and sustained attention of the concerned professional bodies to prevent their degeneration and avoid compounding the extent of the most prominent ones.

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Conclusion and Recommendation

In the quest to understand the challenges of the profession and the weaknesses of the professional bodies within the transport and logistics sector, in order to proffer the best practical and policy implications, it was discovered that the directly concerned professional bodies in the transport and logistics sector are not in the forefront or top-ranked professional bodies of the employees of the transport and logistics - related public and private services examined. As a result, the poor performance of these professional organizations contributed to the plethora of issues confronting the transport and logistics profession. There is a need for proactive and reactive measures for the concerned professional organisations considering the veritable importance and contributions of the transport and logistics sector in the country, which are;

1. Strengthen the implementation of guidelines for professional development and career progression.
2. Strengthen the legal framework and institutions for the transportation and logistics professions.
3. Provide opportunities for indigenous professionals to practice.
4. Strengthen publicity and recognition of the transport profession in society
5. Strengthen collaboration and synergies with other professions.

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