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Future scenarios for the quantity surveying profession: adaptation to socio-technical change

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ABSTRACT

The role of the professions is currently being influenced by revolutionary changes in the socio-technical systems in which the professions operate. Social changes and technological advancement, are making certain tasks of these professions redundant. There are, thus, claims that these professions, including the quantity surveying profession, may not exist in the future.

This analysis uses the quantity surveying profession in South Africa as a case study to investigate the validity of this claim. Geels' Multi-Level Perspective (MLP), augmented by the 5Ps model, is used as both a theoretical framework and heuristic device to understand change and to provide future scenarios for the quantity surveying profession. Before generating future scenarios for the sustainability of the quantity surveying profession, the following was conducted: data was collected from 23 semi-structured interviews, with experts from the quantity surveying profession and the construction sector; a workshop was held with 39 attendees from a quantity surveying conference, and a focus group was brought together, with 11 built-environment professionals, are all analysed, using a combination of grounded theory, narrative and thematic data analysis techniques.

Findings from the interviews reveal divergent views regarding the future of the quantity surveying profession, with some experts holding a positive view and others a negative one. While there is consensus that technology will replace various professional tasks, technology is not regarded as a major threat to the profession. The workshop and focus group findings reveal that corruption and intense competition are the two critical factors influencing the profession's outlook.

Scenario planning is used to construct four possible futures for the quantity surveying profession in South Africa, based on the data from the interviewees, workshop and focus group. The scenarios are useful in guiding the quantity profession, as well as others, in considering their future. A further contribution made by the study is in demonstrating that the MLP framework can be used to predict future changes in a socio-technical system.

Keywords: change, profession, quantity surveying, socio-technical system, technological advancement.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. In Him, I live, move and have my being.