



# **The Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria**

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**THE ROLE OF APBN LEADERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN  
NIGERIA AND AFRICA**

***A PAPER DEIVERED BY THE CITN PRESIDENT, CHIEF MARK ANTHONY  
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## **1.0 Introduction**

The rapid development of societies have largely been driven by individuals coming together towards providing a collective front in solving issues of development. To examine this topic, I would use this approach;

- Define the concept of professional associations;
- Provide a background on what led to the establishment of the APBN;
- Review the aims and objectives of the APBN; and
- Speak on the expected role of the APBN in professional development

It is perhaps necessary to define in clear terms what professional bodies are with a view towards distinguishing same from mere clubs and associations.

## **2.0 What are Professional Associations?**

The University of Minnesota's publication on Career and Internship Services<sup>1</sup>, states that, "A professional association is a group of professionals within a career field who come together for

- Individual professional development and advancement
- Promoting the field as well as educating the public on issues related to the industry
- Networking and collaborating
- Sharing new ideas and practices that set standards for the industry and workplace
- Representing interests of industry before federal, state and local governments

## **3.0 Background on the Establishment of the APBN**

Prior to the establishment of the APBN, professional bodies operated separately and distinct from one another. Except in some cases where a few professional bodies related either due to convergence of specialisation or in interdisciplinary professions, there was not much in terms of working together in real terms.

It is in order to bridge this gap that existed that “some highly placed and well-meaning Nigerians identified the need for the creation of a unified body of professionals to render advise to government on national policy issues. On matters of business, commerce, industry and labour, the opinions of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), the Manufacturers Association of Nigerian (MAN) and the National Employers Consultative Association (NECA) are frequently sought by Government before major policy decisions are taken or implementation made. There has been no parallel national body or association embracing various professional organizations in Nigeria, which can be called upon by Government to advise it. Consequently, when policy matters of national importance are to be made, Government either neglects to seek consultations or turns to a few known individuals whose views may not necessarily reflect those of the various Professional Institutions. Yet, we all know that the soundness of a policy depends largely on the quality and integrity of the advice on which it is formulated. The initiative to bridge this gap brought about the body of Professionals. Hence, the evolution of APBN.

As you are aware, the APBN is an umbrella body of recognised professional Institutes, Institutions and Associations promoting a new era of cooperation among professionals in Nigeria. APBN is set up to speak with one voice on behalf of its member-bodies while at the same time giving professional and proper technical advise to Government on matters affecting the professionals and their practices.

As of date, the APBN comprises of twenty-seven (27) professional bodies, whose main objective is to provide Nigeria with an effective forum for transmitting to Government the aggregate views of the nation's Professionals on matters of public interest which they are competent to express informed and enlightened views. APBN was given official Federal Government recognition as the third leg of the tripod of the Organised Private Sector (OPS) in January, 1992. However, the activities of APBN started far back in

1983. APBN is actively involved in promoting and enhancing the status of professional bodies by ensuring maximal utilization of the talent, skills and knowledge of the Nigerian professionals. APBN believes that human welfare problems are multi-dimensional in nature and for this reason it employs a multidisciplinary approach to problem solving. In this regard, APBN discourages traditional professional prejudice, intolerance, and self-centredness. APBN believes that, in the interest of the wider society, no profession needs to operate in isolation of the other professional bodies and by that very fact advocates frequent interfacing and cooperation among professions.

### **3.1 Aims and objectives of the APBN**

- To encourage and assist in the formation of National Professional Bodies in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- To promote and enhance the status of Professional Bodies in Nigeria.
- To offer advice and render such other assistance to Government as and when necessary.
- To make or support representation to government and other appropriate bodies on matters affecting member associations or public interest.
- To encourage the interchange of ideas on and discussion of subjects of common interest and for this purpose to collect and publish literature which may result in promotion of such interest.
- To encourage good relations and understanding among the association and the public
- To develop and maintain cooperation with other similar Professional Bodies in other countries.
- To organise National and international conferences in Nigeria.
- To encourage the establishment of and or provide a professional library.
- Generally to do such other things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the aims and objective of the Association.

- The Association, through its aims and objectives is committed to playing an active role in the socio-economic planning process and development of Nigeria.

#### **4.0 Professional Bodies and National Development**

The level of development of any society is inextricably linked to the level of enlightened awareness of its citizens. The awareness of the citizens has to do with the literacy level, exposures to what is obtainable in developed communities, the conscious efforts to improve the standards expected in terms of service delivery, government enactments, policies, and regulations. The development of any society is therefore dependent on the quality of members produced by professional bodies and focus of their activities.

#### **5.0 Professional Bodies in Nigeria and the think tank lacuna**

It befuddles the imagination and collective intelligence of professionals to find today the almost irreverent stands by policy analyst with respect to consideration of input of professional bodies in their sphere of practice. A case in point is where all manner of practices subsists in various sectors where such bodies can be found with attendant hues and cries by such professional Association against such practises left untended. Cases of non-audits of parastatals of government have been roundly condemned with calls to correct same. Another case in point is the sudden removal of what the government describes as fuel subsidy in 2012 which brought unintended consequences for the economy with the attendant strike action that followed. Another case is that of earmarked taxes being levied on portable device equipment inspite of the Nigerian Technology Development Act (NITDA) still subsisting. These are few cases where things could have fared better if the views of such bodies were canvassed.

In all, these avoidable missteps are a direct result of a tenuous link between policy analysts, policy think tank of government and position papers articulated overtime for presentation by professional Associations through the APBN. This therefore underscores the need for there to be properly established channels among professional bodies as well as those of

government with a view to ensuring that articulated policies are indeed processed and made to see the light of day.

## **6.0 Expected Role of the APBN in professional development.**

In taking a look at the objectives of the APBN, one of its key objectives is to encourage and assist in the formation of National Professional Bodies in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In doing so, the APBN is contributing to professional development.

As the Nigerian society is gradually evolving with efforts being made to develop the economy, it is expected that the APBN should assume a greater role in enhancing professional development. The leadership of the APBN should be committed to playing the following roles in this regard.

- APBN should leverage effectively on Information Communication Technology for data gathering and benchmarking with the developed economies or other developing economies with a view to identifying areas where professional bodies can effectively contribute to solving issues in their areas of competence;
- The Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria should focus on creating/strengthening its research and development function. This will ensure that the professional bodies benchmark against the best standards in the developed countries to improve internal capacity within the professional bodies;
- APBN leadership should contribute to the legislative process of granting legal status to associations intending to become registered professional bodies to check the proliferation of professional bodies who seek to whittle the influence of other bodies within the same profession with little or no value added;
- APBN should encourage its members to establish vibrant research and development units while also committing itself to establishing same for

the development of their respective professions and Nigerian as a country; and

- APBN should constructively engage government towards ensuring only relevant professionals are engaged by the government to perform specific tasks as it is only by so doing that professional bodies can be seen to be relevant.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

It is my view that the efforts of the APBN towards enhancing professional development can only be effective with the active involvement of the professional bodies. Professional bodies must necessarily agree with the vision of APBN to make the task easier.

Thank you for your attention.

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1 University of Minnesota- Career & Internship Services:

[www.careerhelp.umn.edu](http://www.careerhelp.umn.edu)

2 [www.apbnnigeria.org](http://www.apbnnigeria.org)