

MORAL LEADERSHIP EDUCATION IN CONSTRUCTION

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Construction is largely viewed as a fragmented industry due to its project based nature. Majority of construction projects involve one-off client and are non-recurrent. Such fragmentation is due to the various cultural values, processes and interests of diverse participating organisations in project delivery. The industry is further viewed as being of low trust with competitive and adversarial relationships as the dominant strand of its culture. There is mounting pressure for construction to change. The discourse of change towards collaboration and authentic and moral leadership espouses an improvement in contracts, communications and management. The recommended change remains an aspiration of the policy makers as well as academicians. The premise of this paper is to give a fresh perspective for Higher Education and its role in developing the moral leaders of tomorrow's construction industry. The focus within construction is mainly on management functionality ignoring the psychological and sociological aspects of leadership. Higher Education in construction has a pivotal role developing moral leaders of tomorrow's construction. It is argued that an integrated education module of culture, ethics, values and moral leadership in construction will be beneficial for future leaders of the industry.

Keywords: authenticity, culture, higher education, leadership, morality.

INTRODUCTION

Construction is largely viewed as a fragmented industry due to its project based nature. According to Wild (2002) 80% of construction projects involve one-off clients and are non-recurrent. Such fragmentation is due to the various cultural values, processes and interests of diverse participating organisations in project delivery. The industry is further viewed as being of low trust with competitive and adversarial relationships as the dominant strand of its culture. There is mounting pressure for construction to change. The discourse of change towards collaboration and authentic and moral leadership espouses an improvement in contracts, communications and management (Egan 1998). The recommended change remains an aspiration of the policy makers (Wild 2002) as well as academicians (Elmualim 2007).

According to the figures from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the UK construction employs more than 1.6 m people with a third registered as self-employed (DTI 2003). The UK construction industry is dominated by small and medium enterprises with annual output of more than £83.5bn. The sector is highly fragmented with low levels of workload continuity, little interdependence and communication and lack of trust. According to Egan (1998) this sector's fragmentation led to the extensive use of subcontracting and prevented the continuity of efficient and effective team

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work. However, this fragmentation assisted organisations in having greater flexibility to deal with highly varied workloads. Eventually the sector's overriding practice is characterised by adversarial relationships, low costs, short-term profits and opportunistic behaviour. The introduction of best practice initiatives of teamwork, collaborative work and the call for a higher level of trust are failing to bring about dramatic changes that are sought (Green and May 2005). Due to its fragmentation and practices the construction industry is criticised for lacking leadership. The publication of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) report and Statement of Objections regarding 112 construction companies engaging in bid rigging activities caused stir in public arena as to morality in construction. The severity of the accusations, specially bid rigging and false invoicing in public sector projects, left the public asking where morality starts and ends in construction?

The premise of this paper is to give a fresh perspective for Higher Education and its role in developing the moral leaders of tomorrow's construction industry. The paper reviews current construction leaderships' practices and further develop the case for authentic and moral leadership. It further aims to develop a teaching module for culture and moral leadership to be integrated into the teaching and learning at undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as Continuing Professional Development in Higher Education.

MORAL LEADERSHIP IN CONSTRUCTION

Leadership and practice in construction is continually developing with ongoing research mainly in other fields such strategic management and organisational theories. Indeed leadership models, capabilities and theories have developed over the past century to understand what makes a leader or a person with authority (Chan and Cooper 2007). Within the realm of construction leaders are criticised for being a technocratic totalitarian type with a 'lip service' given to contested themes of empowerment and teamwork (Green 1998). Green (1998) further commented that all calls for change within construction are imposed on organisations to ensure control of the processes by the dominant power groups. He further added that "whilst industry leaders are fond of calling for attitudinal and cultural improvement, the language of the accepted research agenda continually reinforces the industry's dominant culture of control and command." In a study with in-depth interviews with leaders in the UK construction industry, Chan and Cooper (2007) found that leaders are highly motivated by pursuing personal agendas.

It is apparent that there are various business and professional moral and ethical challenges facing construction today. Many of these moral and ethical challenges are associated with the contemporary culture of construction such as conflict of interest, customer needs and service, fair competition and responsibilities. The fierce competition within construction is seen to engender the unethical behaviour which is prevalent in construction (Elmualim 2007). Although there are various code of ethics governing the practice within construction, breaches in professional responsibilities are common (Bowen et al 2007).

Recently the role of leadership and entrepreneurship in construction is widely being examined due to the dynamic and changing nature of the industry. Although there is a wealth of management knowledge evolving around leadership in other disciplines, it is contested that leadership as a concept is not fully understood nor developed in construction. It is argued that leadership studies in construction management remains inadequate (Chan and Cooper 2007). Toor and Ofori (2007) in their survey of

authentic leadership in construction found that individuals are not satisfied with authenticity of their managers/leaders as well as their organisations. They further concluded that “the overall perception of the ethical and professional environment of overall construction industry is not healthy.” Having said that, leadership studies in construction focuses solely on managerial functionalism and to a great extent ignoring the broader sociological, psychological, historical and political perspectives of leadership (Chan and Cooper 2007), hence the difference between a manager and a leader. Current educational and management practices within construction focuses on managerial aspects of leaders, hence the industry has managers however lacks having aspiring moral and authentic leaders.

Having said that, in construction as in other disciplines leadership practice and study will ever remain a fascinating subject. According to Munshi et al (2005) leaders are vital for the progress of organisations at all levels. Particularly important are the distinct two roles performed by leaders; firstly motivation of others particularly into new arenas and secondly instigate organisations structure and environment that fostering innovation and continual improvement (Munshi et al 2005). Leaders are seen as individual with vision with the ability to take group or organisation into new territories where there is lack of knowledge (Chan and Cooper 2007). During the past half-century it is estimated that more than one thousand studies were conducted to establish the styles, characteristics or personality traits of great leaders. However, none of these studies have produced one style that individuals can imitate (George et al. 2007) “No one can be authentic by trying to imitate someone else. You can learn from other’ experiences, but there is no way you can be successful when you are trying to be like them. People trust you when you are genuine and authentic, not a replica of someone else.” (George et al. 2007).

Without a doubt the study of leadership can’t be separated from the study of culture and power. However, there are main five clusters of theories describing leadership: contingency; transformational; transactional; distributed; and structuralist theories. Contingency theories assert leaders as taking action in difficult circumstances. The difficulty here is that any response or decisions taken by the leader are dependent on the context or the situation in which the response or the decision is taken. The transformation and transactional theories examine the differences that exist between leaders and followers. Transformation theories put high emphasis on vision and effective communications through personal qualities such as charisma (Strange and Mumford 2002). On the other hand the transactional theories point to the reward and punishment system (carrot and stick) that will influence the attitude and behaviour of followers. The rationale underpinning distributed leadership theories is that new forms of interdependence and coordination (characteristic of the construction industry) give rise to distributed managerial and leadership practices. The emphasis of this cluster of theories is on self-management (Munshi et al 2005). The structuralist leadership focuses on organisation systems and the inclusion of system thinking whereby leaders are facilitators and responsible for the creation of organisational structure that allow efficient and effective distribution of resources (Chan and Cooper 2007).

Most of these early theories were mainly concerned with finding out styles and characteristics of leadership based on the assumption that these are what differentiate leaders from followers. Sceptics of these theories argue that having an individual with such characteristics will not necessarily mean that this individual can become a leader (Chan and Cooper 2007). Indeed some theories according to specific characteristics

describe the prevailing models of leadership as authoritarian, paternalistic, egoistical, know-it-all leadership, manipulative and democratic leadership.

Construction is being widely criticised for being slow in adopting leadership theories with more emphasis on organisational performance. Some research in leadership in construction identify four leadership styles; shareholder, autocrat, consensus and consultative. Other studies point out that leaders are technically competent entrepreneurs focusing on driving innovation (Chan and Cooper 2007). However, the focus within construction remains on performance agenda and mainly achieving financial performance or competitive advantage over other competitors.

The most fundamental questions raised within this study are; how leaders are born? How authentic or morally oriented are they? And what is the role of Higher Education in advancing moral leadership in construction?

With the turn of this century there is a growing interest in positive psychology that is contributing to the rising research in moral leadership and authenticity in general and in construction in particular. Indeed the concept of morality is one of the most complex and widely discussed concepts over the centuries. Research is widely being conducted on authenticity in various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy and managerial science (Toor and Ofori 2007). However, according to Toor and Ofori (2007) in-depth understanding, measurement, development and sustainability of authenticity are some of the challenges facing researchers today. Of course “the different perceptions of authenticity in different cultural contexts have resulted in a plethora of measurement challenges and research questions”.

For construction the need for moral leadership and authenticity is well established due to the poor social image, ethical and moral difficulties and fragile professional practices (Toor and Ofori 2007). Toor and Ofori (2007) further emphasised the need for moral leadership in construction as corruption remains at a high level and the situation is worsening worldwide. They further articulated that there is a stringent need for raising the awareness of authenticity, positive organisational behaviour, positive organisational scholarship and authentic and moral leadership in construction.

Moral leadership is seen as the behaviour of leaders in addition to the moral character, values and programs (Toor and Ofori 2007). According to Luthans and Avolio (2003) moral leadership is a process that integrates positive psychological capacities and highly developed organisational understanding resulting in greater self awareness, self-regulating positive behaviours and fostering positive self-development. Hence moral leaders are genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real and veritable (Luthans and Avolio 2003). Other authors described moral leaders as honest, open, transparent, compassionate “and with a heart”. Further definition for a moral leadership is the possession of vision, the practice of solid set of values, leading from the heart, establishing enduring relationships and demonstrating self-discipline in their lives (Toor and Ofori 2007). Another complementary articulation of moral leadership is that the individual is fully aware of who they are, how they think and behave, confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient and of high moral character (Luthans and Avolio 2003).

According to George et al (2007) authentic and moral leaders work hard at understanding and developing themselves and drive long-term results. Through their integrity, moral leaders sustain the organisation results through good times and bad times. They further introduced four main points in order for an individual to be a moral leader; firstly practicing values and principles. The values and ethics that motivate moral leaders are derived from their convictions and beliefs. It is suggested

that one will not know what their true values are until tested under real life pressures. Secondly balancing extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivations are those gained when comparing with peers and outside world parameters such as promotion, recognition and status and financial rewards. Intrinsic motivations are mainly derived from the sense of meaning of life such as personal growth, helping other people develop, taking on social causes, and ultimately making a difference in the world (George et al 2007). Such issues are vitally important in order to advance moral, ethic and authentic leadership in construction.

It is apparent that moral leadership is a very complex and multi-dimensional concept containing elements from various domains. In his holistic framework for moral education, Clarken (2007) suggested a tripartite theory of the human mind. These three elements of the human mind depends on and conditional on cognition (related to knowing, intellect, epistemology, thinking), affection (which is related to valuing emotion, aesthetics, and feelings) and finally conation (which is related to striving, volition, ethics and willingness) (Clarken 2007). These three elements of a moral education framework are part of the self-development and self-awareness process of an individual in a variety of contexts such as individual, family, group/team, organisation level and society as large. This understanding has a great implication in construction. According to Toor and Ofori (2007) if a construction leader is morally oriented and authentic “it is likely that the overall performance of the project will be superior. Since authenticity and morality take into account the component of self-awareness and self-regulation. It is likely that an authentic project leader would not suffer from personal bias and self-interest. Moreover, an authentic project leader will develop better interpersonal relationships which will result in reduced disputes and conflicts on the projects.” Such moral attitudes will benefit individuals and organisations. It is anticipated that employees will enjoy better interpersonal relationships, satisfaction and well-being and good working environment. Authenticity and moral leadership will benefit organisations with better chances to grow in challenging times which will results in higher standards of ethics, morality and professionalism of the wider construction industry. Toor and Ofori (2007) called for investing in academic curricula as well as professional development among other human resource management to advance the cause of moral leadership in construction.

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN MORAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Education is the catalyst for developing individual humans for the betterment of themselves, families and the world. Education is not merely the provision of well designed ambient environments for learning and well structured curricula but it encompasses far complex and variant aspects of psychological, sociological and technological development. It is argued that conventional education is teaching for example to read, write and do arithmetic and students are obliged to do what the teacher says relying most of the time on dull textbooks. A fresh perspective on education for moral leadership is needed. A perspective that provides the learners with the understanding of the benefits of the educational process and with such vision students will be motivated to learn. The educational process “becomes an essential building block of their future, it becomes an adventure, and exciting challenge instead of meaningless duty.” (Rutstein 1992).

It is argued that it is time for a radical change and a paradigm shift in education. A paradigm shift in which “the entire fabric of our curriculum may be called holistic

education because we have no disconnected, departmentalised pieces; the arts, sciences and the humanities constantly interweave, bringing a unity to all our studies. ...Everyone - parents, students, teachers – know the goals we plan to achieve” (Rutstein 1992). According to the school of cognitive positioning, there are six hierarchical levels of learning; factual knowledge; comprehension; application; analysis; synthesis and evaluation (Bloom 1956). In Higher Education, a moral leadership module, on one hand, needed to be at a high level of taxonomy of learning i.e. at the levels of synthesis and evaluation according to Bloom (1956). On the other hand, the designed module should be developed in a way that will encourage meaningful engagement of participants. This require that intended learning outcomes and assessment methods should be considered carefully and further aligned to encourage deeper approach to learning amongst participants (Biggs 1999).

This paradigm shift has great implications on moral leadership education particularly for each individual. Individuals must be filled with a sense of purpose that drive them not only to change and develop themselves – in this life-long process of education- but impels them to contribute to the transformation of society. It is argued that “man is organic with the world” as the standards of behaviour of individuals and groups shape our environment and in turn we are shaped by our social structures and processes (Noguchi et al 1992). Noguchi et al (1992) stated that for moral education a profound awareness of this reciprocal relationship between personal growth and transformation in social structures and processes is of paramount importance. “One cannot develop ventures and talents in isolation, but only through effort and activity for the benefit of others.” (Noguchi et al 1992) This radical change in moral education unquestionably needs to readdress the age-old dichotomy of the tension between the desire of individuals for freedom and the demand by various social institutions for submission. Noguchi et al (1992) argued that with this paradigm shift a new understanding is needed in discerning this dichotomy. They argued that the “answer does not lie in compromise between the two extremes. There is a new understanding to be reached which redefines and transforms the roles of individuals and institutions in relation to one another and to society.” They further expanded on this understanding by stating that “institutions, in their response to the exigencies of this new age, need to ensure that they are used not as instruments for the selfish ends of a minority or mechanisms for the control of the population, but as channels through which the talents, abilities and collective energies of the people can be expressed in service to society. A reciprocity can be cultivated in which the individual lovingly supports and nurture the institutions, which in turn humbly and openly consult with the community whose needs they serve.”

With this understanding in mind, the purpose of moral education is to foster the development of individual moral structures. These moral structures include values, qualities, attitudes, skills and capabilities as well as knowledge and understanding of essential moral concepts and actions. Noguchi et al (1992) articulated that the role of moral education is to analyse these qualities and virtues and then devices patterns of actions and educational activities that will enable the development and growth of individuals. Noguchi et al (1992) further recommended “that virtues, rather than being examined individually, be analysed in related groups organised around moral capabilities.” A moral capability will be a result of the complex interactions of certain related values, qualities, skills, attitudes and knowledge that enable an individual to make an authentic and moral choice. In focusing on acquiring moral capabilities, on what individual must be capable of doing in order to achieve personal and societal

transformation, will help to eliminate the tendency to reduce moral education to seamless lectures and sermons on virtues and good behaviour (Noguchi et al 1992).

In their conceptual moral framework Noguchi et al (1992) listed various moral and authentic capabilities around four requirements; motivation for moral development with the associated qualities of love, knowledge, faith and obedience; rectitude of conduct with the required capabilities of trustworthiness, truthfulness, and justice; purity of motive with qualities of sanctity, sincerity, and radiance; and finally attitude towards transformation which require courage, trust, confidence and humility. The enumeration of all moral capabilities to be analysed is beyond single education curricula. However, it is vital individuals have the opportunity to create one's own conceptual framework around which a vision, moral capabilities and practical skills can be arranged and applied within a specific context.

MODULE: CULTURE ETHICS, VALUES AND MORAL LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPMENTAL WORK

The authentic and moral leadership education in construction provides an interesting area of further research. The investigation, development, delivery and evaluation of a module in moral leadership will be vital for the progress of leaders and industry as whole. The evaluation of the benefits of such a module for graduating construction student in terms of practicality in the real world will be a further area of research and educational interest. A module for moral leadership was instigated and developed.

The module is a multi-disciplinary course that aims to discuss and evaluate the understanding of the nature of culture, ethics, values and aspects of moral leadership. It applies a psycho-social approach in a participatory format. The module aims to ascertain the individual's moral responsibility to search for and recognize truth, and then to apply that truth in all aspects of his or her life. Students are encouraged to find principles that can serve as the basis of their lives and then to base decisions and actions on them, while remaining open to the investigation of new principles so as to allow for continuing growth. Students thus develop a principle-based vision of the desired future of themselves and their community and examine different points of view and facts in order to investigate and appreciate the social reality of our time. The module teaching and learning methods include Lectures, Seminars/Facilitated Workshops, Web-Based Forum, Private Study and Community Service.

Module Objectives:

1. Understand the psycho-social aspects of culture
2. Appreciate aspects of cultural representations, metaphors, cultural change and adaptation
3. Develop a critical view of ethics and understand the dynamics of values
4. Recognise the defects and limitations in dominant forms of leadership
5. Articulate a conceptual framework of moral leadership based on a commitment to service-oriented leadership, personal and social transformation
6. Initiate a process of individual learning centred on the development of moral leadership capabilities- concepts, skills attitudes, qualities and capabilities.
7. Understand that leadership for social change means applying, living, acting and developing intellectual and practical skills.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the module students should:

1. Be a catalyst of positive social and individual transformation – as a facilitator, and as a leader in business, family and the wider community
2. Be able to recognise, identify, articulate and apply relationships and connections while in the process of creating new and progressive knowledge
3. Integrate the skills, concepts, attitudes and qualities studied into service in the context of facilitator and as a leader in the wider society
4. Be a conscious leader reflecting on consequences of one's action and engage in a global learning process.

The module objectives and the learning outcomes were designed in principle to be challenging for participants in order to generate debates in lectures, seminars, workshops and forums. It is equally challenging to devise an extensive assessment model for the course. However, the assessment of meeting these objectives and for the students to achieve those intended learning outcomes will require various methods of assessments. A Coursework and a written exam will be the main aspects of the assessment. A written examination will be used to assess the attainment of the theoretical objectives (1-7). Exams questions will be formulated around understanding aspects of culture, defects and limitations of current types of leadership and the role of authentic leaders. Further exam questions will focus on discussing hypothetical or real life case studies and personal experiences when participants are faced with challenging moral dilemmas or management decisions and how they enacted their role as authentic leaders/facilitators for positive personal and social change relying on well established information (outcomes 1-3). The intended learning outcomes will be further assessed through coursework, through observation of participants' contribution to discussion in seminars and their role in facilitating workshop in addition to participation in the debate using a web-based forum (outcomes 1-4). Intended learning outcomes 1 will be further assessed by providing evidence of engaging in voluntary work or service-oriented projects.

To foster the required engagement of participants in the course to achieve the objectives, the teaching and assessment methods are based on Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives (Bloom 1956) and constructive alignment (Biggs 1999) {Biggs, 1999 #1469}. To achieve this, participants will be required as individual to think, create relations, analyse and draw extended abstraction for their understanding of keyword such as truth, morality, responsibility, leadership and society. This individual part will be followed by a Group Discussion in workshop format to discuss for example; what is the objective of personal transformation? And what are the requisites necessary for achieving transformation?

To further enhance the participants' attainments of moral capabilities participants will be required to facilitate seminars about concepts, skills, attitude and qualities of moral leadership. In addition to discussion on the web-based forum students will engage in a discourse on reflection-action-consequences and reflection processes with specific case studies, role plays and reflective learning logs suggested by (Macfarlane and Ottewill 2001).

Such case studies will include discussing various decision challenges and moral dilemmas in various environments such family, friends, social group and work. Such case studies as a problem based learning will encourage personal reflection. Indeed the voluntary service component of the Coursework will further facilitate participants' personal reflection by engaging in meaningful activity and seeing themselves making change in their immediate environments while fostering personal growth, development and transformation.

CONCLUSIONS

The construction industry is widely being viewed as a diverse and fragmented industry with competition, conflict and distrust as the main strands of its dominant culture. The industry is further criticised for high levels of corruption and a lack of authentic and moral leadership. In this paper, study for the pedagogical aspects of moral leadership in construction was critically reviewed and analysed. It is argued that the construction industry is widely being perceived as lacking authenticity and moral leadership. There is a perception that leaders in construction, while being innovative and supportive, are mainly driven by their extrinsic personal agendas and indeed there is a gap in moral leadership education. The focus within construction is mainly on management functionality ignoring the psychological, sociological aspects of leadership. It is argued that an integrated education module of culture, ethics, values and moral leadership in construction will be beneficial for future leaders of the industry. The main purpose of the module is not merely giving sermons and lectures on morality but rather to raise awareness of participating individuals in their path of their personal and professional development. The objective of the course not only enumerates various moral leadership qualities and capabilities but further aims to instil in the participants the urgency for developing a personal moral framework based on authenticities and moral leadership centred around developing concepts, qualities, attitudes, skills and moral capabilities.

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