

Influence of Professional Capabilities on Leadership Development in the Ghanaian Construction Industry

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ABSTRACT

It has now been fairly and widely accepted that leadership, both as research area and a practical skill, encompasses the ability of an individual, group, or organization to “lead,” influence, or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organizations. Empirical evidence suggests numerous studies on effective leadership in the construction industry, but their impact on leadership development remains underexplored in the literature. The study evaluates the professional capability features and issues affecting leadership development in the construction industry. The study utilized the Delphi method to gather opinions of professional experts on leadership development in the construction industry, focusing on factors affecting professional capabilities. The study, using Microsoft Excel, revealed that experts deemed fifteen out of sixteen professional capability features to be most important for leadership development in the construction industry. The study suggests that professional capability features have a significant impact on leadership development in the Ghanaian construction sector and that construction industry players must be trained professionally to acquire the needed skills in order to be capable of carrying out leadership roles. To verify the measurement variables, it is recommended that a questionnaire survey instrument be utilized.

Keywords: Professional capability, Leadership development, Construction industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a long-term process of getting people to work toward fulfilling a group's or organization's mission and goals (Emad 2014). According to Skipper and Bell (2006), a leader is someone who understands the need for direction and improvement, sets goals, brings people together, empowers and encourages, articulates a vision of where the company is going, builds teams and decision-makers, guides and advises subordinates, and demonstrates a high level of integrity in their professional interactions. Owusu-Manu et al. (2021) asserted that the function of a leader is essential for every project's success. Leadership development, on the other hand, is the process of improving leadership skills and competencies through various activities. In leadership development, staff, at all levels, are taught the invaluable leadership skills that allow them to properly lead, inspire, and guide their teams to success.

The Ghanaian construction industry has had a significant influx of highly skilled leadership within the past ten years, however, no research has been conducted specifically on exploring the professional capabilities of leadership in Ghana's construction industry. As a result, there is a lack of available literature on this topic. This study aimed to address this disparity by assessing the professional capabilities and challenges that impact leadership development. To achieve this goal, the study used the Delphi technique to collect the opinions of expert professionals in the construction sector regarding the development of leadership skills, with a specific focus on the elements that impact professional capabilities.

The theory of leadership is difficult to pin down, and there are several different meanings to the term. Leadership has evolved into a quality that encompasses everything and can only be vaguely defined (Speranza, 2019). Leadership development is the process of preparing a leader to take on future responsibilities successfully which includes working with others to reach the firm's collective and individual goals (Laguerre, 2010). A leader needs to be professionally capable, thus 'the combination of knowledge, skills, personal qualities, and understanding' that can be used effectively to lead in an organisation (Torabizadeh et al., 2019). Within the context of the modern corporate world, leadership development is becoming increasingly important and urgent for organisations. Current historical events and developing trends highlight the need to participate in the dynamic development of leaders and their capabilities (Schoemaker et al., 2018). At every point in human history and at every stage of the growth of human civilization, the need for leadership in human society has been felt. The mode of recruitment of members, the fundamentals of their authority and their method of articulating and aggregating people's interests have changed from time to time. Additionally, the topic of leadership has been extensively studied by psychologists, social anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and social workers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To develop construction professionals successfully, it is important to identify the most important parts of the implementation process. Effective negotiation, planning, networking, monitoring and evaluation are the hallmark of a well-developed leader (Addy & Adabor, 2021). Competence, achievement, and ongoing professional skill development contribute to the outcome when evaluating the performance of a construction leader in the current growing economy. (Ametepey et al., 2022; Kwofie et al., 2016). Ogolo (2019) and Saraph et al. (1989) defined critical success factors as critical areas of managerial planning and action that must be practiced to achieve effective management in a business unit. These factors may be structures with hidden variables that can't be measured directly but can still be judged indirectly based on how they show up. The things a person does at work are called their "professional characteristics." Two important parts of professionalism are an employee's ability to live up to the organizations core values and take care of the tasks assigned to them. Professionalism is important for the long-term success of any organization, no matter how big or small it is. It makes sure that a business keeps good relationships with its customers, has productive interactions with its employees, and reaches its goals and objectives (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021). The following qualities are expected in every professional; possession of skills, good communication, professionalism in appearance, reliability, display of ethical behaviour, organization, accountability, professionalism in language, separation of personal from profession, exhibition of positive attitude, control of emotions, management of time, display of respect and ability to focus. Again, to develop oneself and others, including

continuing professional learning, one needs to take responsibility for his or her own continuous professional development through a variety of activities, such as training and education, participating in industry events, representing the industry in public, and teaching others about the role and value of public relations to employers and clients. You are then able to offer professional guidance that involves, motivates, and contributes to personal and professional growth (Baillies et al. 2013). Professional capabilities are the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and specialized knowledge that are needed to perform at a certain level. The ability of a person to reach strategic goals depends on his or her capability and performance (O'Connell et al., 2014). Capability is "the combination of knowledge, skills, personal qualities, and understanding that can be used effectively not only in predictable specialist contexts but also in unexpected and unstable situations (Torabizadeh et al. 2019; O'Connell et al., 2014). Capability is used to identify and address training and development needs, build good working relationships, supplement existing organizational structures, improve the quality of care, increase workforce competency and adaptability, create learning cultures, help develop leadership skills, and provide a platform for taking on new roles and improving practice (Ross 2016). Professional capabilities are therefore an individualized capability, judgment-based capability, research-based capability, inter-professional competence, practical capability, ethics-based capability, and practice-based capability (Torabizadeh et al., 2019). The main goal of personnel capability in management is, among other things, to maintain and be able to provide accurate and up-to-date skills. Capabilities are the things that people can do and be if they want to.

Extensive research has been conducted on professional capability. The research conducted by Torabizadeh et al. (2019), Ross (2016), and O'Connell et al. (2014) revealed several elements that contribute to the successful professional development of individuals. They created the following constructs, which are widely used by researchers to measure leadership development. Capability is commonly defined as the amalgamation of skills, knowledge, values, and self-esteem that allows people to deal with change, be flexible, and go beyond competency. "Capability is also used to identify and address training and development needs, build good working relationships, supplement existing organizational structures, improve the quality of care, increase workforce competency and adaptability, create learning cultures, help develop leadership skills, and provide a platform for taking on new roles and improving practice (Torabizadeh et al., 2019; Ross 2016).

Professional capability is defined by five-dimensional matrices that provide a common language, namely, "personal capability." Thus, the ability of the staff is a predictor of satisfaction and retention (Darzi and Bhat, 2018). The primary goal of personnel capability in management is, among other things, to be able to provide and maintain accurate and up-to-date skills. "Interpersonal capabilities," which are used to get along with other people at work, are part of our emotional intelligence and include factors such as actively communicating and listening. Leaders must work on their interpersonal skills for their own success, as well as the success of their teams and the organisation as a whole (McKenna, 2022). "Cognitive capabilities" are the ability to understand, evaluate, choose, and compare information, the mental skills mostly used to solve problems and make decisions (Helfat & Peteraf, 2014; Neil et al., 2019). "Role-specific competencies" means how organisations communicate which behaviours are required, valued, recognised and rewarded with respect to specific occupational roles. It ensures that staff in general have a common understanding of the organization's values and expected excellent performance behaviors (IAEA, 2020). "Generic competencies" are

groups of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that can be used together to complete a task in a certain setting. It's also called transversal characteristics and can describe how a person acts in general, regardless of their technical knowledge (Saito, 2003). Researchers primarily conduct this research in developed countries, resulting in limited knowledge about developing countries or sub-Saharan regions. The following qualities are expected in every professional: possession of skills, good communication, professionalism in appearance, reliability, display of ethical behaviour, organization, accountability, professionalism in language, separation of personal from profession, exhibition of positive attitude, control of emotions, management of time, display of respect and ability to focus.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research used the Delphi survey method to get information from experts (construction professionals) through email. A Delphi Study is a group decision mechanism requiring qualified experts who have deep understanding of the issues at hand (Ellis et al. 2021; Mambwe 2021; Shariff, 2015). The list of experts was made from conference proceedings and journal articles that were reviewed by experts. Twenty-five invitation letters were sent to the experts through email to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. Twenty-two experts showed their interest to participate in the study. During the first stage of the Delphi questionnaire administration, three experts were dropped. The remaining nineteen experts concluded the survey. This number of panellists was thought to be right based on what scholars who had used the technique before had said in the literature. Aigbavboa (2014) observed that the panel size for a typical Delphi survey could range from 15 to over 60 experts. Ameyaw et al. (2016) identified a Delphi panel size of 8 to 20 experts as the most widely used size in the majority of engineering studies reviewed. Hallowell and Gambatese (2010) opined that the size of a panel should depend on the nature of the study, the number of experts who are available, the amount of geographical diversity that is wanted, and the facilitator's capacity. Experts in Ghana were asked for their thoughts on how top management can help leaders develop. The experts were asked to rate how important and influential each factor was in predicting the success of professional capability features in leadership in the Ghanaian construction industry. Table 1 shows an impact scale that was used. Data obtained from the Delphi survey was analysed with Microsoft EXCEL, spread-sheet software. The results of the analysis were a set of descriptive statistics like means, medians, standard deviations, and derivatives of these statistics. The steps in conducting Delphi survey has not been discussed in this paper due to limited space.

Table 1. Impact scale

No impact / influence		Low impact / influence		Medium Impact / influence		High impact / influence		Very high impact / influence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the sixteen (16) variables of professional capability features that influence leadership development in the Ghanaian construction industry, fifteen (15) were considered to have reached consensus with cut-off (IQD ≤ 1) score on (Table 2). Twelve (12) of the factors had very high impact (VHI: 9-10) on leadership development in the construction industry. The remaining four (4) factors had high impact (HI: 7-8.99) on leadership development in the

construction industry. The fact that each expert's standard deviation (σ_x) was at most 1.00 shows that their answers were consistent and variable. However, there was good agreement on six (6) of the items, which got scores between 1.00 and 2.00. Furthermore, in ranking the items by their respective mean scores, leadership ability to have effective time management was ranked 1st out of the 16 variables. This was followed by leadership ability to work within ethical framework on behalf of the organisation, while leadership ability to separate personnel from professional was ranked last. (Table 2)

Table 2. Professional capability attributes to leadership development

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT - PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITY ATTRIBUTES					
Leadership ability to	Median M	MEAN (x)	Standard deviation SD	Interquartile deviation IQD	Mean scores ranking (R)
have professional appearance	8	7.94	1.47	1.00	10
have ethical behaviour	9	9.06	0.73	0.00	4
be reliable and accountable	9	8.72	1.02	0.75	8
be organized	9	9.00	0.59	0.00	5
have professional language	8	8.28	0.96	1.00	9
separate personnel from professional	7	7.50	1.47	1.00	11
have emotional control	8	8.28	0.89	1.00	9
have effective time management	10	9.61	0.78	0.00	1
be focused	9	9.22	0.73	1.00	3
be poised	9	8.78	1.06	0.75	7
be respectful	9	8.78	1.22	0.75	7
possess technical/soft skills	9	9.06	1.06	1.00	4
work within ethical framework on behalf of the organisation	10	9.56	0.70	1.00	2
be conflict resolution	9	9.00	0.77	1.50	5
be responsible for one-self	9	8.94	0.80	0.00	6
recognise and observe societal obligations	9	9.00	0.91	0.75	5

The study was to evaluate the professional capability features and issues that affect leadership development in the construction industry. The study's results showed that the sixteen professional capabilities or measurement variables were considered by the experts to have varying effects on the development of leadership in the Ghanaian construction industry. The assessment of the sixteen (16) factors and issues as considered by the experts to be the major determinants of leadership development in the construction industry showed that, twelve (12) (Leadership ability to; have professional appearance, have ethical behaviour, be reliable and accountable, be organized, have professional language, separate personal from professional, have emotional control, have effective time management, be focused, be poised, be respectful, possess technical/soft skills, work within ethical framework on behalf of the organisation, be responsible for one-self, and recognise and observe societal obligations) were considered by the experts to have achieved consensus with IQD less or equal to one (1). Twelve (12) of the variables (Leadership ability to; have ethical behaviour, be reliable and accountable, be

organized, have effective time management, be focused, be poised, be respectful, possess technical/soft skills, work within ethical framework on behalf of the organization, resolve conflict, be responsible for one's-self, and recognize and observe societal obligations) were considered by the experts as having very high influence (VHI: 9-10) on leadership development in the construction industry. The remaining four (4) of the professional capability variables as considered by the experts had high influence (HI: 7-8.99) on leadership development in the construction industry. Their SD ranges from 0.73-1.47 and their mean ranges from 7.50 – 9.61. These indicate how significance professional capability factors are towards leadership development in the Ghanaian construction industry.

5. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study intended to examine professional capability features that affect leadership development in the Ghanaian construction industry. Twelve out of the sixteen features (Leadership ability to; have ethical behaviour, be reliable and accountable, be organized, have effective time management, be focused, be poised, be respectful, possess technical/soft skills, work within ethical framework on behalf of the organisation, resolve conflict, be responsible for one's-self, and recognise and observe societal obligations) were considered by the experts as having very high influence on leadership development in the construction industry. These conclusions affirm the research conducted by Ametepey et al. (2022), Addy & Adabor (2021), Torabizadeh et al. (2019), Ogolo (2019), Kwofie et al. (2016), Ross (2016), and O'Connell et al. (2014), which offers a reliable and effective method to address the gap in leadership development within the construction industry in Ghana. The remaining four (4) of the professional capability features as considered by the experts had high influence on leadership development in the construction industry. The study's results show that all of the professional capability features that were looked at have a high effect on leadership development in the Ghanaian construction industry. The findings further refuted the general perception within the Ghanaian construction industry that professional capability features have limited influence on leadership development. It is believed that attention given to these factors would minimize difficulties related to the implementation of professional capability and enhance performance in companies implementing leadership development. Thus, an innovative framework should seek to include professional capabilities in its formation. Professional capabilities play an important role in leadership development and have a dramatic impact on personnel's development. It is also suggested that more research be done using empirical fieldwork (such as a questionnaire survey) to find out how important, similar, or different the identified factors are.

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