

Importance Of Organizational Behaviour Courses In Project And Construction Management Education

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Abstract

The field of organizational behavior itself is not only vast, but also has over the years expanded from a focus on the behavior of people in organizations to encompass all aspects of organizations, including structural issues. It has influenced to a large extent by the more complex nature of construction projects arising from greater specialization, more complex clients and stakeholder activities, by the advent of partnering and other relational arrangements, by government and other reports aimed at improving the performance and reputation of the construction industry. When the complexity of the construction industry is added to the complexity of the organization behavior subject, it is easy to imagine what a complex issue the industry faces to.

Data are collected through the web pages of the construction management graduation programs of the universities all over the world. Program curriculum of the departments is analyzed through their web pages. Whether the departments have core courses or electives related to the organizational behavior issues. It is aimed to determine the proportion of the organizational behavior courses in the curriculum of the departments. This study will be discussed through a new proposal of curriculum in the area of construction management.

Keywords

Organization, Organizational behavior, Construction Project Management, Construction Industry, Construction Project Management Education

1. Introduction

Understanding behavior of people in organizations is important. People are the common element and the most important part of an organization. It is difficult managing people, because everyone has different goals, values, or behavioral strategies. Employees, in an organization, are members of different cultures, families or may be countries. The main objective of an organization is to coordinate these different people and provide more effective work. Organization behavior is about people working in organizations which is the most important part of management such as improving the productive contribution of people, ensuring the quality of work life, handling job stress, and providing career development (Ivancevich et al., 2005) (McShane and Von Glinow, 2000).

The purpose of this study is emphasizing the importance of organizational behavior and human relationship courses in construction project management education. This study is based on a research investigating program curricular framework of twenty four construction project management schools from different parts of the world. The research comprises an investigation over organizational behavior courses in construction project management programs. If there are any courses through organization

behavior education or any other courses related to management theories or human relationship is investigated.

2. Organizational Behavior in Construction

An image of a workplace that co-workers are excited about their jobs, managers listen carefully to workers' comments about their jobs, a general atmosphere that is vibrant is the kind of workplace that will have to be created if a firm, entrepreneur, or institution is to survive in the coming years. A work environment where people want to work hard, have pride in the job they are doing, trust each other, and share ideas on how to improve performance. It is a picture of the kind of workplace that managers should use as a target to achieve where a pleasant setting in which groups work together, solve problems, set high quality standards. (Ivancevich et al., 2005)

The study of people in organizations, which is called organizational behavior, has been recognized important by mainstream management for many years. In construction, like all organizations, as a result of the need for the collaborative style of working, individual's personal characteristics affect the smooth running of firms and projects. Whilst mainstream management literature stresses that managers need to develop personal skills of the employee, understanding of organizational behavior can play a vital role in managerial work (Moorhead and Griffin, 2001). Construction industry requires having all its professional and technical members, not just managers, such skills (Walker, 2011). Regardless of gender, age or work experience, service firms can reduce employee turnover by applying human resource policies that promote affective bonds between the individual and the organization. Affective bonds between the individual and the organization induces high levels of affective commitment (Simo *et al.*, 2014).

An intensive process in various phases from the first contact between client and architect is involved until the keys are handed over when a building project is finished. It is important from the outset that so as to deal with critical situations a basis for cooperation is needed. Although this does not mean a superficially harmonious cooperation, involves all participants working constructively together to carry out the work at hand to their mutual satisfaction. Planning and realization can last for a period of several years. Depending on the size of the project, which can be dealt with in several building faces, the project team should be viable in the face of all kinds of situations and challenges. This makes project manager significant in the team building process (Klein, 2008). Team working is paramount in construction, perhaps more so than in any other commercial activity. Members of the construction industry have always worked in teams because of the practically total focus of the industry on projects necessitating the use of interdisciplinary groups of specialists in project team. It is the only rational way to members of the industry that projects could be designed, developed and constructed in any other way (Walker, 2011).

Project managers must have their eye on the initial aims throughout every phase of the project and they are qualified coordinator between everyone involved in the building project. The ability to deal with all kinds of people and to be able to work in a team requires a high level of social competence. The roles, like client, architect, specialist, contractor, subcontractors that crop up in every project are usually played by changing partners and individuals. Both professional and personal conflicts can occur in this process. It is necessary to reach mutual understanding that everyone is working towards the same goal, and by working together and maintaining respectful forms of interaction and behavior this can be achieved only (Klein, 2008). Many researches have proposed that superior organizational performance result from strongly held shared values and positive corporate values. Collins and Porras (1996) found that many successful companies adopt the premise of shared organizational values as an underlying philosophy. In contrast, companies that ignore their emotional, mental and spiritual needs and concentrate on the physical aspect of their being may struggle to survive (Geus and Senge, 1997). Pant and Lachman (1998), also, found that management will have hard time implementing a strategy incompatible with

organizational core values. Besides, Sillanpää (1998) mentioned that companies need to listen, to process and to respond positively to the values and beliefs of their stakeholders (Zhang *et al.*, 2010).

2.1. Individual differences and work behavior

It may be obvious, but nevertheless necessary, to repeat that the behavior of individuals is vital to the successful performance of business organizations. This simple statement not only disguises the complexity of the constituents and interconnectedness which make up individuals' behavior, but also the quality of an individual's performance and, particularly importantly, an individual's job satisfaction. (Walker, 2011) Each individual has differences from every other individual in many respects. Any attempt to learn the causes of the behaviors of people in organizations requires some understanding of individual differences. Managers need to ask the results of the effects on the personal behaviors and performance of employees. Ignoring such differences often become involved in practices which hinder achieving organizational and personal goals (Ivancevich *et al.*, 2005) Bresnen and Marshal (2000) showed that construction professionals are motivated by the factors inherent in contemporary motivation theories and, hence that these theories can usefully to better understand the motivational dynamics that are at play in both teams and individuals in construction.

2.2 Culture

The most common meaning of culture relates to the characteristics which are seen to typify the inhabitants of different countries and tribes (Walker, 2011). Hofstede (1991) defined culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another. He meant nation with the category of people and explained that it is a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned (Hofstede, 1991). Differences in national culture require differences in management practices, in addition to expectations from leaders, what leaders may not do (Paşa *et al.* 2001). The socio-economic and cultural changes during the last few decades have influenced the internalization of construction activities, and the players involved have faced several challenges. The influence of culture on organizational behaviors is one of the most intensively examined constructs and some researchers found distinct relationships. They indicated that there are overlapping influences stemming from different levels of culture, such as regional, industrial or professionalism differences.

3. Leadership

Leadership had been in every age of history and one of the most popular research topics among organizational behavior subjects and since the days of Greek philosophers, has also contemplated. The Greek philosopher Plato is defined leadership as prudence, courage, temperance, and justice. Although leadership is one of the most observed phenomena on the earth, it is the least understood one. (McShane & Von Glinow 2000) As a symphony requires a conductor to direct its various sections and ensure that each section plays its part, change within an organization requires a leader to direct and assist in the transition. (Hyatt *et al.*, 2007) It is not surprising that it is difficult to define leadership, since researchers have had trouble understanding leadership, but it can be defined generally as the process of influencing others toward goals. (Umstot 1988) Leadership, besides influence, has been defined in terms of group processes, personality, particular behaviors, power, role differentiation, persuasion, compliance, goal achievement, interaction, initiation of structure and combinations of two or more of these. (Luthans 2008)

On a construction project, there are various participating organizations and they should function together as a team where these different groups have to work together, and these differences may have implications for team-working, formality and how control and coordination are achieved. (Ankrah and Langford, 2005) Toor and Ofori (2008) indicate the need for leadership development in construction

professionals, because construction professionals invariably work in teams and often take on leadership roles as the design manager, construction manager, procurement manager, contracts manager or project manager. The leadership skills of project managers are important to the overall performance of the construction industry (Skipper and Bell, 2006).

4. Research Method and Research Objectives

The literature review demonstrated that organization behavior imposes a significant impact on the performance of construction projects and is pivotal in determining project success. The structure of construction industry differs from that of other kinds of the industries, but it shows similar results in organizational researches. The impacts on the organizational behavioral factors on construction firms do not differ from those in other industries.

It is aimed to examine program curriculums of the construction project management schools and determine the ratio of the organizational behavior courses. For this study, following the literature review, twenty four construction project management graduation programs of the universities from different parts of the world were chosen. While creating the sample of countries, one of the main criteria was being from different countries and geographical areas around the world. However, it was a limiting factor that selection had to be among the schools having web pages in English, because many countries did not have the English page.

The objective of this study is emphasizing the importance of organizational behavior courses in construction project management education. This study based on a research investigating program curricular framework of twenty four construction project management schools from different parts of the world. The research comprises an investigation over organizational behavior courses in construction project management graduation programs within the frame of their web pages. If there are any courses through organizational behavior education or any other courses related to the subject, organizational behavior qualities are investigated.

5. Findings and Discussion

Table.1 shows the results of the research. Among the twenty four construction project management programs of graduation schools, eight of them are from United States of America, seven of them from Turkey, four of them from England, and five of them are from Hong Kong, Dubai, Canada, New Zealand and Pakistan. Twelve of them are the departments of engineering schools, five of them are architecture, three of them built environment, and two of them are the departments of Real Estate schools. The other two departments are architecture and built environment, planning design and construction. The results show that eight of the schools (33%) do not have any courses under the title of organizational behavior or mentioning organizational behavior. Sixteen of the schools have courses under the title of organizational behavior or mentioning organizational behavior. Although one of the programs (4%) has two compulsory modules and one of them (4%) has two compulsory courses, most of the programs have elective courses. According the results of the research one of the programs (4%) has one core course and two electives, three of them (13%) have one compulsory course and one elective. The other findings of the research are three of them (13%) have one compulsory course; two of them (8%) have two electives, one of them (4%) have one elective module and four of them (17 %) have one elective.

Table 1: Construction Project Management Schools from Different Parts of the World

University	Name of the School	Name of the Program	Name of the Course	Type of the course
New York University	Polytechnic School of Engineering	Construction Management	Organizational Behavior	Elective
New York University	Schack Institute of - Real Estate	Construction Management	Labor Relations in Construction	Elective
University of Oklohoma	College of Architecture	Construction Management	Leadership	Compulsory
Florida International University	Engineering & Computing	Construction Management	-	-
Illinois Institute of Technology	Armour College of Engineering	Construction Engineering and Management	-	-
Washington University in St. Louis	School of Engineering & Applied Science	Construction Management	-	-
University of Hong Kong	Department of Real Estate and Construction	Construction Project Management	Management Theory and Projects	Elective
			Management Practice and Projects	Elective
American University in Dubai	Department of Civil Engineering	Construction Management	Managing Organizations And Leading People	Elective
Liverpool John Moores University	The School of Built Environment	Construction Project Management	-	-
National University of Science and Technology	The Faculty of the Built Environment	Construction Project Management	-	-
Conestoga College	School of Engineering and Information Technology	Construction Project Management	Leadership in Project Management	Compulsory
University of Westminster	Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment	Construction Project Management	Developing Effective Construction Teams	Elective Module

City University London	School of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences	Construction Management	Leadership and Management Skills	Compulsory module
			Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour	Compulsory module
Michigan State University	School of Planning, Design and Construction	Construction Management	-	-
Heriot-Watt University	School of the Built Environment	Construction Project Management	People and Organisational Management in the Built Environment	Compulsory
Istanbul Technical University	Architecture	Project and Construction Management	Management and Organization	Compulsory
			Organizational Behavior and Human Relations Management	Elective
Istanbul Technical University	Civil Engineering	Construction Management	Human Relations	Elective
			Yapımda İnsan Faktörü	Compulsory
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Architecture	Construction Project Management	-	-
Yıldız Technical University	Civil Engineering	Construction Management (Without Thesis)	Human Resources in Building Trade and Employer-Employee Relations	Elective
			Modern Management Principles in Construction Companies	Compulsory
Yıldız Technical University	Architecture	Housing Production and Construction Management	Organizational Problems in Construction Companies	Elective
Istanbul Kultur University	Civil Engineering	Project Management	-	-

Istanbul Kultur University	Architecture	Architecture / Construction Management	Management and Organization in Construction	Elective
			Organizational Problems in Construction	Elective
Northern Arizona University	College of Engineering, Forestry, and Natural Sciences	Master of Administration	Leadership	Compulsory
			Organizational Management	Compulsory
Auckland University of Technology New Zealand	Engineering	Construction Management	Management in the Construction Industry	Compulsory
			Human Resource Management	Elective
			People Management in Construction	Elective

6. Conclusion

The subject and related research presented in this paper addresses the lack of organizational behavior courses in construction project management education which is very important for a successful construction project management process. It is particularly remarkable that some of the programs which mention that they acquire candidates particularly leadership and management skills, have not any courses related to the subject. Construction industry is based on labor force. In this context, the possibilities of using machines and technology is less than other industries, and the development in the industry depending on the technological development remains at the level of material, and labor based production on site continue. Especially depending on the size of the project, as long as increasing the number of participating teams, coordination between these teams emerges as a separate issue.

The project team, as do all working groups, goes through various social action phases. There may be professional and personal conflicts. In confrontations and tension, people should never lose their objectivity: the construction project manager needs to be a mediator as well as a coordinator. It is necessary to reach the mutual understanding that everyone is working towards the same goal, and this can be achieved only by working together and maintaining respectful forms of interaction and behavior. Thus, the project team can work effectively, powerfully and purposefully towards realizing the project. So, it is an essential part of the construction project manager's work, along with effective project management, to direct the planning team with this end clearly in sight. Organizational behavior subjects are significant in this process. Among the topics related to organizational behavior leadership has a key role. It is important making construction project managers conscious of their leadership identity from the beginning of their education. It is obvious that construction project managers having necessary leadership skills have a better performance during construction process.

On the other hand, although design offices are part of the construction process, they are not addressed in construction project management education. Especially with the growing number of employees in architectural offices, an efficient and effective working environment will be possible with effective

management and leadership approaches. In this context, it is important to provide necessary options of leadership and organizational qualifications are important for an effective design process.

The results show clearly that courses covering organizational issues appear to be inadequate. Construction project management graduation programs have not necessary courses related to basic theories and concepts of management and organizational behavior. Curriculums of these programs have not courses related to creating team spirit and harmony between the teams, also. It is important for a successful project management process; managers in the area have necessary qualifications from the beginning of their education. Graduate curriculum should cover necessary satisfactorily headlines on the organizational behavior and human relationship subjects. The positive process here not only through the level of personal career development of construction project managers, but also affect the quality of the construction project.

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