Construction Women Leaders

Final Research Report

Authors:

Prof Dilanthi Amaratunga

Dr Richard Haigh

Kanchana Ginige

Nirooja Thurairajah

Executive Summary

This report examines the role of women as leaders and the barriers confronting women in leadership positions in the construction industry, with particular emphasis on the North West of England. The outcomes are based on a 12 month project which was partly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) under Policy Field 5, which is 'Improving the role of women in the labour market', and Measure 1, which is 'Research into gender discrimination in employment such as recruitment, pay, segregation, and progression discrimination against women'. A research team from the School of the Built Environment, University of Salford carried out a comprehensive literature review and conducted case studies that included interviews and a document review. The studies were carried out in the construction industry and other sectors such as the health sector and academia. The team identified several barriers confronting women leaders and examined the culture and practices within the construction sector. Further the team identified the other sectors where women are leaders in order to capture the lessons to be learnt from them and to provide recommendations to address the barriers for women's career advancement and to improve their retention within managerial positions in the construction industry.

The study identified several strategic leadership skills which need to be highlighted when providing career progression training for employees who work in managerial positions. Skills such as team working, communication, inter personal management, multi tasking, organising and prioritising, negotiation, listening, delegation, time management and the ability to stand on your ground without feeling intimidated in aggressive situations. In addition it highlights the need for a broader understanding of work and people with different responsibilities. The research provided the following recommendations and good practice guidelines for organisations and women leaders, to address the barriers confronting women leaders in the construction industry.

Improve the family and work life balance

- Develop a flexible working policy to encourage females to continue their working career during critical periods which may include,
  - Part time working, which allows them to work less than the standard full time hours and offers different options
  - Flexitime, which allows employees within agreed limits to vary their start and finish times and lunch breaks
  - Compressed working week, which allows them to carry out a full time job in less than five working days per week
- Allow them to work from home at times when they really need to be at home and spend time on family responsibilities
- Allow unpaid parental leave to employees who have a child or adopt a child until the child is a certain age
- Encourage employees to have mentors or provide mentoring. Mentors could provide guidance and advice on personal and work related issues to employees and advise them on their career development
- Personally, employees can plan their work and family activities well in advance and build good communication between family members in relation to their family and work responsibilities

Develop career break schemes and improve child care facilities

- In addition to the judicial requirements employers could provide better maternity policies which may include,
  - Allowing employees to work from home, visiting the office on a few occasions to become familiarised with the current organisational practices and changes
  - Providing support systems such as a laptop with connections to the internet and with limited access to the office network to work from home
  - Developing a flexible working policy in order to encourage them to return to work when they are ready to without taking a longer career break due to early child rearing responsibilities. This may include part time working, flexitime, flexible working hours
- Provide workshops for superiors and subordinates to improve mutual understanding and to create a more cooperative working environment
- Provide childcare facilities near to the work place which should operate extended opening times to assist employees who need to work longer hours, rather than opening for very limited hours which do not help to overcome the difficulties in both personal and organisational aspects

Promote self development

- Encourage female students to get involved in extra curricular activities from their school life to develop the ability to hold leadership positions
- Conduct training programmes to develop leadership skills allowing them to be effective in their roles and to develop the other employees
- Provide a better employer support structure to encourage women to develop their career further in the management field
- Provide mentoring to all employees or grant additional benefits to employees to facilitate their accessibility to mentoring service

- Conduct training programmes to allow employees to become familiarised with the current organisational practices and developments and provide induction programmes to new employees or to employees who return to work after their career break
- Provide special training programmes to encourage employees to persevere in developing their careers and improve their confidence

Improve the working environment

- Set up monitoring committees to consider gender issues arising from harassment, bullying and grievances cases
- Provide better mentoring facilities and support by employers to those employees who suffer from harassment
- Organisations should recognise the obligations under Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act and relevant Equal Opportunity Policies and legislation and ensure it's compliance within the organisation
- Provide training which will enhance the understanding for the need for an equal opportunities programme

Improve recruitment and advancement policies

- Recruitment policy must be established to ensure that the selection criteria and its policies and procedures are maintained to treat individuals solely on the basis of the merits and abilities which are appropriate to the job and it must avoid any stereotyping of roles. Most importantly organisations should avoid recruitment solely by word of mouth or through recommendations of existing employees to avoid unlawful activities
- Training and development programmes should be circulated widely to employees and should be monitored for any imbalances for corrective actions irrespective of gender difference
- All employees should be provided with career guidance
- Access to advancement opportunities should be made available to suitable employees irrespective of gender or marital status
- Organisation should employ individuals to plan and monitor human resource management policies. These individual should be open minded and be able to recognise gender discrimination, develop better understanding of employee status and encourage empowerment of employees

Promote different organisational working practices

- Allow a compressed working week with a specific timeline to ensure an effective completion of tasks
- In critical situations allow job sharing where applicable, which is a full time job shared by two or more employees where salary and benefits are also shared
- Allow a flexible working policy which may include flexible working hours and home working with delegated responsibility of work to employees
- Develop a better understanding between employees and senior management to accept and overcome the difficulty of sharing more time at work place
- Conduct workshops for employees to explain different arrangements in managing their responsibilities with the help of family members

Contents

1   Background to the Project

This report presents the findings of Constructing Women Leaders (CWL), a 12 month research project that was partially funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) under Policy Field 5 and Measure 1. This research aimed to study the underlying reasons for the scarcity of women in leadership positions in the construction industry, and to discover ways to improve the current position of women leaders in construction, with a particular emphasis on the North West of England.

The project has direct links with a previous ESF project titled "Construction and Women" undertaken by the Research Institute for the Built and Human Environment and was proposed based on the recommendations of its work. The recommendations of "Construction and Women" to overcome the barriers for women in construction and to attract more women in to the industry, were briefly, as follows.

- Improve work life balance through:
  - Allowing flexible working hours based on the magnitude of the family responsibilities women have
  - Developing 'career break' schemes.
- Enhance women's psychology by:
  - Promoting 'can do' and 'can win' attitudes among women
  - Promoting role models
  - Appreciating and promoting women's achievements.
- Overcome the problem of poor industry image by:
  - Organising positive image campaigns
  - Inviting construction women role models to schools
  - Organising workshops for women on how to work successfully in a male dominated industry.
- Enhance career knowledge among women through:
  - Education at the very early age to improve awareness and understanding of the industry
  - Advising parents, teachers and careers advisors
  - Training events for professional careers advisors to educate them regarding career opportunities available for women in construction
  - Implementing Equal Opportunities recruitment procedures in order to recruit the skilled women workforce into construction
  - Raising awareness of the construction industry among general public.
- Improving physical environment of construction sites through:
  - Providing separate facilities for women on site
  - Providing uniforms that are appropriate for females
  - Monitoring attitudes and behaviour of co-workers towards female professionals
  - Allocating more than one woman for site based jobs.
- Implementing initiatives such as:
  - Promoting mentoring and develop networking among the construction female professionals
  - Publicising the purpose of the initiatives taken by various benefactors
  - Circulating information related to the initiatives available for professional women, across the Human Resource (HR) management departments of construction organisations, schools and careers advisors.

1.1   Objectives

Construction in the North West is expanding and it is one of the region's largest industries and fundamental to all other economic activity. However, a scarcity of women in leadership positions in construction has persisted despite their increasing numbers in construction training. The lack of women leaders in construction has been a concern for many years, attracting government and industry wide attention. The issue has been made more prominent recently due to the potential managerial skills shortage facing the industry.

Accordingly, this research attempted to:

1. Understand the role of women as leaders in construction in the North West in terms of
   - Their duties and their job satisfaction
   - Their leadership styles and their personal attributes
   - Acceptance of their leadership by others and their ability
   - Significance of their role
     - Number of women leaders
     - Extent of their contribution
     - Positions or levels in the organisational hierarchy
2. Understand the barriers confronting women in leadership positions in the construction Industry in terms of their personal and organisational dimensions
3. Identify potential remedies for overcoming these barriers
   Examine the experiences of women leaders from other sectors and the initiatives undertaken to overcome these challenges
4. Provide recommendations and good practice guidelines to address the barriers (including the identification of strategic leadership skills)

In order to achieve the objectives, the project focused on female leaders in managerial positions because they are the leaders who have power and authority to bring change into organisations.

1.2   Methodology

Literature on leadership styles, the current status of women in leadership positions in the construction industry, and the barriers confronting women leaders, was critically examined. The study aimed to identify relevant issues and current practices, and to provide context to the research team's findings. The literature review was also used to examine the status of women leaders in the other sectors, especially in the education and health sectors, including a comparison of the cultural attributes of different sectors, with that of construction.

Case studies were selected as the most appropriate research strategy for this study because they provide an opportunity for studying real-life phenomenon in detail, without any control over the phenomenon. Yin (2003) defines case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between both are not clearly evident. A case study is strong in elaborating a real-life context because it is a very detailed research enquiry into a powerful, single example of a social process, organisation or collectivity seen as a social unit in its own right, and as a holistic entity and not into a sample of one (Payne and Payne 2004).

Four female leaders representing different disciplines of the construction industry were selected as the four main cases in order to study the role of women leaders in construction and the barriers confronting them. A detailed study was carried out on their careers, career progression, their leadership styles and ability, and the barriers faced by them. Views regarding the selected leaders' leadership and the barriers encountered by her

were also obtained from their superiors, peers and subordinates. Another set of four case studies representing two from each sector was carried out to study the roles and issues of women leaders in the education and health sectors. The unit of analysis, the central concept in connection with understanding, preparing and implementing a case study (Yin 2003) for both sets of case studies was determined as the female leader because conclusions were drawn from them at the end of the study. Semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire and documentary analysis were used for data collection.

A number of questions relating to respondents' career details, career progression, their leadership styles and ability, and the barriers confronted, needed to be answered. To answer these questions, a series of interviews were conducted. Interviews were chosen due to their appropriateness, 'for capturing the experiences and meanings of the subjects in the everyday world', and as they allow subjects to convey to others their own situation, from their own perspective, and in their own words (Kvale 1996). The type of interviews used was semi-structured because they allow for the collection of both structured information and people's views and opinions, allowing spontaneity in the interviewer's questioning and the interviewee's response (Moore 2000). The process of constructing and using qualitative research interviews can be split into four steps: defining the research questions; creating the interview guide; recruiting participants; and, carrying out the interviews (King 2005).

Qualitative research interviews generally use an interview guide, listing topics which the interviewer should attempt to cover in the course of the interview, and suggesting probes which may be used to follow up responses and elicit greater detail from participants (King 2005). Different interview guidelines were formulated in this research to obtain details from the women leaders, their superior and subordinates, and their peer employees.

In addition to the interviews, the Personal Attribute Questionnaire-PAQ (Vinnicombe and Singh 2002; Fagenson 1990; Twenge 1997) which was developed by J.T. Spence, R. Helmreich and J. Stapp in 1974 was used in order to assess the personal characteristics of leaders. The PAQ was specifically selected for this study because it is a self reported questionnaire, which was an important factor in obtaining a set of data that might be extremely personal and sensitive to the respondents. There are twenty-four items in this questionnaire, each measuring a single personality characteristic. There are eight questions on socially desirable instrumental traits generally associated with males, eight questions on expressive traits known to be associated with females, and the remaining on androgynous traits, the characteristics of combined male and female qualities. All these items are presented in a five-point bi-polar format with a masculine label at one end and a feminine label at the other (Vinnicombe and Singh 2002). The questionnaire was given to all four female leaders and they were each asked to rate their personal attributes according to their own perceptions.

The analysis of the interview responses of this research followed the process outlined by Hall and Hall (1996): "qualitative analysis involves three activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing". The first stage was a process of selecting, focussing, and simplifying the interview transcripts. Before starting the analysis, all the interviews were converted into text; thus, the transcripts of the interviews will be made ready for analysis. A transcript is the mere text which is used to identify data consisting of words which have become recorded without the intervention of the researcher through an interview. The data reduction will be done by reading through the transcripts and extracting the most relevant data for all of the questions listed in the interview guidelines, and any additional questions that were raised during the interview. This process identifies a number of issues under the major themes of the project. Hall and Hall (1996) noted it would be simpler to concentrate solely on these themes; however, it was determined that at this stage, each question would be considered to ensure that nothing was excluded.

The second stage in the interview analysis process was the data display. This was done by producing a data matrix. A data matrix is produced by tabulating the interview data; the respondents were listed as columns and the questions as rows. This system makes it easy to identify patterns in the responses. The matrix was also useful as a reference tool when providing recommendations, as it is simple to refer back to respondents that noted such issues, and to extract quotations.

The final stage of analysing interviews was to display the data and draw conclusions. The analysed data were broken into relevant themes rather than a detailed account of each question, which would make the section very lengthy and unstructured.

The analysis of the questionnaires was carried out according to the method which was presented by the scholars who have used PAQ in their research. The respondents, female leaders, were asked to indicate the extent to which they possess each of the eight masculine characteristics, each of the eight feminine characteristics and each of the eight androgyny characteristics on the five-point bipolar scale. Scores ranged from a low score of 1 to a high score of 5 on each of the attributes. The scores on each set of attributes was calculated by adding the scores on each item, of a particular set together and dividing by eight. The highest average among the above three, decides whether the leaders are masculine, feminine or androgynous in terms of their personal attributes. The confidentiality of the results was highly assured to the respondents and was maintained during the analysis due to the sensitivity of the information.

Additionally, organisational charts, employment records and other relevant documents from the respondents' organisations were studied in order to understand their positions within the organisational hierarchy; their duties, roles and total number of females employed.

2   Construction and women leaders

2.1 Women in the construction workforce

A recent CITB report (2003) revealed that women still constitute only 9% of the construction workforce. The true position of women in construction can be seen only when this figure is further broken down. 84% of women in construction hold secretarial posts, whereas only 10% are employed in a professional capacity, and the remaining 6% are craft and trade level employees. Another survey carried out on the UK construction industry shows that the ratio between male and female management staff is 94%:6% (Greed 2000). Further, in the "managerial and administrative category" in the construction industry, women are concentrated in specialist positions (including personnel and public relations) rather than mainstream management (Fielden et al. 2000).

According to Vinnicombe and Singh (2002), senior women are rare in many male dominated companies, so that many women managers have few role models. More feminine ways of managing may be included in the acceptable behaviours for future senior roles by female role models in the organisations (Kanter 1977; Burke and McKeen 1996). When women in managerial positions are disproportionate in organisations, they become more vulnerable because they are in a minority (Cortis and Cassar 2004). Increased access of minorities has been identified as an effective way of changing the existing culture of the construction industry, in order to overcome its various problems, including lack of women, as acknowledged by many construction professionals (Greed 2000). Improving women's participation in leadership roles will enhance the rights, freedom and opportunities of women (Schein 2007) in the industry.

2.2 Leadership and Management

Leadership can be defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse 2004). Leadership and management are represented as similar concepts by many authors. Cunningham (1986 cited Sadler 2003) identifies three different viewpoints on the relationship between management and leadership.

I. Leadership is one competence among a range required for an effective management

II. Leadership and management are two separate concepts but related

III. Leadership and management have a partial overlap

Ellyard (2001) creates a distinction between managers and leaders by arguing that managers and leaders have a different kind of vision and ask different questions about the future. He believes managers respond to change and problems, while leaders envision, create and shape change. He asserts that mangers are concerned to do the thing right, while leaders focus on doing the right thing and managers work in the organisations, while leaders work on the organisation. Kotter (1990) argues that their functions are distinct; the overriding function of management is to provide order and consistency to organisations, whereas the primary function of leadership is to produce change and movement.

Despite these differences, leadership is a process that shares numerous similarities with management. Leadership and management both involve influence, require working with people, and are concerned with effective goal accomplishment (Northouse 2004). Similarly, management and leadership are essential if an organisation is to prosper Kotter (1990). However, it has also been noted that the outcomes of an organisation could be stifling and bureaucratic, if it has strong management without leadership. Competent management and skilled leadership are needed for organisations to be effective.
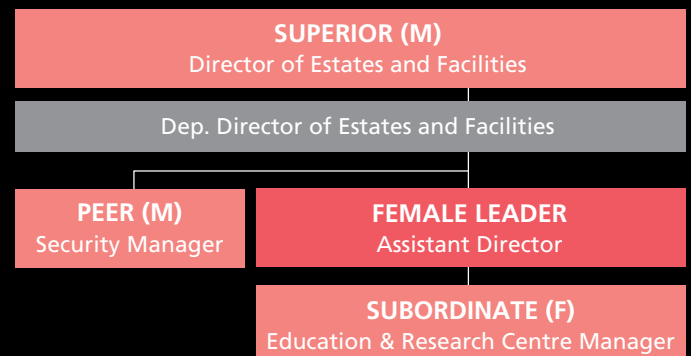
Case study of Alice

Designation and organisational details: Alice is the Assistant Director of Estates and Facilities Division, of a public body attached to a university hospital in the North West of England. Her division looks after the management of estates, property, facilities and construction projects of the hospital and she is responsible for a team of monitoring managers, who are in charge of the sub divisions. These responsibilities direct her to deal extensively with different teams and become involved in mediation and arbitration related to various issues in construction projects and delivery of other services.

Age: 51 years

Family and childhood background: Alice is married and a mother of two children. Both children live with her and they are still studying. Her husband is employed in a construction related trade. Both her parents were employed but not in construction related occupations. She was sporting during her younger days and had leadership experiences through captaincy of many sports teams and as a prefect during her school days.

Career background: Alice joined the organisation seven years ago as the Estates and Facilities Monitoring Manager. Before joining her current organisation she worked in the catering industry for several years.

Educational and professional background: Alice holds a Higher National Diploma in Catering. After moving to this organisation, she has completed a MSc related to Construction Management.

| SUPERIOR (M) |
| Director of Estates and Facilities |

| Dep. Director of Estates and Facilities |

| PEER (M) | FEMALE LEADER |
| Security Manager | Assistant Director |

| SUBORDINATE (F) |
| Education & Research Centre Manager |

(M) - Male **(F)** - Female

Case study of Benita

Designation and organisational details: Benita is the Financial Director of the UK's northern wing of an international construction company. This company is a major business, which delivers a wide range of construction products in both buildings and infrastructure. It is mainly based in the UK, with several other hubs in various countries around the world. Her main responsibility is built around managing company accounts. All finance related issues of the company, including the accounts for their construction contracts, are handled by her subordinates.
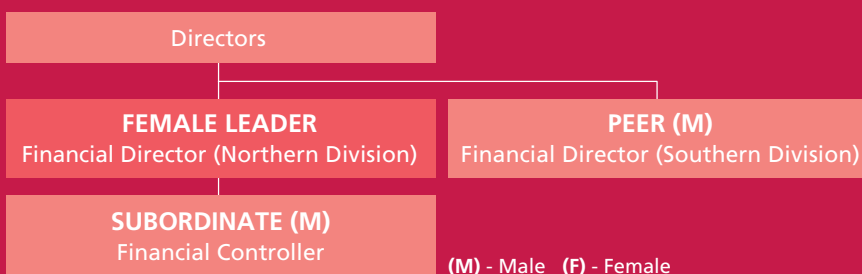
Age: 35 years

Family and childhood background: Benita is the youngest of her family. Her father was employed and a mother was a housewife. She didn't have any additional responsibilities in her childhood but she was highly involved in extra curricular activities during her school days and at university. She is single and expecting her first child.

Career background: Benita was in the financial sector from the beginning of her career and has worked as the Financial Director for her current employer since she joined the organisation two and a half years ago.

Educational and professional background: Benita's first degree is in Mathematics. She is professionally qualified as a Chartered Accountant.

Organisational structure and positioning of interviewees:

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │    Directors    │
                    └────────┬────────┘
              ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
   ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │   FEMALE LEADER       │      │        PEER (M)          │
   │ Financial Director    │      │ Financial Director       │
   │ (Northern Division)   │      │ (Southern Division)      │
   └──────────┬────────────┘      └──────────────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────────┐
   │   SUBORDINATE (M)     │
   │ Financial Controller  │
   └──────────────────────┘
```

(M) - Male   **(F)** - Female

2.3   Leadership styles

The behaviour pattern of leaders may vary from one individual to another in their process of influencing others. Leadership style refers to the behaviour pattern of a leader or to the ways they adopt to execute their functions. Leadership style is regularly conceptualised as consisting of two independent dimensions, such as: initiating structure and consideration; task oriented behaviour and relationship oriented behaviour; and, concern for production and concern for people (Park 1996).Different approaches for leadership style have been demonstrated: trait approach; skill approach; style approach; situational approach; contingency theory, etc. (Northouse 2004).

In the modern era, it can be seen that leadership is categorised into various styles under two major classes: transactional and transformational. These transactional and transformational styles of leadership are supported by motivation theories (Bass et al. 1996) since leadership creates the environment in which people are motivated to produce and move in the direction of the leader (Horner 1997). Corrective style ('do what I tell you') and authoritative style ('come with me') fall under the transactional style, whereas affiliative style ('people come first'), democratic style ('what do you think'), pacesetting style ('do as I do, now') and coaching style ('try this') fall under the transformational leadership style (Goleman 2000). Transformational leaders can initiate and cope with change, and they can create something new out of the old, while transactional leaders, by contrast, represent efficient managers who can focus on the task at hand, communicate clear expectations to their subordinates, solve immediate problems, and reward performance (Thurairajah et al. 2007). In addition to these two styles, a third type of leader known as Laissez-faire has emerged in more recent leadership research. This type of leader tends to lead by staying out of the way or by adopting a style of leadership that is sometimes characterized as passive-avoidant, management by exception, or administrative (Tatum et al. 2003).

2.4   Women as leaders

Helgesin (1990) argues that women's central involvement in managing households, raising children and juggling careers gives them a capacity for prioritisation in a leadership role that men typically do not possess. Griggs (1989 cited Oshagbemi and Gill 2003) lists some characteristics considered to be feminine that help to differentiate the ways males and females lead:

- Uses consensus decision making
- Views power in relation terms as something to be shared
- Encourages productive approaches to conflict
- Builds supportive working environments
- Promotes diversity in the work place

It has been found that female leadership tends towards a style defined as 'interactive leadership' and women adopt more democratic and participative leadership styles, (Rosener 1990; Trinidad and Normore 2005) that involve: encouraging participation; sharing power and information; enhancing self-worth; changing self interests for an overall good; relating power to interpersonal skills; and believing in better performance when feeling good. Women are shown as better in performing transformational leadership.

Most of the women leaders in the case studies of construction perceived themselves as democratic leaders. They believed that they have to be more supportive and understanding in leading, as women. Further, most of them were highly confident and satisfied with their leadership role and the contribution they make towards their organisations. The majority of the leaders' superiors, peers and subordinates agreed that women leaders do not have any problems with their leadership ability. Irrespective of their gender, they believed that women have advantageous qualities and skills to perform leadership roles, such as more effective communication styles. In contrast to the other leaders, Dana possessed a negative attitude about her leadership ability and the acceptance and recognition she receives from her site working environment. This example suggests that women find more difficulties in influencing others to get work done in the work sites. However, the case study findings in the construction sector exhibited that the extent of authority which comes with the position of women leaders in organisation has a significant impact on the acceptance and the recognition they receive.

Appelbaum et al. (2003) emphasise that women's leadership style is typically different from men's but leadership is not the exclusive domain of either gender and both can learn and adopt from the other. Since modern organisations are in a need of effective management, which requires a balance of feminine and masculine traits, androgynous leaders, who are capable of combining the best of female and male leadership qualities may be the most effective leaders irrespective of gender (Pounder and Coleman 2002). Scandura and Ragins (1993) suggest that instrumentality and androgyny may be related to successful performance outcomes for women in male dominated fields.

Although feminine characteristics are the most commonly associated qualities with women, Korabik (1990) found that women in leadership positions were higher in masculinity than the general population. It is suggested that as women move up the corporate ladder, their identification with the male model of managerial success becomes evident and some of the women mangers consequently reject even the few managerial feminine traits they may have earlier endorsed, especially in male-dominated environments (Grant 1988) However, this was not proved through the case study findings on women leaders in construction. A close relationship between the self-perceived personal attributes and the nature of the leaders' careers could be seen through the questionnaire findings, which showed Benita, whose self-perceived personal attributes were more masculine, had a similar career to a male leader because she had fewer family commitments, with no childcare responsibilities and no career breaks as yet.
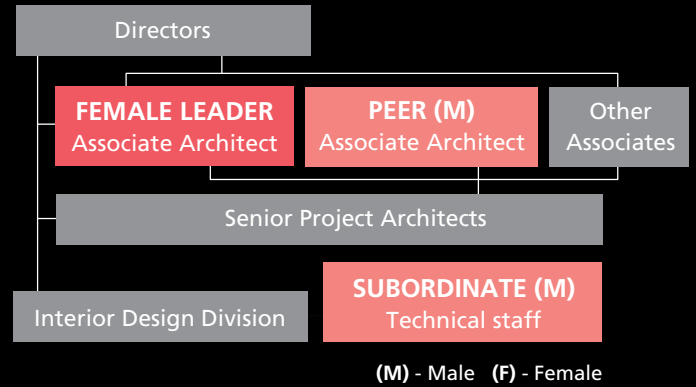
Case study of Cathy

Designation and organisational details: Cathy is an Associate Architect in an architectural design firm in the North of England. This company has delivered its architectural services to various sectors such as housing, industrial, commercial and health for more than a hundred years. Her responsibilities range across a broad spectrum, i.e. design to contract administration. She has to deal not only with her subordinates of project architects, designers and technical staff as a leader but with clients and building contractors as well.

Age: 51 years

Family and childhood background: Cathy is married with two young children and expecting her third child. Her husband is employed in a construction related profession, which is very similar to her own discipline of work. Both her parents were employed but not in the construction industry. As the eldest of her family, she had some responsibilities during her childhood, including looking after the younger members of the family. She was not engaged in any team sports when she was young but had performed some leadership roles through being a group representative and a member of various committees during her school days.

Career background: Since graduating from university Cathy has always had a job related to architecture. She joined her current organisation ten years ago as an architectural assistant. After ten years of tenure with her current employer, she has reached a position of Associate, and is the first woman to achieve that level in the company's history.

Educational and professional background: Cathy holds an honours degree and a postgraduate diploma in architecture. She is a member of the Royal Institution of British Architects.

(M) - Male   **(F)** - Female

Case study of Dana

Dana works as a Site Quantity Surveyor on a construction site, which is located in Manchester. Her employer is a large, internationally reputed construction company. She is mainly responsible for sub contractor payments, variations and assessment of site preliminaries. She does not have direct subordinates according to the organisational hierarchy, but she has to get some work done through the assistant site quantity surveyor and influence sub contractors and site workers in certain circumstances.

Age: 35 years

Family and childhood background: Dana is a mother of four children. Her eldest child is employed and the other three are still at school. Her husband is employed but not in the construction sector. She is the only child of a family where both parents were employed and she did not have any additional responsibilities as a child. She was not particularly interested in extra curricular activities during her school days.

Career background: Dana has worked in different sectors before moving into construction as a Quantity Surveyor about five years ago. Her earlier roles were primarily in administrative positions. One and a half years ago she joined her current employer as an Assistant Quantity Surveyor.

Educational and professional background: Dana holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in literature and has recently completed her degree in Quantity Surveying.

Organisational structure and positioning of interviewees:
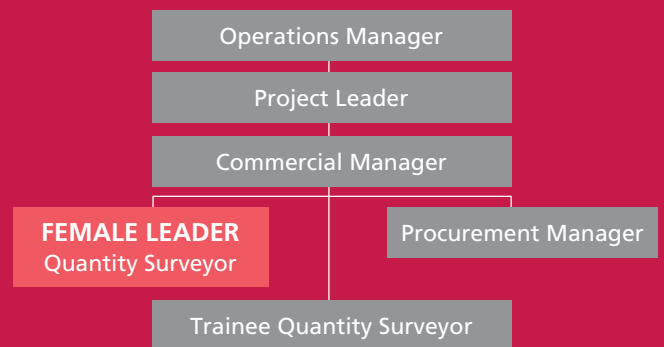
2.5 Determiners of leadership styles in construction

According to Oshagbemi and Gill (2003) especially, the issues about the gender of leaders cannot be fully understood without reference to organisational culture. Not only culture but socialization within the society and the workplace, nature and demographics of an organisation, and gender and gender ratio of the industry also influence leadership styles (Pounder and Coleman 2002). However, according to different research views regarding leadership traits and gender, women's style is more effective within the context of team based organisations that are more prevalent today due to their personal traits (Pounder and Coleman 2002; Appelbaum et al. 2003).

Table 1 shows a comparison of the cultural attributes of different sectors. As indicated in the report, Construction and Women (Amaratunga et al. 2006), the culture of the construction is openly masculine and the male values of the industry are exemplified by long working hours, working away from home, geographical instability and a highly competitive culture. When considering leadership styles in the construction industry, the masculine culture and its unique characteristics such as project characteristics, contractual arrangements, project life cycle and environmental factors can have a significant impact (Shanmugam et al. 2006)

Table 1: Comparison of cultures in different sectors

Sector	Masculine values	Male dominated	Management Male dominated	Occupational segregation
	Cultural Attributes			
Transport and logistics	X	X	X	
IT/Computer	X	X	X	
Oil Industry	X	X	X	
Manufacturing	X	X	X	X
Agriculture	X			
MARKETING	X		X	X
Financial sector			X	X
Leisure Management	X	X	X	
Retail industry	X		X	X
Education				X
Health			X	X
Construction, Surveying and Project Management	X	X	X	X

Since construction is a project-based industry, it creates temporary multi organisations with extensive team work that have a significant impact on the leadership behaviour of managers. Cleland (1995) argues that project leadership should be appropriate to the project situation because leadership is a continuous and flexible process. Naum (2001) states that large capital investment projects coupled with the high complexity of decision issues can require different styles of leadership, and he admits that 'a participative style of leadership with bureaucratic organization is expected to be more appropriate than a directive style'. In contrast, Nicholas (1990) suggests that a less participating, more directive style might be more appropriate when there is less time and high pressure to complete the work. The study by Bresnen et al. (1986) shows that task-oriented forms of leader behaviour are more appropriate where subcontract labour forms the bulk of the workplace.

In summary, there may be different styles of leadership required at different stages of the construction process because construction has multiple phases with different characteristics and dynamics.

"..leadership style depends on what you are dealing with and the individual. Some people respond well to pressure and some are not."

(Benita - Financial Director, Aged 35)

3 Women leaders and their challenges

Women's under representation in the construction industry has been a concern for many years. However, a recent study (Amaratunga et al. 2006) has brought forward the need for research into developing women leaders in construction. Further a previous study found that the presence of women in leadership positions can assist the improvement of women's representation within the construction industry (Still 1994). This study has identified many barriers faced by women in leadership positions based on case studies and a survey of the literature. Further the study captures the experiences of women leaders from other sectors and their initiatives in overcoming the problems in order to provide recommendations to the construction industry.

3.1 Family and work commitments

Although many women and men want a successful career and a happy family it has been a difficult task for them to find the balance between work and family commitments. Since, generally, women perform a large share of household tasks, this has been found to be a major barrier to women's career development. Moreover the construction industry fails to consider some of the issues associated with women's obligations towards job and family life (Watts, 2007). Since construction organisations tend to treat family and work as completely different aspects, women often highlight the task of balancing the multiple commitments as a barrier to their career development in the industry (Fielden et al. 2000). Previous research found that females have been socialised to subordinate their careers in favour of their families (Fagenson and Jackson, 1993).

The case studies showed that women in leadership positions who have families are confronted with more difficulties in balancing their family and work commitments. This was clearly indicated when the female leader Benita who does not have family responsibilities or any dependents didn't consider the task of balancing her commitments as a barrier to her career. However, Benita acknowledged the difficulty of balancing work and family commitments for women leaders. This indicates the priority for addressing the difficulties faced by females who are in leadership positions and who have families in order to reduce their stress and support their careers.

3.2 Childcare problems and career breaks

The majority of the burden of child rearing is still placed on mothers, imposing additional responsibility to a career woman that is often not faced by a man. Female leaders from this study have stated that they have faced difficulties with regard to childcare. It has been noticed that the importance which women place on childcare and the adequacy of facilities for this have had an effect on women's careers. Bullock (1994) states that women's late entry into middle management hinders their promotion and this results in under-representation of women in senior management.

One of the female leaders, Cathy, has taken maternity leave twice and she feels that this has affected her career. However her commitment towards work through working from home and making few visits to the work place during the break helped her to progress to a higher level. Further, Cathy mentioned that women's commitment is very important in order to continue their careers. The understanding between the employer and female employees also has a significant effect on career continuity.

Although, generally, women take on a larger share of child rearing activities, one of the subordinates of the female leader Benita said that it is a problem for men also, as nowadays men also take the responsibility of childcare. However he stressed the importance of improving childcare facilities to facilitate both men and women progressing in their careers.

> ## "If I'd chosen not to have children, I would have been an Associate probably about 4-5 years before. As far as my employer is concerned I didn't have as much time to commit. I had distractions by having children and I was not here because of maternity leave."

(Cathy - Associate Architect, Aged 38)

Other Sectors

Previous studies found that women frequently work on a part time basis in order to combine their domestic commitments with paid employment in health service (Lane, 1998). However this research found that the focus group of nurses was actively excluded from management grades through the process of occupational downgrading after their maternity leave. The difficulty that women have in combining their paid work with primary responsibility for dependant care is interpreted by some as a lack of women's commitment to paid work, rather than a problem with the way work is structured (The State Services Commission, 2000).

Within the study on the health sector, female leaders pointed out the significance of planning their obligations well with other members within their house to overcome the challenges. Further female leaders recognised the importance of support from family members and especially from the employers during critical periods and unexpected events. In addition the flexibility in the educational sector where the employee is not always tied to specific hours of work acts as a solution to the above problem. Within the health and educational sectors, the provision of home working, flexible working policies and support from employers are considered as a great support to women to continue their career successfully. Within these sectors, although women leaders consider their career break as a hindering factor to their career, the provision of better structured maternity policies within the organisations makes them more flexible and strengthens their interest to continue their career with courage and confidence.

3.3 Organisational culture and attitudinal barriers

The construction industry, after mining and quarrying, is renowned for its male dominated culture. Organisational culture in construction is essentially gender biased since men have represented the majority of the organisational workforce from the times when both organisation and management systems were formed. Ragins et al. (1998) cite corporate culture as the primary barrier to women's advancement to upper management and the women they surveyed described the environment as inhospitable and exclusionary. According to Powell et al. (2006), engineering in the UK has a popular image of being tough, heavy and dirty, and these powerful cultural images have helped reproduce occupational segregation whereby engineering is perceived as unsuitable for women.

One of the female leaders Daisy who works on a construction site considers the construction site as a significant barrier to women's advancement and also as a factor that reduces their satisfaction in work. While explaining her experience she said that it is so male dominated compared to her earlier job, which was an administrative role in the education sector. Daisy further explained that they feel they are quite segregated in construction. However the female leader Benita who comes from a different discipline has not felt any difference with regard to the culture in her work division, though she is from a construction company.

Women are given the tasks that are intended to "test" their ability to work in male environments (Fielden et al. 2000). This is a challenge especially to those who are interested in developing their career in construction (Fielden et al, 2001). Previous research found that, refusal to carry out such tasks led to women being accused of incompetence and seen as a legitimate target for further harassment. In certain instances this becomes a black mark against their future offers and poor performance in these tasks led to reinforcing gender stereotypes and to jeopardising their chances of acceptance for promotion.

The prevalence of gender stereotyping and the incidence of sexual harassment also remain as major threats to women especially for their career development. Feldman (1999) explains gender as one's sense of maleness or femaleness which is culturally determined by a society's perceptions of the role which men and women are expected to perform. Gender stereotyping is shaped by the expectations and generalised judgements about members of a society based on their membership of specific group. Stereotyping can have an influence on the way in which men and women are perceived in the workplace. Within this study the female leader Daisy who works on the construction site has experienced this barrier. Despite the advent of women into both the workforce and management, the introduction of anti-discrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action laws, there has been little fundamental change to the underlying culture (Still, 1994). Further, a gendered substructure dominates work activities with men making the decisions and women helping to carry them out (Symons, 1992). Further the use of stereotypes as the basis for assessment can result in dissatisfaction in work. In addition to above, women face problems when they give instructions to get work done.

Within the study, Cathy the leader who works in a consultancy firm and generally does not face this problem, has experienced this when she visited a construction site where a technician has challenged her leadership because she was a woman. However her courage and confidence in her leadership helped to the work to continue without any intimidation. Interestingly, a peer employee of the female leader from an architectural practice said that women often possess greater language skills, better negotiation skills and adopt a friendlier and a more caring approach. Further, he said that all of which should be seen as positive attributes and engender respect and cooperation from colleagues. This indicates the acceptance of women in leadership positions and the recognition of women as leaders in the industry though other barriers prevail in the same place. However, the extent of this acceptance and recognition needs to be addressed to develop more women leaders in the industry.

In many instances the male senior executives and professionals have many shared experiences called "old boys network" (Appelbaum et al. 2003). The "old boys network" is found to be a common barrier in the construction industry, since it is a male dominated industry. Studies found that women do not fit easily into this atmosphere, except in appendage roles (Still, 1994). According to Fielden et al. (2001), construction organisations attempt to recruit prominently male networks, being unaware of the implications of such methods in terms of Equal Opportunities. Among the respondents, the female leaders Cathy and Daisy who are from construction professions have faced problems with the "old boys network".

It was found that when women attend meetings or events where there are no other women or very few women they find it uncomfortable which sometimes leads to a lesser contribution towards decision making. This feeling of isolation may ultimately affect their advancement opportunities.

Culture is an important factor which has a great influence on the success of women leaders within any sectors. Miller (2004) explains the dominant or hegemonic, masculinity in the oil industry through three major themes or processes: everyday communications based on shared masculine interests which omit women from power; individualistic competition is combined with a dominant engineering occupational culture effectively to support the division of work by gender; and gendered interactions and occupations are embedded in a consciousness derived from the powerful symbols of the frontier myth and romanticised cowboy hero. Although women denied the salience of gender, they also used strategies to avoid sex stereotyping by not showing emotion, masking sexuality by dressing carefully in the oil industry (Miller, 2004). Some studies suggest that restructuring is associated with heightened barriers for women (Collinson and Collinson, 1997); data from the study by Simpson and Holley (2001) presents a different picture. They said perception of career barriers changed after restructuring and this was particularly the case with attitudinal barriers, such as prejudice of colleagues and sex discrimination, where proportions identifying these barriers fell after restructuring. Further the scale of restructuring influenced the experience of some barriers, so that in each case large-scale restructuring was associated with reduced career barriers (Simpson and Holley, 2001). In order to compare the barriers faced by females within construction and other sectors, table 3 tabulates the barriers from the literature.

Within the educational and health organisations considered in the study it is evident that Equal Opportunities policy is properly implemented and it was pointed out that human resource practitioners are broad minded and very fair in recruiting or providing promotions. Although it is not widely noted within the sectors, in some instances women leaders have faced with attitudinal barrier while giving instructions to their employees in health sectors. Within a profession highly represented by females, some male employees were not prepared to accept female leaders' instructions simply because they are women. Within the educational sector different policies like 'Code of practice for dealing with harassment and bullying' and 'Gender Equality Duty' are leading the way in reducing some of the above problems which can be seen from the number of females entering the management roles compared to earlier times.

"… in construction there are probably more hurdles to cross and barriers. Due to the nature of the people who work in the industry and possibly the more senior members of the staff who have been working in the industry for a long time, they are less accepting of women because they come from a different society where women are less visible." (Male subordinate of Benita – Financial Controller, Aged 34)

"… haven't felt any difficulties with the organisational culture, not particularly within this organisation. With the contacts which I have outside of work, sometimes I've come across some old school people. I once met a technician who disrespected me, saying I am a woman." (Cathy - Associate Architect, Aged 38)

Case studies of education and health sectors

With the aim of capturing the lessons to be learned from the other sectors in order to provide recommendations to address the barriers for women's career advancement and improve their retention in managerial positions in the construction industry, the role of women as leaders in sectors where women are more successful in their career progression such as education and health was studied.

Case study of Patricia

Designation and organisational details: Patricia is an Associate Dean of a leading university in the North West of England. She is in one of the highest positions in the organisational hierarchy. She is mainly responsible for coordinating the research structure and strategy of her faculty. Supervision of research assistants and research students is also another key activity of her role.

Age: 42 years

Family and childhood background: Patricia is married and has no children or dependents. Her husband was formerly employed as a manager in a different sector but is seeking employment in education. Both her parents were employed but not in education. She is the youngest of her family and had no additional childhood responsibilities. She was very sporty during her young days and had leadership experiences through captaincy of many sports teams.

Career background: Patricia joined the university four years ago as a reader. She has started her career as research assistant and has always been engaged in the research and academic activities during her career.

Self perceived leadership styles and attributes: Patricia perceives herself as more of an encourager than a controller in her leadership. She believes influencing other people is difficult since people are different from one to another and people at the top of the organisational hierarchies are sometimes reluctant to be lead. She perceives herself as a character with more feminine attributes.

Educational and professional background: She holds a PhD.

Case study of Kate

Designation and organisational details: Kate is an Associate Dean of a leading university in the North West of England. She is mainly responsible for supervising the enterprise activities of her faculty. In addition, she lectures and supervises research students.

Age: 51 years

Family and childhood background: Kate is single with two children who are still at school. Both her parents were employed but not in education. She was highly involved in sports during her school days.

Career background: Kate joined the organisation five years ago as a lecturer. Before moving to the education sector she had worked in the textile industry for more than ten years.

Self perceived leadership styles and attributes: As Kate sees it, leadership is a peculiar role in her position since she does not have any direct line managerial role or responsibilities. However, she believes her leadership is more associated with guidance and suggestions than with instructions. According to her perspective, the best approach of leadership for any situation is leading by persuasion. She perceives herself as a character with more feminine attributes.

Educational and professional background: Kate obtained her first degree and masters in law.

3.4 Working patterns

The tradition of long hours of work, including routinely working through weekends, and the project nature of the industry require women to spend more time in work, especially during the commencement and completion of the contract. In addition, the periods away from home and travelling a substantial distance are major obstacles to them (Fielden et al., 2000). Within the construction industry women who work on a construction site which is spread over a period of time that covers planning to completion of any structures and includes additional time if required, most often work long hours and work through weekends due to the nature of the project. More often, due to the temporary nature of the construction site office the working environment is provided with fewer facilities than in offices. However, employees who work on sites have, in certain instances, additional allowances. On the other hand women who work in head offices or in other branches of the construction company have different practices and generally better physical facilities within the working environment.

However, employees in an office environment may also need to work overtime especially when nearing bid submissions. The industry wide practice of working long hours is seen as a barrier to women. However, three of the female leaders commented that the flexible working hours and home working is of great advantage to them. In addition they stressed the importance of better understanding between superiors and the views of women. The long hours of work required by senior managers for women to actively participate in the management are incompatible with women's domestic responsibilities.

The female leader Daisy felt that the work is judged based on the number of hours worked. When superiors expect them to work for long hours female leaders with families face problems unless proper facilitates are provided to overcome them, especially on construction sites. Although Daisy recognised the need to work long hours on a regular basis she found it difficult to challenge this. Therefore companies need to adopt measures that will not consider male success criteria on employees' performance for advancement opportunities

"… for this company specifically you seem to be judged on how many hours you work. My commercial manager comes in at seven and doesn't leave till six at least everyday but I can't do that. I think probably allowances are made a little bit because I have got a family but I think that will probably hold the backlog of my hours of work as well." (Dana - Site Quantity Surveyor, Aged 38)

3.5 Working policies and advancement opportunities

Although there is no discrimination in formal announcements, some of the construction organisations have differentiated pay levels for men and women in leadership positions. According to EOC (2006) the mean hourly earnings of full-time employees in construction on adult rates for women is £10.83 per hour and for men is £12.35 per hour. In addition to the female leader from the construction site who recognised the need for better working policies for women, the leader from the contracting company recognised that very minimal facilities are given in construction, such as the minimum legal requirement for maternity leave.

It was also found from a previous study that women are less frequently offered rotational job assignments to areas that are on the revenue producing side of the business, which ultimately decreases their chances for promotion to top management of the organisation (Jackson, 2001). Most importantly, the corporate inequities in advancement opportunities and rewards discourage women from seeking top management positions. Further the study identified that there are inequities in organisations' provisions to employees on advancement opportunities within the construction industry. In addition a lack of female leaders in higher positions in the organisation leads to difficulties in obtaining the required facilities or allowances as these facilities are not in place before a need was recognised. This includes gaining the knowledge regarding policies that can help them to continue their career while also giving importance to family life.

"…I have felt that males have their own networks which exclude women and these groups are harder for women to get in with."

(Cathy - Associate Architect, Aged 38)

3.6   Personal characteristics

Women are generally said to have lower aspirations and confidence, and are reluctant to compete for senior positions. Due to internal and external barriers created within them and from the external environment, women lack the confidence and assertiveness to go for positions of power (Itzin and Newman, 1995). Their reluctance to compete for senior jobs (Taylor, 1997) is a major barrier created by them. In addition, their lower aspirations and inappropriate expectations (Spero, 1987) hinder their careers in leadership positions in senior management.

The under-representation at senior level in construction and the experiences of other women discourage young women to enter or to remain in senior levels (Powell et al, 2006). Thus, women state that they need to prove their capabilities and work harder than their male counterparts to reach and to retain their positions. They experience more challenges, compared to their male counterparts, to rise up the career ladder. Female managers emphasised their personal qualities as critical factors in their career, such as, capacity to hard work; integrity; desire for responsibility and positive attitude (Fielden et al. 2000).

Due to negative attitudes towards their promotion, women fail to undertake appropriate training to develop executive skills required for senior management. Some fail to plan their careers (Morrison, 1992) and do not build networks and support systems to locate and maintain effective mentoring relationships. Within the study few female leaders expressed their lower confidence and lower aspirations to lead or to progress in their career.

Case study of Rosa

Designation and organisational details: Rosa is a medical doctor in a psychiatric rotation of a public body in the North West of England. She is in the middle level of her organisational hierarchy. Assessment, diagnosis and management of patients with mental illness are the key activities of her role. In addition, research, teaching and working with patients' families are associated with her role. In performing these activities she has to work with teams of medical practitioners in which she needs to take the lead of coordinating the team.

Age: 38 years

Family and childhood background: Rosa is married and has one young child. Her husband is employed in the education sector. Both her parents were employed and she was the second of their family of three children. She was a prefect when she was at school and involved in other extra curricular activities such as music and school committees.

Career background: Rosa has started providing her service for the current organisation five and a half years ago as a house officer.

Self perceived leadership styles and attributes: Rosa thinks she has to be always transparent on her leadership decisions to avoid confusions and conflicts. She believes it is important to take the ideas of others into consideration before coming to a decision of her own especially when she has to work with different teams and groups. As she mentions, it is necessary to be very firm on decisions, but careful due to the nature of the field of her work. She perceives herself as a person with more feminine attributes.

Educational and professional background: Rosa has done her bachelors degree in surgery and reading for her masters. She is a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Case study of Sandra

Designation and organisational details: Sandra is a lead nurse and the theatre manager of a hospital in the North West of England. Her responsibilities range over clinical governance, monitoring of theatre activities and management of the subordinate staff.

Age: 45 years

Family and childhood background: Sandra is single and has one child who is still at school. Her father was employed and mother was a housewife. She was sporty and competitive during her early years but she does not believe that it provided any background to move up in her career, she believes it was her personality which gave her the courage to do competitive sports and advance into a higher position.

Career background: Sandra joined her current organisation eighteen years ago as a staff nurse but had left it in the middle and worked in another hospital for two years. She has re-joined the organisation with a promotion. She had worked as a social worker before starting her nursing career.

Self perceived leadership styles and attributes: Sandra perceives herself to be a democratic leader. She thinks she allows her subordinates to work by themselves and facilitates them where necessary. She believes being a woman is sometimes an advantage in leadership, especially in her working environment but it is not true always. She perceives herself as a person with more masculine attributes.

Educational and professional background: Sandra has undergone a traditional nursing training and qualified as a nurse before she acquired her diploma and the degree in nursing.

Other Sectors

Women's self assessment or judgment of themselves plays a bigger role in moving up in their career ladder. Few female leaders regard higher rank work in their professional career as a massive responsibility and as highly pressured work. This shows the need to conduct development programmes to develop their confidence and willingness to take the challenge in order to avoid any loss of opportunities. However many respondents recognised the importance and influence of extra curricular activities on their current leadership position. One leader, though she has done sports, considered her self-interest as a determining factor in achieving a leadership position. In addition one of the most important factors highlighted by all the respondents is mentoring. Providing guidance and advice on career and work related issues will help them to progress well. As quoted by female leaders, guidance should be given on the ways of avoiding or reducing challenges and making employees aware of the facilities and support available to them as this was not always the case.

In the educational sector women's less developed research profile hinders their promotions (Doherty and Manfredi, 2006). This was also pointed out by the female leader Patricia from the educational sector. The requirement for formal qualifications and less occupational capability or less developed research profile are being stated as militating factors for women's advancement. This indicates the need for better training and development for women to develop their competencies to equip them for the demands of the industry.

Furthermore in order to obtain the views of other about the barriers faced by women, interviews were conducted among their superiors, peers and subordinates. However most of them said that their female leaders do not face any difficulties. One of the subordinates of a female leader said that,

"I don't see a problem. She is more than capable of doing her job in a male dominated environment; ……..Family responsibilities are not a problem for a woman nowadays for her career. If it was, it is a personal problem, a problem of not making necessary arrangements rather than a problem with the employer. Enough facilities are there to support women's career advancement now."

(Subordinate of Alice – Education and Research Centre Manager, Aged 47)

Interviews were conducted among male peers of the female leaders in the study in order to understand their views on barriers faced by them during their career. However in contrast to female's perspectives about their own barriers, male employees stated that they didn't face any problems.

Table 2: Comparison of barriers between construction & other sectors: Literature review

Barriers		Transport & logistics	Information Technology	Oil Industry	Manufacturing	Agriculture	Marketing	Financial sector	Leisure Management	Retail industry	Health Service	Education	Construction, Project Management & Surveying
Inequities in HRM systems & practices	Recruitment & Selection												X
	Training & Development	X						X		X	X		X
	Pay & rewards between men & women		X								X		X
	Advancement opportunities		X					X			X	X	X
Organisational culture	Masculine culture		X	X					X		X		X
	Gender stereotyping/ attitudinal barriers		X				X	X	X	X	X		X
	Old boy networks	X						X	X			X	X
	Unsupportive working environment/ co-workers		X				X						X
	Work patterns (long hrs/weekend work, distance travelling, nature place, time of work)	X		X				X		X	X		X
Personal aspects	Family & work commitments	X	X	X	X			X			X	X	X
	Required formal qualifications/skills/ profile		X					X			X	X	X
	Not building networks & support systems												X
	Lower aspirations, confidence, reluctance to compete for senior positions	X										X	X
Others	Experiences of other women												X
	Women being treated chivalrously			X									X
	Lack of role models										X	X	X
	Lack of support from community/social pressures	X		X		X		X		X			X
	Lack of facilities for women	X								X	X		X
	Industry's negative image	X		X	X								X

4 Recommendations

According to the CITB (2003), females' representation in leadership positions in construction is weak. Hence the research study undertaken identified many challenges faced by female leaders within the construction industry. Further in order to attract and retain female leaders in construction the study proposed the following recommendations and highlighted certain good practice guidelines to employers and to female leaders themselves. Although the recommendations to organisations are mainly illustrating the need for developing women leaders it recognises the importance of gender mainstreaming to facilitate all employees' careers within the organisation.

4.1 Improve the family and work life balance

The challenge of balancing work and family commitments has been found to be a major obstacle to females' career advancement across many sectors such as Transport and Logistics (Simpson and Holley, 2001), IT (Trauth, 2002), Oil Industry (Miller, 2004), Manufacturing (Evetts, 1997), Financial (Gammie and Gammie, 1995), Education (Doherty and Manfredi, 2006) and Health Service (Lane, 1998). Many females' careers towards leadership positions in construction have been affected by both family and work obligations. The study found that, currently, males also experience these difficulties. However, the impact on females' career towards leadership positions is highly noticeable compared to men.

Recommendations

While general understanding about work and family life has improved, consideration of its significance on organisational provisions for employees needs further attention. This study proposes the following recommendations by considering the suggestions and problems of female employees.

- Develop a flexible working policy to encourage females to continue their working career during critical periods which may include,
  - Part time working, which allows them to work less than the standard full time hours and offers different options
  - Flexitime, which allows employees within agreed limits to vary their start and finish times and lunch breaks
  - Compressed working week, which allows them to carry out a full time job in less than five working days per week
- Allow them to work from home at times when they really need to be at home and spend time on family responsibilities
- Allow unpaid parental leave to employees who have a child or adopt a child until the child is a certain age
- Encourage employees to have mentors or provide mentoring. Mentors could provide guidance and advice on personal and work related issues to employees and advise them on their career development
- Personally, employees can plan their work and family activities well in advance and build good communication between family members in relation to their family and work responsibilities

4.2 Develop career break schemes and improve child care facilities

Generally women leaders' careers tend to suffer from career breaks such as maternity leave. Respondents from the study expressed the thought that some women do not retain their original job title which they held before their career break and some are downgraded after their break. Immediately after their career break they can find it difficult to cope with child care responsibilities which ultimately results in them leaving the organisations. A few respondents expressed the idea that the child care facilities are inadequate and fail to help them manage their commitments. In addition some females take longer career breaks which eventually leave them with fewer competences and benefits. Further when females return to their job after a career gap they appear less confident and experience difficulties due to their knowledge gap. Moreover, due to less support from their employers or superiors they tend to lose their interest in their career progress.

Recommendations

The above problems have led the female employees to recognise the need for better maternity structure and support systems to facilitate their career. Although currently construction organisations have maternity and paternity policies, the additional provisions to the judicial requirements and the extent of it's implementation needs attention. Therefore this study proposes the following recommendations and practice guidelines to develop female leaders within the industry.

- In addition to the judicial requirements employees could provide better maternity policies which may include,
  - Allowing employees to work from home, visiting the office on a few occasions to become familiarised with the current organisational practices and changes
  - Providing support systems such as a laptop with connections to the internet and with limited access to the office network to work from home
  - Developing a flexible working policy in order to encourage them to return to work when they are ready to without taking a longer career break due to early child rearing responsibilities. This may include,
    - Part time working, which allows them to work less than the standard full time hours and offers different options depending on company's work demands
    - Flexitime, which allows employees within agreed limits to vary their start and finish times and lunch breaks. This system can help employees to build up debit or credit hours of work
    - Flexible working hours, which allows total flexibility over the period of work considering the type of work. In order to encourage employees to attend work, a small payment can be given with a requirement of minimum number of hours or some measures to indicate their completion of work
- Provide workshops for superiors and subordinates to improve mutual understanding and to create a more cooperative working environment
- Provide childcare facilities near to the work place which should operate extended opening times to assist employees who need to work longer hours, rather than opening for very limited hours which do not help to overcome the difficulties in both personal and organisational aspects

4.3   Promote self development

The study noted that some women tend to lose their courage to advance further when they reach a certain level in the management structure. One of the main reasons behind this is their lack of confidence in carrying out tasks which they consider to a huge and daunting responsibility. Therefore there is a need to develop their confidence, self aspiration and courage to move forward and take responsibilities in their career. In addition, females should be encouraged to develop their competencies to establish their demand to effective management roles within the sector while they progress in their career. Further the `1study identified the need to develop women's leadership skills to carry out their roles and to advance and retain their leadership positions within the sector. Many respondents felt that women leaders need to possess skills related to team working, communication, inter personal management, multi tasking, organising and prioritising, negotiation, listening, delegation, time management, sound knowledge on their profession and the ability to stand on their ground with not feeling intimidated in aggressive situations. In addition they stressed the need to have a broader and better understanding of work and people since they need to work with people who have different responsibilities. Leaders must be able express their ideas well and influence the other employees. Although influencing others using a more democratic approach is considered a better way of leading, female leaders insisted that they need to change their style of leadership depending on the people and the situations. Moreover, the strategic leadership skills that were highlighted within this study involve planning, evaluating, problem solving skills, decision making, figurehead, spokesperson, liaison, intellectual competence, system perspective and higher cognitive capacities such as complex investigations and judgements.

Recommendations

Females' lower confidence in continuing their career to the higher ranks has been found to be a common barrier across different sectors. However, in order to promote more women in construction the construction industry should take more care about building the confidence and courage of all its female employees and provide training and development programmes to increase their potential. Particularly it should assist female leaders to tackle the difficulties arising immediately after their career break and when they move forward to progress their career. As previously mentioned women need to be encouraged to develop their competencies. In order to address the above issues, the study recommends the following suggestions.

- Encourage female students to get involved in extra curricular activities from their school life to develop the ability to hold leadership positions
- Conduct training programmes to develop leadership skills allowing them to be effective in their roles and to develop the other employees
- Provide a better employer support structure to encourage women to develop their career further in the management field

- Provide mentoring to all employees or grant additional benefits to have mentors
- Conduct training programmes to allow employees to become familiarised with the current organisational practices and developments and provide induction programmes to new employees or to employees who return to work after their career break
- Provide special training programmes to encourage employees to persevere in developing their careers and improve their confidence

4.4   Improve the working environment

The culture of organisations has a significant impact on employees. An inhospitable culture within the construction organisation is one of the most significant barriers to women's career advancement and also is a major factor in diminishing their satisfaction in their working life. Although the culture of the construction industry is slowly changing, the resonance of the macho culture can be found in many activities throughout the construction life cycle. Gender stereotyping is one of the barriers found in the construction industry. Some female respondents felt that although they hold leadership positions men tend to expect them to carry out certain activities which they normally perform as a female at home such as preparing tea for meetings. In addition they felt they are isolated in certain events and meetings from other employees in construction environment as opposed to other sectors. Men's networks between themselves act as a barrier to allowing women to network well with other employees. Further, female leaders felt that the acceptance of their instructions is sometimes challenged especially in construction sites.

Recommendations

Within the study about the organisational policies it was found that the above problems have not been addressed adequately in construction organisational policies. Generally, few respondents felt that the construction industry has minimal facilities compared to other sectors, such, as a maternity structure, flexible working hours, etc. which help to maintain a better working environment throughout their career. This study considers the following in addressing the above issues.

- Set up monitoring committees to consider gender issues arising from harassment and bullying and grievances cases
- Provide better mentoring facilities and support by employers to those employees who suffer from harassment
- Organisations should recognise the obligations under Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act and relevant Equal Opportunity Policies and legislations and ensure it's compliance within the organisation
- Provide training which will enhance the understanding for the need for an equal opportunities programme

4.5 Improve recruitment and advancement policies

While formal announcements do not reflect any discrimination some respondents felt that there are instances where promotions have taken place through word of mouth which resulted in demotivation in their interest in career progression. Further, some feel there are occasions where the recruitment has taken place through the network between existing employees. However, since construction is a male dominated industry, females feel that there are inequities in recruitment and advancement procedures within organisations. In addition they feel employers' support is a significant factor which helps to implement equitable recruitment and advancement policies.

Recommendations

In order to address the above issues this study proposes the following by considering the policies from other sectors considered for the study.

- Recruitment policy must be established to ensure that the selection criteria and its policies and procedures are maintained to treat individuals solely on the basis of the merits and abilities which are appropriate to the job and it must avoid any stereotyping of roles. Most importantly organisations should avoid recruitment solely by word of mouth or through recommendations of existing employees to avoid unlawful activities

- Training and development programmes should be circulated widely to employees and should be monitored for any imbalances for corrective actions irrespective of gender difference

- All employees should be provided with career guidance

- Access to advancement opportunities should be made available to suitable employees irrespective of gender or marital status

- Organisation should employ individuals to plan and monitor human resource management policies. These individual should be open minded and be able to recognise gender discrimination, develop better understanding of employee status and encourage empowerment of employees

4.6 Promote different working practices

It was often noted within the study that work patterns within the construction environment hinder women's career progress. Some respondents expressed the view that women tend to lose interest in applying for promotions as they feel that they will not be able to allocate more time to work. Long working hours are a major challenge to women leaders within construction especially when they need to look after their personal and family responsibilities. Besides which, the construction industry requires its employees to allocate time to carry out the task within the specified period of time.

Recommendations

Within other sectors which were considered for the study, women have the flexibility to overcome obstacles related to work patterns. The Education Sector has the flexibility to accommodate family and work responsibilities which ultimately assists women leaders to have a more balanced work and family life. This study proposes the following recommendations to overcome to the above problem.

- Allow a compressed working week with a specific timeline to ensure an effective completion of task

- In critical situations allow job sharing where applicable, which is a full time job shared by two or more employees where salary and benefits are also shared

- Allow a flexible working policy which may include flexible working hours and home working with delegated responsibility of work to employees

- Develop a better understanding between employees and senior management to accept and overcome the difficulty of sharing more time at work

- Conduct workshops for employees to explain different arrangements in managing their responsibilities with the help of family members

References

University of Salford, 2007. Construction and Women - Promoting construction careers for women in the North West. Salford: University of Salford.

Appelbaum, S. H., Audet, L. and Miller, J.C., 2003. Gender and leadership? Leadership and gender? A journey through the landscape of theories. Leadership & Organisation development Journal, 24(1), Pp. 43- 51.

Bass, B. M., Avolio, B.J. and Atwater, L., 1996. The transformational and transactional leadership of men and women. Applied Psychology: An Internal Review, 45, Pp. 5-34.

Bresnen, M.J., Bryman, A.E., Ford, J.R., Beardsworth, A.D. and Keil, E.T., 1986. The leader orientation of construction site managers. ASCE Journal of Construction Engineering and Management, 112, Pp. 370–86.

Bullock, S., 1994. Women and Work. London: Zed Books Limited.

Burke, R.J. and McKeen, C.A., 1996. Do women at the top make a difference? Gender proportion and the experiences of managerial and professional women. Human Relations, 49(8), Pp.1093-1164.

Cleland, D.I., 1995. Project Management: Strategic Design and Implementation. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw Hill.

Collinson, D. and Collinson, M., 1997. Delayering managers: time-space surveillance and its gendered effects. Organization, 4(3), Pp. 375-407.

Construction Industry Training Board, 2003. Construction Skills Forecast Report [Online]. Available from: http://www.citb.co.uk [Accessed September 2004].

Cortis, R. and Cassar, V., 2005. Perceptions of and about women as managers: investigating job involvement, self esteem and attitudes. Women in Management Review, 20(3), Pp.149-164.

Doherty, L. and Manfredi, S., 2006. Women's progression to senior positions in English Universities. Employee Relations. 28 (6), Pp. 553-572.

Ellyard, P., 2001. Creating and preparing for jobs in the 21st century. Keynote address to 5-6 February working 2001 conference. Fremantle.

EOC. 2006. Facts about Women and Men in Great Britain 2006. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Evetts, J., 1997. Women and careers in engineering: management changes in the work organization. Women in Management Review, 12 (6), Pp. 228-233.

Fagenson, E. A., 1990. Perceived Masculine and Feminine Attributes Examined as a Function of Individuals' Sex and Level in the Organizational Power Hierarchy: A Test of Four Theoretical Perspectives. Journal of Applied Psychology, 75(2), Pp. 204-211.

Feldman, R.S. 1999. Understanding Psychology. 5th ed. New York: McGraw Hill.

Fielden, S.L., Davidson, M.J., Gale, A. and Davey, C.L., 2001. Women, equality and construction. Journal of Management Development, 20(4), Pp. 293–304.

Fielden, S.L., Davidson, M.J., Gale, A.W. and Davey, C.L., 2000. Women in construction: the untapped resource. Construction Management and Economics, 18, Pp. 113 – 121.

Fagenson, E.A. and Jackson, J.J.(eds), 1993. Women in Management: Trends, Issues, and Challenges in Managerial Diversity. The Academy of Management Review, 20(3), Pp. 741-748.

Gammie, E. and Gammie, B., 1995. Women chartered accountants-progressing in the right direction?. Women in Management Review, 10(1), Pp. 5-13.

Goleman, D., 2000. Leadership that gets results. Harvard Business Review, March–April, Pp 78–90.

Grant, J., 1998. Women as managers: what they can offer to organisations. Organisational dynamics, 16(3), Pp. 56-63.

Greed, C., 2000. Women in the construction Professions: Achieving Critical Mass. Gender, work and Organization, 7(3), Pp. 181-196.

Hall, D. and Hall, I., 1996. Practical Social Research: Project Work in the Community. London.

Helegesin, S., 1990. The Female Advantage: Women's ways of leadership. New York: Doubleday.

Horner, M., 1997. Leadership theory: past, present and future. Team Performance Management, 3, Pp. 270-287.

Itzin, C. and Newman, J., 1995. Gender, Culture and Organisational Change, Putting Theory into Practice. London: Routledge.

Jackson, J. C., 2001. Women middle manger's perception of the glass ceiling. Women in Management Review, 16(1), Pp. 30-41.

Kanter, R.M., 1977. Men and women of the corporation. New York: Basic Books.

King, N., 2005. Using Interviews in Qualitative Research. in: Cassell, C., and Symon, G. (eds.),

Kovacs D.M.W., Ryan M. and Haslam A., 2006. The glass-cliff: women's career paths in the UK private IT sector. Equal Opportunities International. 25 (8), Pp. 674-687.

Kotter, J.P., 1990. A Force for Change: How Leadership Differs from Management. New York: Free Press.

Korabik, K., 1990. Androgyny and leadership style. Journal of Business Ethics, 9 (4/5), Pp. 283-292.

Kvale, S., 1996. Interviews: An introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing. London: Sage.

Lane, N., 1998. Barriers to women's progression into nurse management in the National Health Service. Women in Management Review, 13 (5), Pp. 184-191.

Miller, G.E., 2004. Frontier Masculinity in the Oil Industry: The Experience of Women Engineers. Gender, Work and Organization, 11(1), Pp. 47-73.

Moore, N., 2000. How to do Research: The Complete guide to designing and Managing Research Projects. London: Library Association Publishing.

Morrison, A. M., 1992. New solutions to the same old glass ceiling. Women in Management Review, 7(4), Pp. 15-19.

Naum, S., 2001. People & Organizational Management in Construction. London: Thomas Telford.

Nicholas, J.M., 1990. Managing Business and Engineering Projects-Concepts and Implementation. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Northouse, P.G., 2004. Leadership theory and Practice. 3rd ed. California: Sage Publications Incorporation.

Oshagbemi, T. and Gill, R., 2003. Gender differences and similarities in the leadership styles and behaviour of UK managers. Women in Management Review. 18 (6). Pp. 288-298.

Park, D. 1996. Gender role, decision style and leadership style. Women in Management Review, 11(8), Pp. 13 -17.

Payne, G. and Payne, J., 2004. Key concepts in social research. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Pounder, J.S. and Coleman, M., 2002. Women better leaders than men? In general and educational management it still "all depends". Leadership and Organizational Development Journal, 23 (3), Pp. 122-133.

Powell, A., Bagilhole, B.M. and Dainty, A.R.J., 2006. The problem of women's assimilation into UK engineering cultures: can critical mass work?. Equal Opportunity International, 25(8), Pp. 688-699.

Ragins, B. R., Townsend, B. and Mattis, M., 1998. Gender gap in the executive suite: CEOs and female executives report on breaking the glass ceiling, Academy of Management Executive, 12(1), Pp. 28-42.

Rosener, J.B., 1990. Ways women lead. Harvard Business Review, 68, Pp. 119-125.

Sadler, P., 2003. Leadership. 2nd ed. London: Kogan Page Limited.

Scandura, T.A. and Ragins, B.R., 1993. The effects of sex and gender role orientation on mentorship in male-dominated occupations. Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 43, Pp. 251-265.

Schein, V.E., 2007. Women in management: reflections and projections. Women in Management Review. 22(1). Pp. 6-18.

Shanmugam, M., Amaratunga, R.D.G. and Haigh, R.P., 2006. Women in Construction: A study on the Leadership. 6th International Postgraduate Research Conference in the Built and Human Environment, 6th – 7th April, Delft University of Technology and TNO, Delft University, Netherlands.

Simpson, R. and Holley, D., 2001. Can restructuring fracture the glass ceiling? The case of women transport and logistics managers. Women in Management Review, 16 (4), Pp. 174-182.

Spero, M., 1987. Self-development for women managers in the retail industry. Industrial and Commercial Training, 19, Pp. 15-9.

Still, L.V., 1994. Where to from Here? Women in Management - The cultural dilemma. Women in Management Review, 9(4), Pp. 3 -10.

Symons, G. L.. 1992. The Glass Ceiling is Constructed over the Gendered Office. Women in Management Review, 7(1), Pp. 18-22.

Tatum, C.E., Kottraba, R. and Bradberry, C., 2003. Leadership, decision making and organisational justice. Management Decision, 41, Pp. 1006-1016.

Taylor, B.H., 1997. The construction of women's management skills and the marginalization of women in senior management. Women in management review, 12(7), Pp. 255 -263.

The State Services Commission, 2000. Barriers to women's career progression: A review of literature. Wellington: The State Services Commission.

Thurairajah, N., Haigh, R. and Amaratunga, R.D.G., 2007. Leadership in construction partnering projects. 7th International Postgraduate Research Conference in the Built and Human Environment. 27th – 29th March. University of Salford, UK.

Trauth, E.M., 2002. Odd girls out: an individual differences perspective on the IT profession. Information Technology & People, 15 (2), Pp. 98-118.

Trinidad, C. and Normore, A.H., 2005. Leadership and gender: A dangerous liaison?. Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 26 (7), Pp. 574-590.

Twenge, J.M., 1997. Changes in masculine and feminine traits over time: a meta-analysis. Sex Roles. 36 (5). Pp 305-321.

Vinnicombe, S. and Singh, V., 2002. Sex role stereotyping and requisites of successful top managers. Women in Management Review, 17(3/4), Pp. 120-130.

Watts, J.H., 2007. Porn, pride and pessimism: experiences of women working in professional construction role, Work. Employment and society, 21(2), Pp. 299-316.

Yin, R.K., 2003. Case study research-Design and Methods. 3ed. California: Sage Publications Incorporation.

Research Institute for the Built and Human Environment

University of Salford
4th Floor, Maxwell Building
Salford, Greater Manchester
M5 4WT. United Kingdom

Enquiries:

T: +44 (0) 161 295 4600
F: +44 (0) 161 295 5011

www.buhu.salford.ac.uk