

Leadership Development of Young Professionals for Organizational Performance in the Building Industry during the Fourth Industrial Revolution

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Abstract

This study sought to review existing literature about leadership development of young professionals for organizational performance in the context of the building industry. The purpose was to reflect on the various findings and discussions, and then lay these out on the backdrop of the emerging fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Studies perceive leadership development as involving the process of cultivating the soft skills that a leader has through the use of diverse educational processes. Moreover, leadership development has been cited as one of the key ingredients that enrich organizational performance. Extant literature noted that the natures of construction and civil engineering professions demand for teamwork and collaborative approaches to efficiently solve the predominant unique and complex projects. It was observed that emerging global trends favoured the leadership development for younger generations, especially so during the predicted 4IR era that is driven by digital advancement, because of their unique characteristics.

Keywords: fourth industrial revolution, leadership development, organizational performance, young professionals

1. Introduction

In broad terms, this study seeks to review the existing literature on leadership development of young professionals for organizational performance within the context of the building industry. Specifically, the study converges towards the emerging fourth industrial revolution (4IR), which is characterized by digitization, so as to highlight how this could influence the leadership development of young professionals in the industry.

Leadership development is perceived to involve the process of cultivating the soft skills that a leader has through the use of diverse educational processes, such as the formal learning actions, sequencers as well as through coaching (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Armstrong and Taylor added that the various leadership development programmes “prepare people for leadership roles and situations beyond their current experience” (p. 329). While citing Bolden (2010), they acknowledged that the crucial elements that define leadership development include “reflection, practice, self-awareness, personal support, opportunities to apply learning and relevance to work” (p. 324).

Moreover, it was observed that those institutions that have redesigned themselves into learning organizations seek to endorse both communication as well as collaboration “so that everyone is engaged in identifying and solving problems, enabling the organization to continuously experiment, improve, and increase its capability” (Daft, 2010, p. 31). Daft, therefore, recommended that such a redesign should be adaptable for diverse environments.

2. Leadership Development of Young Professionals and Performance

The in-depth scope of this review covers five aspects. These are: leadership development, leadership development and organizational performance, leadership development in the building industry, leadership development of young professionals, and related empirical studies in the building industry.

2.1 Leadership Development

A key question that often comes up during discussions on leadership development (LD) is whether leaders are born or made (Bolden, 2005; Conger & Riggio, 2007; Lussier & Achua, 2016; Mostovicz, Kakabadse, & Kakabadse, 2009; and Mullins, 2010). On the one hand, these studies argued that the perception about born leaders is largely backed by the various trait theories of leadership. For instance, Mullins mentions the “Great Person theory of leadership” (375) which submits that leadership is made of personality traits, or a set of particular hereditary features. The theory, thus, propagates the argument that leaders are born and not made. Lussier and Achua added that leaders can be made through hard work and extreme effort.

To add on the foregoing discourse, Kouzes et al. (2015) demonstrate that some of the most influential and successful leaders are those that have been made. They pointed out that such leaders have succeeded because they took their followers along with them on the leadership development journey. There may appear a middle-ground perspective in this debate. It has been argued that while several qualities of leadership such as self-awareness, strategic thinking as well as communication skills could be developed, there are certain central personal characteristics that might not easily

change although they influence the type of leadership style being adopted (Bolden, 2005). These personal characteristics include sociability and dominance. Consequently, in spite of the above debate, the inclination of this review was based on the assumption that leaders can be developed (Conger & Riggio, 2007).

Both leader and leadership development definitions, according to Day and Dragoni (2015), “focus on efforts aimed at expanding individual and collective capacity to be effective in leadership roles and to bring about effective leadership” (p. 134). In addition, those who hold leadership roles are expected, among other things, to undertake the following three processes: “facilitate the development of a direction given environmental considerations, align the efforts of others in support of this direction, and engage and motivate others to accomplish this direction” (p. 134). Leadership development has, therefore, been defined as “the expansion of the capacity of individuals to be effective in leadership roles and processes” (Day & Dragoni, 2015, p. 134).

McCauley et al. (2010) observed that leader development and leadership development are not synonymous. They pointed out that leader development could be defined as “the expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes” (p. 2). While explaining that this is a personal development activity, McCauley et al. stated that leader development is one part of the wider process that describes leadership development. On the other hand, they defined leadership development as “the growth of a collective’s capacity to produce direction, alignment, and commitment” (p. 26). The term “collective” that has been used in this description was defined as “any group of people who share work, for example, teams, work groups, organizations, partnerships, communities, and nations” (p. 20). It was explained that, unlike the traditional perspective of leadership as a process where leaders influence followers towards shared goals (Drath et al., 2008), leadership is viewed here as a process that produces “direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC) in collectives” (p. 21). Within any organization, there is a strategic need to link the process of the individual leader development with the overall shared leadership development agenda of the organization (Conger & Riggio, 2007).

McCauley et al. (2010) viewed leadership development as an ongoing process that is grounded within personal development that never comes to an end, and is entrenched in experience. This means that leaders keep on learning, while over time expanding their experiences. It also means that the leadership development process intervenes to facilitate and weave together such experiences through meaningful structures. They affirmed that this includes, and goes beyond, the individual leader development. They concluded that it incorporates “the development of the connections among individuals, the development of the capacities of collectives, the development of the connections among collectives in an organization, and the development of the culture and systems in which individuals and collectives are embedded” (p. 26).

In a broad perspective, the concept of leadership development encompasses the process of acquiring, developing as well as utilizing the leadership skill or the potential that this skill has (Burgoyne, 2010). While identifying with this definition of leadership development, Armstrong and Taylor (2014) revealed that the purpose of leadership development programmes is to prepare the participants to take up their roles of leadership in circumstances that are beyond their present experiences. They suggested that leadership development is inclined towards nurturing the softer

skills in the leader using a range of educational processes such as formal learning activities and programmes as well as through coaching.

Similarly, it was established that leadership process is a developmental progression that could be done in a continuous manner dependent on the sort of choice that the leader makes (Harrison, 2017; Mostovicz et al., 2009). In this respect, two options available to choose from, and which are governed by the leader's worldview, have been observed. These are: "looking for affiliation (i.e. the Theta worldview), or looking for achievement (i.e. the Lambda worldview)" (p. 563). Mostovicz et al. conclude that, although such choices are made according to the leader's worldview, there is need for the leader to understand that their choices should be pursued ethically in a manner that will fit within activities planned by the organisation. It has also been observed that leadership development begins with "clarifying the emotional, strategic worldview first before defining those tactical methods that can enhance the strategy" (p. 571).

It has also been submitted that there can be a faith-based structured approach towards leadership development that is based on the servant leadership model (Roberts, 2016). The background argument backing this observation was that the foundations of effective leadership development, together with those of accompanying training programs. Is expected to have a form of humility and transparency. The argument went on to add that these foundations should have a clear value system that defines, identifies and relates to the selfless expectation for Christians to love and obey God, among several other factors (Roberts). Similarly, Johnson (2018) found out that an increasing number of scholars were seeking to study the connection between "spiritual values and practices and organizational performance" (p. 172). Roberts revealed that the biblical perspective of developing servant leadership is shrouded in grace and clemency which enhances an effective pursuit towards excellence without necessarily seeking to achieve perfectionism. He elaborated this by pointing out that transparency is the active and measurable part of humility. Roberts recommended that, because transparency is not an easy task to attain, leadership development along this line would entail extensive efforts as well as sacrifice due to the high expectations regarding morality, integrity, and spiritual acceptability.

This means that not every organization can apply such a leadership approach in an effective and productive manner. Moreover, Roberts found out that, even though numerous organizations appear to be compatible with biblical Kingdom objectives, there is a question as to whether their ethos (values, mission, vision, the motives, the means, and the ends) are undertaken in accordance to the will of God. He agreed with the concept that management of leadership development should be systematic, even as he likened the process of servant leadership development to that of becoming a parent in the sense of it being a twenty-four-hour per day occupation.

2.2 Leadership Development and Organizational Performance

It has been argued that leaders cannot generate performance by themselves but rather, they are channels through which performance is achieved as a result of their influence on others (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). This concurs with other observations which stated that programs related to leadership development exist for the purpose of contributing to the success of both the concerned individual leaders as well as the organization (Cleveland & Cleveland, 2020).

Furthermore, it has been established that several leadership development practices have a linkage with individual-level outcomes of leaders (Subramony et al., 2018). According to Latukha (2018), there is a correlation existing between talent development and company performance. He asserted that these two variables are considered to be the key components used to enhance individual, team, as well as the organizational performance through expertise development.

The study by Subramony et al. (2018) demonstrated that there existed significant positive relationships between leadership development practice (LDP) “bundles, intangible assets, and organizational performance within the context of an emerging economy” (p, 127). The study was useful in identifying measurable values of leadership development (LD) for organizations as well as those for the development of the individual leaders. Moreover, Conger and Riggio (2007) alluded that the process of undertaking a proper selection of the leader not only boosted organizational performance but, it also provided the employees with the opportunity to enjoy and excel at their work.

An investigation to assess the impact of some of the common leadership development practices (LDPs) on the performance of organization revealed that a blended set of practices had a positive effect on the organizational performance (Azam, 2020). The study, which was based on data collected from responses by managers in the banking sector, established that mentoring and action learning stood out as the best selected practices out of the six common leadership development practices (LDPs) that were investigated. In effectiveness, those two were followed by the practices of coaching and that of 360-degree feedback.

The practice of social networks and that of job assignment, were found to require improvements for them to be effective. Azam concluded that LDPs are strategic tools useful in enhancing the organizational performance through “reshaping the organization’s strategy, appropriate changes in the culture of organization, development which are constant in nature, building the competencies and skills in the employees and developing them as a leader” (p. 129). He recommended that organizational leaders ought to come up with appropriate strategies for implementing the LDPs so as to enhance their organizational performance and, by extension, strengthen leadership development within the organizations. In this case, the leader’s mandate is expanded considerably. This perspective agrees with the findings by Oginde (2011) who acknowledged that leadership goes beyond a leader’s role, as it extended to integrate the follower psychology within a sociological group setting. He explained this to mean that the follower expectations and perceptions are the ones that determine the apparent success or failure of a leader.

On the other hand, Johnson (2018) observed that ethical leadership boosts the levels of organizational trust, and thereby foster the perceptions that the organization is competent, transparent, concerned about the employees, as well as reliable. Johnson concluded that such form of trust would lead to improvement in organizational performance and ultimately resulting in greater organizational profitability. Similarly, servant leadership has been found to influence organizational performance. Accordingly, a number of studies have determined that servant leadership positively related with what is referred to as “organizational citizenship behaviours ... which are follower behaviours that go beyond the basic requirements of their duties and help the overall functioning of the organization” (Northouse, 2016, p. 237).

It has been detected that the general organizational problems could pose a negative effect on organizational performance. According to Northouse (2016), if the management and the leadership of organizations failed to effectively deal with workers' anxieties, it will cause the workers to suffer depression and thereby contribute to low productivity. It was recommended that, in order to favourably impact on the organizational performance, the management needed to "pay attention to the conscious and subconscious needs of their employees" (p. 299).

Some of the factors that spirituality has been found to enhance include the following: "commitment to mission, core values, and ethical standards; organizational learning and creativity; morale; productivity and profitability; collaboration and community; loyalty; willingness to mentor others; job effort; job satisfaction; social support; sense of well-being; sense of purpose; sensitivity to ethical issues" (Johnson, 2018, pp.174-175). Top among the leadership styles that Johnson has identified, which have a positive impact on organizational performance, are the servant leadership and the authentic / ethical leadership.

Within the context of teams in organizations, Conger and Riggio (2007) observed that effective leadership development is based on five prerequisite conditions. These are "(1) a real team, with (2) a compelling direction, (3) an enabling structure, (4) a supportive organizational context, and (5) expert coaching" (p. 176). Moreover, Conger and Riggio cautioned on the likely organizational consequences if demographic difference between organizational leadership and their staffs is not addressed. The building industry is one that has integrated a substantial level of demographic diversity. Indeed, it is observed that the expanding globalization has meant that the impact of cultural diversity has been amplified in importance (Conger & Riggio). In order to achieve a superior organizational performance, Conger and Riggio recommended a culturally intelligent form of leadership that is committed to creatively in combining the strengths as well as the weaknesses among diversities in the workforce.

In a nutshell, the foregoing review has examined the studies that deal with leadership development (as an independent variable) and organizational performance (as a dependent variable) for professionals in the building industry. These are useful in terms of enhancing the empirical survey that engages into existing discussion regarding the possible knowledge gaps in this topic. Not only do these studies help in elaborating aspects that have already been researched on within the topic, they also then highlight the theories that have so far been applied and tested with the aim of establishing the foundation for an appropriate the theoretical framework (Armstrong, 2014).

2.4 Leadership Development in the Building Industry

Some of the contemporary studies regarding leadership development in the building industry have looked at various unique factors facing the industry at the moment. One of the key approaches that enabled organizations to achieve their goals is that of strategically developing their skilled personnel through various business-like models aimed at attending to strategic and personalised developmental and growth needs (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Armstrong and Taylor (2014) defined development as "the growth or realization of a person's ability and potential through the provision of learning and educational experiences" (p. 284). In addition, training is defined as "the

systematic application of formal processes to impart knowledge and help people to acquire the skills necessary for them to perform their jobs satisfactorily” (p. 284).

One of the philosophies that underpin strategic learning and development is that “learning and development should be performance-related – designed to achieve specified improvements in corporate, functional, team and individual performance and make a major contribution to bottom-line results” (p. 285). There are also some observations that have been made regarding the correlational impact that learning and development would have on organizational performance. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) highlighted some two researches which have established that training programmes that are appropriately-designed can be associated to “improvements in business results and that return on investment in training programmes is very high...[and] that firms that train their managers obtain better results than those that do not, and that the intensive training contributes to improved performance” (p. 286). Simmons et al. (2020) observed that the nature of construction and civil engineering professions require teamwork and collaboration approach to effectively solve unique and complex projects. They argued that such unique perspectives would be in conflict with the traditional hierarchical leadership that is structured around the great man and the traits theories of leadership.

A study that sought to analyse secondary data regarding the Nigerian building industry identified certain lapses in the management of a number of construction processes. The survey by Okagbue et al. (2018) undertook a systematic review of published articles discussing the diverse factors contributing towards the never-ending cases of failures leading to collapse of building in Nigeria. Okagbue, et al. summed up these causes into seven broad sections: “the use of poor building materials; geophysical and geotechnical; structural defects; lack of effective management of construction processes; construction defects; corruption; [and] legal and regulatory failure” (p. 1398). The element of managing the construction process was faulted here.

The foregoing perspectives seem to point towards a leadership failure and omission. It is argued that management and leadership have a close relationship (Mullins, 2010). Investigations have, specifically, cited leadership failure on the part of industry professionals as one of the reasons that have led to the collapse of buildings (Commission of Inquiry, 1996 and Okagbue et al., 2018).

2.5 Leadership Development of Young Professionals

Regarding the aspect of leadership development that seeks to equip young people in established organisations, Alvarez and Alvarez (2018) highlighted on the need for innovation especially in moments when such institutions could be facing deep-seated changes. Their study scrutinized the importance of developing elements of inclusion as well as solidarity right across the various diversities. Such diversities included: gender, age, able-ness, ethnicity, race, education level, sector and industry. Among the findings by Alvarez and Alvarez is that the certainty, growth and effective impact of future organizational leadership depended upon the nature of existing courage and vision among leaders. In addition, they observed that leadership development for young leaders is prone to discrimination due to the perception that such a group of people could end up challenging their promoters and mentors for leadership positions.

Leadership is a key issue in management. Although it is generally agreed that leadership is important, critics of leadership development programs state that new college graduates lack the skills necessary to effectively lead people (Lussier & Achua, 2016). The nature of background training in other skills may supplement the aspect of leadership development. The impending advent of the fourth industrial revolution places younger generations at the forefront of leading innovations for organizations.

Byrne et al. (2018) cautioned on the imminent danger facing those organizations who stuck to entrenched leadership practices as a benchmark for developing future leaders. They cited a study by Sucharow (2013) which revealed that although young professionals were anticipated to form part of future leaders, they had already lost their moral range by accepting corporate misconduct as an essential evil. The study acknowledged that such young professionals even feared to report the wrongdoings they saw happening within their organizations. Although this survey was done in the USA's Wall Street context, its findings could bear bits of semblance globally. If that may be the case, it could call for radical and innovative strategies to be adopted so as to attain an effective leadership development for young professionals in the building industry.

It has been noted that the millennials are gradually taking up leadership roles in many organizations (Abbas & Belhadjali, 2016; Ardichvili, Dag, & Manderscheid, 2016; and Hughes & Byrd, 2015). This may not be the case globally. Indeed, in most of the African contexts, the younger generations have not been readily integrated into leadership positions. For instance, it has been reported that the *Kiswahili* adage "where elders are present, nothing will go awry" has been taken rather too far to instil gerontocracy, thereby denying emerging generations governance roles in organizations (Goldsmith, 2018). It is imperative to note that the global leadership trend and perspective cannot be ignored, because globalisation is a reality. As a generation that has been identified with unique characteristics, their leadership development may require a customized approach that suits them.

On another perspective, one of the emerging digital revolutions in the building industry involves the 3D building printing potentials. This is an evolving house construction method involving a full-scale 3D printing technology using a large 3D printer. Expected to be a flexible and revolutionary construction approach, the building printing may be undertaken either on-site or through production of pre-fabricated building components remotely off-site. It is reported that, "while 3-D printing systems may require only a small workforce at the time of printing, a highly qualified operator is needed and skilled craftsmen are needed for follow up installation of architectural elements" (<https://www.thebig5constructkenya.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/The-Big-5-Construct-Kenya-2020-Kenya-Construction-Market-Report.pdf>). This means that an appropriate building professional leadership would be an essential component of its success.

It is also imperative to note that a substantial number of young professionals are in a generation referred to as the Millennials, alternately called the generation Y (or Gen Y). Studies have identified several characteristics that are unique to the Millennials and which could largely influence their participation and integration into the workforce (AbouAssi, McGinnis, & Holt, 2019;

Cetinkaya & Rashid (2018); Omilion-Hodges & Sugg, 2019). The characteristics include opinions asserting the generation of Millennials as the most connected of all times. Some of the characteristics may have potential to moderate the process of leadership development of young professionals in the building industry and thereby enhance organizational performance.

The above background brings to focus several factors that point to the strategic importance of leadership development of young professionals in the building industry designed to enhance performance of this industry. The emerging global digital revolution presents a unique opportunity that could favour young professionals to take certain leadership roles and thereby effectively steering such organizations towards prosperity. The building industry has been highlighted as a major contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for many nations globally. It, therefore, calls for innovative approaches to be incorporated into the running of this critical industry, including that of coming up with enhanced efficient leadership and management structures.

2.6 Related Empirical Studies in the Building Industry

This section critically reviews related empirical studies that have been carried out in the area of leadership development and organizational performance among young professional in the building industry. There appears to be a scarcity of empirical researches undertaken on this topic, even on the broad subject of leadership development in the building industry, more so within the African context (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2020; Alade & Windapo, 2021; Liphadzi et al., 2018; Oyetunji et al., 2019; Simmons et al., 2020).

Simmons et al. (2020) observed that there could be a lack of clear definition regarding the kind of leadership development that may be appropriately aligned to the academic and work environments for construction and civil engineering professionals. Consequently, they initiated the development of such a definition through a study that sought to establish the leadership competencies, as identified by executives in the building industry, and which could be applicable for construction professionals. They argued that the collated competencies would help in developing an appropriate definition of leadership which could be aligned with the civil engineering and building industry settings; and one that would be applicable when preparing and training the emerging building industry professionals. The study achieved a consensus by the industry executives about the leadership competencies that would be necessary for workforce entry. Moreover, it was established that leadership constituted both the technical and the professional competencies. This perspective provided the basis of leadership definition within the building industry to be conceptualized as “a set of competencies that can be integrated across technical and professional contexts to provide continuous, more holistic opportunities of professional development for promoting employee success and retention in the industry” (p. 9).

In order to determine how leadership practices related with leadership needs among the construction companies within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Albahali and Omran (2017) conducted a study by means of a postal questionnaire mailing survey. The leadership needs, depicted by the two dimensions of professional competence and personal competence, were found to be useful towards leadership practices. The study recommended that “the company leader, director, executive and non-executive should give direct reports autonomously and encourage others

to face challenges, solve problems, and develop their own accountability which could significantly increase the effectiveness of company leaders” (Albahali & Omran, p. 67).

Liphadzi et al. (2018) undertook a study on the leadership development focusing on the building industry in South Africa. They acknowledged that this industry stands out as an influential factor within South Africa, and is one that made a substantial positive impact on the country’s economy. The study used a combination of primary data as well as secondary data to explore how project and construction managers could be developed into becoming effective and competitive leaders of the building industry in that country. The findings revealed that within this national context, both the curricula education as well as the personal qualification could assist in developing leaders. Other parameters that the study identified included: management uptake of responsibility, incorporating leadership training courses, accepting fresh challenges, adopting internal motivation, integrating professional as well as personal development.

Liphadzi et al. (2020) used a Delphi survey method to determine how succession planning influences leadership development. The contextual setting was South Africa with the study data obtained from construction specialists together with a team of researchers. The findings revealed that, out of the various attributes that were evaluated, the “ability to understand organisational long-term vision had a high influence on developing succession planning attributes for leadership development in the [building] industry” (p. 373).

Another study by Liphadzi et al. (2021) sought to identify any composite configuration in a group of variables on the challenges facing leadership development within the building industry. In terms of leadership development challenges, the resulting findings were classified into three new thematic areas. These areas are: leadership training and education; challenges in leadership succession; and political instability. The three knowledge areas were adopted for use in the leadership development training structure in the South African building industry context.

Based on the need to have effective Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) leadership within the construction organizations framework, Alade and Windapo (2021) carried out a study to examine how leadership styles, leadership intelligence, leadership traits related with effective 4IR leadership. They argued that the unique transformational experience during the 4IR had created a push for organisations to select and develop leaders that would effectively steer their organisations over that period. The findings of this study showed that there is a positive association relating effective 4IR leadership with leadership traits, leadership styles and leadership intelligence.

An investigative study was done on how leadership behaviour impacted on the performance of construction workers of Lagos in Nigeria (Oyetunji et al., 2019). The primary data analysis identified transformational leadership behaviour as well as transactional leadership behaviour as the key influencers of worker performance. Moreover, it was established that embracing a laissez-faire leadership behaviour led to a negative correlation with performance of construction workers. The survey concluded that leadership qualities are essential factors in determining the success of projects in the building industry. Acknowledging the critical link between successful management of building projects and intelligence, initiative, imagination, and the capacity to make instant decisions of the leaders, the researchers proposed that the building industry needed to identify the

appropriate professionals that could achieve this goal. Considering the emerging global trends, young professionals could provide a fit onto this gap.

A theoretical study that was undertaken by Toor and Ofori (2008) provided very useful insights for this study. The study documented that construction professionals face several challenges such as: an increasing volume of activity, a technological advancement, an increasing number of stakeholders that are active, a growing forceful global competition, and an upward demand for accelerated completion. Their findings point to the need of integrating leadership development programs within construction professionals through a relational partnership that involves universities, building industry, and related professional organizations for posterity.

On their part, Misra and Mohanty (2021) reviewed the training and leadership development in the Indian construction industry by assessing its effectiveness in enhancing the employee performance. The review identified an extensive list of factors that were seen to have contributed to the eventual failures in the industry through inefficient operation. The most common definitive perspective for all these factors was found to be poor management, followed by that of deficiency of training for the workforce, either the skilled, the semi-skilled or the unskilled workforce.

3. Conclusion

The various extant literature have pointed to a need for a paradigm shift from the way that leadership development has been undertaken traditionally. The emerging fourth industrial revolution, which is characterised by digitalisation, has brought out compelling perspectives that may define how leadership development of young professionals in the building industry could be structured. On the other hand, there appears to be a scarcity of extant literature that adequately address the subject of leadership development of young professionals within the building industry in the digital era. This being a strategic industry that positively impacts on national GDPs globally, its leadership and management strategies cannot be ignored if a positive organizational performance is to be of focus. There is, thus, a greater need to encourage broader discussions and researches about the potentials provided by this subject together with other related studies.

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