Chapter 16
Enhancing Global Competency of Future Construction Professionals

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ABSTRACT

A globalized world requires future professionals to be global citizens; to perceive their market as a global market. Globalization challenges future professionals due to its potential impacts on the labour profile. Labour markets’ skills and talents as well as their adaptation to the global trends can contribute to the sustainability of the labour market and to the competitiveness of the companies globally. This chapter focuses on the future construction professionals’ global competency as the construction industry is labour intensive and site based. Site based nature of the construction industry requires construction professionals to work in different countries within multidisciplinary and multicultural teams. This chapter covers the following topics: construction industry’s contribution to the economy and employment rate of the countries; globalization in the construction industry; globalization as a challenge for future construction professionals; impacts of the globalization on the future construction professionals’ profile; education of future construction professionals.

INTRODUCTION

Construction industry contributes to the employment rate and to the economy of the countries [e.g. in the UK (Rhodes, 2015, p. 3), in Australia (AIGROUP, 2015), in Canada (Mazhar Arain, 2015, p. 434), in Portugal (Horta, Camanho, & Costa 2012, p. 84)]. It is influenced by the economic conditions and it influences economic growth as well as national income (Giang & Pheng, 2011, pp. 118-119). Countries tend to allocate approximately half of their national investment to the construction industry (Bock, 2015, p. 113). The construction industry is labor intensive and it relies heavily on low qualified workforce (Horta & Camanho, 2014, p. 975). It has low capital intensity (Bock, 2015, p. 113).

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Construction industry has a project and site based as well as fragmented nature consisting mainly of small-size companies (Horta & Camanho, 2014, p. 975). Construction projects are unique as they are site based and as they are accomplished by interdisciplinary and project based temporary teams as well as by involvement of various companies and suppliers (Horta & Camanho, 2014, p. 975). Site and project based nature of the construction activities require construction professionals to work in different cities and countries within temporary multidisciplinary and multicultural teams.

Globalisation is “…the accelerated movement of goods, services, capital, people and ideas across national borders.” (Little & Green, 2009, p. 166). Globalization results in economic interdependencies of the countries (Ngowi, Pienaar, Talukhaba, & Mbachu, 2005, p. 135). Globalization is an inescapable and unavoidable fact for the construction industry (Horta and Camanho, 2014, p. 975; Ngowi, et al., 2005, p. 135). Emergence of international contractors has been perceived as the first footsteps towards the globalisation of construction (Ngowi, et al., 2005, p. 138). Globalization has been fostered through developments in transport and communication, the World Trade Organization’s protocols facilitating goods and services movements internationally as well as established strategic capabilities (Horta & Camanho, 2014, p. 975; Ngowi, et al., 2005, p. 141). Furthermore, globalization’s perceived potential advantages to the construction companies contributed to its widespread as it enables construction industry to get business opportunities in new markets and to get technological, financial and managerial know-how from international companies (Horta & Camanho, 2014, p. 975). Rich and developed countries have approximately 80 to 90% share in global construction activity especially due to their economic and technological strengths enabling them to accomplish complex constructions (Drewer, 2001, p. 69). Developing countries, on the other hand, rely mainly on construction labour supplied from the international construction trade (Drewer, 2001, p. 69)

Globalization provides opportunities (e.g. employment opportunities globally) as well as challenges future construction professionals and their labour profile. Countries’ construction labour markets’ skills and talents as well as their ability to adapt themselves to the changes in the global construction market can contribute to the sustainability of the construction labour market, to the competitiveness of the companies globally as well as to the employment rate and welfare of the countries. Higher education institutions play vital role in educating future construction professionals equipped with the skills needed to cope with globalization challenges. This chapter focuses on the global competency of the future construction professionals and covers the following topics: construction industry’s contribution to the economy and employment rate of the countries; globalization in the construction industry; globalization as a challenge for future construction professionals; impacts of the globalization on the future construction professionals’ profile; education of future construction professionals.

BACKGROUND

Globalization in the construction industry is not new. Internationalization and globalization of the construction activities fostered construction workforce’s and professionals’ mobility resulting in establishment of multinational, multicultural, and multilingual construction teams. As construction industry is labour-intensive, adequate quantities of labour supply is important for the successful accomplishment of construction projects (Wells, 1996, p. 295). Reliance on international construction labour for the accomplishment of the construction works has been intensified especially since 1950’s due to the reconstruction of the Europe after the World War 2 as migrant workers mainly from Italy, Portugal, Spain, Yugoslavia,
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