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### Original Citation

Elvitigala, Gayani, Amaratunga, Dilanthi and Haigh, Richard (2006) Women's career development and the role of training and development. In: Second Annual Built Environment Education Conference (BEECON 2006), Recruitment and Retention: The Way Forward, 12-13th September 2006, The Bonnington Hotel, Bloomsbury, London.. (Unpublished)

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# **WOMEN'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Abstract**

Women progress averagely than male peers in the field of construction. Especially women's progression became very low once they have left the company training program. In this context, research based on which this paper is written, critically reviews literature on the necessity of training and development towards women's career development. It identifies lack of training as helping to prevent entry of women into the management ranks in many organizations, and to keep women at the lower levels within management. It further emphasises that it is important to develop the effective and proper training at organizational and regional level to pursue women's career development in the field of construction.

**Keywords:** Career, Construction, Training and Development, Women

## **1. Introduction**

The sectors of construction, ICT, and engineering are amongst the areas where there is an identified skills shortage. Construction has the second highest proportion of skill shortage vacancies out of 28 industries (38.2% against an average of 19.9%) (EOC, 2004). The phase one report of the EOC's investigation identified "a correlation between sector-specific skills shortages and under-representation of women in these sectors" (EOC, 2004). The same investigation identified how skills shortages "...seriously undermine the UK's productivity and competitiveness.

A recent report has noted how women's skills are under-used in industries such as construction, where significant barriers are found to their wider employment (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005). Labour Force Survey (2004) highlighted that recent trends for women in the UK percentage for all women in the workforce averages out at 46.5% and presented a small upward trend between 1990 and 2003. Job opportunities for women in construction compare very unfavourably with employment prospects in the wider economy Learning and Skills Council (2004) found that the most segregated areas of learning in further education are Construction and engineering, technology and manufacturing, where at least 90% of learners are men. Further to that Labour Force Survey Spring 2004 showed that Employment by sector 2004 Employees and self-employed aged 16 and over in Great Britain the sector of Construction, women are only 203,000 as 10% from total employees. Andrew et al., (2000) found that younger women became disillusioned with their career choice more rapidly than men, and sought to leave the industry early on in their careers. Further, they mentioned that this was caused by women having opportunities over-sold to them by target recruitment campaigns aimed at attracting them in to the industry. Very few had been advised to join the industry by their friends and family, and so they had a poor initial understanding of the culture of the industry and the other inherent difficulties of working in such a male dominated and oriented environment.

Women now comprise some 18% of the undergraduates on construction related courses within the UK (HEFCE, 2001). Thus, the focus of concern should now lie with ensuring that equal opportunities exist for women working within the sector, in order that they remain within it in the long- term (Bagilhole, 2003). Maintaining an upwards trend in the number of women wanting to enter the industry is difficult when those currently working within the industry are neither evenly distributed throughout the professions, nor appropriately represented at middle and senior level (Bagilhole, 2003).

According to the Dainty et al,(2000) women were found to have progressed an average of one hierarchal level behind their male peers of similar age and experience. He further found that ,women progression could be seen to be more variable than men's, particularly during years three to twelve of their careers, which accounted for their development after they had left company training programmes ,through the junior management grades. The transition from junior to middle management appeared particularly problematic for women.

Moreover, to that it provided company training programme were highly recognised for the women's career development (Dainty et al, 2000). Fielden et al(2001) reported that CITB had run summer school/taster courses for school leavers (16-18 years) over a 10-12 week period. The first course had attracted 11 women, eight of them completed and three entered the industry. It was suggested that these and other "taster courses" could be used to encourage women to undertake training and /or employment in construction (Fielden et al,2001). Sandra et al,(2001) in her research put forwarded that the participants in the male dominated group felt strongly about the general lack of training provided by the construction industry ,while the 'women only' group were more concern at the limited attempt to attract and train women and singled out the CITB for failing to target women (with women representing less than 1% of trainees). Participants also complained that while schemes offered by the government have increased the recruitment of apprentices, they have failed to provide decent training. The mainstream courses and training provided by colleges, training organizations and employers create a number of problems for women arising from the male dominated environment and masculine culture (Gale,1994).there is a

disbelief among the male colleagues and instructors that women are having lack of technical competences. Therefore it highlighted the appropriateness of training programmes towards women's career development. Accordingly, this paper critically reviews literature on the necessity of training and development of women's career development. Section 2 describes the process of career development followed by a discussion on how important training and development for women's career. Obstacles face by women in this process are described in sections 3 and 4.

## **2. The Process of Career Development**

A career is the sequence and variety of occupations (paid and unpaid) which one undertakes throughout a lifetime. More broadly, career includes life roles, leisure activities, learning, and work. Career development is the process of managing life, learning, and work over the lifespan (Patton & McMahon, 2001). Theorists such as Super (1957) and Schein (1971) assume that a career is a life-long, uninterrupted experience of work, which can be divided into neat stages of development, starting with initial ideas about working and ending with retirement.

However, the patterns of women's career development are frequently affected by family as well as workplace commitments and responsibilities, unlike those of men. Therefore Astin (1984) proposed that career development theory should describe women's career separately from men's careers. Her model of career development is based upon four constructs which she believes shape women's career development. They are: work motivation, work expectations, sex-role socialization and structure of opportunity which includes factors such as sex-role stereotyping, distribution of jobs and discrimination. Larwood and Gutek (1987) concluded that any theory of women's career development must take account of five factors:

- a) Career preparation, or how women are brought up to view the idea of a career and whether they believe they will have one or not.

- b) Availability of opportunities should be taken into consideration, and whether they are limited for women, compared with men.
- c) Marriage, viewed as neutral for men but harmful to the career of women.
- d) Similarly, pregnancy and having children inevitably cause women to take some kind of career break.
- e) Timing and age, as career breaks and family relocations often mean that women's careers do not follow the same chronological patterns as those of men.

Powel and Mainiero (1992) claimed that women have two overriding concerns in their lives, for their career and for others (e.g. family and friends). Their model therefore incorporates the influence of personal, organizational and societal factors to describe the balance between work and non-work aspects of life which most women strive to achieve. The paid work aspects of most careers unfold within an organizational context. As such, it is important to understand the processes that influence organizational behaviour and the development of the individuals within them (Hall and Seibert, 1992). Within organizations, careers can be seen to be determined by the mutually interdependent dimensions of structure, culture and individual action (Dainty et al, 2000). Structure and culture are influenced by the decisions and actions of the individual, while at the same time helping to determine their decisions (Evetts, 1992). This perspective sees individuals as defining their growth throughout their life of work, rather than moving along pre-determined career paths (Sonnenfeld and Kotter, 1982).

By considering the above arguments, it can be said that career development is differed from men to women. So it is an important aspect for any organization to evaluate it separately. Accordingly, Section 3 below tries to highlight the how important of training and development in women's career.

### **3. Training and development**

Writers define the terms training and development, and other related terms, in varying ways. Fitz-enz (1984) distinguishes between *education* and *training*. He notes that "education is the presentation of concepts and information to people for the purpose of imparting knowledge, while training is ... an interactive exercise whose goal is to develop skills and competencies within the workforce. It is one thing to know; it is something different to be able to do". However, the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) notes that "the dual role now performed by the education system (of preparation for citizenship and life as well as developing employment-related competencies) so blurs the boundary between vocational training and education as to make the distinction between them not only difficult, but unimportant" (OECD, 1997). The OECD defines training as "all the various processes by which an individual develops the competencies required for employment-related tasks" (OECD, 1997). Training is an input. The extent to which "competencies are actually gained in any instance depends on the level and quantity of inputs, the innate abilities of the trainee and motivation to learn" (OECD, 1997).

*Development* is also sometimes distinguished from training, with development defined in terms of broader capability to take up future work and career opportunities, beyond the competencies required for a current position. Collett (1998) refers to the need to "keep the twin activities of training and development in balance - to develop capability (for future work) not just competence (for current position)". Several studies have shown that women in full-time jobs tend to receive less training than men (Powell, 1988; Brockbank and Airey, 1994), but it has also been pointed out that part-time job holders have even fewer training opportunities than their full-time colleagues (Skinner and Robinson, 1988). Wickham (1986) suggests that this may be owing, in part, to the idea that women do not need training as they perform less skilled tasks for which training is unnecessary. nevertheless, the significance of training for both development and confidence-building purposes has been noted (Healy and Kraithman, 1996) as has the difficulty women often face when trying to gain the training they want (Macdonald, 1985). It is, therefore, not surprising that a lack of training is seen as helping to prevent entry into the management ranks in many organisations, and to keep women at the lower levels within management.

The training was always part of the culture of organisation and that sometimes it will offered to part-time and full-time staff. Training increases productivity, Some studies have shown that women appear to have less self-confidence than men (Davidson and Cooper, 1992), are less likely to put themselves forward for promotion (Business in the Community, 1992; ILEA, 1984; Fincham and Rhodes, 1988) and are more likely to feel the need of training, believing that they will not reach the required standard without it.

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#### **4. Discussion**

Research findings summarized that women are having required qualification to undergo a training to improve their career. but they face numerous barriers to enter in to the training program. according to Fielden et al, (2000) there is attitude had persisted through training into the workplace, where they had been expected to undertake clerical and support duties and had to fight to be given technician training and work. they had experienced advantages during their training because of their gender, and a third felt that this was the case in their subsequent careers (Fielden et al, 2000). The very low proportion of female trainees in Italy, Spain and England. Where access to training is through employment and work experience, women experience great difficulty in entry (Birindelli and Sordini, 2003). This difficulty in



obtaining both employer-based training and employment subsequent to formal college training is apparent in Britain. Here the majority of trainees (62%) are in full-time further education (FE) colleges, whilst the remainder are Modern Apprentices based with an employer (CITB, 2004). Women represent 3% of all trainees but, of these, the vast majority are in FE colleges (7% of all trainees) rather than apprentices. Byrne et al,(2005) stated that the route of entry for women into construction is obtaining the training and work experience necessary. Only rarely are they found employed in labouring occupations and those who succeed invariably have formal qualifications. according to Angela et al,(2005) there are numerous obstacles which are faced by women.

- Many women had been interested in non-traditional occupations when younger,
- though had been actively discouraged or unsupported from teachers and
- careers advisers when at school or in further education.
- Women had not been given appropriate advice and guidance in subject choices
- for non-traditional route ways, nor when older in relation to training provision.
- Some women encountered resistance to them undertaking non-traditional skills
- training from their husbands or partners. Success in a male domain, coupled
- with the fact that they could earn more money than their partner triggered
- resentment.
- Women found it much harder than their male counterparts to secure work
- experience placements with employers in order to complete their NVQ
- qualifications.
- In mainstream training women experienced isolation as the 'only one' on many
- courses, with no female lecturers, inflexible hours and little support. These
- conditions meant that only the strongest and most determined women
- completed the courses.
- As many of the women entered non-traditional training when older, they had not
- been eligible to take part in Modern Apprenticeships. Funding to employers for
- training is focused upon Modern Apprenticeships, therefore the options for

- women were limited by age and gender.
- Women in training and employment faced overt and covert discrimination from employers. In some cases employers refused to train or employ women. In other cases women were laughed at, bullied, faced antagonism, were given the worst jobs to do and were expected to make the tea.

Though they enter to the training programme their qualification is not unrecognised by the industry because of them as women. according to Byrne et al,(2005) found that even if women are able to obtain qualifications through college training, these may count for little.it gives an impression that though women enter for the training programme still they were unqualified in the industry. The proportion of women in training is far higher than those in employment, at 0.3%, indicating that many with a formal training are unable to obtain the work experience with an employer necessary to enter the labour market. It is for this reason that efforts to bring women into construction have tended to concentrate on improving their access to work experience and employment (Beck *et al.*, 2003). Colleges appear particularly accessible compared with apprenticeships, including offering women-only courses in a number of trades. Those women who do succeed in finding employment will as a result generally have a higher level of theoretical knowledge and formal qualification than their male counterparts (Wall and Clarke, 1996).

However In the construction sectors formal qualifications are a requirement of entry into construction . Here the emphasis is on the way in which the education and training system itself may act as a force of exclusion. In the Netherlands, the sectoral representatives established a special training programme for women in the 1980s (*Bouw-vak-vrouw*). However, female participation in construction training in the Netherlands remains especially low, a factor that has been attributed to the failure of the education system to integrate changing concepts and methods of organization of work (Westerhuis, 2004). In Britain, a disproportionate number of women trainees are found on the school-based as opposed to the employer-based route; altogether 18% of trainees are unable to find places

in firms and rely on this school-based route, many ending up unemployed (Colclough and Mailand, 2003).

## **5. Conclusions**

This paper has highlighted that Women's career development is mainly based on the proper training program. according to the literature findings it can be identified that women's are seeking training program in order to develop their career and it is necessary for their career development. Even though some initiatives have taken into consideration for training and development as the policy in an organizational aspect lack of success were highlighted in implementing those in to practice. Paper will conclude in identifying lack of training as helping to prevent entry of women into the management ranks in many organizations, and to keep women at the lower levels within management. It further emphasises that it is important to develop the effective and proper training at organizational and regional level to pursue women's career development in the field of construction.

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