# PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEEDS FOR THE PROJECT LEADER IN THE LIBYAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

**Salahaldein Alsadey, Abdelnaser Omran & Abdul Hamid Kadir Pakir**
School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800, Minden, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Email: salahalsadey@yahoo.com

**ABSTRACT**
The quality of leadership is one of the most important factors in determining the success and survival of groups and organizations. The purpose of this paper is to examine the leadership needs of the project leader in the Libyan construction companies. The objective was identified the most important and crucial personal and professional needs of the project manager. This study attempted to identify the needs of the project leaders in the construction industry in Libya. As results, this paper was found that the factor "concise and rational" ranked as the first personnel needs factors. Meanwhile, "versatile" was considered the first professional needs that the project leaders should possess.

**Keywords:** *Leadership needs, personal, professional, Project leader, Construction Industry, Libya.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Every role, performed at excellence, requires talent, whether excellence is celebrated or anonymous; great managers know that excellence is impossible without talent Buckingham & Coffman [1]. Companies everywhere are struggling to attract, develop and retain top applicants and employees. In addition, quality talent is always scarce and having the right talent in the right place at the right time is a make-or-break factor for entities of all types and sizes Rueft & Stringer [2]. Collins [3] claimed that the right people are an organization's primary assets. With the aging workforce, changing technologies and global demand, companies simply need to capitalize on all members of their skilled workforce. The quality of leadership is one of the most important factor in determining the success and survival of groups and organizations. Although technologies play an overriding part under some conditions, effective leadership has often compensated for lack of equipment and resources. It would be difficult to imagine a world without leader Fiedler [4]. There can be little doubt that the well being and success of any nation or organization is heavily dependent on good and effective leadership. History has shown that great nations and organizations are often the result of great leadership. Nations or civilizations have been known to fall or disappear completely due to leadership failure or the lack of a strong leader. The way in which people co-operate with each other, with the leadership and with the community, and the extent of their commitment to their organization, depend very much on the style of management. As such, one must be aware of interacting with others: in the workplace, with friends, at home; any interaction between two or more different project mangers contains opportunities for growth and improved communication. It also may contain opportunities to understand differences in style of expression and action which may lead to destructive relationships. Evaluation of the ability of mangers to understand others especially their counterparts who have different culture and tradition is very important so that it will help them build good interaction with their counterparts. Realizing the importance of understanding leadership of others, this study is carried out in order to investigate the differences between effective manger and ineffective mangers. Since the early pioneering study by Carlson [5], researchers have used descriptive methods such as direct observation, diaries, and interviews to discover what managers do and how they spend their time. These researches on managerial activities only attempted to find answers to question such as how much time should managers spend alone or interacting with different people to accomplish group objectives. In the 80's, management researches became very interested in the emotional and symbolic aspects of management leadership influence. These processes help us to understand how leaders influence followers to make self-sacrifices and put the need of the mission or organization above their materialistic self-interests. There are managers in every organization. A good and perfect one is the manager who possesses good qualities. Barry [6] proposes ten qualities that make a manager effective; these qualities include, inspiring a shared vision, good communicating skills, enthusiasm, team building skills, problem solving skills, empathy, and competence cool under pressure. Ability to delegate tasks among subordinates. It was further explained that these qualities ought to be practiced altogether before significant results can be seen. Gates [7] also provided 10 top qualities that managers need to consider. Amongst these qualities are choosing a field thoughtfully, hiring carefully and having the will to fire lazy workers ,creating a productive environment, defining success, liking people and being a good communicator ,developing workers to do their jobs better ,building moral , taking projects your self , not making the same decision twice and letting people know whom to please. Gates explanations though differ from Barry's are all qualities that are expected to be carried out by

managers in order to be effective. Effective manager or leader must be able to lead as he is regarded as the leader of the project team. Without firm leadership, he would not be able to gain respect from the other consultants. Furthermore, without good leadership qualities, he would not be able to motivate his team to work towards the common goals of the project. Strong leadership is therefore a very important criterion for the manager. This paper, however is trying to identify several personal and professional factors that project leader should have to him/her as an effective one in the construction industry in Libya.

## 2.  LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT

There has been a lot of discussion whether project managers must focus on leadership or management in their companies. Leadership in itself provides a picture of authoritative characteristics. This is because, project managers will see themselves as power holders who will not like to participate in other works. However a project manager who is as a management based will like to be participative, this is one of the reasons why Brugger, Gerrits and Pruitt [8] identify some tools that will help differentiate between project managers who are leaders and those who are managers. One of the tools included intense site reconnaissance. By this project managers who wish to be effective must be more conscious on the current developments on the site. This is because any inconvenience, problem or unexpected circumstances can be responded to accordingly. Another tool is to plan / execute. They explain that project managers must not only focus on planning issues in an organization but also they must focus on effective execution of the planning activities. This will differentiate them from being leaders or managers. The third tool, which is managing sub consultants, is one of the difficult ones amongst them. This is because, sub consultants can sometimes be stubborn and might delay some processes in project execution. Therefore effective project managers must know how to deal with them. The last tool proposed by Brugger *et al.* [8] is quality control. Controlling the quality of projects is one of the characteristics that a project manager should exhibit if he/she wants to be truly effective. Rimualdo [9] proposes that knowledge ability to stimulate interest and delivery of quality results are factors used to distinguish between leadership and management. He explains further that a project manager must have the knowledge to show enthusiasm and convey to the staff important information and also be able to organize the methods that follow systematically. This will make him/her an effective leader. Further more, an effective leader is differentiated from management if he/she has the ability to bring out the interest of people and to deliver quality results. Unearthing the potential in worker would also make the project manager achieve his/her results. The delivery of quality results is also another area explained by Rimualdo [9]. This takes into consideration the ability to plan and carry out a good job; they would trust him and give him credibility.

## 3.  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for this study was obtained through structured questionnaire. All the leadership needs factors were rated on a five-point Likert scale, 1 to 5 representing Not Very Important, Not Important, Moderately Important, Important, Very Important, respectively. These Likert scales are used in the questionnaire survey because it provides a wider choice of alternatives for the respondents Cooper and Schindler [10]. The questionnaire was carried out by getting feedback from various ranged construction projects and companies in Libya. The target respondents were Company Directors, Project Managers, Executives and Non-executives. Of 280 distributed questionnaires, a tow hundred and fifty five (255) useable questionnaires (91.07% response rate) were received and analyzed. The data collection carried between January until April 2010. After all the raw data obtained, the data were then used as input and analyzed with the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 17). The respondents characteristics involved in this study, can be shown in Table 1. Analysis was conducted to rank the Factors based on the average score. Finally, Relative Importance Index (RII) was used to determine the personal and professional leadership needs for the project leader. The most important factors influencing leadership needs was further analyzed using the 'relative importance index' as adopted by Kometa *et al.* [11]. The 5-point Likert scale was converted to relative importance index for each factor, which made it possible to cross-compare the relative importance of each of the factors as perceived by the respondents. The relative importance index was formulated using the following statistical expression Lim & Alum [12]:

$$\text{Relative importance index (RII)} = \frac{4n1 + 3n2 + 2n3 + 1n4 + 0n5}{4N}$$

$$(0 \le \text{RII} \le 1)$$

Where N = Total number of respondent, 4= highest weighted score (0, 1, 2, 3, 4) on scale of agreement (whereas n1 = number of respondents for Not Very important, n2= respondents for Not Important, n3= respondents for moderately important, n4=respondents for Important and n5 = respondents for Very important.

**Table 1: Presents the respondents' characteristics**

| Factors | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Designation in the company** | | |
| Director | 38 | 27.5% |
| Manager | 25 | 18.1% |
| Executive | 39 | 28.3% |
| Non-Executive | 36 | 26.1% |
| **Experiences** | | |
| 1 – 5 years | 66 | 47.8% |
| 6 – 10 years | 46 | 33.3% |
| 11 – 15 years | 16 | 11.6% |
| More than 20 years | 10 | 7.2% |
| **Company establish in the construction industry** | | |
| 1 – 5 years | 67 | 48.6% |
| 6 – 10 years | 38 | 27.5% |
| 11 – 15 years | 18 | 13.0% |
| More than 20 years | 15 | 10.9% |
| **Strategy management system** | | |
| ISO 9000 | 9 | 6.5% |
| TQM (Total quality management) | 10 | 7.2% |
| TPM (Total project management) | 22 | 15.9% |
| Conventional System | 97 | 70.3% |
| **Education** | | |
| Bachelor's | 66 | 47.8% |
| Master's | 22 | 15.9% |
| Doctorate's | 2 | 1.4% |
| Others Specify (Higher Diploma) | 48 | 34.8% |

## 4.  RESULTS & DISCUSSION
This section presents the findings of the study and is divided into two parts. The first one describes the personal needs for the project leader. The second part analyzes the findings of the professional needs.

### 4.1. Personal needs
Table 2 presents the results for the personal needs of project leaders who participated in this study.   Majority of the respondents ranked concise and rational as the number one factor (RII=0.842).  Specific was chosen as the next factor (RII=0.837) followed by open-minded as the third personal factor needed by the project leader (RII=0.821). The rest of the factors are shown in Table (2).

**Table 2: Ranking of the personal items of the Leadership needs**

| Personal Items | RII | Rank |
|---|---|---|
| Adherence to law/legality | 0.497 | 14 |
| Social/moral sensitivity | 0.686 | 8 |
| Adherence to personal Moral Code | 0.796 | 6 |
| Integrity | 0.521 | 13 |
| Impartiality | 0.534 | 11 |
| Team player | 0.701 | 7 |
| Dynamic | 0.812 | 4 |
| Concise and rational | 0.842 | 1 |
| Courteous | 0.521 | 13 |
| Maturity | 0.811 | 5 |
| Open minded | 0.821 | 3 |
| Specific | 0.837 | 2 |
| Intuitive | 0.532 | 12 |
| Diplomatic/discreet | 0.560 | 9 |
| Creative | 0.546 | 10 |
| Ethnocentrism | 0.443 | 15 |
| Parochialism | 0.344 | 16 |

### 4.1. Professional needs
Table (3) clearly illustrates that the overwhelming majority of the respondents believe that versatile is the first professional trait that the project leader should have (RII=0.891), followed by self-regulation (RII=0.831), motivation which ranked third (RII=0.821), and procedural which ranked fourth.  The fifth factor that was

considered as an important professional factor in the construction projects in Libya was receptive to alternative solutions/suggestions.

**Table 3: Ranking of the professional needs of the project leader**

| Items Personal | RII | Rank |
|---|---|---|
| Adherence to construction industries/professional codes (s) | 0.569 | 22 |
| Self-regulation | 0.831 | 2 |
| Time conscious/constraints | 0.705 | 16 |
| Const conscious | 0.726 | 13 |
| Environmental sensitivity/awareness | 0.699 | 18 |
| Client-centredness | 0.568 | 23 |
| Ethical judgment | 0.734 | 12 |
| Attention to details | 0.781 | 7 |
| Thoroughness | 0.702 | 17 |
| Broad base visualization | 0.781 | 7 |
| Receptive to alternative solutions/suggestions | 0.787 | 5 |
| Elicit approval | 0.771 | 9 |
| Prioritize | 0.699 | 18 |
| Safety awareness& Quality | 0.686 | 19 |
| Health conscious | 0.743 | 11 |
| Conversant | 0.762 | 10 |
| Project focus | 0.570 | 21 |
| Procedural | 0.811 | 4 |
| Compromise | 0.722 | 15 |
| Firm | 0.786 | 6 |
| Predictive | 0.779 | 8 |
| Adaptability | 0.725 | 14 |
| Motivation | 0.821 | 3 |
| Critical | 0.686 | 20 |
| Problem solving | 0.551 | 24 |
| Versatile | 0.891 | 1 |

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The leadership research and development should be given greater attention in the industry owing to the particular challenges construction organizations are now facing. There are certain professional and personal needs that required by provided for the project leader in the construction industry in order to be an effective leader. However, the current study has attempted to identify these leadership needs within the Libyan construction companies. Based on the obtained survey, this study confirms that a project leader with specific personal and professional needs will achieve effective leadership; as such, project leaders should put effort in acquiring these needs to execute their responsibilities and tasks effectively. More specifically, the project leaders ranked "concise and rational" as the number one factor (RII=0.842) for arranging top priorities, with "specific" ranked as the second personnel needs factors (RII=0.837). Meanwhile, "versatile" was considered the first professional needs that the project leaders should possess (RII=0.891), with "self-regulation" ranked as the second need (RII=0.831) as identified by the respondents.

## 6. REFERENCES

[1] Buckingham, M., & Coffman, C., (1999). First, break all the rules. New York: Simon & Schuster.
[2] Rueft, R. & Stringer, H. (2006). Talent force: A new manifesto for the human side of business, Upper Saddle River. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
[3] Collins, J. (2001). Good to great. New York: Harper Collins.
[4] Fiedler, F.E., (1987). New Approaches to Effective Leadership: Cognitive Resources and Organizational Performance, USA: John Wiley & Sons.
[5] Carlson, J.G., (1989). Affirmative in Support of Researching The Myer-Briggs Type Indicator. Journal of Counseling and Development, 67. 484-486.
[6] Barry, T.R., (2000). Top 10 Qualities for Project Manager.
[7] Gates, BILL, (2004). A Good Manager Has At Least 10 Good Qualities.
[8] Brugger, W.E. & Gerrits, R. J., (2000). Effective project Management Equals Successful Military, Engineering, 42, 11, pg. 33, ABI/INFORM Global.
[9] Rimualdo, R., (2003). On leadership, Article Business Credit, New York, 105, 8, pg.6.
[10] Cooper, R., Schindler, S., 2005. Business Research Methods, ninth ed. McGraw-Hill, Boston.
[11] Kometa, S.T., Olomolaiye, P.O., and Harris, F.C. (1994). Attributes of UK construction clients influencing project consultants' performance. Construction Management and Economics, 12, 433–43.
[12] Lim, E.C., & Alum, J., (1995). Construction productivity: issues encountered by contractors in Singapore. International Journal of Project Management, 13 (1), 51–58.