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Ethical Behavior in the Construction Industry

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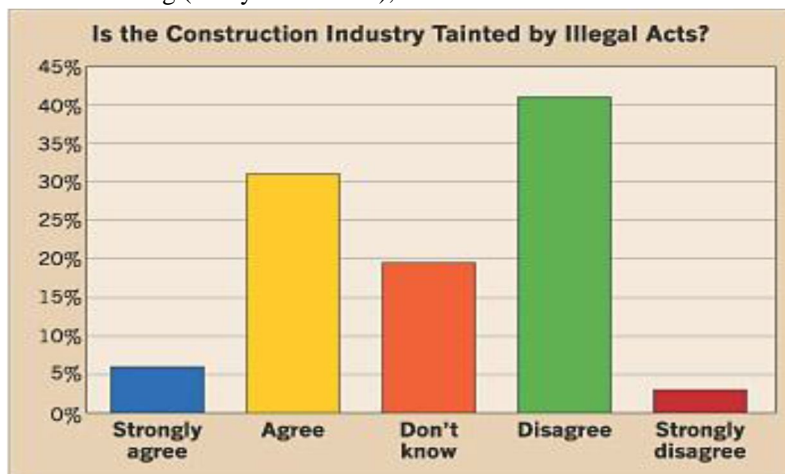
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Abstract: Ethics is a branch of moral philosophy that involves the principles of guiding and recommending behaviors and conduct. Stemming from the Ancient Greek philosophers, ethics is based on the central questions of ‘what is the best way for people to live?’ and ‘what actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances?’ Trying to answer these questions involves considering issues such as good and evil, virtue and vice, and justice and crime. In the construction industry, ethics has developed both at a professional and organizational level. Professionals such as lawyers, engineers and surveyors have ethical codes to uphold as befits their profession, as do organizations. Ethical behavior is often measured by the degree of trustworthiness and integrity with which companies conduct business. Some of the largest construction contractors in the world have faced multi-million fines for significant breaches of ethics and compliance on issues from bribery and collusion to modern slavery. A recent high-profile example was the case of contractors having blacklisted workers. Ethics is a key facet of a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) which it must endeavor to fulfill. The increasing emphasis on sustainability and environment in construction further requires companies to apply ethical standards to their activities.

Keywords: Ethics, Corporate social responsibility, Project Manager, Construction Industry

I. INTRODUCTION

Ethics can be defined as the science of moral; moral principles or code. Hence, it is the system of moral principles governing the appropriate conduct for an individual or group (E. Parson 2005). Ethics in the construction industry is a topic of extreme importance, but at the same time it remains an issue no one wants to talk about publicly. Different departments, however, have different reputation as ethical behavior are concerned, architects were rated superior in ethical behavior to lawyers, some doctors and almost all businessmen and businesswomen; with the clarity being ranked the highest (C. Vee, M. Skitmore 2003). According to the responses of 270 owners, architects, engineers, consultants, construction managers, contractors, and subcontractors in a significant survey finding state the following (L. Oyewobi 2011);



II. UNETHICAL PRACTICES

Unethical performance is a weakness for economic development and good governance. One of the most frequently reported unethical practice in business is Bribery, described as: “the offering of some good, service or money to an appropriate person for the purpose of securing a privileged and favorable consideration (or purchase) of one’s product or corporate project” (C. Vee, M. Skitmore 2003). Other frequently reported unethical practices are related to Fraud, Breaking of confidence and Negligence. Dishonesty, trickery, sharp practice, or break of confidence, by which it is sought to gain some unfair or dishonest advantage, is the description of the unethical practices (W. G. Feighery 2011).

III. ETHICS IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN TERMS OF INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONS

A. Architects

They have high ability to design and construct the building. However, the main type of unethical behaviour in architecture to be (C. Vee, M. Skitmore 2003):

- 1) Stealing someone's drawing
- 2) Concealing the construction drawing errors
- 3) Charging clients for work not done
- 4) Exaggerating experience and achievement for commission
- 5) False promise of advancement as practiced by some architects
- 6) Misleading client in project management
- 7) Involvement in conflict of interest

B. Project Managers

One of the ethical foundations in this profession is the consideration of ethics and social responsibility. There should not be any conflict between morality and good management.

C. Construction Contractors

They are also expected to behave in an ethical manner. The recent survey shows that people working in construction industry are twice as likely to sustain a major injury and five times more likely to be killed than the average for all industries. Being honest and realistic is one of the important aspects of professional integrity while making claims and estimates (C. Vee, M. Skitmore 2003).

IV. CHECKING UNETHICAL PRACTICES

Good control of public funds helps in the reduction of corrupt practices, such as:

- A. Efficient and effective project management
- B. Improvement of liquidity management of public funds
- C. Enhancement of transparency
- D. Accountability and probity in government
- E. Improvement in project cost management
- F. Expenditure and institutional control
- G. Improvement in technical efficiency in management and utilization of resources

The following are the few keys which can be adapted by the construction industry:

- 1) Transparency
- 2) Codes of conduct
- 3) Civil society participation and oversight
- 4) Whistle-blower protection
- 5) Reducing incentives for corruption
- 6) Conflict of interest rules
- 7) Integrity pacts and debarment
- 8) Rigorous prosecution

The following are ways of cutting corruption in the building construction industry: Contracting opportunities are widely publicized; awards are made to those who meet the contractual requirement and make best offers; the rules are clear and fair; the process is transparent with predictable results and public officials are accountable (C. Vee, M. Skitmore 2003).



V. CONCLUSION

It was observed that ethical problems are obvious in all the phases of building project rising from tendering stage to its completion (E. Parson 2005). In the construction industry, corruption can be stopped only if the projects participate in the operation of anti-corruption action which is mentioned in the paper. These members include governments, consultants, project owners, financiers, contractors, and suppliers as well as the business and professional associations which represent these parties (R. Fellows 2004).

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