

CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING MASTERS DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Digitisation: A review into the effect of leadership on culture and data driven procurement teams in UK Main Contractors

This research project aims to investigate the effect leadership has on culture and data driven change programmes within Procurement functions across UK Main Contractors in the Construction Industry. The research aims is to add to the existing body of knowledge and advance the understanding of a data driven culture by exploring procurement professionals' knowledge of data and their role in a data driven culture.

Some industries are not the best known for using data effectively. Consider the construction industry, where much of the work is done on the project – by workers in hardhats, not in front of computers. As the world is becoming more digital, connected and intelligent, companies have a growing desire to become more data driven.

Main Contractors have recognised the need to reimagine their relevancy within the UK construction industry by acknowledging that a change is needed in their organisational operating models. More importantly, an acceptance that the quest to become data driven is no longer a 'nice to have' but is existential; it is a matter of survival (Mauri, 2020). With this, many traditional internal business functions are being challenged to re-think their strategies – whether this is leadership, structure, or the formation of a data team. Leading this transformation is not easy, and it is essential to acknowledge cultural and technological related challenges. Prior research has found that senior management plays a critical role in making a data culture a reality. However, most prior studies, have not fleshed out how leadership teams can be a key agent in influencing other key players in data use.

To gain rich and in-depth data with the aim to ascertain greater insight into leadership and its role in data driven cultures, this research illustrates the experience of twelve procurement professionals on themes associated with data, leadership, culture and data driven decision making. The interviews followed an interpretivism philosophical approach, using a qualitative semi-structured interview.

The findings suggest that there is a new taxonomy of leadership being developed in this digital age. As the pace of change towards a more technological future accelerates, the research suggests that this transformation is less about digitisation and more around the social connection between people.

The main limitation of this research was the sample size and sampling method meaning the findings of this research cannot necessarily be generalised across procurement functions in UK Construction. However, these findings have positive implications for the procurement leader of the future in UK Construction; as demonstrated by the evidence, the procurement community wants to digitise. Therefore, there is a requirement for further research to adopt an action research approach to help enable a broader and richer data collection phase and more rounded experience.