

CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING MASTERS DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Equality, diversity and inclusion in construction: Exploring the effectiveness of change programmes in shifting the industry's culture from the LGBT+ perspective

Construction companies seeking organisational change often embark on broad-spectrum, multi-faceted organisational change programmes addressing issues from financial performance through to a human capital agenda. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within the UK construction industry, in particular the inclusion of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual (LGBT+) community is rarely addressed effectively and as a result homophobia and abuse are still commonplace in the sector. Not only does this impact individual well-being, but affects outside perception of the sector and could be limiting the talent pool willing to work in the industry. This is particularly concerning in light of the widely reported skills shortage in the construction sector.

This research reviewed existing literature to establish knowledge on what contributes to successful organisational change and how an EDI change programme might be structured. Findings reveal that despite the existence of well-established organisational change approaches, effects of those on lives of LGBT+ employees are not well understood. It then assessed opinions of employees of a Tier 1 main contractor as a case study organisation complimented with views from the broader construction industry on the key success factors enabling change, as well as significant barriers inhibiting it. Ultimately, it proposes a set of guidelines that create an enabling environment that contributes to the successful implementation of EDI/LGBT+ change programmes, with a focus on the particular needs of the construction sector.

The study employed qualitative analysis to explore complexity in organisations in a rich, multi-dimensional problem space. It involved 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews with a cross-sectional representation of the organisation. Interview data was analysed alongside secondary data from published case studies and unpublished internal reports.

The challenges to an effective organisational change programme to increase LGBT+ inclusion can be described using a multitude of themes such as apparent perception, multiple facets of leadership, social networks, engagement and the process of change. The findings suggest that despite increased focus and publicity, the activities that organisations are undertaking are usually not placed strategically within the core of the business. This can be addressed by increased executive sponsorship, targeted communications and visibility of the construction sector within the LGBT+ community.

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