

## **CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING MASTERS DISSERTATION ABSTRACT**

### **Early Contractor Involvement in the UK Construction Industry: A study of participant experiences and the implications for the future**

The early involvement of contractors at the front end of construction projects, such that they can assist both the client and consultants in the buildability and planning of a project, has long been signalled as a key progressive step for the construction industry. Despite a number of sources promoting the uptake of an early contractor involvement procurement route and accompanying research advocating the benefits of this approach, implementation of ECI remains an outlier within industry. While current studies focus very much on the benefits and successes of an ECI procurement approach, little research to date in the UK has focused on the combined perceptions of those who have gained significant levels of experience in this route.

The research sought to address the effect of the cycle of experience of ECI schemes amongst the project community on their attitudes and therefore, expectations associated with the process. Motivations in engaging with the process were examined, along with investigating the degree of alignment amongst project participants on a series of enabling factors associated with ECI.

Through a methodology involving an extensive interview phase, designed to be exploratory in nature so as to capture the experiences of ECI participants, a series of contemporary themes were developed. Further validation and analysis of the data derived was undertaken in a follow on quantitative phase.

A recent evolution in motivations, over and beyond those traditionally associated with ECI in literature, was identified through the research. Participant expectations in the form of transparency were found to be unfulfilled in the main, with particular challenges facing the process in the form of main contractor transparency affecting the attitudes of other participants. Related challenges due to commercial behaviours were found to be continuously negating the contributions and adversely affecting the expectations of the lower tier supply chains towards ECI, whose contributions are rightly regarded as fundamental to the successful enactment of the process.

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