

International Conference on Professionalism and Ethics in Construction
21-22 November 2018
Keyworth Centre, London South Bank University, London, UK

REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE

The conference

The first meeting of the CIB Task Group 95 (TG95) on Professionalism and Ethics in Construction was held at the Keyworth Centre, London South Bank University (LSBU) on 21-22 November 2018. The main organisers this International Conference on Professionalism and Ethics in Construction was the LSBU (host) and the International Council for Research and Innovation in Building and Construction (CIB). The co-organisers were: the Applied Science University in Bahrain; Federal University of Technology Akure in Nigeria; and the Infrastructure Transparency Initiative (CoST) based in London, UK.

The conference was sponsored by the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), and Wilmott-Dixon Interiors, UK. It was supported by the Association for Project Management (APM), Association for Project Safety (APS), Constructing Excellence, and Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

The Co-Chairs of the Organising Committee of the conference were Professor Charles Egbu and Professor George Ofori, both of LSBU, who are also Joint Co-ordinators of CIB TG95.

Aim, objectives and themes

The aim of the conference was to provide an opportunity for prospective authors to review knowledge on professionalism and ethics and how it relates to the construction process and practices in different countries, with the view to making proposals of actions which can be taken to improve the situation.

The objectives of the conference were to:

1. review the state of the construction professions in different countries, and the implications of this state of affairs
2. consider the importance of ethics in construction, current state of adherence to ethics in countries and implications of the present situation
3. discuss what can be done to develop the professions and practitioners to enhance professionalism, ethics, and the industry's image.

It was suggested that papers submitted for the conference might explore topics including the following:

1. State of the construction professions; underlying factors and the implications
2. Regulation and control, and continuous development of the construction professions
3. Professionalism and current issues such as leadership; sustainable development; technology development; and innovation
4. Project management and professionalism
5. Ethics in construction and current issues such as bribery and corruption, modern slavery, responsible sourcing, and considerate contracting
6. Transparency and open contracting
7. Stakeholder management and citizen involvement in construction.

Of 80 abstracts from 18 countries which were received, 59 were accepted. Some 41 papers (from 15 countries) were eventually accepted for the conference. Some 29 papers and industry case

studies were presented in-person and one via recorded video, under six themes. Some 48 participants from 12 countries attended the conference.

The papers in the proceedings were fully edited by the two Co-Chairs of the Conference Organising Committee: Professor Charles Egbu and Professor George Ofori. Each of the papers in the proceedings has a 'DOI' number. The proceedings are available online on an open access platform, as well as in ICONDA, the CIB depository of research papers.

Special features of conference

A major intention of the conference was to bring industry and researchers together. For example, there were five eminent keynote speakers from both industry and research. The keynote speakers were:

1. Professor Ghassan Aouad, President of the Applied Science University, Bahrain
2. Dr Wim Bakens, Former Secretary General, CIB, the Netherlands
3. Mr Chris Blythe, OBE, Chief Executive Officer, CIOB, UK
4. Professor Jacqueline Glass, University College London, UK
5. Mr Neill Stansbury, Director of the Global Infrastructure Anti-Corruption Centre, UK.¹

There were two one-hour discussion panel sessions, one on 'professionalism' and the other on 'ethics'. The topics of these sessions, and panel members, are now presented.

Panel Discussion Session One

Topic: "Exploitation and modern slavery, and unfair payment in construction"

Moderator: Professor Charles Egbu, LSBU, UK

Panel Members:

1. Professor Jacqueline Glass, University College London, UK
2. Mr Chris Blythe, OBE, Chief Executive, CIOB, UK
3. Dr Jill Wells, Senior Fellow, Engineers Against Poverty, London, UK
4. Assoc Prof Yamuna Kaluarachchi, LSBU, UK.

Panel Discussion Session Two

Topic: "Integrity, responsibility and accountability in professional roles in construction"

Moderator: Professor Ghassan Aouad, President of the Applied Science University, Bahrain

Panel Members:

1. Dr Wim Bakens, Secretary General, CIB, the Netherlands
2. Mr Bobby Chakravarthy, President, APS, UK
3. Professor Liu Junying, Tianjin University, China
4. Mr Neill Stansbury, Director of GIACC, UK.

Industry case studies of good practice on aspects of the theme of the conference (on both professionalism and ethics) were presented in a plenary session. One of the papers was prepared by a professional institution, and the others by construction companies.

A business meeting of TG95 was held in a plenary session. It provided the opportunity to review the activities of the group, and establish plans for its future.

Best paper awards

The best paper awards for ethics and professionalism respectively were won by:

1. Weirui Niu and Xiaomei Deng, for the paper entitled: "A monitoring system of professional ethics for the construction industry based on Blockchain"

¹ The keynote paper presented by Neill Stansbury was co-authored by Catherine Stansbury, co-founder of the Global Infrastructure Anti-Corruption Centre (GIACC), UK.

2. John Hawkins, for the paper entitled: "Turning infrastructure data into compelling information: how the CoST assurance process can be a catalyst for sector reforms".

We congratulate the winners of these awards.

TG95 Business meeting

During the business meeting of CIB TG95 on Professionalism and Ethics in Construction, the reasons for the formation of the task group, and its activities were first outlined. Several broad issues relating to the subject of the group were then discussed. Arguably worth singling out is that the discussion highlighted the need for a generational change in ethics in the construction industry. This should start from the way the subject is taught at the tertiary institutions; ethics should be a mandatory subject on all tertiary-level built environment programmes.

The suggestions which were made included:

- Effort should be made in all countries to change the image of the construction industry in all countries
- It would be useful for the task group to team up with a professional institution such as CIOB, to form a joint working commission on the subject of professionalism and ethics in the construction industry
- Countries could introduce a reward-based system for ranking or indexing companies on the levels of professionalism and ethics. Such "naming and faming" schemes have the potential to engender good performance.

The topics for research which were suggested included:

- A good practice database on professionalism and ethics in construction at the international level – research could be undertaken in each country to document the current situation with regard to professionalism and ethics
- A survey of universities around the world and how they cover the teaching of ethics
- Emerging technologies and professionalism and ethics in the construction industry, to show how the former is helping to
- Making a business case that ethics and business professionalism helps the bottom line.

Conclusions and recommendations

There was general agreement at the conference that the subjects of professionalism and ethics should be important considerations in the construction industry in all countries. The construction industry should be about making people's lives better. From the papers, presentations and discussions, there was a consensus on several other broad issues. Some of these were:

- The construction industry around the world has a poor image stemming from corruption, unethical behaviour and poor business attitudes such as non-payment of downstream firms in the supply chain and workers, tolerance of such anti-social practices such as human slavery, and adversarial practices among project participants which hinder effort towards attaining clients' and society's goals
- The separation of the professionals from the rest of the construction industry is a major impediment to progress in construction; this UK practice has been exported to many countries. In this model, risk is passed on to those who are least able to bear it: the industry's workers. There is a need for context-specific approaches to professionalism in construction; it is necessary to consider the supply chains at a distance as well
- Over the past 15 years or so, there has been a move from tolerating poor levels of professionalism and unethical behaviour to taking action to stop it. The developments have included the adoption of international conventions, changes in the law and introduction of increasingly stronger and more effective enforcement mechanisms, high profile prosecutions, the introduction of an international standard to guide practice, actions by professional

institutions and trade associations, and cross-cutting national or international initiatives such as the multi-stakeholder programme, CoST

- There is a need for political will and leadership in order to enhance levels of professionalism and ethics in construction. Every stakeholder in construction should consider it his/her responsibility to work towards reducing corruption, unethical behaviour, mismanagement, and other bad practices: "It is not anybody's problem: it is everyone's problem". It is necessary for the stakeholders to work together
- There is a need for transparency, awareness building and capacity building, better laws, and more effective enforcement. There should be more sharing of the available good practices and country experience (such as the direct payment of workers scheme of the Seoul Municipal Authority)
- Educational institutions should do much more to impart ethics to students on built environment programmes. We should consider developing a common education framework for construction in all countries.

We can conclude that the rationale for the conference was justified, and that the conference met its aim and objectives, by providing a platform for the detailed discussion of the key subjects of professionalism and ethics in an industry with major deficits in both regards.

At the closing ceremony, the conference paid tribute to Dr Wim Bakens, the former CIB Secretary General, as this would be one of the last CIB events Dr Bakens would be attending. The participants expressed their appreciation to him for the long period of service to the construction research community, and his commitment to professionalism and ethics. The support he has provided to researchers, and citizens, of the developing countries was particularly noted and appreciated.

The participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the conference. The response was generally positive. The organisers were encouraged to endeavour to organise another conference on the broad themes in the near future.

Another conference of TG95 will be held towards the end of the task group's initial three-year tenure (i.e., before the end of January 2021).

A note of thanks

We are grateful to the eminent keynote speakers, the distinguished members of the scientific and technical committee, the authors of papers, and the participants who attended the conference. We also thank all the members of the organising committee, the Events Team at LSBU, and the few postgraduate students who worked so hard in a very short period to make the conference a success.

Charles Egbu and George Ofori
Conference Co-Chairpersons
Joint Co-ordinators of TG95 on Professionalism and Ethics in Construction

08 December 2018