

# Strategic corporate real estate management practice in Ghana

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The success of every business depends to a large extent on its corporate real estate (CRE), given that, it is the physical assets that support its operations. To achieve this success, organizations must adopt a strategic approach to CRE management. The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent of adoption of strategic corporate real estate management (SCREM) practice in Ghana based on the views of CRE managers.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The embedded mixed method approach was adopted for the study. In total, 72 CRE managers were selected from 35 institutions in 5 sectors (tertiary education, health, banking, security and service industry) where real estate is a requirement for accreditation using a multi-stage sampling technique.

**Findings** – An analysis of the existing practices underpinning SCREM in Ghana showed that SCREM has not been adopted completely in Ghanaian institutions. No organization has a complete systematic structure in place for SCREM as the practice is evolving. This finding correlates the global trend that CRE is not strategically managed like other corporate resources.

**Practical implications** – Current SCREM practices in Ghana, as divulged by this research, provide useful insight into the current status quo of SCREM and what must be done to ensure that CRE achieves its attribute of value adding.

**Originality/value** – The paper outlines the elements of SCREM practice, adding to the limited literature on the practice in Ghana and worldwide. It also sets the stage for further research in SCREM practice and CRE performance.

**Keywords** Strategic management, Ghana, Organizational structure, Corporate real estate, Enabling systems, Policy direction

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Corporate institutions need property in order to achieve their goals and establish their identity. Well-designed buildings and workplaces are often used to boost corporate image, values and culture (Haynes, 2012; Khanna *et al.*, 2013; Omar and Heywood, 2014). Managed strategically, corporate real estate (CRE) contributes to employees' satisfaction, motivation and productivity, and to shareholders' wealth (Manning and Roulac, 1996; Lindholm *et al.*, 2006), by providing work environment that supports employees and organizational processes (Beckers *et al.*, 2015; Van der Voordt, 2016).

Globally, CRE constitutes approximately 20–50 percent of corporate assets and the second largest expenditure item after salaries (Jones and White, 2012; Sulaiman *et al.*, 2015; Van der Beemt-Tjeerdsma and Veuger, 2016). The nature of CRE partially indicates an

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organization's ability to provide quality goods and services to achieve organizational goals (Veale, 1989; Omar and Heywood, 2014; Taylor, 2014). It also provides collateral for corporate borrowing (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2015; Van der Beemt-Tjeerdsma and Veuger, 2016). Yet, in some instances, CRE is still considered a cost item. Its management is seen as a reactive support service excluded from top-tier functions. Additionally, in most organizations, the CRE manager is usually not part of the strategic management team (Ngwira *et al.*, 2012; CoreNet Global, 2015; Langford and Haynes, 2015).

In Ghana, CRE in the health, education, security, service and banking sectors constitutes about 51–87 percent of corporate capital investment and is also a source of corporate strength, weakness and strategic priority (Bolgatanga Polytechnic, 2009; Koforidua Polytechnic 2010a; Accra Polytechnic, 2013; Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, 2013; Judicial Services, 2014). It is acknowledged that the physical state of CRE is an important determinant of the quality and access to goods and services provided in health care, education and banking institutions (Ministry of Health, 2000; Osei Kwarteng *et al.*, 2012). As such, CRE issues ought to be high on the corporate agenda and managed strategically to support core business. However, like the global situation, it is the most under-managed corporate asset in Ghana, with most organizations not having asset inventories (Owusu, 2013; Bokpe, 2017).

Globally, studies have shown that CRE contributes significantly to organizational performance; however, it is not strategically managed to support business processes (Heywood, 2011; Omar and Heywood, 2014; Sulaiman *et al.*, 2015). This challenge can be attributed to the lack of clear CRE strategic and policy direction (Beckers *et al.*, 2015; CoreNet, 2015), inadequate organizational power (O'Mara *et al.*, 2002; Then, 2005; Abdullah *et al.*, 2011) and inadequate enabling systems for effective CRE management (Haynes, 2012; Ijason, 2013; Laloo, 2013).

Views shared by the authors above also pertain to Ghana. CRE units are mostly submerged, not well represented at the strategic level of management, and their contribution to organizational performance is often overlooked (Osei Kwarteng *et al.*, 2012; Judicial Service, 2014). Also, lack of integrated CRE policy with strategic direction for CRE management is a major problem (Ministry of Health, 2000, 2014). Additionally, poorly resourced CRE units with inadequate databases for decision making continues to adversely affect the strategic management of CRE in Ghana (Judicial Service, 2014).

There is a plethora of research findings on corporate and real estate strategies alignment, CRE value-adding attributes, CRE management best practice and performance measurement (Lindholm *et al.*, 2006; CoreNet Global, 2015; Langford and Haynes, 2015). However, there is still limited research on the strategic corporate real estate management (SCREM) practice, especially in Ghana and the African sub-region notwithstanding some related studies from Nigeria and South Africa (Oladokun, 2010; Laloo, 2013; Ijason, 2013; Koleoso *et al.*, 2018). This knowledge gap, when filled, would provide a useful insight into the SCREM practice in Ghana and internationally. This paper, therefore, examines the extent of adoption of a strategic approach to CRE management in Ghana. It focuses on the requirements for the adoption and improvement of SCREM practice.

## 2. Strategic corporate real estate management (SCREM) practice

### 2.1 Meaning of SCREM

CRE has been defined as land and buildings used by organizations not primarily in the real estate business to support their operational activities (Heywood, 2011; Omar and Heywood, 2014; Sulaiman *et al.*, 2015). According to Ali *et al.* (2008), the term CRE also applies to real property that is either owned or leased by firms to achieve corporate objectives. These definitions are in line with the technical definition by CoreNet Global (2015, p. 1) that “corporate real estate refers to the real properties that house the productive or business

activities of an organization that owns or leases and, consequently, manages real estate incidental to its primary business objectives, which are not real estate.” The definitions show that, aside being an important asset on the balance sheet, it is globally acknowledged that CRE contributes to organizational performance. This gives CRE a more strategic role as it provides the physical environment that satisfies customer needs, entices and retains qualified employees, promotes corporate identity and enhances core competencies (Roulac *et al.*, 2003; Van der Beemt-Tjeerdsma and Veuger, 2016).

SCREM is the proactive approach to operational real property management for the achievement of organizational objectives (Joroff *et al.*, 1993; Heywood and Kenley, 2008; CoreNet Global, 2015). Other authors have expanded this definition to add that SCREM involves active interaction between CRE managers and all managers in organizational activities (Krumm *et al.*, 1999; Edwards and Ellison, 2004; Fadzil *et al.*, 2011). In line with the expanded definition, SCREM, for the purpose of this study, is defined as a practical, all-inclusive management of operational real estate assets with optimal organizational support for the achievement of corporate goals. SCREM, therefore, transcends the day-to-day technical and individual real property management activity, becoming a holistic CRE management process.

According to the resource-based theory of the firm, organizations use resources such as labor, capital and real estate (the tangible physical environment) to create and sustain competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Heywood and Kenley, 2008; Too and Too, 2010). Organizations, therefore, adopt a strategic approach to ensure that organizational resources, including CRE, are well managed to support operations (Dess *et al.*, 2008; Gibler and Lindholm, 2012). However, globally, CRE is not strategically managed like other corporate resources (Ngwira *et al.*, 2012; Osei Kwarteng *et al.*, 2012; Kämpf-Dern and Pfnür, 2014), although there is a changing view of CRE from a cost to a value-adding item (CoreNet Global, 2015; Jones Lang LaSalle, 2015).

### *2.2 Essentials for strategic corporate real estate management (SCREM)*

First, SCREM requires clear strategic direction from senior management. This involves strategic analysis of the CRE needs of the organization, formulation of CRE policy and allocation of resources – CRE-enabling systems at the organizational level (Then, 2005; CoreNet Global, 2015). As per the strategic management best practice approach, all functional managers, including the real estate executive, must play a leading role in the strategic analysis process for strategic direction (David, 2011; Azmi, 2010; Jones Lang LaSalle, 2015). However, this role is not always played by CRE managers (Omar and Heywood, 2010; Kämpf-Dern and Pfnür, 2014), especially in Ghana. It is against this background that Osei Kwarteng *et al.* (2012) argued that the Ghanaian CRE manager is not part of the strategic management team. This suggests that Ghanaian CRE managers must strive to obtain a higher representation in corporate affairs.

Second, SCREM requires a well-integrated CRE policy that provides the framework for managing organizational real estate assets. This includes the formulation, evaluation and selection of strategies for the implementation of the policy (Kotler, 2003; David, 2011). The policy must outline the vision, mission, goals and functions of the CRE unit, its alignment to organizational activities, strategies for alignment, action plans for implementation, key performance indicators, evaluation and control measures (Kotler, 2003; Nieboer, 2011).

Third, an organizational structure that gives adequate authority for the implementation of the CRE policy is also needed. It provides information and direction about who, where and how decisions related to CRE are made within the organization (Tay and Liow, 2006; Van der Beemt-Tjeerdsma and Veuger, 2016). For the strategic role of CRE and its managers to be adequately recognized, the CRE function must be clearly shown on the organizational structure with the CRE manager close to senior management and other functional

managers (CoreNet Global, 2015; Langford and Haynes, 2015; Jones Lang LaSalle, 2015). Additionally, organizational culture also plays a role in corporate policy implementation. Therefore, a CRE-educated culture is also required for the adoption of a strategic approach to CRE management (Omar and Heywood, 2014; Goldman *et al.*, 2015).

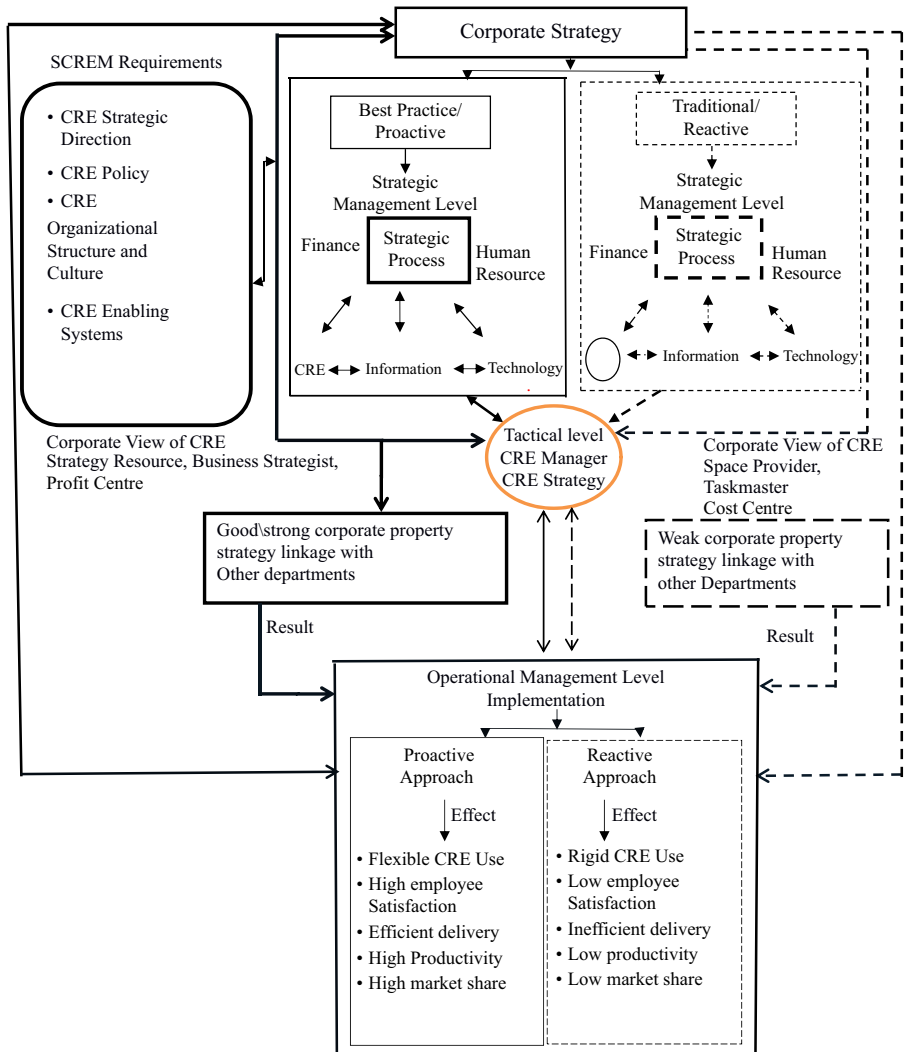
The fourth requirement for SCREM is a CRE-enabling system. This includes CRE budgetary allocation, workplace standards guides, real estate helpdesks, information management systems and logistics for effective CRE management (Acoba and Foster, 2003; Then, 2005; Tay and Liow, 2006). A fully automated CRE unit ensures a well-integrated information management system for decision making, and better performance of CRE and other organizational functions (CoreNet Global, 2015; Jones Lang LaSalle, 2015).

### 2.3 Conceptual model for strategic corporate real estate management (SCREM)

The requirements from the literature for the adoption of SCREM have been summed up in a conceptual model as shown in Figure 1. The right side of the model shows the reactive approach to CRE management, while the left side illustrates the proactive (best practice) or the SCREM approach. As per the left side of the model, SCREM requires an all-inclusive approach to CRE management. It indicates that there must be a well-integrated approach to CRE strategy formulation with the active participation of all functional managers – human resource, finance, information and real estate – at the strategic level of management. This will ensure that all functional strategies, including CRE, are properly aligned and included in the corporate strategy. This means that there must be CRE strategic direction (Heywood and Kenley, 2013; Omar and Heywood, 2014), a well formulated CRE policy, a well-structured CRE management unit with adequate organizational power, a CRE-educated organizational culture (Goldman *et al.*, 2015; CoreNet Global, 2015) and enabling systems (Acoba and Foster, 2003; Tay and Liow, 2006; Omar and Heywood, 2010).

With the active involvement of the CRE manager in the strategic planning process, functional managers at all levels of management – strategic, tactical and operational – will begin to appreciate the strategic role of CRE in organizational activities. This will gradually change the corporate view of CRE from a purely cost to a value-adding item (Langford and Haynes, 2015). Additionally, the CRE manager will be seen as a Business Strategist contributing to the competitive advantage of the organization (Joroff *et al.*, 1993; CoreNet Global, 2015). The overall benefit of the proactive approach to CRE management will be to have a well-integrated CRE management due to a good, strong alignment of corporate and CRE strategies. All things being equal, this will result in the flexible use of CRE, high employee satisfaction, improved employee delivery, increased productivity and high organizational market share.

The hypothetical Ghanaian CRE management practice, as shown by the literature, is reactive in nature, following the situation depicted on the right side of the model. As per the diagram, it is presumed that CRE management in Ghana has no strategic direction since there is no direct coordination between strategic managers and CRE managers. Also, there is no CRE policy, nor well-structured CRE units or comprehensive CRE information management systems. CRE strategy is often not well aligned with corporate strategy because it is formulated at the tactical level and then often presented at the strategic level of management by another functional manager whose area of specialization may not be real estate management (Osei Kwarteng *et al.*, 2012). As a result, CRE issues may not be well presented at the strategic decision-making level. This is in line with the view of Langford and Haynes (2015) that the value-adding attributes of CRE are not well appreciated in organizational performance, since the CRE function is not well aligned with the core business. The effect is the reverse of the proactive (best practice) approach in that CRE is seen as a space provider, the CRE manager a Taskmaster (Joroff *et al.*, 1993) and CRE a cost item on the balance sheet. All things being equal, this will result in the rigid use of CRE, low employee satisfaction, inefficient delivery, low productivity and reduced organizational market share.



**Figure 1.**  
Strategic corporate  
real estate  
management  
conceptual model

**Sources:** Author's construct 2017 based on Joroff *et al.* (1993); Kotler (2003). Then, 2005; Roulac (2001); Lindholm *et al.* (2006)

### 3. Research design and methodology

The embedded mixed method approach was adopted for the study. The embedded design is a mixed methods of design in which one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Creswell, 2014). The study, which is largely a quantitative study, focused primarily on the collection of quantitative data through the usage of a questionnaire survey. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis and personal observations were used to obtain qualitative data which provided an auxiliary role to the methodology. According to Yin (2014), Creswell (2014) and Denscombe (2010), such an approach enables researchers to address complex research

questions and obtain higher consistency and validity of the research. It also provides researchers with the opportunity to neutralize inherent bias in a particular data source (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

Using multi-stage sampling, the researchers selected 72 CRE managers from 35 organizations nation-wide with formally established CRE management units. Participants were selected from five different sectors, namely, health, tertiary education, banking, security services and service industry, to give a holistic view of SCREM practice in Ghana. The institutions were selected from lists provided by the legal regulatory bodies of the five sectors: Bank of Ghana (2013) approved banking institutions; National Accreditation Board (2013) accredited tertiary educational institutions ; Ghana Health Service (2010) approved hospitals; Ministries of Trade and Industry, Defense and Interior accredited service providers and security services. Table I gives an insight into the sampling stage units adopted for the multi-stage sampling. The response rate of the targeted organizations and CRE managers are spelled out under Table II.

Questionnaires were completed in the presence of the researchers to ensure that the respondents were whom the researchers want (Saunders *et al.*, 2012) and that they were not handed to only low ranking or operational managers. This was followed by semi-structured interviews which lasted 10–30 min. Where applicable multiple CRE professionals were included to ensure that a candid view of the organizations' CRE activities was captured. This allowed the researchers to probe further for detailed information to enhance, confirm and clarify findings from the survey (Denscombe, 2010; Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

For the document analysis, 21 organizations provided documents such as annual reports, strategic plans, organizational charts, statutes and CRE policies for review. The key areas of the document review were the strategic importance of CRE, strategic direction, reporting lines of CRE managers, integration of the CRE function into organizational activities and CRE management practices. The document analysis, interview results and observations were used to corroborate (Creswell, 2014) responses from the survey. All the 35 organizations were visited by the researchers to observe at first hand the CRE management practices,

Stage	Activity	Population	Sampling technique
One	Selection of sectors	Sectors in which CRE is a requirement for accreditation	Cluster sampling
Two	Selection of organizations from sectors disproportionately	Organizations with established CRE units in the selected sectors	Random sampling
Three	Selection of CRE managers	CRE managers in the selected organizations	Purposive sampling

**Table I.**  
Multi-stage sampling procedure

Sectors	No. of organizations sampled	No. of organizations responded	Response rate (%)	Targeted CRE managers	Realized CRE managers	Response rate (%)
1. Tertiary education	21	13	62	35	23	66
2. Health	10	8	80	14	10	71
3. Security services	3	3	100	12	11	92
4. Service providers	11	7	64	29	16	55
5. Banking	8	4	50	17	11	65
Total numbers	53	35	66	107	72	67

**Table II.**  
Response rates of organizations and CRE managers

CRE organizational structure and office set-up of the CRE units. The research was conducted from July 2014 to January 2016. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations were obtained using SPSS version 20.0 for the quantitative data analysis. Anonymity was one of the ethics requirements of the responding institutions.

#### 4. Results and discussion

##### 4.1 Background of the CRE managers

In total, 72 out of 107 CRE managers from 5 sectors responded to questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. In total, 23 (31.9 percent) were from the tertiary education sector, 16 (22.2 percent) from the service industry, 12 (16.7 percent) from the security services, 11 (15.3 percent) from the banking and 10 (13.9 percent) from the health sector. The highest number of responses was from participants in the tertiary education sector (i.e. 31.9 percent) with the least number of participants coming from the health sector (i.e. 13.9 percent).

In terms of expertise of the CRE managers, the results show that 55 (76.4 percent) of the respondents were real estate professionals; the remaining 17 (23.6 percent) belonged to other built environment professions such as building technology, civil engineering and architecture. Regarding participants' academic qualifications, 29 (40 percent) of the respondents indicated that they had earned a master's degree, 27 (38 percent) a bachelor's degree, 10 (14 percent) a Higher National Diploma and 6 (8.4 percent) lower qualifications such as diploma and certificate. This high attainment of tertiary level qualification among respondents could be attributed to the increasing number of tertiary institutions in Ghana which stood at 128 institutions as at 2014 (Ministry of Education, 2015). However, of the 29 CRE managers who indicated that they held master's degrees, only 2 of them were in real estate management. The remaining 27 were in non-CRE-related disciplines. This low percentage of CRE managers having real estate-related master's degrees conflicts with the national trend for master's degree enrollment in general. In 2013, enrollment for master's degree programs recorded an average growth rate of 114.4 percent (National Accreditation Board, 2015). This inverse correlation exists because, currently, only one tertiary institution in Ghana runs a real estate-related master's program. The results also showed that only 44.4 percent of the 72 respondents were members of the Ghana Institution of Surveyors. The low number of CRE managers having master's degrees and professional memberships indicates that most CRE managers in Ghana have not upgraded their basic knowledge in CRE management. Table III shows the working experience of the CRE managers. About half of the respondents, 37 (51.4 percent), have between 1 and 10 years' experience, 21 (29.2 percent) have between 11 and 20 years and 14 (19.4 percent) have over 20 years' experience in CRE management. On the level of management of the CRE managers, the study revealed that most of the respondents (70.8 percent) are at the operational level, whilst only 14.5 percent are at the tactical and strategic levels.

It is clear from the analysis of the background of the CRE managers above that most of the organizations involved in this study have qualified personnel with considerable years of experience in real estate management. This is because about 80.6 percent of the respondents have between 1 and 20 years' experience in real estate management, making them

Years of experience	Frequency	Percentage
1–10	37	51.4
11–20	21	29.2
Over 20	14	19.4
Total	72	100

**Table III.**  
Years of experience of  
CRE managers

**Source:** Field Survey (2016)

appropriate for the study. Although there were well-trained CRE professionals with significant CRE management experience spread across the various sectors examined in Ghana, the requirements for the adoption and improving of SCREM are not wholly met. According to the literature, the CRE function is evolving toward a strategic role (Joroff *et al.*, 1993; Koleoso *et al.*, 2018). The CRE manager therefore needs improved academic or professional skills to understand the strategic business needs and fulfill the changing role to make a greater impact on organizational competitiveness (CoreNet Global, 2015; Jones Lang LaSalle, 2015). However, it was revealed that most of the CRE managers do not have master’s degrees or professional memberships. In a country where most senior management-level positions require post-graduate qualification and, in some instances, professional qualification (Government of Ghana, 2012; *Daily Graphic*, 2016a, 2018), such a deficit prevents the CRE manager from being closer to senior management. This, coupled with the fact that CRE is usually not considered a core business function especially in the sectors under consideration, makes it difficult for them to move up the corporate organizational structure.

#### 4.2 Strategic importance of CRE

The strategic importance of CRE in the surveyed organizations was assessed by the need of CRE for accreditation, the current CRE needs, the number of buildings and their book values and the corporate perception of the CRE units as well as documentary evidence (see Table VII) and observations. The results revealed that CRE is a requirement for accreditation in the selected organizations, as the majority of the respondents 54 (75 percent) responded positively to this question. In this regard, a CRE manager from the banking sector indicated that “the Central Bank would inspect their CRE facilities in terms of layout, form, and location before a license is issued.”

In terms of the current real estate needs of the organizations, 56 (77.8 percent) of the participants indicated that their organizations are expanding and acquiring additional property, highlighting the importance of CRE to these organizations. In this regard, a CRE manager from one security service said that “CRE facilities are being expanded because there cannot be prisons without barracks, hence the importance of CRE cannot be overemphasized.” Another CRE manager from the service sector highlighted the importance of expansion and acquisition of properties by saying that “The quality of cocoa beans for exportation is dependent on the quality of warehouses available, so warehouses expansion is very vital to our exportation process.” It is worth mentioning that a minority of respondents, averaging 7.8 percent, argued that growth does not necessarily require expansion in property size.

Table IV shows that the organizations have large CRE portfolios, as 51.4 percent of the respondents indicated that they had over 100 buildings. Table V further shows that the majority (66.7 percent) of the respondents indicated that their organizations owned between 91 and 100 percent of the buildings. These operational real estate assets have very high values as indicated in Table VI. The majority of the respondents, 55.6 percent, estimated

Number of buildings	Frequency	Percentage
10–50	13	18.1
51–100	11	15.3
Over 100	37	51.4
Not available	11	15.3
Total	72	100

Source: Field Survey (2016)

**Table IV.**  
Number of CRE of  
the organizations



their organizations' assets to be worth over 1,000,000,000 Ghana cedis (equivalent to US\$222,717,149 correct as at February 16, 2018).

Available institutional documents supported the research findings in Tables IV–VI as shown in Table VII on the importance of CRE in organizational activities. Document analysis revealed that CRE is part of corporate strength by virtue of the location, size, ambience and importance in organizational activities. It was also revealed that organizations spend approximately 51 to 87 percent of their revenue on physical infrastructure development. The forgoing results indicate that CRE is an important organizational resource that must be a priority on the corporate agenda and be strategically managed (Ijasan, 2013; Van der Beemt-Tjeerdsma and Veuger, 2016).

#### 4.3 Strategic direction for CRE management

In view of the strategic importance of CRE and the fact that it must be managed strategically to support organizational performance, it was expected that the CRE manager would be part of the strategic decision-making team. However, Table VIII shows that most (70.8 percent) of the qualified CRE managers work at the operational level of management and are thus not able to take part meaningfully in strategic decisions. Only one organization had a Director of Estate position.

Analysis of documentary evidence also revealed that most of the tertiary education institutions have between 20 and 25 statutory committees that take major organizational decisions, but CRE managers are only members of two-to-four CRE-related committees such as the housing, estate organization and welfare committees and, in a few instances where there is no development officer, on the development committee[1]. The organizational chart of the health sector also revealed that the CRE managers are at the fourth level of management. Also, in the service and banking sectors, the organizational charts showed that there is no strategic manager position for the CRE function compared with the human resource, finance and operations. A CRE manager from the banking sector indicated the

**Table V.**  
Percentage of CRE ownership of the organizations

Property ownership (%)	Frequency	Percentage
10–30	1	14
31–50	2	2.8
51–70	5	6.9
71–90	16	22.2
91–100	48	66.7
Total	72	100

**Source:** Field Survey (2016)

**Table VI.**  
Book value of organizations' CRE

Property value (Ghana cedis)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 100m	4	5.6
101–200m	7	9.7
201–400m	7	9.7
601–800m	2	2.8
801m–1bn	11	15.3
Over 1bn	40	55.6
No response	1	1.4
Total	72	100

**Source:** Field Survey (2016)

Documents	Strategic plan	CRE policy	Organizational chart	Annual report	Maintenance plan	Statutes
Thematic areas	Strategic role of CRE	CRE strategic direction	Organizational power	Value addition	CRE management approach	Integration of CRE in organizational activities
Tertiary education	Organizational strength due to location and ambience	Not available	Indirect relationship with senior management	Not indicated	Manual for corrective maintenance	The CRE manager is not directly involved in core organizational activities
Health	A major determinants of access to quality health care	Not available	Indirect relationship with senior management	Not indicated	Manual for corrective maintenance	Not provided
Security services	Not provided	Not provided	Not provided	Not provided	Not provided	Not provided
Service providers	Determinants of ability to provide quality services	Not provided	Indirect relationship with senior management	One organization indicated a 2% CRE contribution to total revenue	Manual for corrective maintenance	Not provided
Banking	Corporate image, branding and culture	Mission of CRE is to support organizational activities	Indirect relationship with strategic management	Shows minimal contribution of CRE	Not provided	Not provided
Findings	CRE plays a key role in all Organizational activities	Limited strategic direction for CRE management	Limited organizational power for CRE decision making	Contribution of CRE to organizational performance not clearly shown	Reactive CRE management practice	CRE not very well-integrated into organizational activities

**Table VII.**  
Analysis of  
organizational  
documents

Level of management	Frequency	Percentage
Strategic	6	8.3
Tactical	15	20.8
Operational	51	70.8
Total	72	100

**Table VIII.**  
Level of Management  
of CRE Managers

“the properties and facilities management function has been a tactical position under the Finance Director for 46 years.” This shows that most Ghanaian CRE managers are not part of their organization’s strategic decision-making team, buttressing the global argument that CRE managers still do not have greater senior management backing and are concerned about how to have a stronger relationship with business and stakeholders (Omar and Heywood, 2014; Jones Lang LaSalle, 2015).

SCREM practice also requires that the CRE unit must have a unique and well-defined mission statement based on the mission of the organization (Roulac *et al.*, 2003). Contrary to this assertion, the results revealed that the majority (70.8 percent) of CRE managers indicated that the CRE units’ surveys did not have mission statements. This is supported by document analysis as well as shown in Table VII. Several reasons were ascribed for this; however, the most common one was that, although the organizations depend on CRE for their existence, CRE is not seen as a core business. Additionally, to be part of the strategic team and to contribute to the strategic direction of the organization, CRE

managers must be considered as Business Strategist (Joroff *et al.*, 1993; Fadzil *et al.*, 2011). Exploring this prerequisite from the sampled respondents provided an entirely different viewpoint as shown in Table IX, which summarizes management’s views of the role of CRE managers in organizations.

It could be observed from Table IX that CRE managers are often seen as Taskmasters who take orders but who are not strategic partners, as indicated by 72 percent of CRE managers. The results in Tables VIII and IX as well as documentary evidence affirm the views of Krumm *et al.* (1999) and Fadzil *et al.* (2011) that real estate decisions are made by lower/operation level management who do not have sufficient insight into the overall business objectives. CRE issues are therefore not very well articulated and presented at board meetings. This is at odds with Heywood and Kenley’s (2013) view that CRE must be taken seriously by senior management and corporate board members.

*4.4 Availability of CRE policy*

Then (2005) argues that a comprehensive policy guideline is required for the adoption of the SCREM approach. The majority of the CRE managers (83.3 percent) said their organizations did not have real estate management policies. Only 17.7 percent indicated that they had CRE policies. However, Manning and Roulac (1996) noted that the availability of policy brings the real estate management function closer to the long-term goals for it to make a greater impact on organizational activities. The lack of CRE policies may be attributed to the fact that the majority (approximately 72 percent as shown in Table VIII) of CRE managers indicated that they are seen as Taskmasters instead of Business Strategists (Joroff *et al.*, 1993) who can contribute profitably and effectively to organizational activities.

It was also revealed that, though CRE is a requirement for accreditation for all the organizations in the five sectors surveyed, the CRE function is considered a non-core business activity. The development of a CRE policy is therefore not a priority. This is in line with the findings of Omar and Heywood (2010, p. 187) in the study of CRE management’s credibility-positioning status in Australia and Malaysia, that “corporations still do not have sufficient insight about the impact of CRE decisions on corporate performance due to lack of understanding from senior management [...]”

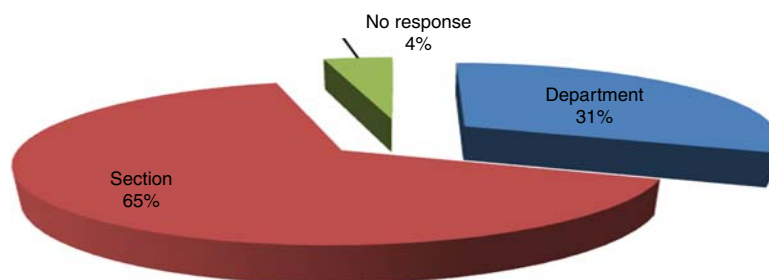
*4.5 Corporate real estate organizational structure and power*

As depicted in Figure 2, 65 percent of the CRE managers indicated that the CRE units were sections under other departments; 31 percent said they were departments and 4 percent did not respond. Only 12 (16.7 percent) of the respondents indicated that the departments supervising the CRE sections are headed by real estate professionals. The majority (83.3 percent) said the heads belonged to other academic disciplines including mathematics. The study revealed that organizational culture also affects the level of authority of

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Taskmaster	52	72.2
Dealmaker	3	4.2
Controller	5	6.9
Entrepreneur	1	1.4
Business Strategist	8	11.1
Visionary	3	4.2
Total	72	100

**Table IX.** Corporate view of the role of CRE managers

**Source:** Field Survey (2016)



Source: Field Survey (2016)

the CRE manager. In this regard, CRE managers from all the five sectors indicated that headship of the CRE unit is affected by the structure and the culture of the organization.

The results also show that CRE units in the organizations were not well organized. Only 19 (26.4 percent) had well-structured units with representation at the strategic, tactical and operational levels of management. The majority of the CRE managers (70.8 percent) indicated that they have managers with supporting staff and artisans. This observation agrees with the findings in Table VIII that CRE is at the lower level of the organizational structure of the organizations and therefore does not have adequate organizational power for major CRE decision making and implementation.

Additionally, the CRE managers' relationship with senior management was also not clearly defined. The statutes of the tertiary education institutions show that the CRE managers' report to the Director of Works and Physical Development, but one CRE manager stated that:

I officially report to the Director of Works and Physical Development but most often I work with the Registrar and an Assistant Registrar-General who supervises part of the works of the estate organization and maintenance unit.

It was also revealed that although the CRE unit is under the Directorate of Works and Physical Development, in stating the membership of convocation, the CRE and maintenance units were not mentioned specifically. But major academic issues which have CRE dimensions are discussed at this level; therefore, the CRE manager ought to participate in order to understand the business and provide the needed CRE management services. Another CRE manager from the tertiary education sector substantiated the findings in the document analysis, stating that:

[...] the CRE unit and position of the CRE manager are not properly recognized by the institution since the position is not indicated in the statute of the institution. The CRE manager does not take an active part in the corporate decision making and strategic planning process.

Another CRE manager from the health sector also stated that:

[...] all sectional heads have been promoted to the deputy director position except the CRE manager; I still report through the health service administrator to the director of administration to the Chief Executive Officer.

However, the CRE manager is expected to understand the business of the organization by working across it (Lindholm *et al.*, 2006; CoreNet Global, 2015), regardless of the sector, in order to provide the appropriate CRE services for effective operations. Therefore, he/she should be part of important decision-making bodies such as convocation, academic board and other management committees to understand the business and be able to provide CRE management services that will support corporate objectives.

Earlier studies have also shown that having adequate authority and direct relationships with senior management are necessary for effective strategic CRE management and for the CRE manager to make the maximum contribution to competitive advantage (Manning and Roulac, 1996; Roulac *et al.*, 2003; Taylor, 2014). A properly structured and empowered CRE unit also has the potential to extend the involvement of the CRE manager. This involvement helps in strategic planning, especially in the areas of identifying opportunities for CRE to contribute effectively to organizational performance (Roulac *et al.*, 2003; Ridzuan and Ali, 2012). For this to materialize, there must be a well-organized CRE unit headed by a qualified professional who can effectively articulate, explain and present real estate issues at the strategic decision-making level (CoreNet Global 2015).

Contrary to the above, most CRE managers (65 percent) in this study pointed out that the CRE units are sections under departments headed by non-real estate professionals such as registrars, health services administrators and engineers. Organizational charts obtained also showed that the position of CRE manager is not indicated in the organizational structure. It was observed from organizational visits that most of the CRE units, especially in the health and tertiary education sectors, were single structure office set-up with one CRE manager, administrative staff and artisans. However, to be duly recognized as a functional unit, the reporting line of the CRE unit must be clearly shown on the organizational structure with representatives at the three levels of management for recognition and effective integration (O'Mara *et al.*, 2002; CoreNet Global, 2015; Jones Lang LaSalle, 2015).

It can, therefore, be concluded that CRE units in the five sectors in Ghana lack the needed organizational power and appropriate culture to manage CRE strategically. As a result, Ghanaian organizations are losing the potential benefits from strategic CRE management practice, as observed by Omar and Heywood (2010), Beckers *et al.* (2015) and Sulaiman *et al.* (2015) in their studies of real estate management and performance in municipal and higher educational sectors in the Netherlands and public listed companies in Malaysia.

#### 4.6 CRE-Enabling systems

The literature shows that adequate enabling systems are also required for SCREM practice (Acoba and Foster, 2003; Then *et al.*, 2014). The study shows that the CRE-enabling systems in the surveyed institutions are inadequate for the implementation of SCREM as 38 (52.8 percent) CRE managers said there were no workplace standards guides, 66 (91.7 percent) said there were no real estate information management systems and 63 (87.5 percent) also said there were no software tools for CRE management. The only system in place was the CRE helpdesks for CRE fault reporting, as 45 (62.5 percent) of the respondents answered "Yes." Budgetary allocation was also found to be inadequate as the majority, 52 (72.1 percent), of the CRE managers pointed out that the units suffer from under funding and budget cuts. One CRE manager in the tertiary education sector indicated that "although the estate office submits its annual budget, we are given less than 20% of what is budgeted for." Another from the banking sector, where funds are deemed to be readily available, also stated that "budgetary allocation for CRE management is never adequate so we are forced to adopt a reactive approach to CRE management, though we plan our activities."

From the survey and visits to the organizations, it was revealed that the enabling systems for the adoption of SCREM were generally inadequate across all five sectors. Additionally, it was clear that there was a lack of updated records on CRE as only 22 (30.6 percent) CRE managers reported that they had an assets register. Most respondents (50, i.e. 69.4 percent) indicated that they do not have an assets register. One CRE manager from the tertiary education sector noted that "the assets database of my organization is very old and must be updated."

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Another also stated that:

[...] our major duty is to identify the land for the development; space design and management are done by the user departments. This, coupled with lack of information on staff recruitment, students' admissions and assets register, take space management and allocation from the purview of the CRE manager.

Document analysis and observations from visits to the organizations also revealed that as a result of the lack of up-to-date records, there have been serious encroachments on some organizational properties. One tertiary educational institution has villages springing up within its boundaries. The effect of the encroachment is further seen in the high crime rate in and around the institution, protracted land litigation between the institution and the community, and restricted the use of the organization's land for expansion. The foregoing findings of the study confirm the claims of Owusu (2013), *Daily Graphic* (2016b) and Bokpe (2017) that most government institutions in Ghana do not have inventories of their assets for effective management, leading to encroachment on some public lands and buildings. From the responses of the majority of CRE managers, it is clear that a greater number of the organizations from the five sectors surveyed also do not have automated and computer-aided CRE information management systems.

However, Tay and Liow (2006) and Acoba and Foster (2003) are of the view that up-to-date CRE databases with automated data management systems are important for CRE planning and policy formulation as well as for higher-level integration between CRE and other functional areas for proactive CRE management. The study has therefore, revealed that there is lack of adequate enabling systems, strategic direction, CRE policy and organizational power for the adoption of SCREM practice in Ghana.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The strategic importance of CRE in organizational activities calls for a proactive approach to CRE management with optimal organizational support, recognition and adequate strategic policy direction.

It was observed that CRE is of strategic importance to the organizations in all the five sectors. However, CRE managers are not an integral part of the strategic planning process. CRE units in Ghana lack clear strategic policy guidelines, adequate organizational power and adequate enabling systems for strategic CRE management practice. Further, most CRE managers continue to operate as Taskmasters instead of Business Strategist. It can, therefore, be concluded that the tenets of SCREM have not been fully applied in CRE management in Ghana. To successfully implement the tenets of SCREM and benefit fully from it, the following reforms are suggested.

To begin with, organizations in the surveyed sectors must have CRE policies and well-structured CRE units with adequate organizational power and enabling systems for the implementation of SCREM practices. CRE managers must also work together to share expertise in their specialized sectors and create awareness of the strategic importance of CRE.

Second, the regulatory bodies for the various sectors must make it a requirement for approval or accreditation that the organization has a comprehensive CRE policy. Third, the government must also make the availability of CRE management strategy and well-established CRE units in the five sectors a requirement for CRE development financing.

Finally, the CRE management training institutions must also introduce higher degree programs to further train CRE managers for higher positions in organizations. CRE professionals must also create more awareness of the important role of CRE in organizational performance through public education and by facilitating the promulgation of CRE management laws for better recognition of the role of CRE in the Ghanaian economy.

CRE managers in Ghana must also seek opportunities to be part of international CRE professional bodies, for instance by forming the Ghana Chapter of CoreNet Global. This will enable them to benefit from international best practice and broaden their knowledge in SCREM practices.

**Note**

1. The development committee is one that regulates physical development in a particular organization.

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