

## PRACTITIONER'S INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHING & LEARNING FOR QUANTITY SURVEYING COURSE: STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*The quantity surveying academic program in Malaysia's public university is distinctive in that it is taught with sufficient contribution of practitioners in the form of academic input but still very low of contribution from practitioner as an instructor or teaching staff. This study is intended to get feedback on the practitioner based teaching model for the Quantity Surveying course focusing the scope in University of Malaya only. The aim is achieved by identify the needs of practitioner's involvement in teaching and learning and by gathering views from students on the involvement of practitioner in teaching and learning. Quantitative method was adopted in this study. Questionnaires were distributed to all quantity surveying students in University Malaya. Finding shows that there is a need of practitioner input in teaching and learning in Quantity Surveying Course and the involvement from the practitioner is going to offer a potential model for developing the performance role of Quantity Surveyor in practice area.*

**Keywords:** quantity surveyor, teaching, learning, practitioner involvement

### INTRODUCTION

The quantity surveying academic program in University of Malaya (UM) is distinctive in that it is taught with an adequate contribution of practitioners in the form of academic input but still very low of contribution from practitioner as an instructor or teaching staff. The teaching programs were to help students to integrate the theoretical components of the curriculum, through reflecting on practice and identifying the knowledge and action an "expert" (Benner, 1984). Students appeared to have particularly difficulty in making sense of the theory taught in college and relating it to practice (Davies S., 1996). The theory-practice gap has been the subject of much debate (Corlett, 2000). Students can't relate classroom learning with their real profession and fresh graduates cannot do their required profession work have become the talk of the employer. Necessarily it did happen and fast action need to be carried out immediately. The involvement of the practitioner in quantity surveying teaching and learning will solve the dilemma as suggested by Peter Jarvis & Sheila Gibson, 1997. The practitioner teacher has an important role to play in the education of students (Peter Jarvis, 1997). It was recognized that the practitioner and the lecturer had differing but complementary strengths, which could usefully be combined for the benefit of students (Rolfe, 1996a).

Therefore, this paper is intended to get feedback on the practitioner based teaching model for the Quantity Surveying course. The aim is achieved by identify the needs of practitioner's involvement in teaching and learning and by gathering views from students on the involvement of practitioner in teaching and learning. This study is focused within Malaysia's public university that offers bachelor of quantity surveying program only which is University of Malaya (UM).

### PRACTITIONER'S INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quantity surveying course in Malaysia's public university is taught with a high contribution from practitioner in the form of their recent updated information & knowledge but still low contribution in the form of as a teaching staff. The teaching team is drawn from lecturers with quantity surveying background. There has been strong ethos of practitioner involvement and emphasis on the course, reflecting the needs of practitioner in terms of the skills they required from new entrants into the profession. According to Jarvis & Gibson, the practitioner teacher has an important role to play in the education of students. In the student's view, the

practitioners had the 'practical' based knowledge and the lecturer had the research, 'college'-based knowledge (Murphy, 2000). Practitioners who are actually working in the areas they are teaching give a sense of realism (Richardson, 2010). The three remarks strongly agrees that practitioner involvement does helping students get the sense of realism and the practicality of what they are learning in class. Students can't relate what they are learning in class with their real future profession is a disappointing incident and some might say that their education life is worthless. Regarding the realism and practicality issue, practitioner involvement is the excellent key to it.

The report 'Integrating Theory and Practice in Nursing' commissioned by the Chief Nursing Officer for England and Wales highlights that the most valuable learning takes place in the real world with experts using process(es) such as reflection to integrate the relevant knowledge.(Richardson, 2010. The balance between the guest speakers/lecturers and academics is needed. It adds a more practical element to the course that makes it easier to link the learning process and practicality. The combination of practitioners and academics was a good effort. Richardson, 2010 also highlights that practitioners have a key role here in at least giving an insight into why these issues are important and providing examples of how to deal with them. Students are gaining a practical and relevant insight into what is needed in today's work environment, with real life examples and topical case studies to work on. As a result this is helping to deliver graduates with the skills needed by employers. Feedback from employers is highlighting the need for knowledge of the application of skills and awareness of workplace environments. The practitioner-based model seems ideally placed to address this need.(Richardson, 2010).Benefits are also identified for students. The teaching they receive should be up to date (O, 1993). Dr O D'A Slevin remarks in her writing that one of the benefits the practitioner involvement can provide is the up to date knowledge and skills in line with the recent industry trends. (Webster, 1990) suggesting that the practitioner involvement means keeping up to date with current practice. Besides that, Fiona A. Murphy suggested that not only students gets the benefit, the lecturer also gets the same. The learning process therefore was not confined to students. There were many opportunities for the lecturer to update her knowledge and to learn from practitioners (Murphy, 2000).

Furthermore, practitioner involvement enables the students to network and gain useful contacts for professional development and advice in relation to future employment. It can also lead to invitations that involve students in professional events, said (Richardson, 2010). The value of the networking, the workplace insights and ongoing support practitioners can offer when students get to know them well can increase their confidence considerably and provide a marked improvement to the "work readiness" that appears so important to employers (Richardson, 2010).

Another side view on practitioner's benefit from (Murphy, 2000) says that, teaching boosted their (practitioner) confidence and gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge to students, offering another dimension to their professional role. Fiona A. Murphy agrees more in her 'Collaborating with practitioners in teaching and research' journal by remarking "Develop their (practitioner) teaching role". The value of having access to knowledge and hearing the views of new and often younger entrants into the profession is also felt by practitioners involved in supervising dissertations (Richardson, 2010). It stimulates and directs professional reading and other activities, giving a focus for development. It helps practitioners to reflect upon their own professional practice. It is also satisfying, in that many people who participate in the course derive satisfaction from the interaction with students (Heery, 1999). For the lecturer, Fiona A. Murphy said that the lecturer's lack in depth knowledge about current practice could be compensated by the practitioner. Working closely with practitioners also allowed the lecturer to maintain a valuable link with practice as well as fulfilling the liaison aspect of the role.

Therefore for the Quantity Surveying Course, there is a need to remain focused on the realities of practice. And this will reflect the needs of practitioners in terms of the skills they required from new entrants into the profession. Graduates are still required to be taught core theories, knowledge and skills while at university, practitioner involvement will give them to have additional skills to enable them to function as competent information professionals

The quantity surveying course has four core modules - Construction Technology, Measurement Of Construction Works, Professional Practice, Integrated Project and other fourteen side modules - It Management In Construction, Academic Project, Property Development, Financial Management And Accounting, Quality And Value Management, Project Management, Construction Law, Principles Of Management, Legal Studies, Construction Economics, Building Services, Data Analysis, Site Survey and Building Structure. These modules are classified into two; Social science subjects and Technical subjects. 90% of these modules are taught by faculty's teaching staff and the other 10% is taught by part time lecturer's from other universities such as UiTM.

In the student's view, the practitioners had the 'practical' based knowledge and the lecturer had the research, 'college'-based knowledge (Murphy, 2000)

A balance between the practitioners/lecturers and academics is needed in teaching and learning of Quantity surveying course. Practical element to the course will make it easier to link what they have learned to what they will expect to practice. Combination of practitioners and academics was a good one overall (Richardson, 2010). The use of "real life" case studies and scenarios now form an integral part of the course, providing a combination of theory and reflection on practice with original thinking and creativity. Some modules use case studies as part of their assessment. These case studies give the students a real flavor of how what they learn can be applied in a work environment (Richardson, 2010).

Another suggestion by Amanda Richardson in her journal says that the modules as part of this top up degree are being developed mostly by practitioners both in academic libraries and in the corporate sector and are focusing on information literacy, information systems, and information and knowledge management.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopted four principle methods namely literature review and questionnaire survey were used for the study. A thorough literature search for either primary sources or secondary sources was conducted through academic research journals, proceedings, dissertations, occasional papers, publications, textbooks, newspaper and online database. Referring to previous research design also enables the author to grasp the problems and issues related to the topic of study and provide important insight to the author on how to design an efficient research study.

Questionnaire survey is the main research methodology used to achieve the research objectives. One hundred and sixteen (116) sets of questionnaires were distributed to Quantity Surveying Students in University of Malaya however only 84 respondents had returned and fill in the survey.

Data obtained from the returned questionnaire was sorted out and analyzed using SPSS Version 20. Ultimately, conclusions were drawn up to summarize the data gained from questionnaire survey and literature review.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondent's Categories

	Gender		Total	
	Male	Female		
Year	1	7	19	26
	2	11	23	34
	3	5	19	24
Total		23	61	84

From the respondent received, twenty three (23) of them are male and sixty one (61) of them are female. Twenty six (26) of them are from first year, thirty four (34) are from second year, and twenty four (24) are third year student. Total respondent is eighty four (84). Students were targeted as the respondent because they are the one who values and experience the teaching and learning process. They are the product and output of the university.

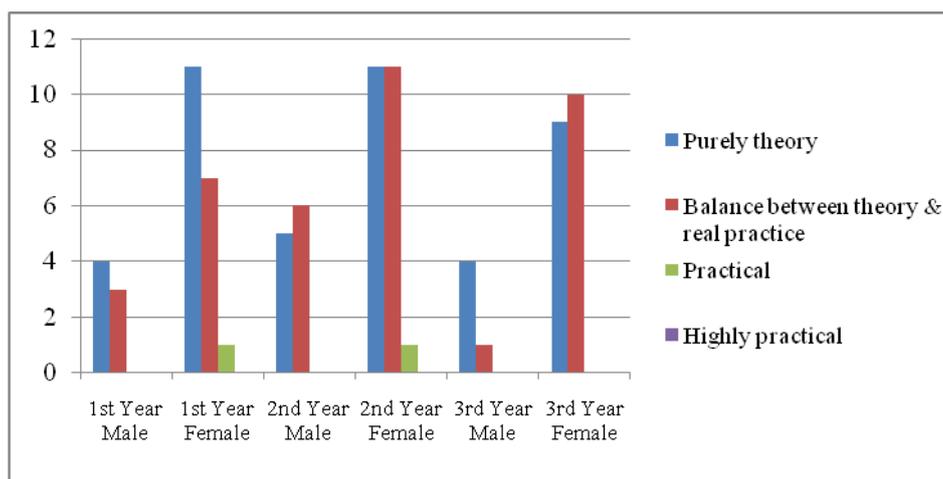


Figure 1: Teaching Mode in Class

Table 2: Analysis on Teaching Mode in Class

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
How is the teaching mode in your class?	purely theoretical	13	31	44
	balance between theory & practical	10	28	38
	practical	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>84</b>

The question in Figure 1 is aimed to identify the student's personal opinion about the teaching mode in all of their class whether it is purely theory, balance between theories & real practice, practical or highly practical. The result of this question will give a general overview of their learning experience in their class. This will help to evaluate the situation and justify whether the involvement of practitioner is needed in their learning process. Based on Table 2, 13 (56.5%) of the total male respondent thought that their learning mode in class is purely theoretical and the other 10 (43.5%) thought that their learning mode class is balance between theory and practical. 31 (50.8%) female quantity surveying students in the opinion that their learning in class is purely theoretical, 28 (45.9%) balance between theory & practical and 2 (3.3%) is practical.

Table 3: Analysis on Teaching Mode in Class based on Student's Academic Year

Count		Year			Total
		1	2	3	
How is the teaching mode in your class?	purely theoretical	15	16	13	44
	balance between theory & practical	10	17	11	38
	practical	1	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>84</b>

Another side view for the same question, a cross tabulation between teaching mode in class & student's academic year. 15 (57.7%) of first year student purely theoretical, 10 (38.5%) balance between theory & practical and only 1 (3.8%) practical. For second year student, 16 (47.1%) of them purely practical, 17 (50%) balance between theory & practical and also only 1 (2.9%) practical. For third year students, 13 (54.2%) think that it is purely theoretical, 11 (45.8%) balance between theory & practical and none of them think that their learning in class is practical.

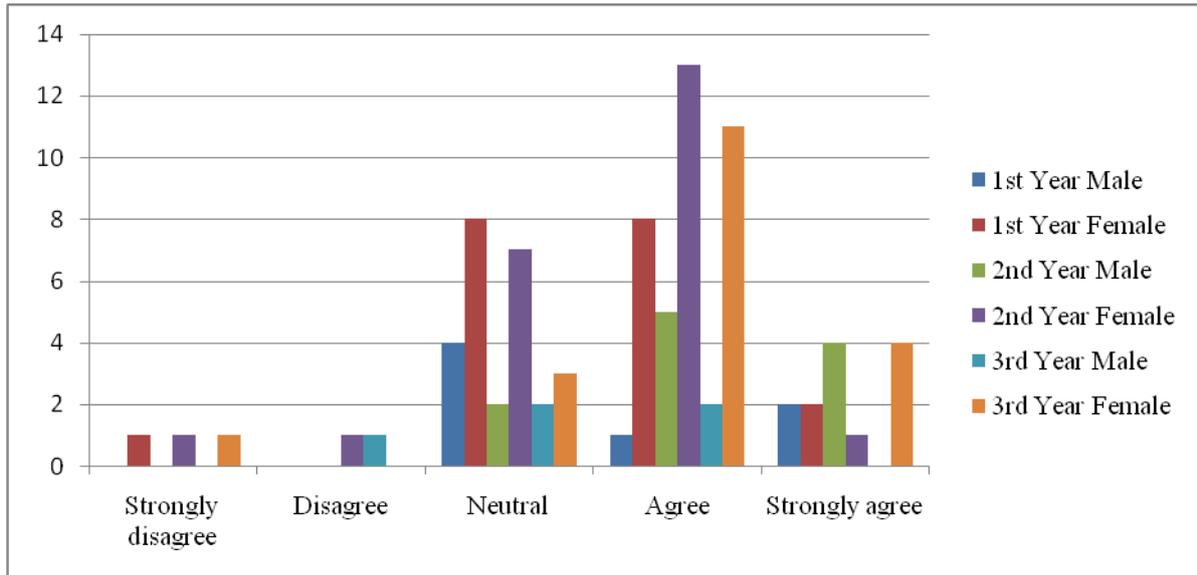


Figure 2: There is a gap between practice and the theory that students obtained in the university.

Table 4: Analysis between practice – theory gap in the University

		Year			Total
		1	2	3	
There is a gap between practice and the theory that students obtained in the university.	strongly disagree	1	1	1	3
	disagree	0	1	1	2
	neutral	12	9	5	26
	agree	9	18	11	38
	strongly agree	4	5	6	15
Total		26	34	24	84

Figure 2 shows the level of consent by students about the presence of gap between practice and theory that student obtained in the university. Three (3) students (3.58%) strongly disagreed and two (2) students (2.39%) disagreed that there is theory-practice gap in the university. Twenty six (26) students (30.95%) are neutral, thirty eight (38) students (45.23%) agreed and fifteen (15) students (17.85%) strongly agreed with the statement. Most of the student agreed that there is theory-practice in their learning in class in general.

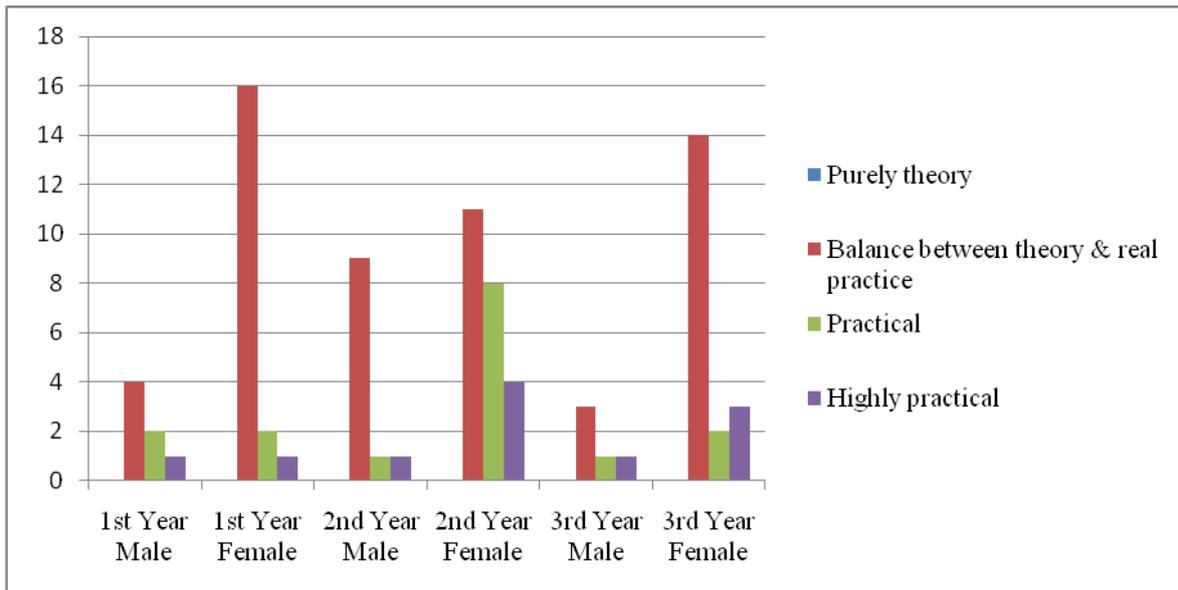


Figure 3: Mode needed in quantity surveying academic programme

Table 5: Analysis on mode needed in quantity surveying academic programme

Count		Year			Total
		1	2	3	
In your opinion, which is needed in quantity surveying academic program?	balance between theory & practical	20	20	17	57
	practical	4	9	3	16
	high practicality	2	5	4	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>84</b>

Respondents were asked which mode is needed in their academic programme. This question aimed to know students desire about their learning program. None of the respondent answers purely theory, 67.86% of the total respondent think that the academic program should be balance between theory and practical. 19.04% thinks that it should practical and 13.09% said that it should have high practicality.

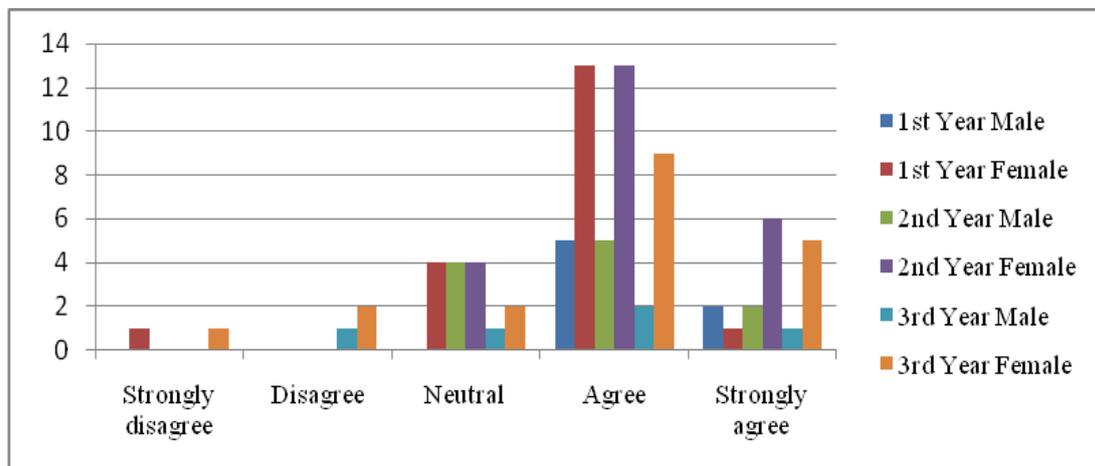


Figure 4: Practitioner has the expertise and experience, and they have the examples from which students can really learn.

Table 6: Analysis on Practitioner's experience & expertise

		Year			Total
		1	2	3	
Practitioner has the expertise and experience, and they have the examples from which students can really learn.	strongly disagree	1	0	1	2
	disagree	0	0	3	3
	neutral	4	8	3	15
	agree	18	18	11	47
	strongly agree	3	8	6	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>84</b>

55.95% of the respondent agrees with the statement that “Practitioner has the expertise and experience, and they have the examples from which students can really learn”. All classes got “agree” as their highest score and strengthened by the supporting vote for “strongly agree”, 20.2% of the total respondent which is the second highest percentage of vote. This question aimed to identify the tendency of students agree or not with the advantages they might get from a practitioner which then contribute to increase their willingness and readiness for the proposed teaching model.

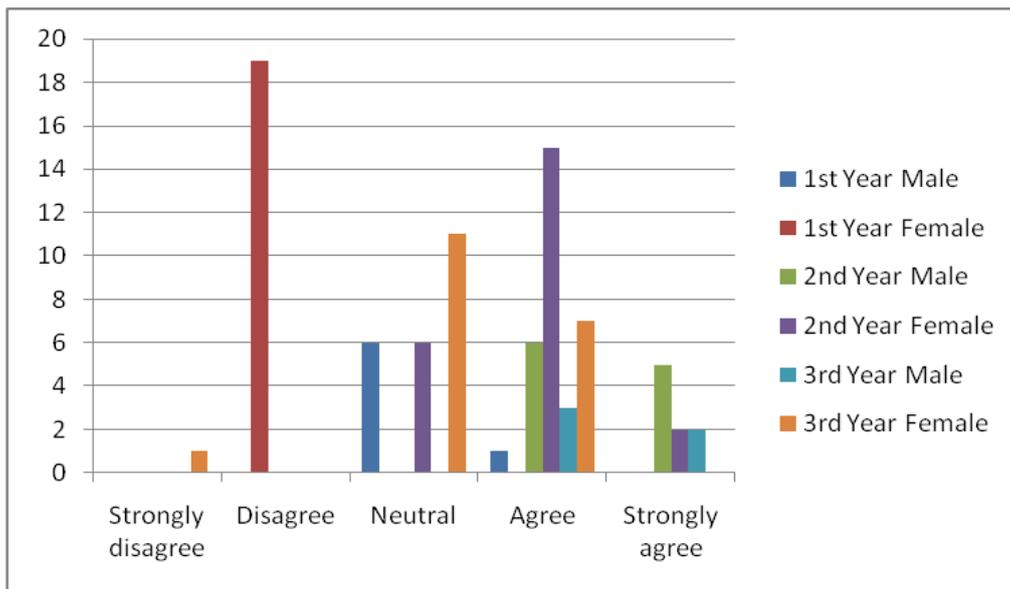


Figure 5: Will practitioner involvement going to give benefit to student learning?

Table 7: Analysis on practitioner's beneficiary

Count		Year			Total
		1	2	3	
Is practitioner involvement will be beneficial?	strongly disagree	1	0	1	2
	disagree	0	0	0	0
	neutral	4	6	0	10
	agree	16	21	14	51
	strongly agree	5	7	9	21
<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>84</b>

Most of the students agreed that involvement of the practitioner in teaching and learning will benefit the students.

## CONCLUSIONS

Finding shows that there is a need of practitioner input in teaching and learning in Quantity Surveying Course and the involvement from the practitioner is going to offer a potential model for developing the performance role of Quantity Surveyor in practice area. And this will solve the theory-practice gap problem. Students also find that it is urgent to implement this in quantity surveying academic program. And the most important thing, this is one of the important practical ways to develop performance role of quantity surveyors in practice area.

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