

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF BUILDING SURVEYORS IN MALAYSIA

Azlan Shah Ali¹ and Chen Jia Woon

¹Centre for Construction, Building and Urban Studies, Faculty of Built Environment, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ABSTRACT

The Building Surveyor (BS) is a qualified person who performs Building Control works and other activities related to construction which involves an organised preparatory process of physical development, supervision of construction quality and Physical conditions of the building. BS plays a vital role in the building industry, especially in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia. However, the awareness on the importance of BSs in Malaysia is still low. Most of the BS graduates work in various fields after they have graduated. The competencies and professional level of BS graduates has always been debated by other professionals in the building industry. Hence, the study concentrates on the academic training of BS programme in Malaysian Universities in order to determine the efficiency of the learning outcomes. Additionally, the paper also focuses on the employment trend of BS graduates in Malaysia. Triangulation approach was used in the study. From the results, it could be concluded that BS are still demanded in Malaysian building industry even without the Building Surveyor Act. In terms of training for BSs in universities, the programme structures from 3 major universities were found to have covered comprehensively the aspects of building construction, technology, maintenance and legal requirements.

Keywords: training, building surveyor, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

A Building Surveyor (BS) should be equipped with a thorough understanding of construction techniques, building materials, methods and technology skills simultaneously with knowledge on the building significance and building regulation (Dickinson, 1999). In Malaysia, a professional BS is an eligible person, by assessment and practice, and also a registered member of the Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia (RISM). The Building Surveyor service has started in Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council (KLMC) since 1950's. It was the British who first introduced the Building Control department which manages the building plan submissions and other related tasks with regards to new and existing construction works. Besides KLMC, there is another local authority which employes BS like Petaling Jaya City Council

¹ asafab@um.edu.my

(PJCC), Bentong Municipal Council (BMC) and Subang Jaya Municipal Council (SJMC) (Ahmad, 2003).

Although in developed countries such as in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia the demand for BS graduates is great, so far it is not so in Malaysia due to some reasons. The profession of BS was constituted since year 1990, under the organization of RISM. Despite the long period of establishment, it is still in the process of getting recognition because the awareness level towards the significance of BS service is comparatively low. Only a few of BS graduates were employed in the government sector. On the other hand, most of the graduates are working in different fields such as property management, quantity surveying and construction sites.

Furthermore, there was an evidence of BS dating back to the 1860s in the UK with the formation of the RISM (Dickinson, 1999). Introduction of the 1961 syllabus on BS was started 10 years before BS were classed within the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) as 'non-specialist members'. However, BS Division was then found to be necessary, formed by the RICS in 1973 to which the Council approved the designation '*Chartered Building Surveyor*' in 1975 (Dickinson, 1999).

DEVELOPMENT OF BUILDING SURVEYOR PROFESSION

United Kingdom was the first country which introduced BS profession. Only in United Kingdom, the BS will be given more authorised power if compared with other profession like Architect. The profession of BS had been further established and enhanced through the efforts of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). As a result, the job scope of BS were defined and identified. The area and scope of work of the BS in the context of project development and construction fields was acknowledged. Similarly, in Australia, BS are mainly involved in building control within the government agencies. Besides, BS carried out building dilapidation analysis for both new and historical buildings in private firms. In Hong Kong, BS profession is more recognised as compared to other Asian countries like Malaysia and Singapore. Comparatively, The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS) was already established earlier in the year 1985. There is a positive growth of the BS profession in getting recognition and acceptance as a vital position in the project development and construction industry. More than 20 years after the Building Surveying Division of RISM was formed, BS is still generally misunderstood by other professionals and the general public. BS is not just building sites and measurements. BS are also trained and qualified to advice on every aspect of the built environment and on the use of land (Dickinson, 1999). Dickinson (1999) further explained that BS is to make sure that buildings work as they were intended to, for the occupier, the landlord, the developer and the investor. Like in the UK, BS in Malaysia was originally under the General Practice Section, also known as Property Consultant Valuation Surveyors (PCVS). Even though the public had witnessed and benefitted from BS for decades in the UK, the role and skills of this profession was still not fully understood (Hashim, 1993). The public was still not aware of the existence of BS as a profession. It was even more surprising when there appeared to be a lack of understanding of the General Practice Surveyors (PCVS or BS) by some members, especially those of the other two sections (Yap, 1966).

CHALLENGES OF THE BUILDING SURVEYOR IN MALAYSIA

There are some issues and challenges faced by the BS profession in Malaysia. These are further discussed below:

i. Public Awareness and Recognition

In Malaysian context, there is lack of public awareness on the significance for establishment of BS profession in the construction industry. The position is not commercially introduced to the public. There is less in printed article about the profession mentioned in local newspaper media and it has led to ignorance among the public on its significance value. The public may not realized that they will get benefit from the BS profession because the surveyors will contribute their services in term of dilapidation and condition survey on new premises, old building and offering professional justification on the building's condition and its property value (Abd-Rashid et al., 2007).

ii. Acceptance of other professional bodies

Currently, the most challenging task for the establishment of BS profession in Malaysia is the process of gaining recognition and acceptance from other specialised professions like Architects, Engineers and Valuers. Continuous confrontation against the establishment of the BS profession gave a great impact towards the approval of the draft of BS Act. Those professional actually realise the significance of BS scope of work and accountability, but they worry to compete with the BS then loss their competitive business and specific area of expertise. It has contributed to the constant objection towards the approval and implementation of BS Act. Even those professional highlighted that it is not necessary to establish and endorse the BS profession with the reason that they are equally competent with their comparable knowledge and ability as the BS profession (Abd-Rashid et al., 2007). There are negative perspectives from certain parties who feel uncomfortable with the emergence of BS practice. The role of BS is actually not in competition with other professions; instead it complements and works in harmony with them. Therefore, each profession has their own role to play for the benefit of the industry. The society and the public should be the one who is supposed to gain the maximum benefit (Ahmad, 2003).

iii. No Specific Regulated Act

Building Surveyor Act been drafted and get approved since year 2007. Numerous amendment being done to make sure that the Act will get consent and recognition from other parties such as Architects and Engineers. Yet, until today, the teams of the BS division of RISM haven't gained any approval for the Act and hence it contributed to the retard of the approved regulation. The current evolution in Malaysia show that the BS profession will be included in Engineer or Technologist acts. When the Surveyor Act 1967 was first approved in Malaysia, BS profession was placed within the General Practice Group, within the same group with another 3 surveying professions which are Valuation, Housing and Planning, whereas Quantity Surveying formed a separate group under the same Act. Nonetheless, Land Surveying is under a different Act. The Surveyor Act was revised in the year 1972, 1973, 1974, and 1989. The revision was carried out without taking the existence and needs of BS services into consideration (Ahmad, 2003).

iv. Educational standard

Abd-Rashid et al (2007) proposed that the syllabus offered of the BS course is varied in the higher education institutions and/or local universities. It has created non-standardization of specific areas of expertise and responsibilities for a BS. There is

much effort being taken in ensuring the programme of study to reach up to an acceptable level. Only local institutions are found to comply with the RICS requirements while the rest are not especially in local private institutions.

In Malaysia, there is an agency known as Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) which controls and monitors quality of new programmes introduced in universities. Besides, MQA is also responsible in monitoring and overseeing the quality assurance practices and accreditation of national higher education. In designing BS programme structure, MQA plays an important role in assuring the course fulfills the set criteria and standards. In fact, the guidelines for approval by Ministry of Higher Education set by the University are modified based on the guidelines provided by MQA.

v. Slow Response for Graduate Membership

Up to October 2006, there only 216 people who are registered as members of BS Division of RISM. In fact, the number of registered members is far less than the BS graduates, either from local or foreign institutions. Based on a research finding by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), there are a number of 535 BS graduates since the Diploma programme was introduced in 1999 and Bachelor Degree programme in 1995. The scenario showed that most of the graduates from local or private institutions are not registering themselves with the BS Division of RISM (Abd-Rashid et al., 2007). The slow response from the graduate students has slowed down the endorsement process of the BS Act. The students were do not enthusiastically engage in active advocacy for the adoption of standard practices and improvement of membership. Due to this lack of enthusiasm on the part of the existing members, it has led to the public, government and private sector not taking the profession more seriously than it currently is.

vi. Slow Response From Government

The BS profession has been approved by the Malaysia Public Service Department (JPA) in 1999. The service is placed under the Scheme in ENGINEERING Classification (J) and pay scales which are comparable with other professional services as recognised by government (Ahmad, 2003). However, Abd-Rashid et al. (2007) mention about the slow response from the government organizations to ensure all state and local authorities employ the BS qualified persons in their respective departments. The BS post is only being offered in 3 local authorities (municipal and city councils) within their departments. This scenario is due to the lack of awareness within the government sector itself about the important role of BS towards the local building and construction industries. This in turn is proving a big obstacle for the Building Surveyors to get recognition from the industry.

BUILDING SURVEYOR TRAINING IN MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITIES

There are three (3) public and one (1) private universities in Malaysia that offer BS programme at the Bachelor Degree level. They are University of Malaya (UM), University Science Malaysia (USM), UiTM and Twintech International University College of Technology (TIUCT). In this research, only BS syllabus for 2 universities has been discussed. In the latest UM BS programme syllabus, there are 30 courses, but with higher credit hours (106). Compared to the second constructed syllabus, nearly all of the subjects have been reviewed and redesigned. Besides Legal Studies

which remained almost the same, the other subjects have been re-constructed in order to fit with the requirement needed for a professional BS. The programme now concentrates mainly in Building Measurement & Analysis, Development Appraisal, Building Control & Design, Building Pathology & Dilapidation and Building Conservation Studies as the hours credited in these courses are considered as high (above 4 credits). These courses provide the core theory and practical knowledge that should be acquired by a BS today. Besides the main studies, the courses such as Environmental Science, Construction and Building Services are all crucial and they enhance the ability of a BS in both construction, maintenance and management field. Not forgetting the importance of subjects like Academic Project and Industrial Training that enable the undergraduate to be exposed to a more challenging research, ethic and practical experiences.

On the other hand, the USM introduced BS programme in 2009, twelve years after the programme has been set up in UM. The programme is offered in the School of Housing, Building & Planning. The programme structure for BS programme in USM is more or less similar with that of the UM syllabus.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was designed using qualitative approach to study the employment trend of BS graduates. It also was used to get feedback from respondents on challenges faced by the BS profession and recommendations to overcome those challenges. The questionnaire contains 3 sections as following:

- i. Section A: The respondent's particulars: - Closed ended question were asked in this section because the data can be easily analysed and eased the respondents in answering the questions.
- ii. Section B: The respondent's perspective on BS profession:- Questions regarding challenges of BS profession using the Likert's scale which required the respondent to rate the significance of challenges ranging from 1 (least significant) to 5 (very significant).
- iii. Section C: The respondent's opinion and recommendation on the BS profession: - This section used open-ended type of questions which did not limit the respondents to only choosing available alternatives as provided by the researcher. This was to obtain feedback with varied points of view.

DATA COLLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Cross tabulation of gender of the respondent and the job title

Job Title	Gender	
	Male	Female
Contract Executive	0	2
Project Executive	3	3
Civil Engineer	2	0
Quantity Surveyor	2	10
Site Engineer	3	0
Property Valuer	0	1
Building Surveyor	1	1
Other	4	0
Total	15	17

The findings obtained were conformed to what Abd-Rashid et al (2007) mentioned earlier. From the responses received, there was a trend that indicated that BS graduates do not work as BS after they had graduated. Majority of them were working in different fields related to the construction industry. It was found that males normally work at site whereas females preferred to work in the office after they had graduated. Refer Table 1.

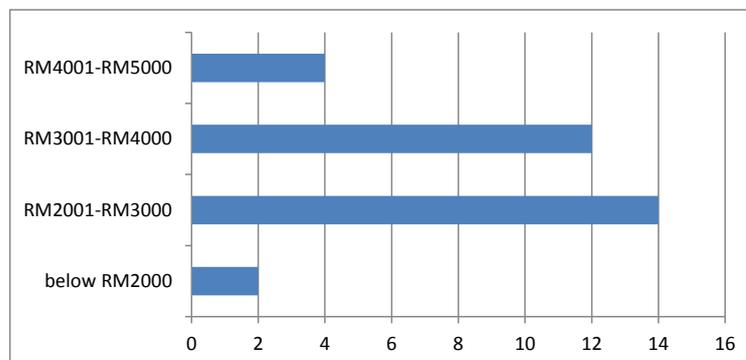


Figure 1: Salary Range for BS Graduates in Malaysia (n=32)

Figure 1 shows the salary range for the BS graduates. There were 14 respondents who answered this question, of which 43.8% who receive a monthly salary paid within the range of RM2001 to RM300, followed by 12 respondent in the range of RM3001 to RM4000 (37.5%), 4 respondents were paid RM4001 to RM5000 (12.5%) and 2 respondents were working with the salary range below RM2000 (6.3%).

Table 2: Cross tabulation of year of graduation of the respondents and the salary paid

Monthly Salary Paid	Year of Graduation of Respondent					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
below RM2000	0	1	0	1	0	0
RM2001-RM3000	1	1	1	0	3	8
RM3001-RM4000	2	1	0	1	2	6
RM4001-RM5000	1	0	1	0	0	2
Total	4	3	2	2	5	16

Table 2 shows the cross tabulation of year of graduation of the respondent with their monthly salary paid. From the table above, monthly salary paid for the respondents who graduated in year 2003 in the range of RM2001 to RM5000. The figure indicates that BS graduates are still able to perform very well in their working field because the salary paid is very attractive as compared with salary scale of other surveying graduates such as quantity and land surveyors.

Respondents were also asked on their response about the importance of BS in Malaysian construction industry. More than 70% of the respondents agreed that BS plays an important role in the Malaysian construction industry. The same respondents agreed that there was no other specific profession that was responsible for guiding builders on the building regulations. They further explained that BS is the person who ensures all the building control regulations are complied with during the planning and construction works of all kinds of buildings and of most property for instance extensions, refurbishments, renovations, conversions etc.

Moreover, they agreed that BS will resolve any uncertainties regarding building regulations matters. BS also undertakes site visits throughout the construction stages to ensure that the procedures are being carried out properly and in accordance with the regulations. One of the respondents had mentioned that buildings need safety and security auditing which can be carried out by BS. On the other hand, 6 respondents (18.8%) did not agree that BS is important in Malaysia. The respondents felt so because there are not many BS jobs being offered in Malaysia in the construction market.

Table 3: Responses on challenges of establishment of BS profession

Challenges	Standard		
	Mean	Deviation	Ranking
No specific Act or regulation	3.84	1.439	1
Slow response from Government	3.78	1.263	2
Acceptance of other professional bodies	3.63	1.212	3
Entitlement of BS	3.59	1.316	4
Public awareness and recognition	3.47	1.565	5
Educational standard	3.34	.937	6
Slow response from graduate students	3.16	.847	7

Respondents further asked about the most important challenges for the establishment of the BS profession in Malaysia. Table 3 indicates the ranking on the responses received. No specific Act or regulation is the most significant challenge faced, for the establishment of BS profession in Malaysia. The results were reconfirmed as Dickinson (1999) mentioned that there will be an increase of job opportunity among the building surveyors once the BS Act is regulated. Ahmad (2003) had also pointed out that BS had struggled for years to lobby for the enactment of the BS Act since 1970s. Without the Act, BS cannot register as a professional body under the Ministry of Finance. This has restricted the BS to perform in their profession in the building control and performance field.

The second highest ranked challenge is slow response from government. It is in accordance with the view of Abd-Rashid et al. (2007) that the government is slow in ensuring BS profession is positioned at a vantage within the respective government departments. According to Ahmad (2003), the Surveyor Act 1967 was firstly approved in 1960s and later revised in the 1970s to 1980s. Yet, the revision never took into consideration of the BS professional needs. In the late 2000, the Ministry had approved and mentioned the BS Act in the Parliament but there was no immediate action taken therefore the application was left pending.

Acceptance of other professional bodies ranked number 3 out of 7 challenges. This reflects the statement made by Ahmad (2003) and Abd-Rashid et al. (2007). In the current scenario, there is a continuous argument from other professional bodies especially the Architects and Engineers. With the establishment of the BS profession, there will be someone who controls, oversees and limits their profession. They are afraid that BS will monopolise the construction market and they would lose their business and specific scope of services.

From the survey conducted, 84.4% agreed that BS can stand together with other professional job/post level in Malaysian Construction Industry now and also in the future. The respondent had mentioned that it will be possible provided Malaysian construction industry is made aware of the importance and scope of BS in building

construction industry. Moreover, BS is involved from pre-construction stage until post construction stage. BS has knowledge in planning, construction and design, combined with practical mind-set and IT skills. Some of the respondents stated that BS can stand together with other professions once it recognized by the government and with a specified Act to regulate it. Some respondents argue that BS is a vital profession in order to ensure and enhance the quality of construction in Malaysia. There will be different professions and each profession should have their own specification and specialization of work and BS is the main person to deal with building pathology and condition survey. In the absence of BS Act, there are no specific job scopes that can be claimed under the BS domain. In contrast, other professions have their respective Act to protect them.

The survey also attempted to find out the ways in which the BS profession in the Malaysian Construction industry can be enhanced and creation of awareness of the BS's role. The feedbacks received show the majority of the respondents pointed out that the government should play an important role in promoting BS profession to public or other professional bodies. The government should create more job opportunities for graduated BS in construction industry so as to make known the existence of BS. Some of the respondents proposed that starting BS course in more universities all over Malaysia will help. Moreover, the government should take immediate action in passing the BS Act. The BS Act will enable the BS in Malaysia to register themselves as a professional body under the Ministry of Finance. With the registered license, they can perform as consultants in the field of construction. . The BS Act will eventually protect the public interest by lowering the probability of building defects, abandoned projects and low building functional utility. In addition, the BS graduates should prove themselves in the construction industry and let people know that BS student multi-faceted personnel in construction management and building management. . They must prove that they are able to carry out their job and as competently as other professionals.

In the aspect of training, both universities UM and USM have used the same guidelines to design their programme structure. Generally, almost all subjects included in the course are the same with the latest syllabus in University of Malaya, except some differences in the subject titles.

CONCLUSION

They are 6 challenges being identified in the literature reviewed, faced by BS and the most significant challenge was that no specific act was passed for the profession. The study also identified that the possibility to overcome this issue was by applying a holistic approach that combined the efforts of the government, public and the BS graduates themselves to promote and pass the BS Act as soon as possible. Although in absence of the BS Act, there is still a demand for BS in the Malaysian construction industry. One of the indicators showed that the BS graduates are still able to get an attractive salary which is equivalent to other professionals such as engineers and architects.

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