

A Study on the Potential of Making Quality Assessment System (Qlassic) Mandatory To The Contractors

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ABSTRACT

Quality Assessment System (QLASSIC) was introduced in Malaysia in 2016 and the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) plans to enforce QLASSIC as mandatory for all construction projects by the year 2020. However, there has been doubts whether this is practical as the current rate of adoption is low. This research aims to study the practicality of implementing QLASSIC on all construction projects by 2020. Quantitative approach has been employed with the target respondents being G7 Contractors in Selangor. The results of this research show that, the respondents feel that QLASSIC's mandatory status should be delayed beyond 2020, identify barriers to the implementation and provide suggestions to encourage its adoption in the industry. This research was carried out in early 2019.

Keywords

QLASSIC, CIDB, mandatory enforcement, quality assessment.

Introduction

QLASSIC was launched in 2006 and has become the special guideline to measure the quality of construction workmanship to be achieved in projects (Yee, 2014). Its adoption experienced a slow success from 2007 to 2013, with 160 projects assessed with QLASSIC in 2013 being the highest figure; 40 projects assessed with QLASSIC in 2007 being the lowest figure (CIDB, 2017). Although an upward trend was witnessed in the year 2014 and onward, with 311 projects assessed by QLASSIC being the highest figure in 2016, the take up rate is still considered very low (Roshdi, 2013). This is rather worrisome as in the year 2016, there was a total of 4263 development projects but only 311 projects were assessed by QLASSIC, a mere 7.30% of total projects (Nair, 2016).

Three objectives has been established to achieve the aim of this research: to study the perception of G7 contractors toward the compulsory implementation of QLASSIC, to identify the barriers and challenges in implementing QLASSIC as mandatory by 2020 and to propose the necessary actions to be carried out by CIDB in order to achieve the compulsory status.



The process to implement QLASSIC to the construction projects is difficult because there are complications and internal conflicts (Yasamis, Arditi and Mohammadi, 2002) due to the fragmentation of the industry. Moreover, our construction industry is still labour intensive and highly dependable on the foreign workers (Ismail, 2014), which makes the implementation more difficult as foreign workers do not understand and lack proper skills to support the system. As a result, the pace of innovation through Research & Development on new construction methods are relatively lagging.

R&D should be emphasised to enhance and improve the quality materials, provide more cost-effective design, innovate construction methods and labour-saving equipment. The amount of investment on R&D by Malaysian construction organisations ranges from negligible to non-existence (Low and Ong, 2014) due to the belief that researches reaps little or no gain at all. It is not only appropriate to balance the amount foreign workers employed (Ismail, 2014) in the construction sites but also to equip the local workers with necessary skills through collaboration with the National Vocational Training Council of Malaysia (MLVKM) and the National Occupational Skill Standards (NOSS).

Continuous quality improvement is one of many advantages of applying QLASSIC on construction projects (Ismail, 2014). Due to the fact that the fundamental responsibility of contractors is to construct the buildings, QLASSIC scoring framework gives contractors a motivation to continuously achieve higher score in his projects as he wants to prove the quality of workmanship. Besides, QLASSIC score can also help to increase company marketability (Syafiq, 2015) and boosts the confidence of potential house buyers on the quality expected. Moreover, majority of industrial stakeholders also agree that QLASSIC is a credible quality measurement tools giving the construction industry a new outlook.

Research Method

This research employs the quantitative method by sending structured questionnaire randomly to the respondents via online survey. The data collected from the respondents based on their opinion were analysed according to the order of ranking, which were derived from the average index to analysis for each answer from choices of the respondents. T-Test analysis was then made to confirm whether the results are significant or not significant. The category of Likert Scale is divided into five specific weightages as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Category for Average Index (Majid and McCaffer, 1997).

Likert Scale	Average Index	Weightage
Strongly Disagree/Strongly Insignificant	$1.0 \leq \text{Mean} < 1.5$	1
Disagree/Insignificant	$1.5 \leq \text{Mean} < 2.5$	2
Neutral/Quite Significant	$2.5 \leq \text{Mean} < 3.5$	3
Agree/Significant	$3.5 \leq \text{Mean} < 4.5$	4
Strongly Agree/Strongly Significant	$4.5 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 5.0$	5

Discussion of Results

From the 2187 registered G7 building contractors in the state of Selangor, simple random sampling has been adopted in picking the respondents with the required sample size of 66 complete respondents for a 90% confidence level and 10% marginal error.

(1) Background of Respondents

The largest group of the respondents i.e. 36% have only a few of their projects being assessed by QLASSIC and followed by 26% where none of their projects are assessed and also 26% where some of their projects had been assessed by QLASSIC in the past and the result is significant as proven by T-Test.. Unfortunately, only 1% (1 of 66) of respondents had all of his projects being assessed by QLASSIC in the past. This results prove that the current trend of QLASSIC is indeed in slow pace even though 70% of the respondents had attended QLASSIC awareness course while only 48% of the respondents had been involved in any QLASSIC assessor course.

(2) Perception of Respondents on QLASSIC Implementation

Table 2. Opinion on QLASSIC implementation

Statement	Mean Score	Category	Ranking
QLASSIC should be made compulsory for all development projects by 2020.	2.26	Disagree	4
The low usage of QLASSIC in construction projects will affect its mandatory status by 2020.	3.97	Agree	1
QLASSIC should only be made mandatory once CIDB wholly explores the opinions of Developers and Contractors.	3.88	Agree	2
The full implementation of QLASSIC by 2020 should be delay.	3.77	Agree	3

Table 2 shows that the respondents agree that “the low usage of QLASSIC in construction projects will affect its mandatory status by 2020”, “QLASSIC should only be made mandatory once CIDB wholly explores the opinion of developers and contractors” and “the full implementation of QLASSIC by 2020 should be delayed” in the descending order of ranking respectively. T-test conducted shows the results are significant. The respondents further confirm that they disagree that “QLASSIC should be made compulsory for all development projects by 2020”.

Table 3. Opinion on each impact

Statement	Mean Score	Category	Ranking
Continuous quality improvement.	3.88	Significant	1
Cost saving strategy.	3.18	Quite Significant	6
Efficient output of work thus time saving	3.23	Insignificant	5
Increase credibility and competitive position.	3.73	Significant*	3

Increase company's marketability.	3.79	Significant*	2
Reduction of risk and errors.	3.47	Quite Significant	4

*T test rejects Null Hypothesis

The results indicate that the impact of "continuous quality improvement" is significant, while "increase company's marketability" and "increase credibility & competitive position" are considered quite significant from the results of T-Test.

(3) Opinion on Barriers to Implementing QLASSIC

Table 4. Barriers to Implementation

Statement	Mean Score	Category	Ranking
Additional cost in application and construction.	3.88	Agree	1
Insufficient skilled workers to utilise QLASSIC effectively.	3.88	Agree	1
Complicated procedure to comply thus causing delays.	3.45	Neutral	3
QLASSIC standards are outdated thus fail to reflect the quality of workmanship accurately.	2.80	Neutral	6
QLASSIC assessors are less credible.	3.03	Neutral	4
Costly testing equipment to own.	3.02	Neutral	5

The respondents agree that the two main barriers to the implementation of QLASSIC are "additional cost in application and construction" and "insufficient skilled workers to utilize QLASSIC effectively", which are proven significant by T-Test.

(4) Perception of Respondents on Areas of Improvement for QLASSIC

Table 5. Opinion on areas of improvement for QLASSIC

Statement	Mean Score	Category	Ranking
Clearer and simpler quality manual and procedure.	4.0	Agree	1
Shorten the time needed to produce QLASSIC report and issue QLASSIC scores.	3.86	Agree	3
Reducing the cost of processing and training.	3.83	Agree	4
Strengthen supervision by CIDB on the assessment by the appointed external assessors.	3.71	Agree	6
Review and update the tolerance values on the acceptance criteria of the construction works regularly.	3.71	Agree	6

Provide appropriate incentives for those who apply QLASSIC.	3.92	Agree	2
Making it a requirement to obtain Certificate of Fitness.	3.82	Agree	5
Making it a requirement to apply for ISO 9001 QMS.	3.67	Agree*	8

*T test reject Null Hypothesis.

Table 5 above shows that the respondents agree to all the suggestions above for improvement to implementation of QLASSIC except “Making it a requirement to apply for ISO 9001 QMS” to which they consider neutral in their opinion.

Conclusion

Since there is a very low adoption rate of QLASSIC assessment by Contractors currently, the mandatory implementation should be delayed. Although continuous quality improvement is the main reason for QLASSIC assessment, it should only be made mandatory when the industry players are ready. The reasons for the low rate of adoption are the substantial indirect cost for complying with the stringent conditions and shortages of well-trained skilled labour. Suggestions have been put forward by the respondents to improve the assessment structure by making it clearer and simpler to follow and incentives to be provided for companies who volunteer to adopt QLASSIC assessment.

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