



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PRACTICE AMONG MALAYSIAN
CONSULTANT QUANTITY SURVEYORS***

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**ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PRACTICE AMONG MALAYSIAN
CONSULTANT QUANTITY SURVEYORS**

By

NOR ATIKAH BINTI HASHIM

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

October 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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October 2019

Chairman : Zoharah binti Omar, PhD
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There are many unethical behaviours being practiced in the construction industry that lead to corruption, such as dishonesty, cheating, selfishness and bribery. Even though these issues are common problems in the Malaysian construction industry, there is still a lack of studies in Malaysia on ethical decision-making (EDM), especially in the field of the quantity surveying practice. As stated by Abdul-Rahman (2010), one of the problems is in the area of tendering, where the evaluation process is usually conducted by the quantity surveyor (QS). Understanding how EDM is structured in the context of the consultant quantity surveyor (CQS) practice through the perspective of human resource development (HRD) is vital to help the profession grow and sustain itself. The nature of CQS work involves dealing with construction-related legal and financial matters, such as payments for work done, time delays and extensions, and losses and expenses. The need for CQSs to consult and advise the project team on a daily basis puts them in stressful situations and the task requires an expert in the field to convince the professional teams to follow the conditions of the contract. Past research has shown that self-control is an important factor in ensuring practitioners comply with ethical standards. Thus, this research intends to identify the compliance issues of EDM in the CQS practice and to understand why CQSs comply with EDM in practice. This study addresses the concept of knowledge acquisition and how professionals learn. Situated learning and experiential learning serve as the foundations upon which learning from experience can be analysed and better understood, especially in the area of EDM. The role of self-control is also addressed to identify the importance of EDM in professional practice. Acquiring expertise in EDM is essential for CQSs to perform their duty well and to safeguard the clients' interest in construction projects. However, how do CQSs learn EDM? How do CQSs practice EDM in professional practice? And why do CQSs comply with EDM in professional practice? The researcher used a qualitative method to investigate EDM knowledge construction among CQSs through knowledge development, situated learning, experiential learning and self-control theory in professional practice to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. There

is a lack of qualitative research on EDM, especially in the area of the quantity surveying practice within the context of the Malaysian construction industry. Therefore, a qualitative research methodology was selected to gain more detailed and valid descriptions of the phenomena studied. This methodology allowed the respondents to discuss personal data more freely and openly in in-depth interviews. The selection of respondents was limited to CQSs who registered with the Board of Quantity Surveyors Malaysia (BQSM) and practiced within the Malaysian construction industry. From the results, the researcher suggests that several attributes give meaning to EDM in the CQS professional practice, including duty of care and safeguarding a good reputation for the company and themselves. As an ethical person, the CQS shows integrity by being responsible, accountable, trailing excellence and exercising self-restraint. They demonstrate the ability to respond to expectations in their professional practice through EDM.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

AMALAN MEMBUAT KEPUTUSAN BERETIKA DI KALANGAN JURUUKUR BAHAN KONSULTAN DI MALAYSIA

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Terdapat banyak tingkah laku yang tidak beretika yang menjadi amalan dalam industri pembinaan seperti ketidakjujuran, menipu, mementingkan diri, rasuah dan lain-lain yang membawa kepada korupsi. Walaupun masalah ini telah menjadi masalah umum dalam industri pembinaan Malaysia, masih terdapat kekurangan kajian di Malaysia mengenai membuat keputusan etika (EDM-Ethical Decision Making), terutamanya dalam amalan Ukur Bahan. Seperti yang dinyatakan oleh Abdul-rahman (2010), salah satu masalah adalah dalam urusan tender, di mana proses penilaian biasanya dilaksanakan oleh Juruukur Bahan. Memahami pembinaan EDM dalam bidang amalan Juruukur Bahan Konsultan (CQS-Consultant Quantity Surveyor) melalui perspektif pembangunan sumber manusia (HRD – Human Resource Development) adalah penting untuk membantu profesion ini berkembang dan dikekalkan. Bidang kerja CQS adalah berurusan dengan masalah perundangan dan kewangan pembinaan seperti pembayaran kerja yang dilakukan, kelewatan dan lanjutan masa, kerugian dan perbelanjaan, dan banyak lagi. Keperluan CQS untuk berunding dan menasihatkan pasukan projek setiap hari meletakkan mereka dalam situasi yang tertekan dan tugas itu memerlukan kepakaran untuk meyakinkan pasukan profesional mengikut syarat kontrak. Penyelidikan yang lalu menunjukkan bahawa kawalan diri merupakan faktor penting dalam memastikan para pengamal mematuhi piawaian etika. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti isu pematuhan EDM dalam amalan CQS dan mengapa CQS mematuhi EDM dalam praktiknya. Konsep menimba pengetahuan dan bagaimana pembelajaran profesional ditangani menjadi asas dalam kajian ini. Pengajaran pembelajaran dan pengalaman pembelajaran berfungsi sebagai asas di mana pembelajaran dari pengalaman dapat dianalisis dan lebih mendalam, terutama di bidang EDM. Peranan kawalan sendiri juga dikaji untuk mengenal pasti kepentingan EDM dalam amalan profesional. Kepakaran dalam EDM adalah penting bagi CQS untuk melaksanakan tugas mereka dengan baik dan melindungi kepentingan pelanggan dalam projek pembinaan. Tetapi, apa yang perlu diketahui adalah, bagaimana Juruukur Bahan Perunding belajar

membuat Keputusan Etika? Bagaimanakah Juruukur Bahan Perunding membuat keputusan etika dalam Amalan Profesional? Dan, kenapa Juruukur Bahan Perunding mematuhi Keputusan Etika dalam Amalan Profesional? Penyelidik menggunakan kaedah kualitatif untuk menyiasat pembinaan pengetahuan EDM di kalangan CQS mengenai pembangunan pengetahuan, pembelajaran yang terletak, pembelajaran pengalaman dan teori kawalan diri dalam amalan profesional untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang mendalam tentang fenomena ini. Terdapat kekurangan kajian kualitatif dalam membuat keputusan etika terutamanya dalam amalan Ukur Bahan dan dalam konteks Industri Pembinaan Malaysia. Oleh itu, metodologi penyelidikan kualitatif telah dipilih untuk mendapatkan penerangan yang lebih terperinci dan lebih jelas tentang fenomena yang membolehkan responden membincangkan data peribadi secara bebas dan lebih terbuka melalui wawancara mendalam. Pemilihan responden adalah terhad kepada Juruukur Bahan Perunding (CQS) yang berdaftar dengan Lembaga Juruukur Bahan Malaysia (BQSM) dan pengamal dalam industri pembinaan Malaysia. Hasilnya, penyelidik mencadangkan bahawa beberapa faktor memberi makna EDM dalam amalan profesional CQS yang merangkumi tugas kewajipan dan menjaga reputasi yang baik untuk syarikat dan diri mereka sendiri. Sebagai seorang yang beretika, CQS menunjukkan integriti dengan bertanggungjawab, jujur, beretika, kawalan sendiri dalam mengejar kecemerlangan. Mereka juga menunjukkan keupayaan untuk bertindak balas secara terbaik terhadap jangkaan EDM. Abstrak merupakan ringkasan keseluruhan tesis dan wajib diberi perhatian rapi sepertimana bahagian tesis yang lain. Abstrak tidak mengandungi bahan rujukan. Nama singkatan atau akronim mesti didahului dengan terminology penuh pada penggunaan kali pertama.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|--|
| CQS | Consultant Quantity Surveyor |
| EDM | Ethical Decision Making |
| HRD | Human Resource Development |
| NIP | National Integrity Plan |
| PEMANDU | Performance Management and Delivery Unit |
| CPI | Corruption Perception Index |
| PWD | Public Work Department |
| RICS | Royal Institute of Consultant Surveyors |
| BQSM | Board of Quantity Surveyors Malaysia |
| ASE | Approved Supervised Experience |
| TPC | Test of Professional Competence |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to Ethical Decision-Making

Ethics is a branch of moral philosophy concerning the principles of guiding and recommending behaviours and conduct. In business and construction, ethics has developed both at the professional and organisational level. Professionals such as lawyers, architects, engineers and surveyors have ethical codes to uphold as befit their profession, as do organisations. Ethical behaviour is measured by the degrees of trustworthiness and integrity with which companies conduct business. Personal ethics are a reflection of one's beliefs, values, personality, etc., while an organisation's ethics must be instilled by its culture and leadership. Ethical failure in an organisation can often be the result of leadership's inadequate promotion of ethical practices, as individuals' ethics become subsumed among the broader non-observance of professional ethics.

The issue of professional ethics in the construction industry has gained public attention. Common barriers to its solution are corrupt tendering practices, lack of quality in construction work, harmful safety standards, payment problems, corruption and, most importantly, lack of public accountability for money spent on public buildings and infrastructure. Staying in business and obtaining work contracts is vital for all construction teams, like those in professional firms such as architectural, engineering and quantity surveying firms, as well as contractors and suppliers. Corrupt culture occurs when a firm pays to obtain a contract based on business sustainability. Business sustainability means obtaining a steady flow of project to pay for the overhead of a business. It is also regarded as an indicator of good reputation and performance in a business. Sound ethical principles are important for a professional firm to gain a reputable name in the industry and to sustain the business itself.

Profit is the main driving force behind people doing business. Most construction teams, such as consultation and contractor teams, are looking to make more profit to sustain their business, and some are driven by the greed to get rich fast. The problems with ethics arise when money, power and greed take charge of human decisions. Adherence to professional ethics is crucial in the context of the construction industry, and professionals must make practical and fair decisions in this complex environment to uphold their professional ethics.

Ethical decision-making (EDM) has been studied for a long time, both through a clear philosophical and theological lens and across a wide range of disciplines (i.e. business, medicine, athletics and art; Lehnert et al., 2014, pp. 2147–2).

Professionals must have an EDM process, but in practice, many do not. According to the literature concerned, EDM may be shaped by several factors, such as individual, organisational and moral intensity. The majority of EDM research focuses on the process, which includes awareness, judgement, intent and behaviour. Most of the research is quantitative and lacking in qualitative methodologies to understand the phenomenon in depth.

In Malaysia, individuals regularly switch between private and public sector work – a phenomenon known as the ‘revolving door’. Such circumstances allow active government participation in the economy and public–private relations to become vague. ‘The risk of corruption is high, and the regulation of public–private interactions becomes difficult, allowing corruption to take place with impunity’ (Transparency International, 2015). There are a few key national corruption-fighting institutions in the country, namely the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Key Results Areas Against Corruption, the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU), the Malaysian Institute of Integrity, and the Public Complaints Bureau. The Malaysian Institute of Integrity set up the National Integrity Plan (NIP) on 23 April 2004 to form an entirely ethical and moral society whose citizens are committed to religious and spiritual principles and have the highest ethical standards.

NIP was prepared by the Government of Malaysia to cultivate and nurture a culture of ethics and integrity at all levels of Malaysian society. This agenda shows that the Government has taken steps to improve the ethical standards of the community. The Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI; 2016) showed that Malaysia ranks among the highest in corruption, with a score of 49% corruption. TI reported that Malaysia’s CPI ranking in 2019 jumped 10 places to 51 compared to the previous year. A higher score indicates a better public perception. TI’s CPI measures corruption in the public sector, including bribery, diversion of public funds, use of public office for private gain, and nepotism in the civil service.

The Commonwealth of Nations is also tackling corruption among its member countries. Corruption phenomena in the Commonwealth include bribes by businesses to politicians or government officials to obtain licences or bypass regulations. According to TI (2018), most of the less developed countries suffer high rates of corruption. Therefore, being a Commonwealth member, Malaysia cannot ignore the recent alarming issues of corruption.

1.2 Background of EDM Issues in the Quantity Surveying Practice

Nowadays, many unethical practices occur in the construction industry that lead to corruption, such as dishonesty, cheating, selfishness and bribery. According to TI, corruption in the construction industry is due to money, and the corruption can be categorised into four types. The first is bribery that offers an undue reward

(supply side) or that demands or receives a reward (demand side) to make a gain. An individual or a corporation, in the case of institutional bribery, may initiate bribery. The act may also be shared, and secret refunds may be offered to specific individuals on the supply side to help pay for the bribe. The second is extortion called blackmail, where payment is demanded in a context where there is little choice but to comply. It is usually linked to gang or mafia activity controlling (by force) certain activities or actions by coercion. The third is fraud, such as wrongful approval of substandard work or other types of deception that add false value or making payments through accounts that do not comply with the laws at present. The last is concealment, a practice also associated with corruption, that often involves the overpayment of an agent whose services are vague and who proceeds to facilitate or bribe payments.

As Adnan et al. (2012) reported, 'There is no exclusion in the Malaysian construction industry, where grafting and malpractice are reported in the media and are considered synonymous with construction players' (p. 723). In one incident, five workers were injured when steel structures supporting the roof of the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Gong Badak, undergoing reconstructive work at the time, collapsed at 11:30 a.m. on 20 February 2013. Part of the stadium roof collapsed a year after it opened for the Malaysian Games (Sukma) in 2008. An investigation committee was set up by the Public Works Department to identify the cause of the collapse of the RM292 million stadium. They highlighted several key factors in a detailed, 60-page confidential report submitted to the state government one year after the incident. The problem has yet to be resolved, and the stadium has been abandoned and has caused significant losses for the government and society.

The results of a survey by Abdul-Rahman et al. (2010) showed that 74.2% of the players in the construction industry agree that unethical behaviour in the Malaysian construction industry is prevalent. It is particularly prevalent in public projects where contractors and suppliers with the lowest bid are often awarded the tender. The evidence of relatively high-level corruption incidents in the Malaysian construction industry is comparable to the results of an investigation into corruption by TI, the global anti-corruption coalition.

The Society of Consultant Surveyors recognises that upholding ethical principles is a crucial reason that people rely on professional bodies. As Latham (1994), Egan (1998), Fan et al. (2003), Ho and Ng (2003) and the Construction Industry Review Committee (2001) have acknowledged, the unethical behaviour of construction industry professionals has affected public confidence in and respect for the dignity of their professional competence. Pearl et al. (2005) surveyed unethical practices in South Africa. Their findings showed that 88% of surveyors had observed or experienced collusive tendering. A further 50% of respondents, spread equally among the four professional groups, had witnessed or experienced bribery. Most of the quantity surveyors (QSSs) had observed or experienced negligent behaviour. Moreover, they had experienced or

discovered instances of fraudulent behaviour. Some of the cases of unfair conduct intricately reported professionals being forced by clients and reports that indicated conflicts of interest and breaches of confidentiality. A further survey investigated the experiences of respondents in collusive tendering, bribery, professional negligence, fraudulent behaviour, unfair conduct and violations of professional responsibilities (Dabson et al., 2007, p. 16).

Although these issues are also common problems for the Malaysian construction industry, there is still a lack of EDM studies in Malaysia, particularly concerning the quantity survey practice. As Abdul-Rahman et al. (2010) have pointed out, one of the problems is in the tendering field, where the QS usually carries out the evaluation process.

The impact of unethical issues on the construction industry is significant. Reports from the Malaysian construction industry indicate that 17.3% of 417 government projects were considered 'sick' (Pearl et al., 2005). Furthermore, some of these sick projects had been carried out using unethical conduct among project teams. The unethical conduct of the project teams of the construction industry has an impact on the quality of the projects (Adnan et al., 2012; Hamzah et al., 2010; Rahman et al., 2007). As Adnan et al. (2012) expressed it, 'Increased unethical behaviour will see a consequential decline in the quality of project performance as evidenced by statistics from construction sites' (p. 723). The results show that unethical behaviour has a direct and negative impact on the quality of construction. In the Malaysian construction industry, ethical standards among construction professionals are considered to be below average (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2010, p. 3745). The practice of ethics and EDM are essential for professionals in construction, but many factors influence their behaviour and conduct. The need for research on the professional practice experience in EDM is crucial for the sustainable development of the economic and social aspects of the country and profession. Thus, this study will provide a clear picture of the current condition of the quantity surveying practice to perform EDM.

Ethics also plays a vital role in the theory of human resource development (HRD), which includes economics, systems and psychology. According to Swanson & Holton (2001), ethical concerns are best expressed through recognition and adherence to three core beliefs: (1) The organisation is a human-made organisation that relies on human expertise to establish and achieve its objectives. (2) Human expertise is developed and maximised through HRD processes for the mutual long-term or short-term benefits of the sponsoring organisation and the individuals involved. (3) HRD professionals are advocates of individuals/groups, work processes and organisational integrity. According to Nadler and Nadler (1989), HRD is defined as 'organised learning experiences provided by the employees within a specific period to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and personal growth' (p. 56). HRD is intended to help employees develop their skills and knowledge, in particular by training them. Acquiring EDM expertise is essential for consultant quantity surveyors

(CQSs) to perform their duties well and to safeguard the client's interest in the construction project. It is understood that industrial training is compulsory for the novice QS to become an expert in the field. But what learning experiences they have undergone for EDM and how have these experiences shape their EDM in practice? How do they decide to become an expert in practice? Moreover, what else contributes to developing their EDM in practice?

1.3 Problem Statement

Ethical and responsible behaviour cannot be a result of individual virtue alone and is a function of a complex interplay between personalised and contextual factors, both internal and external to an organisation (Knights & O'Leary, 2006; Meyers, 2004). Understanding how EDM is structured in the context of the CQS practice (in-context) through the HRD perspective is vital to help grow and sustain the profession. Much of the research conducted by advocates of practice-based approaches, including communities of practice and situated learning, highlights the embedded in the nature of the practice. Construction is one of the most dynamic, risky and challenging industries. However, the industry has an abysmal reputation for managing risk, with many significant projects failing to meet deadlines and cost targets (Mills, 2001). The process of construction, from inception to completion, is complex and involves a vast number of people with different skills. It also involves facing new design and construction problems with numerous assumptions to be made about elements such as weather, site conditions, interest rates, and labour and material availability. These complexities are enhanced by many external and uncontrollable factors. Risk management is part of CQSs' scope of work in fulfilling their duties and obligations as professionals. In the CQS practice, intuition, expert skill and judgement will always influence decision-making (Khairani, 2012).

A CQS is a professional in their field of expertise. Professionals develop their expertise through tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is gained through informal learning such as upbringing, social culture, religion, beliefs and many more experienced gained throughout life. Explicit knowledge is formal learning obtained through a structured learning process from early childhood education to tertiary education. Lifelong learning is embedded in people's lives from birth. Investigating the development of tacit and explicit knowledge through life experiences is essential for identifying the factors that contribute to CQS EDM and for giving meaning to their EDM in their professional practice. The critical questions are: How do CQSs develop EDM through their life experiences? How do they learn to achieve exceptional skills of EDM?

Fan et al. (2001) argue that professional norms are learned through active engagement and experience when moving from junior to senior level. There may, therefore, be a process for developing ethical concepts. Few experimental studies have distinguished novice and expert phases within the scope and

complexity of knowledge structures, like Berliner (1994), Carter et al. (1988), Chi et al. (1981) and Livingston & Borko (1989). The stage models provided in these studies are based on the traditional notion of professional skills being a set of attributes, such as knowledge, skills and attitudes. A body of knowledge and skills have been identified for professions such as teaching, medicine, engineering, architecture, policing and social work (Freidson, 2001), but this is still lacking in the realm of quantity surveying professions. Investigating the knowledge development for EDM by CQSs through professional practice is crucial to determine how they acquire EDM expertise in their field. The concept of situated learning is a supervisory process for social practice, and is necessary when preparing for most professions (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Garvey et al., 2014). A QS is involved in authentic daily practice settings, applying knowledge, and making use of EDM in productive ways before becoming a CQS. After becoming a CQS and accruing years of practice, what are their considerations of EDM? Are there any other influences that contribute to their knowledge and expert decisions in their professional practice? How do CQSs deal with a problematic situation or conflict in their professional practice? What are the expert skills that are important for CQSs to be able to apply EDM in practice? How do CQSs deal with EDM in their professional practice?

A professional code of ethics usually sets professionals up for a sustainable career. As far as a CQS is concerned, compliance with the Board of Quantity Surveyors Malaysia (BQSM) and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) code of ethics is crucial to the maintenance of their professional licence. If the CQS is found guilty of any unethical conduct, their professional licence and membership from the professional body are revoked. The adverse effect of EDM on the professional duty of care of a CQS is professional negligence. If the CQS performs EDM in their professional practice with self-control, in this context it is an exercise of self-restraint to avoid legal action, such as the revocation of a professional licence, and court action. Self-control has been redefined as 'a tendency to consider the full range of potential costs of a particular act' (Hirschi, 2004, p. 15). Individuals who can restrain themselves from committing crimes and carrying out equivalent behaviours do so because they can predict the long-term consequences of such acts. Among the consequences is the loss of the secure attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief of one's valued family, friends, and community. These social bonds prevent people with a high level of self-control from engaging in crime or delinquency. Dealing with ethical issues in professional practice is the most critical part of the work of a CQS. The nature of a CQSs' work is concerned with the construction of financial and contractual matters, such as payments for work done, time delays and extensions, losses and expenses, and other construction-related issues. Thus, the need for the CQS to consult the project team daily puts them in stressful situations of EDM.

The task of the expert in the field is to ensure the professional teams to follow the proper rules and regulations. The CQS must consider performing EDM for the consultation of job-related matters. Past research has shown that self-control is an essential factor in ensuring practitioners comply with ethical standards.

Tittle et al. (2004) suggest that the concept of self-control theory is incomplete and proposed that self-control has two components: the capacity for self-control and the desire for self-control. As a point of theoretical extension, self-control should be considered situationally (Piquero & Bouffard, 2007). It is vital to identify whether the EDM behaviour practiced by CQSs informs the self-control theory concerning why CQSs perform EDM in their professional practice. Thus, this research intends to identify the compliance issues of EDM in the CQS practice and to understand why the CQS complies with EDM in practice.

As acknowledged by Adnan et al. (2012), research into ethics and decision-making has been carried out in the construction industry in other countries such as the United States, Australia, South Africa and Hong Kong. However, most of these studies used a quantitative approach. According to a thorough review by Lehnert et al. (2014), only a few studies for EDM have engaged with qualitative data (p. 12). They argue that the use of qualitative research could serve to facilitate, grow, and develop the theory behind the research into something that enables the entire field to grow (Lehnert et al., 2014). There is a notable lack of qualitative research on EDM being carried out on the quantity surveying practice within the context of the Malaysian construction industry. The researcher, therefore, selected a qualitative research methodology to gain more detailed and more valid descriptions of the phenomena, which allow the respondents to discuss personal data more freely and openly through in-depth interviews. To gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena, this qualitative method was used to study EDM knowledge constructions among CQSs related to knowledge development, situated learning, experiential learning and self-control theory in the professional practice.

1.4 Research Questions

The outlined problems of learning from experience have a significant effect on individuals, institutions and society. To address some of these issues, several questions should be studied further to advance our understanding of how CQSs construct EDM knowledge through their professional experiences. The following questions have been developed for the purpose of this research:

1. How do consultant quantity surveyors learn ethical decision-making?
2. How do consultant quantity surveyors practice ethical decision-making at work?
3. Why do consultant quantity surveyors comply with ethical decision-making in professional practice?

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The selection of respondents was limited to CQSs who were registered with a quantity surveying organisation, namely the BQSM, Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia (RISM), or the RICS, which is based in the United Kingdom (UK). The respondents' practice was in the Malaysian construction industry. The selected respondents had more than 15 years' experience as CQSs. With an understanding of the importance of experience, this research focuses on the ethical development process and issues related to EDM. The research focuses on the learning aspect of HRD. The concept of knowledge acquisition and how professionals learn are also addressed in this study. Situated learning and experiential learning serve as the foundations upon which learning from experience can be analysed and better understood, especially in the area of EDM. The role of self-control is also studied to identify the importance of EDM in professional practice.

The study will deal with issues within the Malaysian context only. The findings of pilot studies indicated that the CQSs agreed that they usually have problems with EDM in governmental projects, not private projects. The limitations of this study include inconsistent interview settings and lengths, and a lack of regional diversity among the respondents. Depending on the availability of the respondents, interview settings varied, with some respondents being interviewed at coffee shops, others at offices, and others at construction site offices. All respondents were from Klang Valley, but had projects in various Malaysian states, including Sabah and Sarawak. This could inject regional diversity into the project-related experiences. A further limitation was the interviewer's potential lack of ability to interpret respondents' non-verbal cues and clues.

1.6 Significance of the Study

1.6.1 Suggesting High Ethical Standards for EDM within the Profession

The QS profession requires technical competence and business expertise. Leadership skills, motivational skills, soft skills, and risk management expertise are tools commonly considered essential. In practice, they have to follow the rules outlined in the QS Act and Code of Conduct. Professional ethics can be appropriately explored alongside a set of social values and a conception of the general role of professionals in society. By explaining the relationship between elements like the standards of practice and context and other contributors, the results can help to improve and uphold the standards of practice for the sustainability of the QS profession in Malaysia.

1.6.2 Promoting Sustainable Development of the Quantity Surveying Profession through HRD

The outcome of this research intends to enhance the values and prolong the existence of the QS profession in the construction industry by promoting the sustainable development of the profession through HRD, thereby increasing corporate social responsibility and assisting the development of high ethical standards among other building environment practitioners in Malaysia. It also contributes to the field of HRD by addressing the positive impact of EDM practices on business cultures. Ethical and responsible behaviour cannot be a result of individual virtue alone and is a function of a complex interplay between individual and contextual factors, both internal and external to an organisation (Knights & O'Leary, 2006; Meyers, 2004). By examining the quantity surveying profession through HRD, this research contributes to the information that promotes the understanding of EDM through practice while helping develop and sustain the profession.

1.7 Contribution to Practice

The emerging issues of construction ethics involving Qs are severe. The profession deals with clients' money and evaluating all construction works. The trust that is placed in the hands of Qs will affect the whole supply chain if they are corrupt. The industry sees this as a much milder threat than it is. This is because professional fees charged by Qs are low compared to those charged by other consultants. Therefore, people in the industry – mainly contractors – take advantage of this issue and bribe them. Malaysian construction industry players still exhibit behavioural problems, especially the lack of duty of care, social responsibility and ethical awareness. Simpson (2010, p. 252) states that the preferable response to this is the provision of knowledge, expertise and professional judgement to secure market positions. Securing a market position is an essential criterion for a profession to sustain itself in any industry. Professional judgement is one of the most critical factors that can lead to the sustainability of any profession. Craft (2014) states, 'Studies showed ethical decision making was significantly impacted by workplace ethics, standards and practices (Elango et al., 2010); age and perceived ethical climate types (Forte, 2004); management's efforts to encourage ethical decision making and the tone at the top (Sweeney et al., 2010); and ethical norms and incentives (Shafer & Simmons, 2011)'.

This research suggests that HRD should be involved at the organisational level in the training of EDM as a whole, as evidenced by codes of ethics, codes of conduct, policies surrounding the ethics of an organisation, and ethical behaviours. This study will reflect upon other professionals in the construction industry as they deal with the same projects and face similar experiences in EDM. This will help other professionals in the industry enhance their EDM through Continuing Professional Development training content, especially that

which explains the value of a code of ethics, a code of conduct, policies surrounding the ethics of the organisation, and ethical behaviour. Research in QS professional practices will contribute to explanations of new knowledge about how this practice incorporates and constructs EDM.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Ethics

Ethics is defined as the systematic reflection upon what is moral and the study of conduct regarding its moral rightness or wrongness. Conduct refers to a particular kind of human action; one that is voluntary and thus involves choice and decision (Jones, 1991).

Professional Ethics

Professionals are bound by a set of principles, attitudes or types of character dispositions that control the way the profession is practised. This is termed professional ethics (McDowell, 1991).

Professional Practice

The term 'professional practice' refers to the conduct and work of someone from a particular profession. It also refers to professional responsibility. Professional practice is the way an individual behaves in the workplace (Designing Buildings Wiki).

Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making is making a decision that is both legal and morally acceptable to the broader community (Jones, 1991).

Built Environment

The built environment is a material, spatial and cultural product of human labour that combines physical elements and energy in forms for living, working and playing. It has been defined as “the human-made space in which people live, work, and recreate on a day-to-day basis” (Mohit, 2013, as cited in Streimikiene, 2014).

Situated Learning Theory

'Situated learning theory concerns the understanding of and prescriptions for how knowledge is developed and organised within workplaces' (Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Motteram et al., 2013). Individuals who want to learn something need to be involved in a community practising specific knowledge and skills.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory defines experiential learning as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience' (Kolb, 1984, p. 41).

Self-Control Theory

Self-control is defined as the ability to forego acts that provide immediate or near-term pleasures but that also have negative consequences for the actor, and the ability to act in favour of longer-term interests (Gottfredson, 2017, p. 548).

Duty of Care

A duty of care is the requirement that a person act in consideration of others and the public with the vigilance, attention, caution and prudence that a reasonable person in the situation would employ. In tort law, a duty of care is a legal obligation that is imposed on an individual requiring adherence to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others. If an individual breaches a duty of care that they owe another, that breach may lead to the individual being sued for negligence.

Negligence

Negligence is the 'failure to exercise that degree of care which, in the circumstances, the law requires for the protection of those interests of other persons which may be injuriously affected by the want of such care' (Delbridge, 2000, p. 56).

Moral values

Moral values are defined as a set of principles that guide an individual on how to evaluate right from wrong (Jones, 1991).

Intuition

Intuitions are defined as 'effectively charged judgements that arise through rapid, non-conscious and holistic associations' (Dane & Pratt, 2007). Intuition is the ability to understand something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning.

Religion and Belief

Religious beliefs concern the belief in and worship of an omnipotent power, especially a personal God or gods. Religious belief refers to attitudes towards the mythological, supernatural, or spiritual aspects of religion. These beliefs are beliefs about gods and other religious entities or events. Like other beliefs, they are cognitive associations between object concepts (e.g. God) and existential (i.e. real or imaginary) or truth-value (i.e. true or false) concepts.

Integrity

Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles – moral uprightness. It is the quality of acting in accordance or harmony with relevant moral values, norms and rules. 'Integrity means that a professional exercises his tasks adequately, carefully and responsibly, taking into account all relevant interests' (Karssing, 2007, p. 3).

Corruption

Corruption is defined as dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially by influential people (such as government officials or police officers) or as inducement to wrongdoing. The word is derived from the Latin word 'corruptus', meaning 'to break'.

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