

Relationship between Supply, Demand and Opportunity of Interior Designers Graduates in Malaysia Construction Industry

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(Received Feb. 2015 & Published online April. 2015 issue)

Abstract: The aim for the paper is to identify the Interior Designer (ID) graduate create by various public universities, demand of their professional services and knowledge and also opportunity in the Malaysia construction industry. The understanding towards the topic is enhanced by questionnaire response method where the related respondents are required to answer a number of questions. The chosen samples for this research are graduates who are currently practice in various ID Consulting Offices and similar. Outcome from the research shown that respondents agreed and there is still a need for improvement. Based on Malaysia cases, it is imperative that the continuance of these 'SDO's as the required needs of ID graduates is still below demands.

Keywords: Supply, Demand & Opportunity; ID graduates; Malaysia construction industry.

1. Introduction

The Malaysian economy enjoyed a period of sustained economic growth until the 2nd. Quarter 1997 economic crisis is a result of the government's economic recovery measures. Malaysia high level of economic growth and the aspiration of becoming a developed and industrialized nation has created the environment for growth, and stimulated changes in construction industry.

These research overviews how public higher education institutions provide graduate especially interior designer and also the Malaysia construction industry development. It also to investigate the growth and changes in Interior Design graduate demand and opportunity. The aim for the research is to emphasize the Interior Designer graduate create by various public universities, demand of their professional services and knowledge and also opportunity in the Malaysia construction industry. The understanding towards the topic is enhanced by questionnaire response method where the related respondents are required to answer a number of questions.

The findings are Interior Design graduate provided by the local public education institution are still getting their position in Malaysia construction industry. The supply, demand and opportunities of graduate are increase time to time accordingly to the development of the construction industry itself. Through these hopefully the research would give a justified scenario in the atmosphere of Malaysia construction industry impact towards the Interior Design graduate prospect and placement in the future.

1.2 Problem Statement

The research will attempt to break that how the unstable condition of economy affecting the demand of interior designer profession and also highlight various areas of opportunities growth for interior designer graduates in implementing their professional skills and knowledge in Malaysia construction industry.

1.3 Research Objectives

To identify various medium, job scope and responsibilities of interior designer in order to

seek their path and place in the Malaysia construction industry.

2. Background Studies

For the last 25 years, the construction industry in Malaysia has experienced three economic cycles of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In the 1970s, despite the economic fluctuations, the construction industry remained relatively stable with a growth level ranging from 4.7% to 4.3% (CIDB Malaysia, 1999-2000). The main contributing factors were the government policy of promoting home ownership and the rapid pace of commercial and industrial development in the country. Before long, however, the volatile economy of the 1980's affected the construction industry indicated that Malaysian construction firms were vulnerable to economic downturn. The firms were slow to respond to the economic environment (Juhary et.al, 2004)

They were introspective, restricted their activity to certain segments of the industry and concentrated only on the domestic market. The robust 1990s were active years for Malaysian construction industry. There were double-digit growths for seven consecutive years from 1989 to 1995. Growth was widespread, involving the public and private sectors over an expanded range of construction activity. This growth, however, came to a halt in 1998 when the construction sector contracted by 23% and further deteriorated to 5.6% in 1999 (Lee, 2001). With a recovery of 3.1% for 2000 and a steady upward trend of 5.5% of growth in 2002 (Lee, 2001), the construction industry is one of the most cyclic industries in Malaysia. It experiences higher highs and lower lows than any other industry. Thus, the fluctuation represents the most important constraint in the construction industry.

According to 'Market Watch 2006' by Malaysian Group of Construction Researcher (MGCR) consultant in their article says that Malaysia construction industry is generally separated in two areas. One is general construction, which comprises residential

construction, non-residential resident construction and civil engineering construction. The second area is special trade works, which comprises activities of metal works, electrical works, plumbing, sewerage and sanitary works, refrigeration and air conditioning works, painting works, carpentry, tiling and flooring works and glass works.

The construction industry makes up an important part of Malaysian economy, although relatively small, it is extensively linked with many other parts of the economy, in particular with related industries such as those for basic metal products and electrical machinery. Construction also has been described as some kind of economic engine for Malaysia.

Universities have the responsibility of imparting both hard and soft knowledge to students. Upon completion of studies, these graduates are expected to enter the workforce, preferably in their area of specialization. There is, thus, knowledge flowing from universities to undergraduates, and upon graduation, from the graduates to the industry. This flow of knowledge achieves the short term objective of providing the industry with skilled professionals, and a long term objective of ensuring the construction industry has sustainable growth and balanced development (Florence and Lena., 2008).

There are few public universities in Malaysia that producing graduates of interior design. The public university in the country that produces interior design graduates is Universiti Teknologi MARA, Universiti Sains Malaysia and the latest is produced in International Islamic University Malaysia. Interior design and interior designers are relatively a new scene in Malaysia construction industry. The profession recently was recognized as a professional profession and governed by Architect Act. The practice of interior design in Malaysia is now under the jurisdiction of Board of Architect Malaysia. Since it is now a legislated profession, the relationship of supply and demand of the graduates produced by the university to the industry becomes more

apparent. The university that produces the graduates of interior design should strictly follow the education guidelines set by the Board of Architect Malaysia (Siti Majidah, 2010).

There were a lot of organizations in Malaysia construction industry involved in providing the opportunities to the interior design graduates. There are several parties involved, such as consultants, contractors, developers, and also local authorities and the government. All this organization generally can be divided into two categories; private and public sector. Both of these sectors are influential and lead in employing and providing opportunities to these graduates. Sectors have their own advantages and disadvantages, it is the graduates call and they should be intellectual and knowledgeable enough in deciding their own path.

In creating one's own path, the graduates should see how the knowledge that being harvested in the university can be utilized to fit within the industry. Since interior design is very much sided to creative job scopes, the graduates should realize the directions and approaches towards the development policy.

Boon (2010) stated that 'Architecture is the embodiment and means of communicating the nation's aspirations, and given that the government is without doubt the single biggest client body for the built environment in the country, it is vital that the leadership be closely advised on architecture and urban design within the government, and in the shaping of our built environment legacy'.

As it was lauded by Boon (2010) who is the President of Malaysian Architect Society, Malaysia, informed that they have witnessed the mega development of urbanscape throughout all major cities in Malaysia. An architectural project is one of the catalysts in construction industry is the main venue of which most of interior design graduates settle-in after graduation. The development and design consciousness within the society also has made the needs for interior design and interior designer become more apparent. The

ever-changing lifestyle and renewal of old thing including a space or building intensified with the current epoch. Interior design is always a 'sun-shine' industry, the needs of it always parallel with the lifestyle.

3. Methodology

The population chosen for this study is graduate interior and professional interior designers who are practicing in interior design consultant firm and construction firm in Malaysia. Graduate interior designers are practicing interior designers who are valid registered members of Malaysian Institute of Interior Designers (MIID) and Professional Interior Designers are licensed interior designers registered with Board Architect Malaysia (LAM) and also a valid registered member of Malaysian Institute of Interior Designers (MIID). The researcher will select the vicinity of Klang Valley as the target population. This is because the federal capital, Kuala Lumpur is within the Klang Valley area. Secondly, Klang Valley is the fastest developed urban basin in the country and lastly, most of the professionals related to this study set up their practices in the Klang Valley.

The survey questionnaires is design to evaluate interior design graduates demand, supply and opportunities in Malaysia interior design construction industry. The purpose of designated questionnaires is to gain complete view of current situation and issues of interior design graduates today. The survey questionnaires were separated into two different set of survey question. The first survey questionnaires specifically designed to obtain data from interior design graduates and the second set is employer survey. The interior design graduates survey questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A is a survey on personal background information of interior design graduates; Section B is a survey on general skill and competencies of interior design graduates and; Section C is a survey on working responsibilities of interior design graduates in the organizations. All survey

questionnaires for both divisions are close-ended question.

There are seven hundred fifty (750) registered architect firms, and two hundred fifty (250) registered interior design or space design consulting firms in Malaysia. In order to obtain information for this study, a questionnaire will be sent to one hundred (100) Graduate Interior Designers/Professional Interior Designers as respondents. The survey questionnaires will be forwarded to Personnel Managers or Project Designers who manage the human resource of selected Interior Design Consultant Firm where he or she will distribute the entire questionnaire to the all intended respondents involved. The completed questionnaires will also personally collected by the researcher. Respondents will be given one-week duration to complete the questionnaires. This will be done in order to make sure all the distributed questionnaires are return promptly.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

Survey questionnaires methodology is chosen to elicit the required information to enable the researcher to answer the objective of the research. Furthermore, this method deemed appropriated and practical due to large numbers of respondents involved and the findings of the objectives can be promptly achieved.

The objectives of the survey questionnaires are to identify statistically the percentage of Interior Design graduates from various public higher education institutions and private higher education institution employed in interior design job sectors. The objectives also elaborated further information data of working experiences, skills, knowledge to various job scopes, responsibilities and duties in the interior design organizations.

The hundred (100) envelopes which consisted of both sets of Survey Questions to obtain the data were distributed to respondents via Interior Design Consultant Firms, favorably all the distributed questionnaires have been reply within the extended times of additional 14 days instead of intended 7 days of questionnaires

collected. The justification of the extended collection period of Survey Questionnaires reply is due to gain more accurate data findings as more respondents will give greater percentage validity. Hence the percentage of the data analysis is accrued based on actual figure as intended in methodology.

4.1 Section A

Section A comprises of five designated numbers of obtained data which to find out the general data on gender, age group, ethnicity and educational background.

Question 1 Gender

Table 1. Respondents Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Male	43	43
2. Female	57	57

Table 1 shows that more female respondent answer the questionnaires than the female respondents which made up of 57%. While the male respondents made up of 43% which is total numbers of 43 respondents. The result of the analysis data gives the determined differences between these genders.

Question 2 Age Group

Table 2. Respondents Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. 21-25	50	50
2. 26-30	28	28
3. 31 or Older	22	22

Table 2 shows results of the respondent's age group which are divided into three (3) simple categories. The most frequent categories are the first category which the age group from 21-25 years old made up of 50 respondents or 50%. The other categories are age group from 26-30 years old consist of 28% respondents and the final group are 31 years old above made the least percentage of 22% from the total respondents answering the questions.

Question 3 Ethnicity**Table 3.** Respondents Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Malay	49	49
2. Chinese	36	36
3. Indian	8	8
4. Others	7	7

The survey from questionnaires which shown in Table 3 indicated the ethnic group of respondents; 49% of the respondents are from Malay ethnic group, Chinese made up 36%, Indian 8% and other ethnic group made up the balance 7% from total respondents answering the survey questionnaires.

Question 4 Graduated Universities**Table 4.** Respondents Graduated University

University	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. UiTM	34	34
2. UIAM	2	2
3. USM	2	2
4. Private Institution	38	38
5. Oversea/Others	24	24

Table 4 shows the graduated university or educational institution that respondents graduated. The question was divided into five categories of public and private institution that running interior design/architecture programs. 34% respondents graduated from UiTM which is one of the long established public institutions of interior design, 2% graduated from UIAM

Question 5 Education Level**Table 5.** Respondents Education Level

Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Certificate	0	0
2. Diploma	59	59
3. Bachelor Degree	37	37
4. Master's Degree	4	4
5. PhD	0	0

Table 5 shows that most respondent answer the questionnaires has a Diploma level education. The respondents which answer Diploma level as their level of education made up of 59% which is total numbers of 59 respondents while Bachelor Degree is 37%, Master's Degree 4% and Certificate and PhD respondents are nil or 0%. The result of the analysis data determined the differences of level interior design education.

Question 6 Final CGPA**Table 6.** Respondents Final CGPA

CGPA	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Below 2.5	18	18
2. 2.51-2.99	63	63
3. 3.00-3.49	16	16
4. 3.50-4.00	3	3

Table 6 shows that majorities of respondent answer the questionnaires as average level of academic achievers. The category of below 2.5 CGPA respondents made up of 18% which is total numbers of 18 respondents while the category 2.51-2.99 CGPA respondents made up of 63 respondents. 16% of respondents which accumulated from 100 total respondents graduated with 3.00-3.49 CGPA, while only 3% score final CGPA of 3.50-4.00.

4.2 Section B

Section B also comprises of five designated numbers of obtained data which to find out the general skills and competencies of interior design graduates.

Question 7 Work Sector**Table 7.** Respondents Work Sector

Sector	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Public	2	2
2. Private	88	88

Table 7 shows that more respondent working in private sectors answer the questionnaires. The respondents working in private sector made up of 88% which is total numbers of 88

respondents while the respondents working in public sectors is the balance from and made up of 2% which is total numbers of 2 respondents. The result of the analysis data showed most of graduates working in private sectors mainly in Interior Design Consulting Firm and very small percentage (2%) work in Public Sectors either in Public Academic Institution or Statutory Body of Government.

Question 8 Working Experience

Table 8. Respondents Working Experience

Experience (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Below 2	26	26
2. 2-5	58	58
3. 5-10	12	12
4. Above 10	4	4

Table 8 shown results of the respondents working experience which are divided into four (4) simple categories. The most frequent categories are the second category which the year of experiences from 2 - 5 years made up of 58 respondents or 58%. The other categories are working experiences from below 2 years consist of 26% respondents, 5-10 years or working experience in the organizations made up 12% and the final category are above 10 years of working experience made the least percentage of 4% from the total respondents answering the questions.

Question 9 Tools & Medium to get a Job

Table 9. Respondents Tools & Medium to get a Job

ETHNICITY	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Peers Info	61	61
2. Newspaper Ad	8	8
3. Internet	22	22
4. Others	9	9

Table 9 indicated that the tools & medium used by respondents to get a job; 61% of the respondents are found a job from peers info, Newspaper advertisement made up 8%, Internet

which improve strongly in current lifestyle pick up 22% and other tools and medium made up the balance 9% from total respondents answering the survey questionnaires.

Question 10 Computer Skills

Table 10. Respondent Computer skills Literacy

Computer Skills (Literacy)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Excellent	84	84
2. Good	12	12
3. Moderate	4	4
4. Poor	0	0

Table 10 shows that the level of literacy on computer skills of the respondents. The question was divided into four categories of skill literacy which are excellent, good, moderate and poor. 84% respondents answer an excellent literacy of computer skills, 12% answers good literacy computer skills, 4% answer moderate literacy and 0% poor.

Question 12 English Language Literacy Rate

Question 12 was design in a way to find out the rate of literacy of respondents in English Language. The question was designed in addressing three key factor in rating literacy of English language via; Writing, Reading and communicating.

Table 12 Respondent literacy rate of writing in English

Writing(English)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Excellent	14	14
2. Good	80	80
3. Moderate	6	6
4. Poor	0	0

Table 12 indicated most respondent answer the questionnaires have a good literacy rate writing in English language. The respondents which answer excellent level of literacy in writing in English language made up of 14% which is total numbers of 14 respondents while

good rate of writing in English language is 80%, Moderate is 6% and poor literacy rate in writing in English language are nil or 0% respondents. The result of the analysis data determined the level of literacy of writing in English language by the respondents.

Table 13 Respondents literacy rate of reading in English

Reading(English)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Excellent	7	7
2. Good	89	89
3. Moderate	4	4
4. Poor	0	0

Table 13 indicated most respondent answer the questionnaires have a good literacy rate reading in English language. The respondents which answer excellent level of literacy in reading in English language made up of 7% which is total numbers of 7 respondents while good rate of reading in English language is 89%, Moderate is 4% and poor literacy rate in writing in English language are nil or 0% respondents. The result of the analysis data determined the level of literacy of reading in English language by the respondents.

Table 14. Respondent literacy rate of communicating in English

Communicating (English)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Excellent	26	26
2. Good	41	41
3. Moderate	21	21
4. Poor	12	12

Table 14 shows that almost half of respondent answer the questionnaires have a good literacy rate communicating in English language. The respondents which answer excellent level of literacy in reading in English language made up of 26% which is total numbers of 26 respondents while good rate of reading in English language is 41%, Moderate is 21% and poor literacy rate in writing in English language are 12% of total respondents. The result of the

analysis data determined the level of literacy of communicating in English language by the respondents.

5. Conclusion

The role and responsibility of interior designers are becoming more cohesive in significantly contributing to more appraise and quality spatial and building works apart from total wider picture of construction industries. The legislation of Interior Design profession through amendment of Architect Act 1997 also considerably a catalyst in growth and development of interior design field alas the current trend in engaging Interior Designers as part of building team. The percentage ratio of both public and private higher learning institution that offered Interior Design Programs is almost equal share. There a three public higher learning institution offered Interior Design programs at undergraduates and post graduates levels; and there are more than 15 private higher learning institutions offering the same programs mainly for diploma level. Besides, Overseas or other institutions also produced quite substantives amount of Interior Design graduates. The preferences that required by the company are almost identical to all sectors. The main requirement needed is higher academic qualification, literacy in computing and ICT, self-motivated and strong mentality. The main medium that can be reached by Interior Design's graduates in seeking opportunities for employment is through peers information and the internet. A strong relationship throughout the tertiary education and bondage with the senior peers is a highly added advantage in opportunities for better employment. Besides, newspaper advertisement and other medium also help in seeking opportunities for the graduates. Private sectors are the main leading sectors and influential in providing opportunities of these graduates as it is the outlines set by the Board of Architect Malaysia in order to set their career path to become a Professional Interior Designers.

For further recommendation and continuing

education, the interior design graduates should be more diligent in choosing the higher learning institution that accredited by the Board of Architect Malaysia (LAM) as it is partial fulfillment in career path to become a registered Interior Designer. They must also be a member of Malaysian Institute of Interior Designers (MIID). In order to seek the best opportunities for ID graduates, they should have a good peer's relationship. As MIID is the institution that represents the fraternity of interior designers in Malaysia, it should provide better opportunities for the interior design graduates to improve and must improvise their skills and knowledge. Added value of skills and knowledge required in Interior Designers job task and responsibility is a benchmark in succeeding and steps to professional interior designers.

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