

**THE SUFFICIENCY OF CURRENT TRAINING
CURRICULLUM FOR DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES AND
ADEQUACY OF THE MINIMUM ACADEMIC REQUIREMENT
FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH OFFICER**

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ABSTRACT

Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) 1994 considers a competent Safety and Health Officer (SHO) to be at least those with a minimum of a pass in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, attended SHO course and passed the SHO examination, and have a minimum of three years working experience in the field of occupational safety and health (OSH). Having such a requirement for competency to help manage OSH program in a diverse, demanding and high risk work environments appears highly inadequate. A study was carried out to address the question of sufficiency of a single SHO curriculum to meet the demand of a diverse and high risk work environment, and the question of adequacy of current academic qualifications to meet the duties of SHO as prescribed by OSHA. This study was based on questionnaires and perceptions of 32 SHOs towards both questions. The statistical parameters that were analysed includes the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson Correlation and the descriptive tests of frequencies and percentages. Findings from the statistical analysis on the perceptions of the respondents on the two issues above indicated that the single SHO course curriculum is sufficient to prepare SHO for the different industries, and the minimum qualification of SPM with three years of working experience in OSH is adequate for the SHO to carry out his or her responsibilities as specified in the SHO Regulations.

ABSTRAK

Mengikut Akta Keselamatan dan Kesihatan Pekerjaan 1994 (OSHA), seorang Pegawai Keselamatan dan Kesihatan (SHO) yang kompeten ialah seseorang yang sekurang-kurangnya lulus Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, telah berjaya menamatkan kursus SHO dan lulus peperiksaan SHO tersebut, dan mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya tiga tahun pengalaman bekerja dalam bidang keselamatan dan kesihatan pekerjaan (OSH). Bagaimanapun, mempunyai kelayakan tersebut untuk membantu mengurus program OSH di pelbagai tempat kerja, dengan suasana yang amat berbeza, mencabar, dan berisiko tinggi, kelihatan seperti tidak mencukupi. Justeru itu satu kajian telah dilakukan untuk mencari jawapan kepada persoalan kecukupan satu kurikulum SHO untuk memenuhi keperluan tempat kerja yang mempunyai suasana yang amat berbeza dan berisiko tinggi, dan juga persoalan kecukupan kelulusan akademik minimum untuk melaksanakan tugas-tugas SHO seperti yang dinyatakan di dalam OSHA. Kajian ini adalah berdasarkan kepada soal-selidik dan pendapat 32 orang pegawai keselamatan dan kesihatan yang kompeten terhadap kedua-dua persoalan tersebut. Statistik yang digunakan untuk menganalisis data adalah Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Pearson Correlation, dan juga analisis kekerapan dan peratusan. Hasil daripada analisis terhadap persepsi responden kepada kedua-dua persoalan tersebut menunjukkan bahawa satu kurikulum SHO adalah mencukupi untuk melatih pegawai keselamatan dan kesihatan untuk berkhidmat dipelbagai industri, dan kelayakan minimum SPM dan tiga tahun pengalaman kerja didalam bidang keselamatan dan kesihatan pekerjaan adalah mencukupi untuk mereka (SHO) melaksanakan tugas-tugas SHO seperti yang termaktub didalam Peraturan Pegawai Keselamatan dan Kesihatan Pekerjaan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	SUBJECT	PAGE
	TITLE PAGE	i
	DECLARATION	ii
	DEDICATION	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
	ABSTRACT	v
	ABSTRAK	vi
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	x
	LIST OF FIGURES	xii
 CHAPTER 1	 INTRODUCTION	
1.1	Overview	1
1.2	Problem statement	2
1.3	Specific objectives of the study	3
1.4	Significance of the study	4
 CHAPTER 2	 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1	Introduction	5
2.2	The Need for Safety and Health Officer	5
2.3	Appointment of a Competent Safety and Health Officer	6
2.4	Safety and Health Officer Training and Examination	7
	2.3.1 Competency Based Program	6
	2.3.2 NIOSH SHO Course	9
	2.3.3 The New SHO Curriculum	11

2.3.4	Maintaining Quality and Continuous Improvement of the SHO Curriculum	12
2.3.5	Government Initiatives for the SHO Programs	13
2.5	Safety and Health Practitioners in United Kingdom	14
2.6	Comparison of Malaysia's SHO Curriculum and UK's Diploma Part I	18
2.7	Safety and Health Officers in Other Countries	19

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	22
3.2	Location	22
3.3	Population and Samples	23
3.4	Data Gathering Instrument	23
3.5	Data Collection	24
3.6	Data Analysis	25

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1	Introduction	26
4.2	Response rate from Respondents	26

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO

PAGE

1	A Comparison of NIOSH SHO Syllabus Equivalent Against NEBOSH Diploma (Part I and II)	19
2	Distribution of Respondents by Gender	28
3	Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualifications	28
4	Distribution of Respondents by Industries	29
5	Distribution of Respondents by Company Size	30
6	Distribution of Respondents by Duration of Service	30
7	Distribution of Training Providers	31
8	One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc Test on the Perception of Sufficiency of SHO Course Curriculum for 3 Sectors of Industries	33
9	One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc Test on the Perception of Sufficiency of the Four SHO Modules for 3 Sectors of Industries	35
10	Paired T-Test to Compare the Means of the Sum of Scores of the Sufficiency of the Four SHO Modules, and the Sum of Scores of the Sufficiency of the Overall SHO Program to Address Major SHO Functions.	43
11	One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc Test on the Perception of Ability of SHOs of Different Academic Backgrounds to Carry-out SHO Functions	47
12	One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc Test on the Perception of Ability of SHOs of Different Academic Grouping to Carry-out SHO Functions	49

13	Correlation Between Ability to Carry-out SHO Functions and Academic Group	50
14	Correlations Between the Duration of Services and Ability to Carry-out Functions of SHO.	51
15	Average Level of Sufficiency of SHO Modules for All Industries	59
15A	Level of Sufficiency of SHO Modules for Manufacturing Industry	59
15B	Level of Sufficiency of SHO Modules for Petrochemical Industry	60
15C	Level of Sufficiency of SHO Modules for Construction Industries	60
16	Frequency Table for items in Part A concerning Insufficiency of SHO Course Curriculum	61
17	Frequency Table for the second part of Part A Concerning Insufficiency of SHO Program in Addressing Major Functions of SHO	62
18	Frequency Table for items in Part B Concerning SHO Ability to Carry-out SHO Functions as Specified in the SHO Regulations	63
19	Frequency Table for items in Part B Concerning SHOs inability to Carry-out SHO Functions	64

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO

PAGE

1	Bar Chart of the Sum of the SHO Modules Sufficiency Scores	34
2A	Bar Chart of the Mean Scores for Module I	37
2B	Bar Chart of the Mean Scores for Module II	38
2C	Bar Chart of the Mean Scores for Module III	33
2D	Bar Chart of the Mean Scores for Module IV	39
3A	Percentages of the Level of Sufficiency of the Four SHO Modules to Address Major SHO Functions in Manufacturing Industry	40
3B	Percentages of the Level of Sufficiency of the Four SHO Modules to Address Major SHO Functions in Petrochemical Industry	41
3C	Percentages of the Level of Sufficiency of the Four SHO Modules to Address Major SHO Functions in Construction Industry	41
4	Bar Chart of the Percentages of the Level of Sufficiency of the Overall SHO Program by Industry Type	42
5	Bar Chart of the Mean Scores of the Ability of SHO to Carry-out SHO Functions by Academic Qualifications	48
6	Bar Chart of the Mean Scores of the Ability of SHO to Carry-out SHO Functions by Academic Qualifications	50

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

The Safety and Health Officer Regulations 1997 (P.U.(A)315) and the Occupational Safety and Health (Safety and Health Officer) Order 1997 (P.U.(A)316) came into force on August 22, 1997. Under the law, employers of specific industries fulfilling specific requirements detailed in the Order are required to employ a competent Safety Health Officer (SHO). A competent SHO is one who is registered with the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH). The requirement for the registration as a competent SHO includes possessing qualification and/or experience recognized by the Minister of Human Resources, or one who has passed the SHO examination coordinated by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) with a minimum of three years experience in occupational safety and health.

NIOSH developed a curriculum for the SHO course in 1996 and began conducting the SHO courses the following year. The minimum enrollment requirement for the SHO course is a grade 3 in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) with two years experience in occupational safety and health. Major revision of the curriculum was made in 2001-2003, and the new curriculum was implemented on April 2003. To date, more than 3000 participants has attended NIOSH SHO courses and about 1,300 has passed the SHO examination and registered with the Department of Occupational Safety and Health, as competent Safety Officers (Halim 2003).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Industries required to employ SHOs, under the Law, are numerous and diversified in terms of their activities, raw materials, processes, as well as the hazard and risk present. For example, the hazard prevalent in the construction industry is mainly physical hazard such as falling from heights and falling objects, whereas hazard in the chemical industry is mainly chemical hazard such as toxic substances and flammable gaseous. There is only one SHO curriculum for the SHO courses conducted by NIOSH to train candidates to be competent SHOs and to serve the different industries. The issue therefore is whether this single curriculum adequate to prepare SHOs for the different industries with different hazard and risk involved in the respective industries.

The current SHO curriculum consists of four modules covering 83 subjects in about 160 hours (20 days). While many of the subjects are relevant to all industries, such as all subjects in Module I covering OSH Management, Safety Policy, First Aids and so on, many other subjects are relevant to certain industries only such as Construction Safety, Petroleum Acts, Chemical Monitoring, etc.

One of the important roles of the SHO from the legal perspective is to advice his employer or any person in charge at his work-place on the measures to be taken in the interests of the safety and health of the employees at the work-place (SHO Regulations 1997). The employer or the person in charge at the work place is normally the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company, a very senior position indeed. The issue here is whether a competent SHO with only an SPM academic qualification and three years of working experience is able to advice and to report to the CEO all matters pertaining to occupational safety and health at the work place. The work place in this contact could be a chemical plant which may be categorized under the Control of Industrial Major Hazards (CIMAH) Regulations, or it could just

be a construction company involved in a building project worth more than twenty million ringgits.

Abdul Halim bin Hashim, an ex DOSH officer, in his research “Training Needs Assessment of Safety and Health Officers in the State of Selangor” (Halim 2003) found that 28.6% of the SHO respondents in his research registered difficulties in carrying out their duties to advise their employers on safety measures at the work place due to their lack of knowledge and experience. Another 35% said that they have difficulties to conduct safety inspection and investigate accidents for the same reason. For the duties of recording and analyzing accidents statistics, 45% said that they have difficulties doing so because of their busy job schedules and difficulties in gathering data. Halim’s samples for the above statistics are rather small (about 13 respondents) and confined to a small locality of Shah Alam only.

This study, is therefore very relevant to determine whether “Malaysia’s one SHO for all” approach is adequate for the different industries and also to assess whether the current minimum academic requirements for the SHO is adequate to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

1.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i). To determine whether the current single SHO curriculum is sufficient to prepare Safety and Health Officers for the different industries requiring them.
- ii). To determine whether the current minimum academic requirement for SHO is adequate for the SHOs to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Industries required to employ Safety and Health Officers are clearly stated in the *Occupational Safety and Health (Safety and Health Officer) Regulations 1997 (P.U.(A)315)* and *Occupational Safety and Health (Safety and Health Officer) Order 1997 (P.U.(A)316)*. The hazard and risk in these industries varies greatly depending on the nature of activities, the materials and machineries used and the products or services produced. In fact, the legal requirements for each of these industries varies. Some are categorised under the CIMA Regulations while others are not, and some are subjected to the Building-by-Laws while others are not. Thus it is very important that the subject on the sufficiency of a single SHO curriculum to prepare SHO for all of these industries be studied with the aim of improving it.

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