

PRODUCTIVITY ASSESSMENT AND SCHEDULE COMPRESSION INDEX  
FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECT PLANNING

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Civil Engineering  
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

DECEMBER 2004

To all who like to work smart.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah, I am very thankful to God that in preparing this thesis, I had received the support and assistance from many professionals from the construction industry, researchers, academicians, friends and family. Without their contributions, this thesis never would have come about. I express my deep appreciation to them:

- my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr Abd Hakim Mohammed for his advice, guidance and friendship;
- my ex-supervisor, Dr Che Wan Fadhil Che Wan Putra for his advice and friendship;
- UTM for the scholarship and opportunity given to me to study;
- my colleagues and friends for their supports and understandings;
- my wife for her complete support, encouragement and wisdom;
- my children for their patience, supports and prayers;

And finally, I also express my appreciation to many others whose contributions have made all the difference.

## ABSTRACT

Productivity assessment and performance evaluation models identified from previous researches were normally performed separately to reduce complication and cost. However, performing both the productivity assessment and performance evaluation would benefit a project progress significantly. Furthermore, effective schedule compression methods should be identified to maximise productivity and reduce additional costs. The aim of the research was to develop a project management tool that combined productivity assessment and schedule compression methods for reporting productivity status and evaluating project performance. The report is produced based on the level of Factors Affecting Productivity (FAP) and Schedule Compression Methods (SCM) obtained from the project. The research was divided into three stages, which involved a pilot, first round, and second round questionnaire surveys. The respondents of the surveys were mostly project and site managers from registered construction firms in several states of the Malaysia Peninsular. The first stage of the research involved identifying the importance and optimum level of project planning, differences between productivity and performance, fundamentals of productivity assessments, plus FAP and SCM from literature review. The pilot survey was used to determine the relevance, suitability and applicability of the information obtained from literature review to the local building construction industry using index of importance method. The second stage of the research involved two rounds of surveys. The objective of the first round survey was to obtain the minimum and maximum limit for FAP and SCM elements weighting process, and to develop the questionnaire for second round survey. The objective of the second round survey was to obtain historical data from completed building construction projects. A table of predicted time performance ratio (TPR) was produced using fuzzy inference system, which was to be used as a project performance index table. The results showed that FAP and SCM were positively correlated, and so were FAP and TPR. In conclusions, there was a need for effective and cheaper project management tools. Productivity assessment and SCM were implemented only by less than fifty percent of the survey respondents. Correct selection of construction methods, scheduling implementation, starting work as planned, complexity of construction and contractor's budget allocation were considered as having high impact on FAP, while the most effective SCM claimed by the respondents was staffing the project with most efficient crew members. A status report that contained both productivity and performance status of a project was successfully produced.

## ABSTRAK

Beberapa model bagi penaksiran produktiviti dan penilaian prestasi yang dikenal pasti dari kajian lepas pada kebiasaannya telah dilaksanakan secara berasingan untuk mengurangkan komplikasi dan kos. Namun begitu, melaksanakan kedua-dua penaksiran produktiviti dan penilaian prestasi akan meningkatkan kemajuan projek. Tambahan lagi, kaedah pemendekan jadual yang berkesan perlu dikenal pasti untuk memaksimumkan produktiviti dan mengurangkan kos tambahan. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengorak satu alat pengurusan projek yang menggabungkan penaksiran produktiviti dan penilaian prestasi bagi melaporkan status produktiviti dan menilai prestasi projek. Laporan itu dibuat berdasarkan tahap faktor mempengaruhi produktiviti (FAP) dan kaedah pemendekan jadual (SCM) yang diperolehi dari projek. Kajian ini terbahagi kepada tiga peringkat, iaitu tinjauan pandu, pusingan pertama dan pusingan kedua. Peserta kajian yang paling ramai menjawab adalah pengurus projek dan pengurus tapak dari syarikat pembinaan yang berdaftar di beberapa negeri di Semenanjung Malaysia. Peringkat pertama kajian adalah untuk mengenal pasti kepentingan dan perancangan projek yang optimum, perbezaan produktiviti dengan prestasi, asasi bagi penaksiran produktiviti, termasuk FAP dan SCM dari kajian literatur. Tinjauan pandu digunakan bagi menentukan perkaitan, kesesuaian dan kebolehgunaan maklumat yang diperolehi dari kajian literatur terhadap industri pembinaan bangunan tempatan dengan menggunakan kaedah indeks penting. Tahap kedua kajian melibatkan dua pusingan tinjauan. Objektif bagi tinjauan pusingan pertama adalah untuk mendapatkan had minimum dan maksimum bagi proses mengira berat untuk elemen FAP dan SCM, dan mengorak soal selidik bagi tinjauan pusingan kedua. Objektif bagi tinjauan pusingan kedua adalah untuk mendapatkan data dari projek pembinaan bangunan yang telah siap. Satu jadual nisbah prestasi masa (TPR) ramalan telah dihasilkan dengan menggunakan sistem taabir *fuzzy*, untuk dijadikan jadual indeks prestasi projek. Keputusan telah menunjukkan bahawa FAP dan SCM bersekaitan positif, sama seperti FAP dan TPR. Sebagai kesimpulan, terdapat keperluan bagi alat pengurusan projek yang berkesan dan lebih murah. Penaksiran produktiviti dan SCM hanya dilaksanakan oleh kurang daripada lima puluh peratus dari keseluruhan peserta yang menjawab. Pilihan kaedah pembinaan yang tepat, perlaksanaan penjadualan, memulakan kerja seperti yang terjadual, kesukaran pembinaan dan pengagihan bajet kontraktor telah dikatakan mempunyai impak yang besar ke atas FAP, manakala SCM yang dikatakan paling berkesan oleh peserta yang menjawab adalah mendapatkan pekerja projek yang paling cekap. Laporan status yang mengandungi kedua-dua status produktiviti dan prestasi projek telah berjaya dihasilkan.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS/ABBREVIATIONS/NOTATIONS/TERMINOLOGIES

ACWP	-	Actual Cost of Work Performed
AHP	-	Analytical Hierarchy Process
ANFIS	-	Adaptive Neuro-Fuzzy Inference System
BCIS	-	Building Cost Information Service
BCWP	-	Budgeted Cost of Work Performed
BCWS	-	Budgeted Cost of Work Scheduled
CDF	-	Cumulative Distribution Functions
CICE	-	Construction Industry Cost Effectiveness Project
CII	-	Construction Industry Institute of America
CPM	-	Critical Path Method
CPF	-	Cost Performance Factor
CPI	-	Cost Performance Index
CPU	-	Cost per Unit
CSF	-	Critical Success Factors
CV	-	Cost Variance
DEA	-	Data Envelopment Analysis
DI	-	Disruption Index
EMR	-	Experience Modification Ratings
EPC	-	Engineer-Procure-Construct
EV	-	Earned Value
FAP	-	Factors Affecting Productivity
FIS	-	Fuzzy Inference System
FMEA	-	Failure Mode And Effect Analysis
GA	-	Genetic Algorithms
GPM	-	General Performance Model

GUI	-	Graphical User Interface
KPIs	-	Key Performance Indicators
MCS	-	Monte Carlo Simulation
MF	-	Membership Functions
MLGAS	-	Machine Learning and Genetic Algorithms based System
OCV	-	Original Contract Value
PASCI	-	Productivity Assessment And Schedule Compression Index
PDCA	-	Plan-Do-Check-Act
PDF	-	Probability Density Functions
PDRl	-	Project Definition Rating Index
PERT	-	Program Evaluation and Review Technique
PMI	-	Project Management Index
PPC	-	Percent Of Planned Completed
PR	-	Performance Ratio
R	-	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
R-square	-	Coefficient Of Determination
SCM	-	Schedule Compression Methods
SPF	-	Schedule Performance Factor
SPI	-	Schedule Performance Index
SV	-	Schedule Variance
TFP	-	Total Factor Productivity
TPR	-	Time Performance Ratio
TQM	-	Total Quality Management
UMH	-	Unit per Man-Hour
VTR	-	Videotapes Recording
$a_i$	-	Weight Value
$e_i$	-	Residual For The $i^{\text{th}}$ Observation In The Data Set
$i$	-	Response Index
$n$	-	Total Respondents
$t_e$	-	Expected Performance Time
$x$	-	List Of Explanatory Variables
$x_i$	-	$i^{\text{th}}$ Frequency Of Response
$y_i$	-	$i^{\text{th}}$ Response In The Data Set
$C_t$	-	Total Value Of Change Orders

$E$	-	Expected Project Performance Time
$I$	-	Index Of Importance
$Y_i$	-	Given Data Set
$V_T$	-	Variance In Total Project Performance
$\beta$	-	Parameters Estimated During Modeling Process

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Construction projects are one-time and largely unique efforts of limited duration, which involve work of a non-standardised and variable nature. Field construction works can be greatly affected and influenced by events that are difficult to anticipate. High cost requirements and limited time to adjust can seriously worsen the situation. Proper co-ordination and communication can have significant effect on productivity and quality of construction projects (Sadri, 1994). This makes skilled and unremitting management efforts become not only desirable but also imperative for a satisfactory result. There is just too much risk to undertake a construction project without a well-thought plan. The risks can emerge in the forms of time variation, cost variation or litigations.

Productivity is one of the most important basic variables governing economic production activities (Alby, 1994). However, despite being so important, productivity has sometimes been relegated to second rank, neglected or ignored. In recent years, the pressures of an increasingly global economy have compelled companies in all industries including construction to focus on strategies for

productivity improvements. Unfortunately, issues related to productivity measurement or assessment have not received adequate attention by the relevant parties. The main reasons that made productivity assessment become complicated were (Belcher and John, 1984; Alby, 1994; Sudit, 1995):

- *Methodology*: Improvements in the methodology of productivity assessment were diversified and not performed as a whole.
- *Operational*: The implementations of productivity assessment procedures in most firms were not adequate.

Nevertheless, many construction development bodies have shown interest in the study of productivity in the construction industry. Over the past several years, the Construction Industry Institute of America (CII) has funded a number of research projects focused on productivity (CII, 1990a; CII, 1992; CII, 1994a; CII, 1994b). Findings from these investigations have somehow changed the degree of awareness of project management professionals toward the importance and benefits of productivity assessment.

There are two common problems related to the productivity issues. The first common problem faced by clients and contractors is project delay (Finke, 1999; Kartam, 1999; Al-Hammad, 2000). A project delay means a project that cannot be completed, partially or as a whole, on or before the scheduled completion date. There are many factors that can delay works and the project completion, such as unexpected events, hidden conditions or even additional work assigned during construction. In order to bring the project back on schedule, the contractor's rate of performing the remaining activities must be increased because there is more work to be finished in a limited time. Even though the whole project schedule may look the same, the contractor's individual schedule may have to be compressed.

The second problem, which usually troubles the contractor, is when the client decides to move in or use a facility earlier than planned, which makes the whole project schedule needs to be completed early (AGC, 1994; Al-Khalil and Al-Ghafly, 1999). This may involve shortening or compressing the overall schedule duration by revising the project plan. Schedule compression can be performed during the planning process before the start of construction or anytime in between the

construction period (CII, 1988a & 1990b). The usual goal of schedule compression to the client is to shorten the overall schedule duration by the necessary amount at the least cost (AGC, 1994).

In both cases, productivity aspects of the project must be understood, so that productivity can be increased and effective methods of schedule compression can be applied in order to complete a construction project at the required time with least costs (CII, 1990b). Measuring project performance alone will not be very effective because the sources of improving performance come from productivity control and improvement, which cannot be done without productivity assessment (Allmon *et al.*, 2000). In general, productivity assessment can provide an objective source of information about operating trends, draw attention to problems of performance and inspire a useful exchange of ideas.

## **1.2 Background of the Problem**

It is the norm that all project participants would attempt to perform well when a construction project is first undertaken (McKim *et al.*, 2000). However, construction projects must go through many complex steps, difficult site conditions and different individuals, which have caused some unavoidable delays, such as changing of the planned concepts or even rescheduling the project details (Faniran *et al.*, 1999). It is highly desirable for contractors to deal with productivity objectively (Paulonis and Cox, 2003). Project managers and participants should implement techniques that are aimed at “doing things right the first time” and able to find, analyse and make corrections while the job is under way (Daffenbaugh, 1993; Jahren and Federle, 1999; Deming, 1986). Thus, there must be some appropriate ways to monitor tasks from deviations and to bring the schedule back on track when problems occur or delays happen.

An extensive literature review was performed on related topics, such as pre-project planning (Gibson and Hamilton, 1994; Gibson *et al.*, 1993; Gibson *et al.*, 1994; CII, 1995; CII, 1997), productivity (Motwani *et al.*, 1995; Thomas and Zavrski, 1999; Allmon *et al.*, 2000; Rojas and Aramvareekul, 2003a; Rojas and Aramvareekul, 2003b; Goodrum and Hass, 2004), schedule compression (Moselhi, 1993; Noyce and Hanna, 1998; CII, 1988, 1990 & 1998; Hanna *et al.*, 1999a & 1999b) and project success (Chan *et al.*, 2001; Griffith *et al.*, 1999; Chua, 1999; Griffith and Gibson, 2001; Gao *et al.*, 2002). The findings were used to provide background and support in developing the problem statement and methodology used in this study.

According to a study by CII (1994c), pre-project and project planning are very important in determining the success of a project. The better it is performed, the better the overall outcome of the project would be. In other words, there is a positive, quantifiable relationship between effort expended during the pre-project planning phase and the ultimate success of a project (Ottoman *et al.*, 1999; McKim *et al.*, 2000; Cox *et al.*, 2003). By establishing lower third, middle third and upper third pre-project planning effort groups within the sample and evaluating each group against success variables, some broad conclusions can be made. At least, various parties involved in construction projects should understand the implications of pre-project planning in terms of project execution and the contracting environment that currently exists in the industry.

Many public and private sectors are investing significantly less money into preventive maintenance programmes in the construction industry. This lack of financial commitment towards construction projects is because of construction productivity and quality has not improved as much as in other industries and is regarded as low-priority investment (Christian and Hachey, 1995). However, the practice of giving low commitment to productivity and quality improvement should not be continued further because a successful project implementation should be accepted as a big return of an investment too.



### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

Delays in construction projects are very common, but not something that are unavoidable (Finke, 1999; Kartam, 1999; Carr, 2000). When delay happens, work output or productivity must be increased so that the initial schedule can be achieved. Although there are many methods suggested and commonly used to accelerate work productivity or to compress construction schedules, there is no clear and definitive answer on the effects of these method on certain important characteristics of a project, such as the capability of increasing the productivity rate of labour, reducing the schedule duration and whether the methods selected will increase the project costs (Christian and Hachey, 1995; Motwani, 1995; Noyce and Hanna, 1998; Crockett, 2000; Allmon *et al.*, 2000, Marsh, 2002; Rojas and Aramvareekul, 2003a). For example, the initial reaction for most cases is probably to use more labour, increase the work period into overtime or use an additional shift (Noyce and Hanna, 1998). Yet, it is not clear if these methods will in fact reduce the duration and what the overall impact on cost will be. On the other hand, there are also many other schedule compression methods that are not commonly considered as equally or more effective in reducing the impacts on the financial status of contractors during schedule compression period (CII 1990).

However, there have been many studies performed and models developed by researchers in other countries that can be used as guides to this research (Perera, 1982; Coskunogula, 1984; Vrat and Kriengkrairut, 1986; Ritchie, 1990; CII, 1990; Moselhi, 1993; Senouci and Hanna, 1995; Noyce and Hanna, 1998). Some of the major problems with those existing models are that they have to be specially tailored or customised to the project local needs before they can be applied effectively (Hancher and Abd-ElKhalek, 1998). They can also be too complex to be understood and applied by general construction parties because they generally lack the emphasis and accountability on practical and effective concepts or the methods used in compressing the construction schedule itself (Thomas *et al.*, 1999; Han and Diekmann, 2001).

Contractors and clients must be able to identify their resource constraints and apply the appropriate management decision process in the selection of the schedule compression approach or technique (Leu *et al.*, 1999; Chelaka *et al.*, 2001; Hegazy and Ersahin, 2001). There is a need to assess and evaluate the current or expected level of productivity and to identify the most effective methods of getting a project back on track. The need is to develop an improvised model of productivity assessment and schedule compression methods that is simple to understand and easy to apply, so that contractors and clients can be guided and informed about how to increase productivity and compress a schedule effectively with very little time to prepare and anticipate. The primary purpose of this study is to develop a practical tool or index that can be used by Malaysian project planning teams, including contractors and clients.

#### **1.4 Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the research is to develop a project management tool that combines productivity assessment and schedule compression methods for reporting productivity status and evaluating project performance. The objectives of this research are:

1. To establish the level of implementation of:
  - a. Project planning.
  - b. Productivity assessment.
  - c. Schedule compression methods.
  
2. To identify elements of the followings that are relevant to the local building construction projects:
  - a. Factors affecting productivity.
  - b. Schedule compression methods.
  
3. To determine the correlations between factors affecting productivity, schedule compression methods and project time performance.

4. To perform productivity assessment and performance evaluation using single planning tool.
5. To compare estimated risks involved with and without productivity assessment tool.

## **1.5 Scope of Research**

The chance of achieving a project success can be increased by performing assessment on project productivity and on the effectiveness of schedule compression methods. This is done by forecasting the probability in which certain construction activity will finish on time and the capability of compressing the project schedule. Because of insufficient project data and the requirement of additional planning costs, pre-project planning was typically not given enough emphasis in building construction projects in Malaysia. Therefore, an inexpensive management or planning tool that can be applied during pre-project and construction stage can be very useful, especially the one that is user-friendly, accurate and reliable.

In developing such a tool, a study was conducted to gather data on general building projects in Peninsular Malaysia that were completed within the last five years. The tool was developed and intended to be used in general building construction projects, such as schools, offices, shop-houses, hotels, residential, mosques and institutional buildings. In order to avoid significant discrepancies, the tool should be limited from being applied in other types of projects or in other countries.

## 1.6 Methodology of the Research

Figure 1.1 represents the methodology of the research, which was performed over a three years and six months period. The study was divided into stages, namely, the first, second and third stage. The first stage involved collecting data from literature review, setting research aims and objectives, and conducting a pilot survey. The second stage involved two rounds of survey, model fitting and data analyses. The third stage involved model validation, risk prediction, conclusion and recommendations for future research.

The initial steps in the first stage was identifying the importance and optimum level of project planning, the differences between productivity and performance, fundamentals of productivity assessments, Factors Affecting Productivity (FAP) and Schedule Compression Methods (SCM) from previous research found in the literature review. This was followed by a pilot survey, which objective was to determine the relevance, suitability and applicability of the information obtained from literature review to the local building construction industry using index of importance method.

In the second stage, the objective of the first round survey were to obtain the minimum and maximum limit for FAP and SCM elements weighting process, and develop the questionnaire for second round survey. The objective of the second round survey was to obtain historical data from completed projects. The data were analysed to determine the correlations between FAP, SCM and TPR. Once the correlations were determined, a prediction table for predicted TPR values was produced using fuzzy inference system. The table of predicted TPR values can be referred to as the project performance index table.

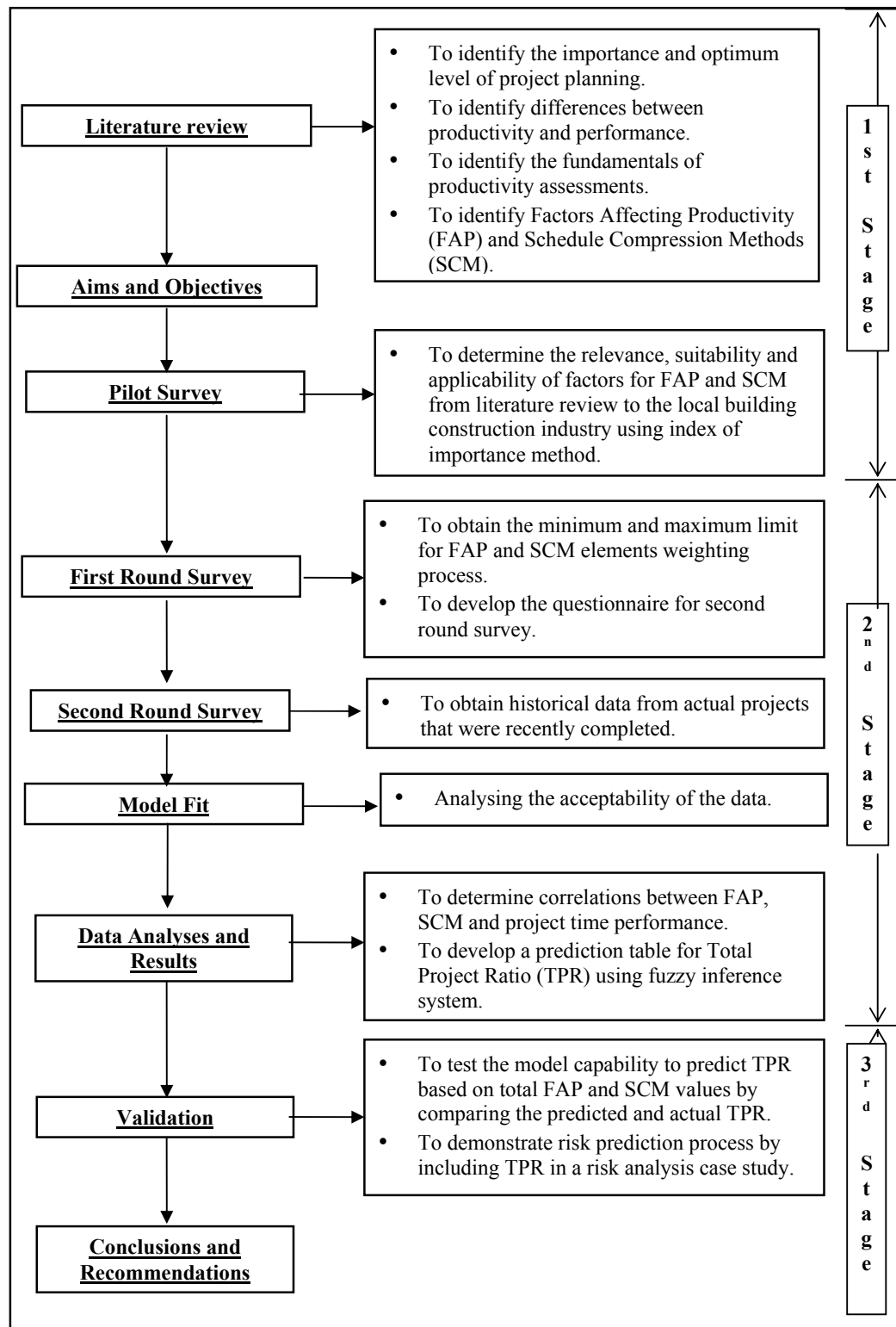


Figure 1.1 : Methodology of the research

In the third stage, validation of the data was performed to test their accuracy and consistency. The predicted TPR values were validated using completed project data. An application of risk analysis was also demonstrated for an on-going project at the time of the research, as a case study. Lastly, conclusions of the research and recommendations for future research were made. More details on the research methodology can be found in Chapter 6.

## **1.7 Organisation of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 1 gives the introduction and background to the existing problems, describes the research objectives and the research methodology.

Chapter 2 provides the overview of project planning. The importance of implementing and finding the correct level of planning are discussed. The existing planning models are identified.

Chapter 3 highlights the difference between productivity and performance. Existing performance measurement and performance indicators are identified.

Chapter 4 focuses on productivity assessment process. Methodologies for direct and indirect productivity assessment are identified. Factors affecting productivity are also identified, which are important to the development of the research.

Chapter 5 identifies productivity and schedule compression methods that have been developed and implemented in previous research. The strengths and limitations of the models are described.

Chapter 6 discusses in detail the methodology of the research. The research was discussed in accordance to stages of the research. Identification of survey elements, questionnaire development, data collection process and method of analysis are the main topics described in the chapter.

Chapter 7 describes the analyses that were performed on the data collected from different stages of the research. The results are displayed, analysed and discussed in order to obtain significant findings and fulfill the research objectives.

Chapter 8 discusses the data validation process. The model capabilities in performing productivity assessment and performance evaluation are demonstrated using data from completed projects. Actual project data were compared to the predicted values produced in this research.

Chapter 9 demonstrates the application of the research findings in predicting and reducing project risks. The demonstration is performed on a selected project as a case study.

Chapter 10 finally summarises the research work, provides the conclusions of this research and recommendations for future research.

- e) Different versions of the PASCI namely for building, industrial and infrastructure projects are also recommended. The existing methodology and data should significantly reduce the research efforts of developing a new version of the PASCI.
- f) Enhancing the application using information technology or other new technology can widen the interest in the application of this tool.



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