SCHEDULING SOFTWARE AS A TOOL FOR MONITORING AND CONTROLLING JKR PROJECT

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To my lovely wife, sons and daughter
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MONITORING AND CONTROLLING PROJECT PROGRESS: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFICACY OF SCHEDULING SOFTWARE AT JKR

ABSTRACT

Monitoring and controlling project progress is an important role of a project manager. Knowing when and how to intervene underperform project is critical to the overall health of any organization. There are problem faced by many construction player in monitoring and controlling project which lead to low quality of works. Thus in order to enhance effectiveness of monitoring and controlling project, JKR has to use planning and scheduling software and identify the importance features to be incorporated. Even though JKR has implemented scheduling software in their projects but the monitoring and controlling still far from the expectation result. The focus of this study is to investigate scheduling software as an effective tool for monitoring and controlling project at JKR and limited to Microsoft Project software. This was due to the high of percentage of user for this software as compared to other software in JKR. The scope of the study includes identifying aspects of the important features in the software planning / scheduling of projects related to monitoring and controlling in JKR. It also includes an assessment of the effectiveness of these items that are available in Microsoft Project for project monitoring and controlling, further to establish project monitoring and controlling guideline for JKR practice. Data were collected using mixed method approach including document search, interview expert-panel and questionnaire survey to evaluate current practice of management and project team. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Conclusion from this study, level of competency of user just grade “Good” and need more improvement. The finding of this study will facilitate JKR with monitoring and controlling guideline of the projects and the quality of products and services delivered to the client are perceived clients’ expectation and satisfaction.
**ABSTRAK**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td></td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td></td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td></td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td></td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td></td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td></td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td></td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Background 2
1.3 Problem Statement 3
1.4 Aim And The Objectives of Study 5
1.5 Scope of Study 5
1.6 Research Methodology 6
1.7 Summary of Chapter 7

## 2 SCHEDULING SOFTWARE

2.1 Introduction 10
2.2 Microsoft Office Project 13
2.2.1 Features for Monitoring and Controlling Using Software
   2.2.1.1 Work Breakdown Structure 15
   2.2.1.2 Chart 18
   2.2.1.3 Project Calendar 20
   2.2.1.4 Tracking 20
   2.2.1.5 Report 21
   2.2.1.6 Cost Control 21
   2.2.1.7 Resource 22
   2.2.1.8 Baseline 23
   2.2.1.9 Analyze Timescaled Data 23
   2.2.1.10 Earned Value Management 24

2.2.2 The Effectiveness of Those Features 32

2.3 Primavera Project Planning 33

2.4 AceProject 35
   2.4.1 Project Management 36
      2.4.1.1 Project Tracking 36
      2.4.1.2 Project Portfolio 37
      2.4.1.3 Task Management 37
      2.4.1.4 Task Dependencies 38
      2.4.1.5 Gantt Chart 39
      2.4.1.6 Calendar 39
      2.4.1.7 Project Templates 40
   2.4.2 Document Management 40
   2.4.3 Timesheet Management 40
   2.4.4 Expense Management 40
   2.4.5 Collaboration 41
   2.4.6 Reporting 41
   2.4.7 HR Management 41
   2.4.8 Other features 41

2.5 ServiceCEO’s 41

2.6 Easy Task Manager 42

2.7 Construction Scheduling Software – Schedule One 2006 43

2.8 AppointmentPlus 43
### 3  MONITORING AND CONTROLLING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Monitoring Project</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Controlling Project</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1</td>
<td>Control Cost</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2</td>
<td>Control Schedule</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3</td>
<td>Control Scope</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.4</td>
<td>Risk Control</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Determine the Aim and Objective of Study</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Interview with Expert Panel</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4</td>
<td>Questionnaire Survey</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.5</td>
<td>Questionnaire Designed</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Demography of Respondents</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3</td>
<td>Question on Level of User Competency</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.4</td>
<td>Question on Features of Microsoft Office Project</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.5</td>
<td>Question on improvement of level of competency</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction 63
5.2 Section A: Demography of Respondents 63
  5.2.1 Respondents’ Role in Project Team 64
  5.2.2 Respondents’ Field 65
  5.2.3 Respondents’ Working Experience 67
5.3 Section B1: To Identify Level of Competency 68
5.4 Section B2: To identify appropriate features for monitoring and controlling project 70
5.5 Section B3: Suggestion for improvement of competency 77
5.7 Summary 80

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction 81
6.2 To identify level of knowledge or competency of user 81
  6.2.1 Knowledge or competency level on Monitoring and controlling project 82
  6.2.2 Factors for Effective Monitoring and Controlling Project 82
6.3 Identifying appropriate features for monitoring and controlling which relevant to JKR project 83
  6.3.1 Identification of the features 84
  6.3.2 Understanding function of the features 84
6.4 Suggestion for improvement of user competency 84
6.5 Summary 85

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Introduction 86
7.2 Conclusion 87
7.2.1 Objective No. 1: To identify the knowledge or competency level of user, using of Microsoft Office Project for monitoring and controlling projects within JKR

7.2.2 Objective No. 2: To identify the appropriate features in scheduling software which are relevant for monitoring and controlling projects

7.2.3 Objective No. 3: To suggest improvement of users’ competency

7.5 Recommendation for Future Study

REFERENCES

APPENDICES
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE NO.</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>WBS process in process group</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Interpretations of Basic EVM Performance Measures</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Earned value management and basic project management question</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of Respondents by Project Roles</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of Respondents by Field</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of Respondents by working experience</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Frequency distribution for all respondents in general aspect of project collaboration and communication</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Frequency distribution for all respondents regarding level of Competency</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Summary of Frequency distribution of appropriate features</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Frequency distribution for all respondents regarding level of Competency</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Summary of Frequency Strategies for competency improvement</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Strategies for competency improvement</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE NO.</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Definition of project success in the client perspective</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Statement in Document Contract</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Flow chart of Research Methodology</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Monitoring and controlling process</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process group interact in a project</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Microsoft Office Project Schedule</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Sample of Work Breakdown Structure</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Earned Value and earned schedule chart</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Sample of Report by Primavera</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The control system</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Three Phases of Research Methodology</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Compositions of Respondents by Project Roles</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Compositions of Respondents by Field</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Compositions of Respondents by Working Experience</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Pre question to top management</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The Interview Questionnaire Form</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Tables of P value for Kruskal Wallis</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Nowadays, scheduling software has been extensively being developed and applied in construction industry; the successful realisation of a project depends greatly on careful and continuous planning, monitoring and controlling. The activities of designers, manufacturers, supplier, contractors, and all their resources must be organised and integrated to meet the objectives set by client or contractor. In most cases, the programme will form the basic plan. Sequence activities will be defined and linked on a time-scale to ensure that priorities are identified and that efficient use is made of expensive or scarce resources. According to Partovi (1993), the scheduling process consist of seven steps as follow; establishing a precedence relationship between activities, constructing the network, evaluating the activities’ duration, performing forward and backward calculations to determine the time schedule of each activity, project duration and identifying the critical path.

The purpose of scheduling is to plan, monitor, and control the timely execution of the work, from the day the project commences through each of its phases to successful completion. This dynamic nature of a project execution plan is best served by a tool that allows modelling of the plan and analysis of the impact of progress and unforeseen developments. The key to project success is to apply knowledge, experience, and instincts to a project plan, and then attempt to execute according to the plan. Important objectives of scheduling include project planning and strategic
analysis, early detection, and resolution of execution problems to prevent, minimize and/or mitigate the impact of schedule problems on the completion of the project. A project is a temporary endeavour which has a definite beginning and a definite end. It’s a set of interrelated activities to achieve a specific goal, within a specific timeframe and to create a unique product or service.

According to A Guide to the Project Management Book of Knowledge Third Edition PMBOK® Guide, areas of expertise of knowledge and skills for effective project monitoring and controlling are application on area of knowledge, standard and regulation, understanding the project environment, general management knowledge and skills and interpersonal skills. The monitoring and controlling of project should cover all the stages of project life cycle; planning, design, procurement, construction and handing over.

1.2 Background

Jabatan Kerja Raya (JKR) is a technical government department that has been entrusted with constructing and maintaining public infrastructure in Malaysia. It was formed in 1872 as the technical advisor to the Government (JKR Strategic Frameworks, 2007). Projects implemented by JKR include government buildings, roads, airports, maritime and ports. According to JKR Strategic Frameworks (2007), JKR’s vision is to become a world class service provider and centre of excellence in asset management, project management and engineering services for the development of nation’s infrastructure through creative and innovative human capital and state of the technology of art.

Based on JKR Strategy Map 2006 - 2020 (JKR Strategic Frameworks, 2007), JKR has to leverage on ICT to enhance its project delivery system. In managing projects, JKR is involved in the planning, designing, procurement, implementing and monitoring aspects of the projects. In any project implementation, JKR has to
balance the time, resources, cost and quality factors of the project according to JKR’s standard quality and its clients’ needs (JKR Quality Manual, 2009). During 9th Malaysian Plan, JKR has been given the authority by the Malaysian Government to implement 6,116 projects that amounted to RM42.906 billion (JKR Strategic Frameworks, 2007).

Since JKR is committed to deliver its projects to the clients as stated in its core business objectives in term of time, cost and quality, it needs comprehensive monitoring tools to help the organisation to control its projects effectively and efficiently. The reports produced are very critical for fast decision and policies making to overcome the problems occurred during projects’ implementation. Currently, JKR is using a number of systems or applications to execute or monitor its projects. The systems or applications are based on variety of software ranging from commercial software such as Microsoft Office Project or Primavera Project Planning (P3e) to in-house development of software’s applications, SKALA.

For the purpose of monitoring and controlling project, JKR has decided that the item on implementing the Critical Path Method (CPM) programme for planning of resources and progress of work as specified that contractor shall provide software for JKR which to be retained by JKR after the completion of the project. The software to be utilized is the latest version of Microsoft Office Project for the projects costing less than RM50 million and Primavera Project Planning (P3e) for projects costing more than RM50 million.

1.3 Problem Statement

Since JKR has obtained MS ISO certificate in Jun 2000, the quality of products and services delivered to the client are perceived as far from clients’ expectation and satisfied. In the 9th Malaysia Plan, JKR is supposed to deliver 6,116 projects that amounted RM42.906 billion to the various clients’ departments. From that number of projects, 631 projects didn’t meet the client expectation and satisfaction. The
successful of project is defined by complete on time within budget allocation and achieve quality conformance as shown in figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1:** Definition of project success in the client perspective

Monitoring and controlling consists of those processes performed to observe project execution so that potential problems can be identified early and corrective actions can be taken, when necessary, to control the execution of the project. The key benefit of this process is that project performance is observed and measured regularly to identify variances from the project management plan. This process also includes controlling changes and recommending preventive action in anticipation of possible problems.

Monitoring the ongoing project activities against the project management plan and the project performance baseline influencing the factors that could circumvent integrated change control so only approved changes are implemented. Monitoring provides the project team insight into the health of the project and highlights any areas that require additional attention. When variances jeopardize the project
objectives, appropriate project management processes within planning process are revisited as part of the modified plan-do-check-act cycle.

1.4 The Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate scheduling software as a tool for monitoring and controlling JKR projects. The objectives of this study presented in this report are as follows:

(i) To identify the knowledge or competency level of user, using of Microsoft Office Project for monitoring and controlling projects within JKR;
(ii) To identify the appropriate features in scheduling software which are relevant for monitoring and controlling projects; and
(iii) To suggest improvement of users’ competency

1.5 Scope of the Study

There are two types of project, conventional and design and built will be considered for this study and focusing on Microsoft Office Project software. This software was chosen because of percentage of users are higher as compared to other software and number of project less than RM50 million are more. Furthermore most document contract for projects costing less than RM50 million shall utilized Microsoft Office Project and any projects costing more than RM50 million shall utilized Primavera Project Planning (P3e). However, most of JKR personnel preferred to use Microsoft Office Project since they are familiar to it and user-friendly as compared to Primavera Project Planning (P3e). There is statement regarding the usage of scheduling software in document contract as shown in Figure 1.2.
The scope of the study is to identify aspects of appropriate features in the software planning / scheduling of projects related to monitoring and control. It also includes an assessment of the effectiveness of these items are available in Microsoft Office Project for project monitoring and control.

1.6 Research Methodology

The methodology used for this research comprises three phases as shown in Figure 1.3. Generally, phase 1 consists of problem statement, aim and objectives of this study and literature review. In phase 2, data was collected through survey questionnaires. Survey questionnaires were designed based on various aspects and factors identified from literature review. The objectives of survey questionnaire are:
(i) To identify the knowledge or competency level of user using Microsoft Office Project for monitoring and controlling projects within JKR;

(ii) To identify the appropriate features in scheduling software which are relevant for monitoring and controlling projects; and

(iii) To suggestion the improvement of users’ competency.

The survey’s respondents were selected randomly from JKR project team members such as Head of Project Teams, Head of Design Teams, Project Site Office and District Engineer (JD) who were involved in project management

After data was collected, analysed and concluded in Phase 3. Details of research methodology and processes involved in each phase are further discussed in Chapter 4.

1.7 Summary of Chapters

This Chapter is an overview of the study which includes the introduction of the topic, problem statement, aim and objectives of the study. It also briefly discusses on the research methodology.

In summary, the aim of this study was to identify the appropriate features in Microsoft Office Project for monitoring and controlling projects. The aim of this study can be achieved through the following objectives:

(i) To identify the knowledge or competency level of user about using of Microsoft Office Project for monitoring and controlling projects within JKR;

(ii) To identify the appropriate features in scheduling software which are relevant for monitoring and controlling projects; and
(iii) Suggestion for improvement of competency for JKR use.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 will discussed on the related literatures of scheduling software and its features for monitoring and controlling project and more focusing on Microsoft Office Project and will discuss on the monitoring and controlling project and relationship between them in order to make scheduling software as an effective tool for monitoring and controlling.

Chapter 4 will discuss and elaborate the research methodology for this study. It presented the three phases of conducting the research which are literature review, data collection and data analysis. Chapter 5 described the data collected and data analysis. The data were obtained from survey questionnaire and were analyzed by using statistical methods such as Frequency Analysis, Average Index and Kruskal Wallis. The purposes of statistical methods are to determine the frequency distribution, ranking in term of importance of factors and to examine if there is a significant difference among the respondent’s groups.

Chapter 6 will emphasize on the findings of this study. All of these findings can be used for improvement of competency of JKR project team communication and Chapter 7 will conclude the study of scheduling software as an effective tool for monitoring and controlling JKR project.
Figure 1.3. Flow chart of Research Methodology
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