SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN CONSTRUCTION – AN EXPLORATIVELY STUDY

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Abstract

The construction industry has massive impacts on the society, environmentally, economically and socially. Sustainability has been an important issue being considered by both industry and academia. However, existing sustainability studies in construction are largely related to the environmental and economic aspects. Social sustainability seems missing from the research radar. A qualitative approach is adopted in this study to explore the social sustainability issues in the construction sector. Particular focuses are placed on the attitudes of industry professionals on social impacts of construction activities and the measurement of social performance of construction projects. The results show that there is a reasonable level of willingness from industry practitioners to take these issues into consideration in their projects. This study also highlighted 26 criteria to measure social sustainability in construction context. These criteria form a basis for the evaluation of social sustainability performance for construction related enterprises. Limitations of this study are also discussed.

Keywords

Social sustainability, social performance, social criteria and construction projects

INTRODUCTION

Social sustainability issues have drawn attention from both professionals and academia in industrial contexts such as manufacturing (Hutchins & Sutherland 2008; Labuschagne et al. 2005). It is generally recognized that social sustainability issues need to be taken into consideration during the design, planning and production. It is well recognized that the construction activities have significant impacts on the environment, economy and society (Lützkendorf and Lorenz 2006). Positively, the construction industry produces a variety of buildings to satisfy different requirements, contributes towards the national GDP and provides a large amount of employment opportunities. However, the depletion of natural resources and degradation of environment has triggered an increasing level of public scrutiny on construction activities. The last decades have witnessed the strong efforts been made from both the industry and academic to target the sustainability issues in the construction industry. However, these efforts are largely environmentally oriented such as waste management, greenhouse gas emission reduction, energy efficiency and water...