ABSTRACT

Foreign workers have been a vital part of the construction industry for the past 30 years and their numbers continue to grow. Foreign labor policy has been used as a control for the entry of foreign labor and has had major impacts on the use of foreign labor by contractors. This dissertation is an attempt to explore the effects of the recent changes in foreign labor policy to the operations of contractors in Singapore, specifically what problems have been generated and what benefits it has brought.

Past and current policy trends and their rationale are examined in this study. Their effect on the overall productivity of foreign workers is also examined. Through interviews with a range of contractors and a comparison of past and present policies, it was found that the recent foreign labor policies have increased the burden on contractors significantly and in general are not well accepted among contractors. The reaction of these contractors to the different problems and how they were solved were also examined. The increased risks and burdens placed on the contractor have been found to translate to increased costs and in many cases profitability.

Through analysis of the interview information, a comparison of the needs of the contractors and the aims of the Ministry of Manpower are examined. Suggestions to reconcile the differences between the Ministry of Manpower’s aims and contractors’ needs are formulated together with recommendations that could help achieve both ends at the same time.

KEY WORDS
Foreign worker policy; productivity, contractors, construction industry