SUMMARY

"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity". Albert Einstein

This research reviews the currently released ISO 9001: 2000 Quality Management Systems (QMS) and evaluates its compatibility with OHSAS 18001: 1999, Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems - Specification. After which the perceptions of Singapore's construction industry towards integration of the two management systems are sought.

The latest ISO 9001: 2000 standard adopts a more consistent terminology making it more compatible with other management systems such as ISO 14000 for Environment Management. Its primary aim is to encourage organisations to implement an integrated management system. In addition, the revised ISO 9000: 2000 standard has increased focus on top management commitment and customer satisfaction, and emphasises on processes within the organisation and continual improvement. Requirements for documentation have also been reduced with emphasis on the demonstration of effective operation. The standard's most significant change is its potential application to all industries besides manufacturing.

OHSAS 18001: 1999 is an occupational health and safety management standard against which an organisation can be audited by external
organisations and it is voluntary. The OHSAS 18001 specification gives requirements for an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system to ensure an organisation controls its OH&S risks and improves its performance. This standard is intended to provide organisations with the elements of an effective OH&S management system.

A comparison made between the ISO 9001: 2000 and the OHSAS 18001: 1999 indicated that it is feasible for the two to be integrated and be managed under an integrated management system. Previous research works also suggest that the concepts of quality management and safety management systems are complementary and that there is a trend to integrate the two systems. Integrating makes safety a management responsibility and also improves the economic health of a company. Generic Project Plans, boundary-less systems or business management systems ensure such an integrated system to be achieved. Despite these findings, the challenges and desire by the Singapore's construction industry of such integration remain a concern to be addressed. The hypothesis of this study is that "The revised ISO 9001: 2000 facilitates easier integration with OHSAS 18001: 1999 because of the many commonalities between them". With this, the study then proceeded with surveys to examine the perceptions of the Singapore's construction industry on integrating the revised ISO 9001:2000 with the OHSAS 18001: 1999.
Surveys were conducted on 215 of the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) registered engineering and construction companies in Singapore. Of these, 99 companies responded and it was found that the current percentage of contractors certified to OHSAS 18001: 1999 is very small. Nevertheless, there is strong potential interest among them. There is also evidence that a large proportion of companies is in favour of implementing an integrated system. Among the companies considering or are already OHSAS 18001: 1999 certified, feedback on the possibility and difficulty for integrating OHSAS 18001: 1999 with ISO 9001: 2000 as well as the benefits and costs were obtained. The findings were then verified with interviews from the industry practitioners. Their expert opinions and anticipation on the potential problems, such as peculiarity of the objectives and the difference in stakeholders of the two systems, motivation for adopting OHSAS 18001: 1999 and the implementation challenges were also discussed.

Finally, the research suggests that the revised ISO 9001: 2000 allows Singapore contractors to consider certification of ISO 14001: 1994 Environmental Management Systems (EMS) and OHSAS 18001: 1999 through their QMS.

Keywords: Integration, Quality Management Systems, Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Management Systems, Singapore Construction Industry.