Theoretical Framework for Human Resource Functions on Development of a Competent Workforce in the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN): Moderated by Job Satisfaction

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The focus of this paper is to address the issues with a theoretical framework for human resource functions on the development of a competent workforce in the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN), mediated by job satisfaction. Human resource management functions are now critically focusing on competency in the workforce. There is a challenge faced by human resources to measure a workforce with the right competencies and determine the most critical functions for the current environment. Having a competent workforce relates closely to individual job satisfaction. Based on that, the number one focus for this study is to look at and to explore the theories related to human resource functions on the workforce in RMN and to propose a theoretical framework for factors relating to human resource functions when developing a competent workforce. Theory and theoretical framework found through an extensive review of literature call for further study on the relationship between human resource functions and the development of a competent workforce in RMN. The finding of this study was that the theoretical framework that best fit this context consisted of two independent variables (IVs), which were training and development and performance appraisal towards the dependent variable (DV), which was job satisfaction. These findings will help the employer to highlight which factors lead to individual job satisfaction.

Key words: *Training & Development, Performance Appraisal, Job Satisfaction, Competent Workforce.*

Introduction

The theoretical underpinning of this study regards the development of a competent workforce. The competencies of RMN's personnel are closely related to their knowledge and abilities to perform their job. The definition of 'competency' from the Ohio State University is "a collection of related knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) working in concert to produce outstanding performance" (O'Neill, Goffin & Gellatly, 2012).

The identification of competency begins by fully describing the duties and tasks of the target job. Job incumbents and their supervisors are asked to identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics needed to perform each task. All levels of performers are included in the identification of job duties, tasks, knowledge, and skills, and there is usually no effort to differentiate the input received about the job duties from high, average, and low performers. Typically, long and detailed lists of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics are developed (Hoge, Tondora & Marrelli, 2005; Hye, 2011).

According to Dubois and Rothwell (2004), competencies focus on specific self-image, values, traits, and motive dispositions, whereby certain people are found to consistently be distinguished from the typical performance of a given job or role. They also mentioned that different competencies predict outstanding performance in different roles and that there is a limited number of competencies that predict outstanding performance in any given job or role. Thus, a trait that is a "competency" for one job might not predict outstanding performance in a different role.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:
1. To explore the theories related to human resource functions when developing a competent workforce in the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN).
2. To propose a theoretical framework for factors relating to human resource functions when developing a competent workforce in the Royal Navy Malaysia (RMN) which is moderated by job satisfaction.

Literature Review

Figure 1. HR Management Framework based on Competency

HR Management Framework based on Competency
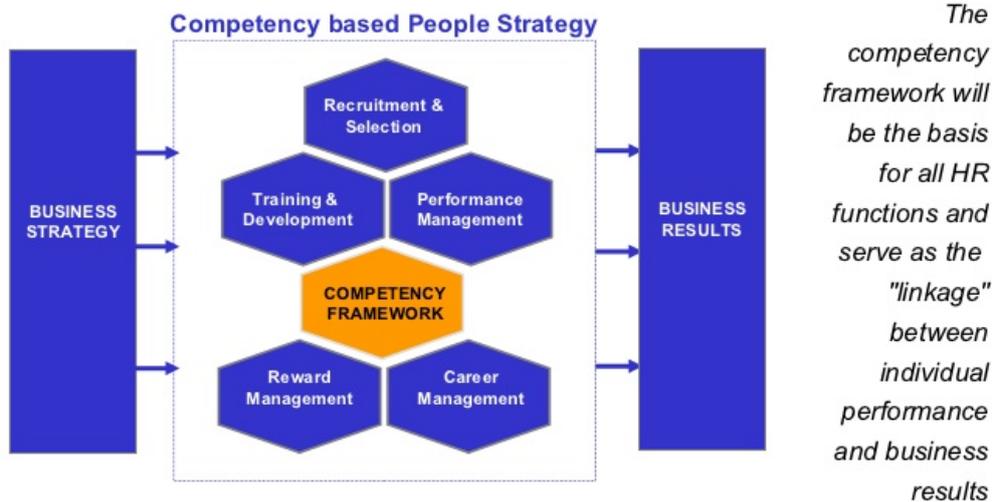
Source: David D. Dubois, William J. Rothwell (2004). Competency-Based Human Resource Management: Discover a New System for Unleashing the Productive Power of Exemplary Performers

The independent variables of the study are training and development and performance appraisal moderated by job satisfaction. A competent workforce acts as the dependent variable of the study. The most appropriate model tied to this framework is the Concept of Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBTA) model. According to the Mouritz, Gellert, Burchill and Challis (2001) in the Naval Training Manual, CBTA is a process that provides information on the extent to which a trainee has achieved the required outcomes of a training program. The trainee must be able to perform their duty in the workplace and meet the required competencies. The proposed conceptual framework below illustrates the factors involved in managing competencies for the listed personnel of RMN.

Methodology

The methodology for this study employed desktop research including journal publications, books, theses and other online materials of equal standard to the research and publications. From the literature review, the study resulted in one solid referred theory which was derived into a conceptual framework for future use.

Findings

Conceptual Framework

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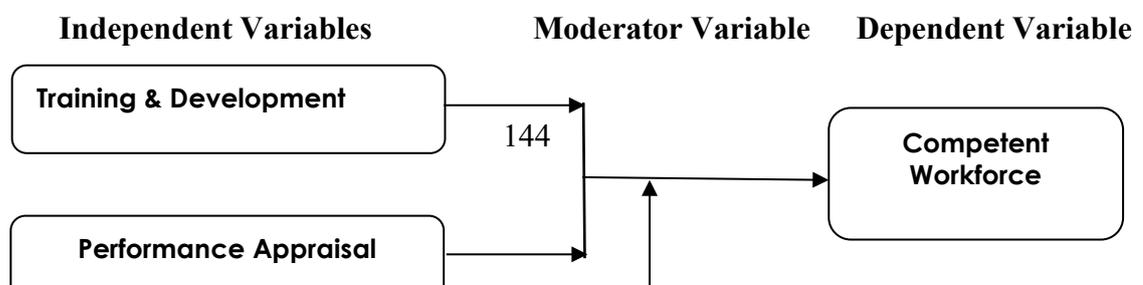
Source: Adopted and adapted from David D. Dubois, William J. Rothwell (2004). Competency-Based Human Resource Management: Discover a New System for Unleashing the Productive Power of Exemplary Performers

Discussions
Independent Variables

The independent variable is the variable that is manipulated by the experimenter to determine its relationship to an observed phenomenon, called the dependent variable (Helmenstine, 2017). Generally, the independent variable is the "cause," while the dependent variable is the "effect" of the independent variable (Engle, 1999). For the purpose of this study, there were four variables involved. Each of these variables is defined as follows:

Training and Development

According to Oluwakemi Ayodeji, Michael, Tunde and Mariam (2011), training is a learning process provided by employers to employees to help them perform their current jobs more efficiently. Education focuses on learning designed to prepare an individual for a job different than the one currently held, while development focuses on providing knowledge or skills within a specified area but is not necessarily job-related.

Development and organizational change require flexibility and improvement in training quality. Young et al. (2015) examined the links between workplace training and work organization. The result of the study showed that the changes in work organization required employees to be more flexible and that training needed to go beyond a narrow focus on a specific job in a specific work-setting.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is a tool that facilitates the organization to gauge their respective employees' performance, especially in terms of their competencies and potentials. Nonetheless, Cintrón and Flaniken (1990) came out with a study to find the source of

dissatisfaction of the performance appraisal. Lack of leadership support was found to be the main weakness, along with follow-through by a laid-back type supervisor as well as having an incompetent supervisor to carry out the appraisal. Hence, strong leadership support is very important to ensure that the process can benefit the organization. On this note, the leadership of RMN does play a very supportive role and are always looking to move forward in improving their performance appraisal system.

Performance appraisal, which in the context of this research is translated through the Competency Log, was used to confirm the RMN personnel's competencies. According to Mouritz et al. (2001) in the Naval Training Manual, this log is used by the naval personnel who undergo training at KD PELANDOK. They need to complete the logbook after completing classes on theory and on-the-job practical training at various ships and shore establishments. The log will then be evaluated by the Training Officer and the Commanding Officer to confirm the trainee's competency at work. Remedial actions will then be taken either by respective units or back to at the training centre if the trainee was evaluated as below par and unavailable to perform his duty as expected.

Dependent Variable
Competent Workforce

A dependent variable is a variable whose value depends upon the independent variables. The dependent variable is what is being measured in an experiment or evaluated in a mathematical equation. For this study, the competent workforce is the dependent variable. Competency is defined as a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform a job effectively and efficiently. According to R.Yuvaraj (2011), 'competency' describes how a job might be done excellently, whilst 'competent' is described as what has to be done. The author also mentioned that core competency is something which cannot be copied and is the pillar upon which an individual rests. Kahirol Mohd Salleh and Nor Lisa Sulaiman (2010) posited that a strong and positive human resource management will be the main enabler for a competent workforce, be it hard or soft skill oriented.

Sanbonmatsu, Strayer, Medeiros-Ward and Watson (2013) went further by examining competency from the perspective of personality and individual differences, especially in the context of multitasking ability. The result of this study indicated that a person who is more capable of multi-tasking effectively is not the person who is most likely to engage in multiple tasks simultaneously. The findings also suggested that people often engaged in multitasking because they are less able to block out distractions and focus on a singular task. The study had also been done in the context of different genders in quantifying the most competent. In the context of multitasking, the study was carried out by Alzahabi and Becker (2013), which aimed to test whether women were better multitaskers than men. The finding showed that women outperformed men in multitasking paradigms, however, due to lack of supporting evidence,

caution should be taken against making generalizations (Mubarik Chandran & Devadason 2018).

Hence, in the process of creating robust human resource management, it is important not only to boost employee performance and competency but also to support and uphold the organization's mission and vision. Such a role played by human resources must be carried out to ensure that competency models are on track. Marrelli, Tondora and Hoge (2005) developed a concept study of employee competency with a focus on providing a definite roadmap to understand, design and implement the competency models. The findings indicate that the organization and the employees had a satisfactory mapping system and that the existing employees are fully aware of the competency required in order to perform excellent work in the organization.

Moderator Variable
Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is important to ensure all RMN personnel are highly motivated to deliver better job performance. Aarabi, Subramaniam and Akeel (2013) studied the relationship between motivational factors and job performance of employees of Malaysian service industries. They found that motivational factors encompassed payment, job security, promotion, freedom, friendly environment and training. Their findings showed that the most significant factors for job performance were training and promotion.

Mohd Bokti, Abu Talib and Talib (2009) measured the job satisfaction of RMN's personnel at the Lumut naval base. The study found that the majority of the respondents had a moderate level of job satisfaction with a high score in terms of the ability to uphold a sense of pride as well as having an enjoyable career. This was largely due to the nature of work, being far from family and uncertainty on their career dimension. Some of the respondents were also not happy with having too much red tape in the organization that hindered their work. Nonetheless, the Human Resource Department of RMN had changed a lot from when the study was carried out.

Conclusion

Human resource is regarded as one of the most important resources of RMN. It is important because people contribute to the effectiveness of RMN. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore the related theories and propose a framework on the relationship between human resource functions with the development of a competent workforce in RMN, moderated by job satisfaction. RMN needs to understand the expectations of its workforce to achieve the desired performance. The new paradigm of human resource management practices requires various approaches to human resource management and practices in order to achieve significant improvement leading to excellent organizational performance (Takeuchi, Chen & Lepak, 2009;

Afthanorhan et al., 2019). This includes human resource planning, utilization, development and the environment that influences the organization.

A shift in the human resource approach will result in better performance by the organization (Duke II & Udono, 2012; Moussa, 2018). This includes the building of a quality workforce, especially with the provision of attractive incentive schemes and cooperation between management-union in organizations. Hence, the concept of this study only covers three parts of human resource management practices, namely training and development, performance appraisal as well as the development of a competent workforce.

Interestingly, the human resource process has actually duplicated a lot of military practices, especially in terms of structure and appraisals (Narang, 2016). Nonetheless, with socioeconomic changes over time, human resource practices in the corporate sector have become more dynamic and relevant. Hence, this study demonstrated that the best human resource practice in the corporate sector is relevant and equally important to also be adapted accordingly by the military to enhance soldier efficiency. Employee performance can be increased by promoting engagement with employees via a performance management system (Saks & Gruman, 2011). It also proved that continuous engagement at every level of employee development is the main key to catapult competency.

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