

Enhancing the Royal Malaysian Navy Effectively Through Competency Management

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Abstract

The article discusses the concept of a competency approach to the management of HR and the concepts that are most reliable in the management of training. An alternative competency paradigm is established based on existing theory and actual evidence. The primary goal of this paper is to explore the value of a competency approach as a human resource strategy for advocating the organization's expected responsibilities, talents, and activities. The paper also discusses potential roadblocks to implementing a competency-based approach to HRM in a specific setting. That is, a new dimensional approach for the HR and Training Division considers the notion of meaningfulness and the internalization of the core values of the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN). The discourse of the study is that there are challenges in implementing a competency strategy which could be the rationale for the Navy People not internalizing a concrete element in their career path. This paper proposed a conceptual and well-developed model, a competency management approach that would improve promotion, development, selection, and reward procedures in order to suit both organisational and individual needs.

Keywords: Competency; Human Resources; Core Value; Meaningfulness; Royal Malaysian Navy

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) is a military force that has been given the responsibility to safeguard the maritime nation and national security. Therefore, the mandate given to the RMN must be carried out with the highest sense of professionalism, which is important to ensure that the sovereignty of the country is preserved. Recently, the RMN has found that the level of competency among Navy people is decreasing at a high rate (RMN Sea Power Centre, 2021). The shortage of training assets, training skills, and attitude towards training are among the factors contributing to this. It is worth to note that competency-based studies emphasized that the problems could lie within intrinsic qualities, abilities, characteristics, expertise, and attitudes that are desirable for good performance in the job (Shet, Patil, & Chandawarkar, 2019).

The Navy People desired skills have been established and listed to perform duty in their respective units. The skills were necessary based on the Navy requirements such as bridge watchkeeping task, machinery responsibility, and all other competencies that are certified based on individual expertise. When developing the competency approach in the RMN, it's also vital to consider the external and organisational climate. Competencies were originally intended to be developed in the context of economic, social, political, industry, strategic, and competitive forces, as well as human capital availability (Spencer, 1993). Nevertheless, in the context of RMN, competency models should be proposed to ensure that the Navy People comply with their policies, regulations and people. Based on the RMN perspective, the approach of competency management is to sharpen the main skills required for Navy People to achieve target performance in their position. Subsequently, there is a need to

improve and enhance such skills to become experts and suit the RMN projection plan. It is therefore important to study and recommend how RMN generates the best human resources management to meet current and future needs. Accordingly, the objectives of this paper are: (1) To discuss how competencies would be able to influence performance and development needs base on the conceptual approach, (2) To recommend the conceptual model for RMN HR and RMN Training Division to consider for their future action plan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competency

A critical consideration for HR managers is to select the right tools for measuring employee results. In precedence to that, the appropriate competencies must be established. A competency-based model of management has been gaining popularity for its emphasis on employability along with corporate competitiveness. Human resource management is critical to the success of a wide range of businesses that demand skilled workers (Swanson, 2001). The alignment of competency with an organization's vision determines the effectiveness of competency adoption. Competencies influence the procedures that support the Navy's mission and vision, strategy, and critical skills, allowing Navy personnel to understand their jobs and operate in ways that represent their adaptive strategies. Besides, strategies that generate the biggest shift and improvement for employee success refers to a variety of management and HR matters. Organization that emphasize on developing employee's awareness and skills and invest in human-resource activities can help organizational meet their goals (Karen Lo, Keith Macky & Edwina Pio, 2015)

The term competency has been defined from a variety of angles in the literature. However, one perspective that spanned the literature was that it should be defined as professionalism or competencies in order to improve work performance (Shet et al., 2019). Competence mechanisms are also recommended as a feasible way forward for the business to integrate HR functions across the employee life cycle, from recruitment to training and development to performance evaluation and promotion. The adoption of an integrated structure allows the business to strategically deploy its human resources in order to achieve organisational goals (Sutton, A. & Watson, S., 2013).

According to the previous Chief Naval Education and Training (CNET), V.Adm. Dato Aris Adi Tan (2018) said during his forum, the Navy People should possess the right *soul*, *mind*, and *body* to become a good sailor. The soul is defined as a feeling or engagement within the organization, the mind encompass a piece of knowledge that is learned during training and the body indicates a standard of fitness within the military requirement. Therefore, it is a crucial concern to analyze if the current competency log for Navy People is ineffective or if other factors have caused the decreasing performance of the young officer and young sailors.

Meaningfulness

To become an effective organization today, a problem-solving strategy for Navy People's performance is not solely depending on an effective process. The RMN should highlight the synergies and strategic advantages for Navy People to build within the Navy. Meaningfulness is one of the elements that needs to be considered in the approach to increase the level of competency and motivation. Meaningfulness at work includes empowering workers to contribute to the task, improving the work environment, develop closer relationships, and giving opportunities to people at work (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). For the Navy People, motivation is individual and process-based, it is heavily affected by the contextual and organizational factors. Because of this, it is important to recognize both the individual and the organizational influences on their career progression. Additionally, a sense of meaning is an important aspect of human well-being and it is linked to psychological and physical well-being (Allan, Duffy, & Collison, 2018; Steger et al., 2012). As such, the Royal Malaysian Navy aims to have Navy People to use meaningfulness to set a high value in their career with high organizational engagement, as well as

a devoted intrinsic motivation for work. Navy People who have positive job experiences are more likely to sacrifice time, compensation, and gratitude toward their organizations, and hold them to a higher standard. They often demonstrate lower disciplinary issues, less negative behavior, a higher commitment and higher work productivity level (Allan et al., 2018). Meaningful work seems to have significant personal benefits and can be related to job success for Navy People in the RMN.

Meaningfulness is derived from the intrinsic stimulus and predicts satisfaction (Allan et al., 2018). Although an element of meaningfulness is significant at the workplace, other benefits (such as in the home domain) can be derived from it. Happiness, motivation, wellbeing, and continuous learning are some of the many aspects of our lives that are strengthened when we live meaningfully (Bragger et al., 2019). Job success is not only dependent on how much the employee knows, but how meaningful their job is (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). A meaningful relationship is described as a relationship in which an individual feels accepted and desired by others (Kahn, 1990). Concerning meaningfulness at work, the Royal Malaysian Navy should see that connectedness, structure, and relationship are values that would contribute to how a person should behave at work. It goes without saying, that individuals who find meaning in their jobs have a better sense of meaningfulness than those who do not. So, individuals who spend time on expected activities and considers them meaningful will better fit their roles and feel a higher level of engagement (May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007).

Having meaning improves many facets of life for inspiration and satisfaction (Bragger et al., 2019). Spirituality and a sense of meaning have emerged as a reaction to changes in the performance of individuals (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). A sense of meaning will be drawn from social connectedness, the pleasure generated from meaningful work, and pleasant workplace interactions. The desire for emotional support and stability is fulfilled by idealistic workplace partnerships and this may affect individual performance. Kelly (2001) argued that people with low meaningfulness could have lower work satisfaction. Additionally, Mahmood (2011) claimed that work satisfaction defines the optimistic emotional reaction people have when they are performing their jobs. Indeed, the workplace can be viewed as an environment with varied thoughts and emotions. The Navy People's satisfaction is a very significant component of employee well-being which consists of the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of the job (Zaim, et al., 2012) Essentially, job satisfaction is associated with how expectations of the work are met and this is link to the competency level. Ultimately, motivation and meaningfulness are required to keep an individual involved at work.

This paper also argued that negative behavioral, psychological, and social consequences could occur due to the lack of meaning instilled in the RMN. HR management can acquire vital evidence to design strategies that can dramatically improve Navy People's motivation, fulfillment, and loyalty. By learning about these organizational advantages, the Navy People would eventually feel more driven and satisfied in both domains, work and home (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). Therefore, meaningful work practice can be a tool for RMN Human Resources to use to improve the behavior of Navy People and establish a code of conduct in line with RMN core values and simultaneously creating exemplary human capital in the future.

Rmn Core Values

The RMN Core Values is used to foster a culture in the RMN. The challenges arise in inculcating the Navy People to internalize the Core Values as a principle in their life, not just at work. Navy core values should be modeled in every sailor to be an example of professional conduct. The core values consist of *Honour, Loyalty, Courage, and Pride* (RMN Core Value, 2011). Honouring denotes a sign to respect the dignity of others regardless of rank, religion & ethnicity. Loyalty signifies upholding the trust given and not betraying shipmates and RMN. Courage means having a high spirit. Pride symbolizes being exemplary and demonstrate the highest level of military discipline. The core values reflect the attitude and the way of life that encompasses integrity and obedience in serving the RMN, which is essential in realizing the Navy's organizational objectives. Additionally, these core values can inspire optimistic thinking, beliefs, and the advancement of the RMN future. These principles are expected to be instilled when conducting the task when operating ashore or onboard a ship. It deals with actions, attitudes, and

emotions to become a successful sailor. The real significance of these core values is to guide the Navy People not only to perform but to give credit to their colleagues where matters, denoting a camaraderie that cannot be imitated elsewhere. Hence, producing a great employee, i.e sailor, necessitates good values.

The satisfaction of Navy People is pertinent in keeping them motivated in various types of working conditions. When they gain pleasure in working, they feel more respected and fulfilled doing their job. The core values are applied from the beginning of their career and continue throughout their service with RMN. Thus, it goes without saying that the awareness and internalization of the core values would have a tremendous influence on the life of the Navy People (RMN Core Value, 2011).

According to Tan Sri Ahmad Kamarulzaman bin Hj Ahmad Badaruddin, the four core values are the standards for success in the organization. These four basic principles are used as a precautionary measure in situations that violate the law, such as disciplinary cases and decreasing job performance. The core values also make anti-graft initiatives much more effective and act as the foundation of the Navy People in the structure of their culture and traditions. RMN performance can only be exemplified if only employees abide by all the core values. Consequently, the core values can help in improving the patriotism and dignity of the RMN people. This should avoid disciplinary cases, unnecessary accidents and increase organizational commitment among the Navy People. Therefore, the enhancement of competency level among the Navy People should be developed by emphasizing the need for these core values.

Underpinning Theory: Self Determination Theory (SDT)

The underpinning theory of this study is the Self Determination Theory. SDT offers a macro theory of human motivation that has been successfully applied across a range of different areas including parenting, education, wellness, sports, and physical activity, psychotherapy, and virtual worlds (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017). SDT hypothesizes that both the amount and the consistency of an employees' work activities depend on the type of motivation they have for their work (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT distinguishes between multiple types of motivation and asserts that each type is based on a separate set of variables.

SDT is a critical psychological theory that is concerned with human choices, as is the case with the Navy People due to the fact that their emotional capacity is critical for their wellbeing and happiness. Self-determination makes it possible for individuals to believe that they have the control over their decisions and lives (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It also adds to a person's motivation as people believe that what they do will have an impact on the result. The theory implies that self-determination is possible when the Navy People's needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy are met (See Figure 1).

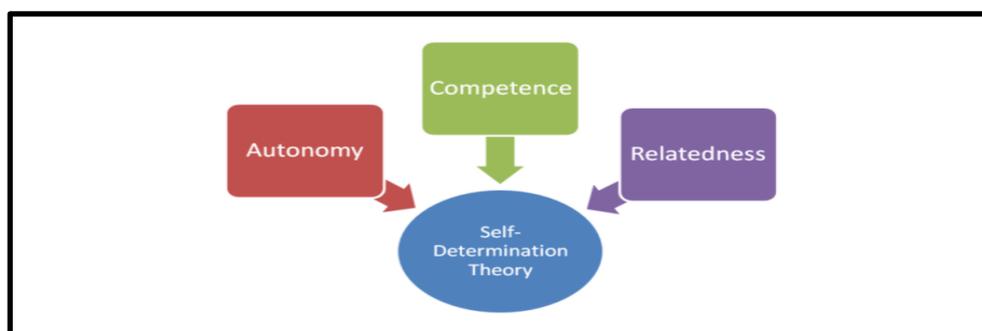


Figure 1. Self Determination Theory (Desi & Ryan, 2000)

The theory proposed that people need to be able to be in control of their actions to feel fulfilled. Thus, in essence, people need to feel competent, attached, and be in control to achieve psychological growth. This can be applicable in the context of RMN as such:

- a. Competence: Navy People need to master their tasks and learn various skills. If Navy People believe they have the skills they need to succeed, they are more likely to take the steps to help them reach their goals.
- b. Relatedness: Navy People need to feel a sense of attachment and loyalty to the RMN organization. As in the case of the core values, the more they feel related to the core values, the easier it would be to internalize them.
- c. Autonomy: Navy People require a sense of control over their behaviours and objectives. Possessing the ability to take direct action may result in favourable outcomes as they play key roles in decision-making (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In SDT, the concept of intrinsic motivation, or doing things for the sake of doing them, is significant. Thus, intrinsic motivation is a critical source in self-determination theory. The argument is based on the premise that people are motivated by their desire to evolve and achieve personal fulfillment, simply because they found their job to be interesting and enjoyable. For instance, Navy personnel who faces challenges doing their job onboard ship and is self-determined would essentially accept their mistake, feel that they can do their utmost to fix the issue, and take additional measures to correct the error. If the same person has low self-determination, they could instead diffuse that responsibility. They might make excuses, transfer the blame to another colleague, or merely refuse to accept the mistake. Eventually, they may feel powerless to influence the situation and assume that their job would not have any real impact on the organization. This outcome leads to lower meaningfulness in their job.

While SDT is pertinent, it is necessary to note that the psychological growth resulting in SDT is not necessarily automatic. Although people may be oriented toward such growth, it requires continuous sustenance. Ryan and Deci, (2000) proposed that the propensity to be either active or passive is primarily affected by social circumstances. Therefore, social circumstances such as the social environment is essential to develop relationships with others that may be able to encourage personal development and improve well-being.

Comparison Competency-Based Development in Navy

In RMN, training and development of the Navy people have always been the responsibility of the HR and Training department. Moreover, a pertinent focal point was the establishment of the Competency-Based Training (CBT). Likewise, CBT is a practice that has been used for decades by many organizations. CBT is a very successful and realistic model for achieving positive results. Numerous organizations have resorted to competency-based training, but few have effectively achieved the benefits (Jaradat, Keating, & Bradley, 2018). This paper maps the trend of how the development process has been conducted by the foreign Navy. The skills and knowledge were needed to effectively grow talent and meet organizational goals. Table 1 indicates the characteristics and focuses by RMN and other foreign Navy to produce the competency level base on their requirement.

Table 1. Comparison of Competency-Based Development (Author’s compilations)

No	States	Theory/ Model	Focus	Challenges
1	US Navy (William J Rothwell and J E Lindholm, 1998)	Personal Performance Theory	1. Specialised knowledge (Hayes,1979) 2. Intellectual maturity 3. Entrepreneurial maturity 4. Interpersonal 5. On job maturity	Achieving real-time competency, ensuring the rigorous process
2	British Royal Navy (Young & Dulewicz, 2005)	Leadership model (Kotter, 1990)	1. Aligning people and resources. 2. Taking an active role 3. Creating success.	Need to conceptualize, aligning, interacting, and creating success
3.	Singapore (Quek, 2006)	1.Leadership Competency Model 2. Situated Cognition and Social Constructivism Theory (Nonaka and Toyama’s, 2003)	1. Task performance 2. Understanding task 3. Diversity & complexity 4. Develop skill	Resource constraints, challenges for curriculum time
4.	Royal Malaysian Navy	1. Competency-Based Training Assessment concept 2. Navy Competency Standard	1. Job demand 2. Skill development	Difficulty in measuring the effectiveness

The comparison in Table 1 is based on competency growth by the US Navy, Royal Navy, Singapore Navy, and Royal Malaysian Navy. Essentially, the implementation model refers to the model and philosophy that are used to ensure that the competency kit meets their requirements. Each Navy focuses on different models. Its focus also differs from one another. The RMN is entirely dependent on model production. Therefore, the comparison demonstrated the need for RMN to take the required steps to minimize their vulnerability and be prepared for forthcoming challenges. This concept paper discusses how the competencies level may be able to predict performance and development needs base on the conceptual approach. The researchers recommend that RMN needs to realign the model of competencies following the Royal Malaysian Navy Training System, Competency-Based Training Assessment (CBTA), and Navy Competency Standard concept. The following provides a discourse on a variety of solutions:

- a. The CBTA design model has been developed to realign the training needs of the RMN officer. Currently, the RMN uses Navy Competency Standard for RMN officers as the basic reference for the career path. To develop a world-class Navy, the priority must focus on developing character, both in individuals and units, and consequently the Navy as an organization. The required quality is superior, unique, and exceptional, or what is referred to as Excellent (Pudiasuti, 2020). Excellent quality encompasses three areas: organization, operation, and human resources. For this reason, the RMN should ensure there is a link in the learning process and map the structure of the officer's career path, from cadet to the middle officer, to get the level of excellence in the Navy People performance. This initiative could help create an environment with continuous training, in line with the competency needs, and simultaneously reduce the negative performance.

- b. As organization process capability improves over time so does its competence, and eventually, its processes mature (Rendon, 2015). Different stages or levels of process maturity or capability, as well as the characteristics and relationships between each stage, are represented by maturity models. RMN can work with other agencies like the Malaysian Department of Skill Development or governmental organizations to refine and certify their competencies and talents. The program may be able to strengthen the Navy system's institutional environment and process. In terms of developing competence, the experience can largely be enhanced through the provision of opportunities in a variety of positions. For example, education and training targeted at enhancing knowledge and skills can help to enhance technical competence. In terms of behavioural competency, numerous training programmes and individual development aimed at modifying behaviour can be implemented, whereas institutional values can be reinforced through indoctrination (Pudiasuti, 2020).
- c. According to a prior study, a person with sufficient experience and technical skills does not necessarily perform well if the individual is unable to demonstrate behavior that is conducive to task completion (Made Jiwa Astika & Okol Sri Suharyo, 2021). As a result, technical competencies can be acquired through education and training that focuses on developing knowledge and skills, and in particular, embedding meaningfulness in their work.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This paper proposed a conceptual framework intentionally modeled for RMN HR and RMN Training Department to consider for their action plan. This concept paper attempts to clarify how HR Managers can internalize the RMN core values and meaningfulness and its importance during their training stages and their day-to-day work. The model may assist in solving problems such as decreasing competency and performance. Additionally, it could also assist in enhancing the feeling of belonging and loyalty towards the organization. Certainly, this will build a competitive advantage among the Navy People and reinforce the RMN Strategy. Figure 2 illustrated the conceptual model proposed:

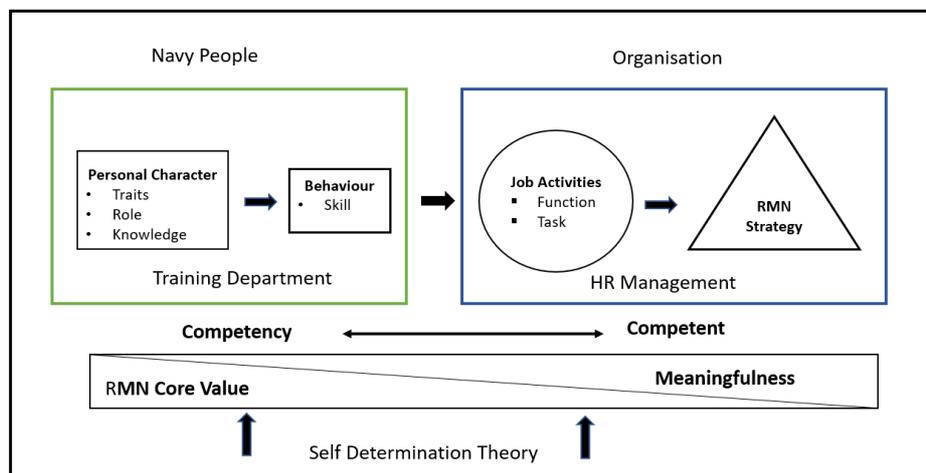


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Competency Management Proposed

This model outlined the roles and obligations of two domains between the Training Department and HR Management. Both are complementary to each other in carrying out the RMN strategy. The model, which essentially gives the concept of two-element, RMN core values and meaningfulness, should play an important role in guiding the process and mapping the structure of their programs. These two-element has a huge influence in internalizing the values of the Navy People. The following section explains further how SDT would underpin the model.

Self-Determination Among the Navy People

It is critical to understand that self-determination theory accentuates that psychological development does not occur automatically. Thus, while individuals may be motivated to pursue career growth, it does also require ongoing support from various parties. As mentioned previously, Ryan and Deci (2017), argued that the tendency to be proactive or passive is largely determined by the social circumstances in which individuals are in. Thus, support from friends and family is critical. This indicates the importance of the work and life domain. Well-being and personal growth can either be fostered through individual interactions on the job and relationships at home. Hence, to strengthen the Navy People's performance, the Training Department should not only emphasize on the development of characteristics associated with a strong set of competencies, but also encouraging a stronger connection between peers and family. Most significantly, the importance of core values must be highlighted during the initial stages of enlistment following the competency level. These core values would undoubtedly facilitate the development.

Furthermore, the HR management, particularly the unit commander, must establish a sense of meaning for the workplace. Instilling meaningful work practice, in line with RMN core values, would inspire members of the Navy and motivate them intrinsically. Individuals who acquire all these elements are bound to exhibit characters or behaviours in line with the proposed model of competency management. For example, if the Navy People are capable of self-control, in line with SDT, they will perform better and live better (Orth & Robins, 2014). Hence, a higher wellbeing. Additionally, if they possess an internal locus of control, this will lead them to believe that their actions will affect their outcomes. Ultimately, this would increase their sense of responsibility towards their job. As such, when confronted with obstacles, they will overcome them through sound judgment, perseverance, and hard work. By the same token, the Navy People are always recommended to plan ahead of their actions and ascertain their objectives. This competency management model proposed that as long as they take ownership of their actions, be responsible for the outcomes, and responsive in time of need, then the alignment of the RMN strategy would have been met. Nurturing a good sense of self (by seeing meaning in their work) and higher competency in decision-making capabilities will foster the development of self-determination among Navy People.

Finally, the creation of a positive sense of self is essential to any Navy People. This research advocates that forming close relationships with others will also enhance the Navy People's self-determination. In this light, the superior-subordinate relationship should be guided based on the following:

- a. A mentor-mentee kinship. Always seek relationships with people who have skills and/or guide them to help reach their goals.
- b. Constantly initiate and support relationships within the working environment. In the training department, self-determined trainees are more likely to pursue people who inspire them, i.e., those that exemplified RMN core values. Therefore, there are avenues for educators or trainers to positively affect the importance of intrinsic motivation and self-determination in the Navy people.

CONCLUSION

The competency management model proposed needs to be used as an instrument to guide the RMN in their strategic plans. The Navy culture endorses a shared concept and common interpretation of what is understood by exemplary success. Competency management is a key human resources strategy that aligns the Navy People's knowledge, skills, and behaviours together with the organization's strategic direction. Based on Figure 2, the competency management model proposed that competency needs to

be developed based on accentuating two elements, i.e., RMN core values and meaningfulness at work. It must be noted that the Training Department and HR Management should look into how the model can be aligned with the local norms, attitudes, and behavioural trends of the Navy people.

Ultimately, the RMN should use this competency model in creating sustainable values and strategies that can be translated into concrete behaviours. Today, a lot of organizations have recognized that significant individual and organizational performance gains can be achieved by an appropriate model. In this paper, a competency-based model was introduced with the aim in assisting the incorporation of HRM activities and strengthening future plans. The researchers hope that the model would be able to give a little value to the RMN to alleviate the challenges of declining performance among the Navy People. Finally, it is expected that this approach would enhance selection, development, promotion, and reward processes to meet both individual and organizational needs.

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