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CONTENT

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Discovering the Antecedents of Engagement for Citizen Centric Public Service Excellence

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian public sector is undergoing vast transformation to provide its citizen with an efficient, transparent, responsive and connected government. The Malaysian government has introduced the Public-Sector Transformation Framework (PSTF) which aims to make it a high performing, trustworthy, dynamic and citizen centric public service. Nevertheless, the biggest challenge faced by the public sector is the people in the service itself. Public employees are being criticized for lacking the desired efficiency and expected performance. Based on the assumption that employees will perform their best when they are "engaged", this study explores the factors of employee engagement and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model for excellence in building a conceptual framework that is conclusive and holistic. Underpinned by the systems theory, this study identifies the factors of leadership, strategy, people, partnerships and resources, processes, products and services, work environment, well-being and work-life balance as the factors that drive engagement towards the realization of citizen centric public service excellence.

1. Introduction

Citizens today have varied needs, preferences, behaviours, attitudes and capabilities. As a result, government agencies need to redesign their service delivery infrastructures to serve each segment of their customers differently (Carrasco & Fetherston, 2011). In response to this, the Prime Minister of Malaysia has announced the implementation of Government Transformation Programme (GTP) exclusively to promote a citizen centric model for public service delivery, attending to priorities that are most significant to the people across all boundaries (PEMANDU, 2011). The ideology behind the approach is to make the citizen as the centre of public practices and operations and to look at service delivery from the eyes of its people (Malik, et al., 2014; Kamaruddin & Md Noor, 2013). The one aim of citizen centric public service is to enable government to improve service delivery, address citizen satisfaction and subsequently improve the quality of life (Gupta, 2006). The initiatives under GTP dedicate itself for the implementation of "whole-of-government" concept whereby all government agencies must work as an integrated agency crossing

boundaries and portfolios to provide the "best-in-class" public service delivery (MAMPU, 2011). A specific chapter "Transforming Government to Transform Malaysia" is dedicated to transform the face of Malaysian Public Sector (UNDP, 2012). It is within this chapter that the government introduces the Public Service Transformation Framework (PSTF).

Figure 1 identifies that the ultimate goal of PSTF is to become a high performing, trustworthy, dynamic and citizen centric public service. In attaining this goal, it goes back to the roles of public service employees who are responsible in translating high-performing and citizen centric public service into implementable actions and policies while fulfilling the stakeholders and citizens' needs. In achieving this, it should not rest on the shoulders of the public employees alone. Instead, it should be a collective endeavour and dedication from various entities, from the leaders to the policies and equipment necessary to impart change in the public sector. As such, it can be said that the public-sector transformation process towards becoming a high performing and citizen centric public service should be viewed as a whole or as a system, and to make change happen, each of its components plays an important role that contributes to the success or failure of change (Olum, 2004).

Relating to this, engagement among public service employees is important to understand how factors such as leadership, organisational strategies and policies, co-workers, work environment and work-life balance, as being components of the system, contribute to making change happen. Employees who are engaged is full of enthusiasm, energetic, dedicated, show initiatives at work and strives for high quality as well as performance (Sakovska, 2012) thus, will result in competitive advantages (Rashid, et al., 2011).

2.0 TOWARDS CITIZEN CENTRIC PUBLIC SERVICE EXCELLENCE

There have been several excellence model developed to stimulate performance improvement in organisations, and one of the most notable self-assessment model for performance excellence is the EFQM Excellence Model (Eskildsen et al., 2004; Sampaio et al., 2012). Although the Malaysian Public Sector has undertaken several forms of performance management for both the agencies and employees such as Quality Management System through MS ISO (Abdullah, et al., 2012), Key Performance Indicators (Mucciarone & Neilson, 2011), and Star Rating Index (Siddiquee, 2013), the efforts never seemed enough. The government is continuously demanding for better service (Zakaria et al., 2011) and the controversy that surrounds performance management, particularly on the central idea that performance measurement is just too simple - to formulate task and indicate how this task is measured using indicators (Bainchi & Xavier, 2014; Bouckaert & Haligan, 2008; Bruijn, 2007) have brought about the intervention for excellence.

Excellence is the aspiration to go beyond than just performing, it is the outstanding pursuit in managing organisation and delivering values (Moullin, 2007). This would mean, excellence is an organisational practice and enculturation for value and quality, while keeping track of the organisation's performance. The EFQM model is based on the concept that organisations will achieve better results when all employees are involved in the continuous process for improvement (Pyke et al., 2001). The EFQM model is notable for recognising all of its employees' strengths and weaknesses as well as the overall areas that needed improvements. As such, the model is seen as the ideal framework to promote continuous learning, creativity and innovation (EFQM, 2013).

Comprised of nine criteria, the model is divided into two parts – enablers and results (Pyke et al., 2001). Enablers focus on what the organisation does and how to do it, while results empha-

sis on what the organisation achieves (Thawani, 2015). There are five criteria for enablers namely leadership, people, strategy, partnerships and resources as well as processes, products and services. These enablers are identified as the drivers that increase organisational effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness. With this consideration, this model is explored against the factors that predict engagement as it is believed to provide a similar outcome as employee engagement.

3.0 DEFINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Previous literatures have identified three types of employee namely i) engaged employees – employees who have the passion for innovation at work and driving the organisation; ii) disengaged employees – employees who are putting time but no passion in their work; and iii) highly/actively disengaged employees – employees who are unhappy at work and busy showing their unhappiness (Kapoor & Maechem, 2012; Romans & Tobaben, 2016; Souza Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008; Sundaray, 2011). When an employee is engaged, he will invest more of himselves in his work role and conduct his work with energy and enthusiasm (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010). When engaged, employees absorbed their work role and internalised the goals and aspirations of the organisation by enacting it and performing the role as an important aspect of their identity (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010). In contrast, employees who are disengaged will not show any emotion, nor energy and passion in conducting their work (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010).

The concept of employee engagement is traced back to 1990 by Kahn, who states that an engaged employee is physically, cognitively and emotionally connected with his work and others (Hart, et al., 2010). As such, when a person is engaged, he will display personally engaging behaviours that channels personal energies into physical, cognitive and emotional labours (Kahn, 1990). This is attributed by being physically involved in work role, be it alone or with others, cognitively vigilant and empathically connected with others in the organisation by the displaying of thoughts, feelings, creativity, beliefs, values and connections to others (Kahn, 1990).

This concept is further expanded to include four dimensions of psychological presence namely attentiveness, connectedness, integration, and focus (Hart et al., 2010; Kahn, 1992). Collectively, these dimensions contribute to the sense of being alive at work, being present at work and being accessible in the given work role (Kahn, 1992). Another definition of employee engagement is by Gallup; those who are involved and enthusiastic about their work and workplace (Harter & Adkins, 2015). Interestingly, a definition by Azeen and Yasmine (2015) and Ketter (2008) suggest that, engagement today is about creating a culture where employees do not feel misused, overused, underused or abused.

4.0 IDENTIFICATION OF FACTORS FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

For more than a decade, the study on employee engagement has generated profound interest among organisational practitioners and scholars. Nevertheless, a study conducted by Rana, Ardichvili, and Tkachenko (2014) stated that there has never been any consensus among past researchers on which factor contributes higher to engagement and the decision on which factor to include as the predictor for engagement, is left at the discretion of the researcher. Practitioners in the field too, have raised concern that employee engagement has become overly generalised and may risk its use in both theory and practice due to the unclarity, ambiguousness and inconsistent understanding of the concept (Anthony-McMann, et al., 2017). In attempt to address this issue, this study explores the factors of

employee engagement by comparing the list found in previous engagement models and written articles between the year 2010 and 2015 against EFQM model of excellence for similarities and redundancies. Table 1 lists the factors, listed according to ascending order of year, that drive employee engagement derived from previous engagement models while Table 2 showcases the comparison of factors between EFQM Excellence Model and Employee Engagement Models. From the comparison, it is established that some literatures did not highlight certain factors although it has been included in other engagement models. As a result, the items listed above are grouped into eight predictors namely i) leadership; ii) strategy; iii) people; iv) partnerships and resources; v) processes, products and services; vi) work environment; vii) well-being; and viii) work-life balance. The former 6 predictors namely leadership, strategy, people, partnerships and resources, processes, products and services are based on EFQM Excellence Model (EFQM, 2013). Meanwhile the latter 3 predictors namely work environment, well-being and work-life balance are based on engagement models by Kapoor and Meachem (2012), Anitha (2014) and Taneja, Sewell, and Odom, (2015). Each of the predictor is explained further in the following discussion.

4.1. Leadership

Years ago, leadership was often associated with an individual or an authoritative figure who has control based on his position in a hierarchy (Piggot-Irvine, et al., 2014). Today, leadership is focused on relationships (Joshi & Sodhi, 2011), influence, adaptability and complexity (Piggot-Irvine et al., 2014). Leaders who are visionary create a culture of engagement that maintains employees' trust, productivity, and satisfaction and positioned the organisation towards success (Wiley, 2010). Leaders, who communicate, support and show interest on employees will create an impact (Hart et al., 2010; Rana et al., 2014; Nink & Welte, 2011). Authentic and supportive leadership has been suggested to impact employee engagement (Anitha, 2014; Dan-Shang & Chia-Chun, 2013) while transformative leadership has been proposed to be an appropriate theory to conceptualitse behavioural engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Considering that different leadership behaviours may affect employees differently, there have been recommendations to having an integrated approach to leadership-engagement behavior (Carasco-Saul, Kim, & Kim, 2014).

4.2 Strategy

The word 'strategy' is first used as a management term by Chandler (1962) that means long term goals and objectives as well as the course of action of an organisation (Steensen, 2013). It is also defined as high-level plans describing activities or plan of action to which organisations intend to achieve (EFQM, 2013). By understanding where the organisation wishes to place itself, employees are driven and focused on achieving it. Most organisation have utilised the tactics of embedding individual goals with organisational goals in efforts to contribute to organisation success. As such, the factor for strategy is placed as one of the enabling factor in EFQM Excellence Model. Additionally, studies conducted by Joshi and Sodhi (2011), Kapoor and Meachem (2012), and Rana, Ardichvili and Tkachenko (2015) have also acknowledged the importance of having a clear organisation vision and mission as well as the appropriate policies and processes to influence the level of engagement among employees.

4.3 People

People, in this study, refers to all individuals employed by the organisation at all levels of the

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organisation (EFQM, 2013). People, or employees, simply need to feel that they are being listened to and valued (Doherty, 2010). This predictor is viewed from three main aspects namely communication, performance management and rewards, recognition and incentives.

Communication is needed between employee and his colleagues or managers, over the phone, electronically, or personally (Harter & Adkins, 2015; Doherty, 2010). It is suggested that organisations should invest in internal networks to create a workforce community that employees can relate to (Kapoor & Maechem, 2012; Doherty, 2010; Tomlinson, 2010). These networks may provide employees the place/platform to share knowledge, interests and experience within the organisation (Doherty, 2010) and it has been proven to help build a sense of togetherness across various departments (Taneja et al., 2015). Performance management is another aspect that promotes engagement. Performance management is critical in keeping employees focused on achieving organisation's goals (Kapoor & Meachem, 2012; Doherty, 2010). Performance management can help employees identify problems that may hinder them from completing a task that may decrease work productivity (Harvard Business Review, 2013; Doherty, 2010).

Another factor that engages employees is rewards (Taneja et al., 2015; Anitha, 2014), recognition and incentives (Harvard Business Review, 2013; Tomlinson, 2010). Employees become engaged when their organisation recognises and rewards them for their increased efforts and productivity. While rewards are listed as items, gift cards or cash such as bonuses (Meija, 2015), recognition is simply the act of saying "thank you for a job well done" (Meija, 2015). Incentive on the other hand, is associated closely with rewards and recognition (Meija, 2015) thus items such as training and development are suggested to be incentives for employees.

4.4 Partnerships and Resources

The predictor of partnerships and resources is modelled after EFQM Excellence model and is viewed as one of the predictor for engagement because it examines the relationship between the organisation and other parties such as its suppliers and collaborators (EFQM, 2013). In this predictor, theorganisation establishes itself with reputation (Taneja et al., 2015; Ellis & Sorensen, 2007) meaning that, employees are likely to become more engaged when employees feel proud of their organisation. The feeling of being associated with a reputable and broadly known organisation, ignites the sense of connectedness and belongingness (Taneja et al.,2015).

Another item that is related to this predictor is resources. Resources, be it assets, such as buildings and equipment, or internal means, such as funds, technology and knowledge (EFQM, 2013) are important to get the job done (Cook, 2008). Engagement is said to exist when they are provided with the necessary tool and equipment to do their job (Nink & Welte, 2011; Shuck, et al., 2011).

4.5 Processes, Products and Services

Processes is a set of activities that interacts with one another and become the input for another activity (EFQM, 2013). These processes usually consist of key activities relating to procedures that are linked with organisation's strategy, vision and mission (EFQM, 2013). Engagement is influenced by a clear and defined set of goals, where goals are formulated and

referred to; action on targets, where employees have an action plan and implement tasks based on these action plans; and data analysis, where actions are reviewed for its completion (Kapoor & Meachem, 2012).

Aside from just focusing on the processes, employees are encouraged to participate in setting the organisation's goal as well as contributing ideas to develop its products and services (Kapoor & Meachem, 2012). Such practice creates a sense of belongingness with the organisation thus create a higher level of engagement (Kapoor & Meachem, 2012). Organisation that puts emphasis in ensuring the quality of their products will develop a customer-employee relationship that contributes to engagement (Taneja et al., 2015). Employees will feel inspired in their work, be focused on customer, care about the future of the organisation and are prepared to invest their effort for the success of the organisation (Cook, 2008).

4.6 Work Environment

This study views the predictor of work environment as the substantial factor of employee engagement. This is because work environment impacts the overall condition of the workplace and affects employee to be either fully functional at work or otherwise (Rana et al., 2014). A positive and supportive work environment contributes to a workplace climate that is empowering, safe and meaningful (Deci and Ryan, 1987; Harter & Adkins, 2015; Holbeche & Springett, 2003; May et al., 2004; Rich et al., 2010; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). For this, work environment is proposed to be divided into five aspects namely i) job design, characteristics and content; ii) democratise workforce; iiii) team and co-worker as well as iv) organisation policies, procedures, structure and system.

 Job design, characteristics and content are suggested to contribute to work environment because they provide meaningfulness, satisfaction and motivation at work (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Rana et al., 2015). Jobs that are clearly identified as, creative, challenging and supportive will be reflected in employees' behavioural and attitudinal outcomes especially relating to work performance and absenteeism (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010; Joshi & Sodhi, 2011; Kahn, 1990; Kapoor & Maechem, 2012; May et al., 2004; Rana et al., 2014).Democratise workforce is another trait that promotes positive and supportive work environment as it encourages empowerment and participation in organisational processes where employees' opinions are valued and respected, regardless of their position in the organisation (Taneja et al., 2015; Mani, 2011).

Team and co-worker emphasise mainly on interpersonal harmony (Mani, 2011) whereby positive teammates at work contribute immensely to a meaningful work environment (Anitha, 2014) by providing a supporting and trusting work relationship, promotes employee engagement by making an employee feel safe and involved in his or her work tasks and responsibilities (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004).

Organisation policies (Anitha, 2014) and culture (Bhatla, 2011) includes the procedures, structures and system that contributes to a positive work environment. Policies and procedures that are 'employee friendly' such as flexi-work time, work-life balance and fair promotional opportunities display concern for employees' needs and feelings, thus have positive impact on employee engagement (Schneider et al., 2009; Rama Devi, 2009; Richman et al., 2008).

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4.7 Well-Being

Described as all the things that are crucial to determine how employees feel (Rath & Harter, 2010), well-being is said to be one of the most important aspects that influence employee engagement (Anitha, 2014) and employee performance (Witters et al., 2015). Healthways (2016) suggested, the use of Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index that looks at a person's well-being elements namely purpose, social, financial, community and physical contribute immensely to engagement. According to these indexes, employees' well-being of purpose, that measures day to day activities likeliness and motivations; social, that measures supportive relationship and love; financial, that measures economic life; community, that measures surrounding; and physical, that measures health and energy have an influencing factor of employees at work (Witters et al., 2015) as they are associated with employee welfare (Mani, 2011) in providing the health and happiness to employees.

4.8 Work-Life Balance

Another factor that predicts employee engagement is work-life balance (Kapoor & Meachem, 2012; Joshi & Sodhi, 2011). Simply put, work-life balance strives to create high levels of engagement by providing employees' the opportunity to balance between work and individual or personal goals (Taneja et al., 2015). It is the term used to refer to organisation support for dependent care, flexible work options and family or personal leave (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Estes & Michael, 2005). It is important to establish work-life balance because it focuses at the emotion of the employees especially if conflicting work roles and non-work roles exits, such as being an employee or manager and being a parent at the same time (Burn, 2015). Employees are often disheartened due to over burden and excessive work load (Zenger & Folkman, 2014). Therefore, work-life balance has a powerful impact to the level of performance and well-being at the workplace (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Bhatla, 2011; Joshi & Sodhi, 2011).

5.0 CONCLUSION

The role of engagement is important to move employees to be physically and psychologically on board with the government transformation plan. The factors that influence engagement are massive in number and cut across various dimensions effecting both the emotional and rational factors relating to work as well as the overall work experience. This paper provides the holistic and conclusive approach to citizen centric public service excellence in spearheading the government's ambition and aspiration. All similarities in function that are found in both previous models of engagement and EFQM model are identified as the predictor for Citizen Centric Public Service Excellence along with other factors that are equally important in influencing engagement. Finally, the components for Citizen Centric Public Service Excellence are identified as leadership, strategy, people, partnerships and resources, processes, products and services, work environment, well-being, and work-life balance. This paper concludes the conceptual build-up and therefore recommends future exploration and validation on the hypothesis.

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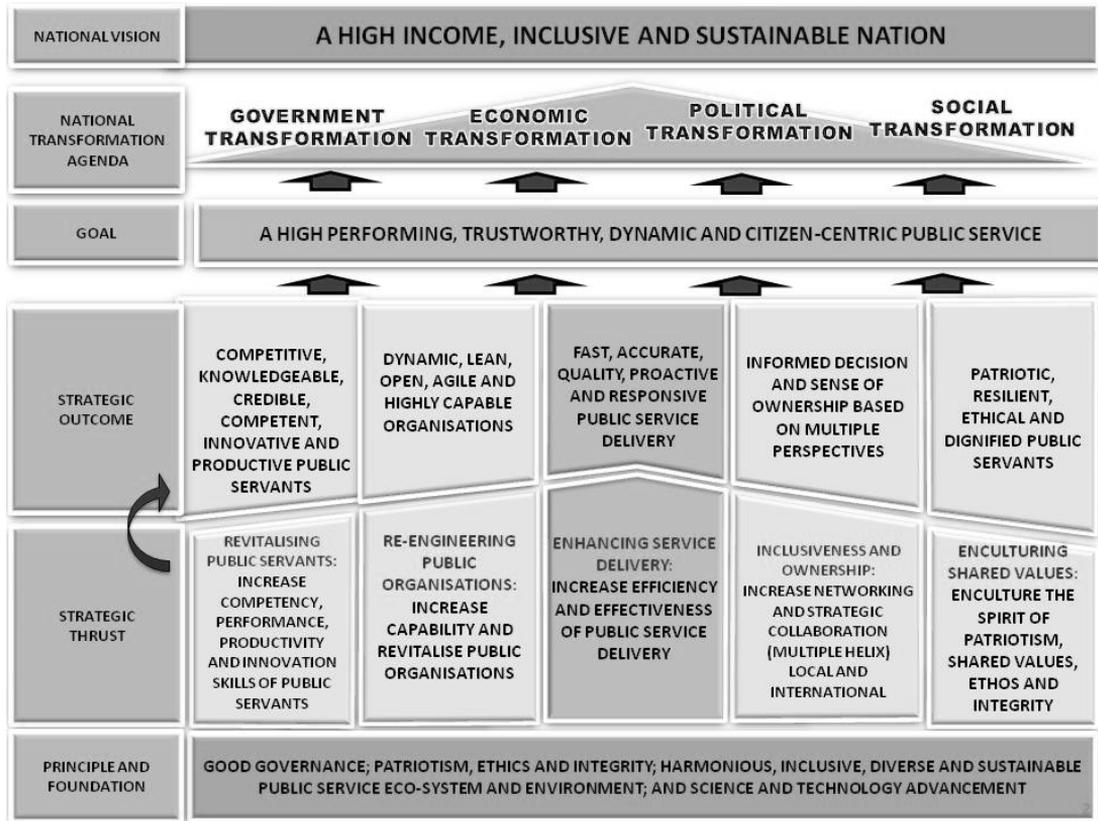
7.0 APPENDICES

Figure 1: Public Sector Transformation Framework

Author (Year)	Employee Engagement Factors
Tomlinson (2010)	• Leadership development • Employee recognition • Internal communications • Organisational development • Employee development
Mani (2011)	• Employee welfare • Empowerment • Employee growth • Interpersonal relationship
Nink and Welte (2011)	• Employees' basic needs • Management support • Teamwork • Employee growth
Bhatla (2011)	• Organisational culture • Organisational communication
Joshi and Sodhi (2011)	• Job content • Compensation/monetary benefits • Work-life balance • Top management-employee relations • Advancement and career growth • Team oriented/team work
Kapoor and Meachem (2012)	• Work life balance • Cooperation • Talent management • Clarity of vision and mission • Clarity of job • Empowerment • Pay and benefits • Health and safety • Communication and channel • Performance appraisal • Job satisfaction

Author (Year)	Employee Engagement Factors
	• Employee enhancement • Creativity and innovation
Rana, Ardichvili and Tkachenko (2014)	• Job design and characteristics • Supervisor and co-worker relationships • Workplace environment • Human resource development practices
Anitha (2014)	• Work environment • Leadership • Team and co-worker • Training and career development • Compensation • Organisational policies • Workplace well-being
Taneja, Sewell and Odom (2015)	• Promote involvement in organisation • Focus on customers • Democratise the workforce • Support work-life balance • Reward employees

Table 1: Factors That Drives Employee Engagement

Author (Year)	Predictors of Employee Engagement							
	Predictors based on EFQM Excellence Model					Predictors based on Engagement Model		
	Leadership	Strategy	People	Partnerships & Resources	Processes, Products & Services	Work Environment	Well-Being	Work-Life Balance
Tomlinson (2010)	√		√			√		
Mani (2011)			√			√	√	
Nink and Welte (2011)	√		√	√		√		
Bhatla (2011)			√			√		
Joshi and Sodhi (2011)	√		√			√		√
Kapoor and Meachem (2012)		√	√		√	√	√	√
Rana, Ardichvili and Tkachenko (2014)	√		√		√	√		
Anitha (2014)	√		√			√	√	
Taneja, Sewell and Odom (2015)			√	√	√	√		√

Table 2: Comparison of Factors Between EFQM Excellence Model and Employee Engagement