Competencies for Youth and Sports Officers in the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify competencies required by Youth and Sports officers in Malaysia and to examine the relationship between competencies need with job tenure. This descriptive survey involved 94 officers in Grade S41 and S48, of the Ministry who were located at the federal and state levels. They were chosen as they were the key group of employees contributing most to the achievement of the ministry’s vision and objectives. The results show that the most required competencies were planning and computer application. The results also showed that there was no relationship between competencies need and job tenure. This result was due to the variability of educational and service backgrounds of the respondents. Recommendation for practice and further research are highlighted.

Keywords: Competencies, Youth and Sports Officers, Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Developing human resources involves the identification of the workforce competencies and the subsequent training programme. This implies that the functions of Human Resource Division in any organisation have become more complex and the human resource personnel should be knowledgeable about the competencies needed by the employees to avoid conducting ineffective training programme (Buckle & Caple, 2000). An organisation should have an ability to adapt to the changing environment and aware of the ongoing changes in working life which believed to put new and strong demands on the occupational competence and qualification of the workforce (Ellstrom, 1997; Hanno et al., 2000). In order to maintain and improve the quality of products and services, the organisation has to develop its human resources in a proper way. Therefore, it is important for each of any organisation to identify the right competencies and develop competent people to undertake various functions and responsibilities.

Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia is the only government agency that responsible for the overall development of youth and sports in the country. Its main objective is to develop youth generation to become positive adult members of society. One of the particular occupational groups in this organisation is Youth and Sports Service. This occupation is a close service that is categorised as social service employment (Malaysia, Public Service Department 2002) and is attached at various departments in the ministry and state levels.

The employees in the Management and Professional employment group are divided into three (3) grades; S1, S2 and S3 and they are recognised as the ‘Youth and Sports Officers’. Officers from Grade S1 are responsible as heads of division or department, Grade S2 as Directors and Grade S3 as Assistant Directors. These groups of employees are responsible for the success of the implementation of various policies and programmes related to youth and sports development in the Malaysian community. Their job functions are influenced by two main policies developed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia; National Sports Policy of 1988 and National Youth Development Policy reviewed in 1997.
Officers attached in the Sports Development Division (Malaysia, Sports Development Division, 2003) are responsible to plan, organise, monitor and control the sports development programmes throughout the country. Their functions are governed by the objectives of the division that are to:

i. Increase community participation in mass sports (sport for all activities), extreme sports and traditional sports which will develop national integration and image of active Malaysians.

ii. Develop, strengthen and improve NGOs in sports.

iii. Develop new leaders, instructors and facilitators for mass sports activities throughout the country.

iv. Provide and increase sports facilities to the community which would enhance their participation and involvement in healthy and active lifestyle.

v. Develop networking and smart partnership with NGOs, companies and other related agencies for mass sports development strategy.

vi. Enrich and develop sports tourism in the country.

vii. Promote and market Malaysia as mass sports activities centre for the world.

On the other hand, officers attached to the Youth Development Division are responsible to attain and fulfil the objectives of the division which are (Malaysia, Ministry of Youth and Sports, 1997):

i. to provide knowledge-based training programmes jointly organised by public agencies, youth organisations and private sector to the youth groups;

ii. to strengthen leadership and self-development programmes that can further develop self-resilience, religious and social institutions among youth;

iii. to upgrade skills development training, and to create entrepreneurial and commercial opportunities that will propel youth to be independent in pursuing successful careers;

iv. to enhance the spirit of volunteerism and patriotism through social and welfare work; and

v. to provide the necessary infrastructure and mechanism for youth activities related to research, assessment and evaluation.

In general, programmes implemented by this Ministry are focusing on the fulfilment of the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of youth through the practice of physical fitness, healthy lifestyle, learning, creativity, exploration and so forth. Therefore, the job scope of this personnel covers creating new policies or activities, managing an event, preparing rules, guidelines, profile of activities and also budget. Their task can be generalised as a service provider covering the five elements of managerial jobs, i.e. planning, organising, controlling, monitoring and coordinating. Thus, the range of Youth and Sports Officers’ functions cover multiple disciplines. It may relate to management, law, physiology, education, psychology and sociology. These functions are complex and involve difficult processes because the main reason of the service is to bring about continuous improvement in the community (Cinneide & Lodsh, 1990). Furthermore, the diverse characteristics of their clients in terms of needs, race, religion, status, family backgrounds, academic qualifications and political inclination also influence the nature of the jobs. Therefore, the services provided by the Youth and Sports Officers are complicated and hence they should be competent in delivering their tasks.

**Competencies Requirement for Youth and Sports Officers**

In most of the professional sectors, existing qualifications have been recognised as meeting the design criteria for technical certificates. However, no suitable qualification exists for youth work. Furthermore, information on the competencies framework for Youth and Sports Officer is very limited. However, competencies for Youth Worker that suggested by the National Youth Development Learning Network (http://www.nydic.org/nydic), National Council for Voluntary Youth Services United Kingdom
and information from the web site http://www.fcny.org can be reviewed to develop a competencies framework for personnel in Youth and Sports Service. Thus, it is recommended that Youth and Sports Officer should be competent in an array of functions, such as to:

i. develop a programme inline with mission, vision of the organisation and the youth development framework
ii. plan and implement activities
iii. organise and manage workload
iv. motivate and engage young people
v. recognise and respond to youth needs and interests
vi. communicate and develop positive relationships with youth
vii. adapt, facilitate and evaluate age appropriate activities with and for the group
viii. respect and honour cultural and human diversity
ix. identify potential risk factors and take measures to reduce those risks
x. work as part of a team toward professionalism and positive role model
xi. carry out calculations, interpret and present information on straightforward material
xii. promote the use of ICT

Furthermore, it is crucial that all Youth and Sports Officer possesses knowledge about youth development in order to maximise the impact of the programmes. The officers have to understand the basic issues, values and development objectives that affect youth development (Edginton & Edginton, 1994). The authors also suggested that an individual who works with youth have to create an environment and climate that encourages youth development by providing personal support, opportunity for involvement and learning, well-planned programmes, materials and equipment with which youth development can take place. Generally, the functions of Youth and Sports Officers involved all managerial jobs and they spend most of their time on managing activities. Thus, Youth and Sports Officers should be competent to manage the activities, resources, people and information including the interrelated activities of planning, organising, leading and controlling that involve human relationship and time (Stoner et al., 1995; Thompson & Harrison, 2000). However, officers who are involved in different activities require different competencies (May, 1999; Hayes et al., 2000) and there is no agreement on what specific competencies are required for this occupation (Horton, 2000). But Stoner et al. (1995) suggest that generic skills such as problem solving, analysis or analytical, decision making, and communication are required for all jobs especially for those at the managerial level.

Therefore, the competencies need for this occupational group is varied and it is difficult to identify the critical task and competencies related to success (Boyatzis, 1982). In addition, the education and certification requirement to join this occupation is not specific (Malaysia, Public Service Department, 2002) and this situation leads to variation in competencies levels. It is noted that any Malaysian citizen who is above 18 years old and possesses tertiary education in any discipline may apply for this occupation. There is a scheme where officer from supporting categories may be promoted to this position after fulfilling certain requirements. Thus, academic background and academic qualification of the Youth and Sports Officers varies and not specific in a youth or sports area. There are officers who are less knowledgeable and inexperienced in youth or sports matters due to their diversified backgrounds in qualification.

Limited studies, be they local or international, have been found to investigate the competencies for personnel in Youth and Sports occupation that is said to be very diverse and complex in terms of their functions. The available studies on competencies are focusing on managers (Abraham et al., 2001;
Farhad, 1998; Thomas & Sireno, 1980), public health professionals (Kreitner et al., 2003; Mayer, 2003) directors of sports (Bretting, 1983 in Case & Branch, 2003), needed competencies for civilian workforce (US, Department of Transportation 2000), job competencies for sports manager (Case & Branch, 2003), and competencies for resorts and commercial recreation professionals (Hammersle & Tynon, 1998). Thus this study intends to respond to this knowledge gap in that area of competencies needed by this occupational workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Competencies

There is an argument about the meaning of ‘competency’ and ‘competencies’. According to Rowe (1995) and Hoffman (1999), the term 'competency' usually refers to the meaning expressed as behaviour, whereas the term ‘competencies’ refers to the meaning expressed as standards. Hoffman explains that competencies can be defined in three ways. Firstly, it can be referred as observable performance or the output of learning, secondly as a standard or quality of outcomes and lastly it refers to the underlying attributes of a person such as knowledge, skills or abilities. The first two definitions saw the term as a measure of output of an individual, whereas the last definition related to performances of the individual. Horton (2000) and Hanno et al.(2000) explained that competencies can be described as the ability of an individual to apply their knowledge, understanding, practice and thinking skills to achieve effective performance to the standards required in employment. Meanwhile, Muhammad and Khalid (2002) stressed that competencies are the possession of sufficient skills and understanding to do certain kind of work satisfactorily.

Moore et al., (2002) explained that the meaning and uses of the terms such as competency, competence and competencies are different between organisations to other organisation. It depends on the context of concept is used (Hoffmann, 1999; Garavan & McGuire, 2001; Abraham et al., 2001). In addition, the meanings of these terms which are explained in the dictionary also differ from the definitions given by the field of social science or management. It is further noted by Moore et al. (2002) that the term competence refers to an area of work, competency refers to the behaviour(s) supporting an area of work and competencies refers to the attributes underpinning behaviour (knowledge, skill and attitude). These definitions support the ideas of Rowe (1995) who explains that competence refers to ‘what’ people can do while competency refers to ‘how’ the people do. He also mentions that competencies refer to the range of skills which are satisfactorily performed and behaviours adopted in competent performance. Based on the Civilian Workforce Needs Assessment Report by United States Department of Transportation (2000), the concepts of competencies are used as a strategy to strengthen the links between organisational culture, result and individual performance by emphasising competencies that are needed across occupational specialities. It is also noted that this concept is used as a tool to help describe work and what is required from employees in a broader, more comprehensive way.

Competencies Framework

The existence of the framework will guide the organisation in conducting its human resources programme more effectively and give a clear direction to its employees about the standards needed by the organisation. The use of competencies framework is linked to the characteristics and performance of an organisation. It is further noted that both the size and the number of years a company that has been in operations were found to be significant (Heffernan and Flood (2000).
Competencies framework is unique for each of every occupation (May, 1999; Hayes et al., 2000). Thus, an organisation has to design a structure of competencies which enables review of its effectiveness to be undertaken and to suit with the dynamic change of the organisational strategies. It is also noted that the understanding of how competencies framework are designed and managed is a key to develop the organisations because it will guide human resource activities such as human resource planning, recruitment, appraisal and so forth. Matheson (2001) further supported that competencies framework should be driven by an organisation’s vision and values that describe the way to achieve better performance.

McLagan (1996) in Berge et al. (2002) identify that there are six approaches to defining and developing model for competency. It includes job task, result of work efforts, output, knowledge, skill and attitude, qualities of superior performances and lastly bundles of attributes. An organisation needs to make an adjustment for their context in developing their competencies model based on the six approaches given. This statement was supported by Kolb and Rothwell (2002) who found that competencies framework is relevant to the nature of job in each of the organisations.

Based on the above literature, therefore this study will focus on the ‘development’ dimension as explained by Rowe (1995) who uses the competencies model to help develop the existing staff by assessing their strengths and weaknesses. By doing so, future development can be identified.

Assessing the Required Competencies

Competencies needed for any occupation can be identified by assessing the required competencies and the competencies level of the individuals in the occupation. According to Agut et al. (2003), competencies needs emerge when the individual’s competencies level is lower than the required competency level at job. Competencies requirement is defined as the discrete dimension of behaviour, which lies behind the success or failure of a particular job or category (Tovey, 1994). It covers knowledge, skills, behaviour and other factors that can be precisely defined and assessed for management development purpose. This author further notes that competencies requirement will be influenced by organisational level and culture. Rowe (1995) emphasized that when assessing competencies, at the same time, knowledge and skills are also being assessed. He explained that when competencies are being assessed, there are three (3) elements that should be given great emphasis. Those elements are: i). Eligibility: does the individual have the right knowledge, qualification, etc? ii). Suitability: does an individual have the necessary skills and is he/she physically and mentally suitable? iii). Ability: can she/he perform the required skill to the required standard in the work situation?

Rowe’s idea is similar to the one that appears in the Civilian Workforce Needs Assessment Report, United States Department of Transportation (2000) which indicates that knowledge and skills provide the basic or underpinnings for competencies.

Competencies Clusters for Youth and Sports Officers

Review of the literature about managerial competencies and job functions of Youth and Sports Officers provides general assumption of required competencies for this occupation. In order to develop competencies cluster for Youth and Sports officer in this study context, ideas from several researchers (Case & Branch, 2003; Kreitner et al., 2003; Mayer, 2003; Abraham et al., 2001; Farhad Analoui, 1998; Hammersley & Tynon, 1998; Thomas & Sereno,1980) were adapted and adopted. Therefore, competencies clusters expected for Youth and Sports officers covers analytical competency, cultural competency, programme development competency, planning competency, leadership competency, communication competency, promotion and publicity competency, and computer knowledge competency.
Figure 1: A Paradigm of Competencies Needs

Figure 2: Research Framework

The literatures show that there is no ideal competencies framework that can be generalised as an ideal framework for all organisations. Each organisation will have its own definitions towards the term of competencies. Competencies requirements and needs of individuals in various occupations and positions are also varied. However, it can be generalised that competencies needs can be assessed by examining the gap between the required competencies and the current competencies level (Figure 1). Competencies needs existed if the individual’s competencies level is lower than the required one.

The Research Framework

Based on the literature reviewed, this study was conducted which focuses on the competencies needs for Youth and Sports Officer who attached at the Ministry and State Department levels. The locations of their jobs and job tenure were the independent variables and competencies needs were the dependent variables. The research framework is illustrated in Figure 2.

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

Research design used in this study was a descriptive survey study. Questionnaires were used to identify perceptions of Youth and Sports Officers on the required competencies in performing their task effectively and their current competencies levels. The results of these two dimensions were used to examine the competencies needs of the subject. Data were collected based on respondents perception toward the items listed in the questionnaire.
According to Case and Branch (2003), there are a number of methods that can be used to identify competencies in various settings such as checklists and the Delphi technique. They note that job analysis of practitioners through the use of competency statement ratings has become popular in competencies research. Therefore, this study was based on the analysis of job functions of Youth and Sports officers (Case & Branch, 2003; Muhammad & Khalid, 2002; Tovey, 1994), and information gained from this analysis was compared against the competencies clusters that are found in the literature.

**Population and Sampling**

The population for this study was all Youth and Sports Officers in management and professional employment groups who were attached at the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia. This study involved those officers in Grade S41 and S48, excluding five (5) officers in grade S54 who were appointed as a panel of experts. These five officers were chosen as a panel due to their experience and their higher rank in the service. Officers of grade S48 and S41 were chosen for this study because they are the key group of employees contributing most to the achievement of the ministry’s vision and objectives. According to Kreitner et al. (2003), these groups of officers are more involved in program planning and overseeing staff who participate in the programmes.

The population was derived from the Ministry and State Department including officers attached to the district levels. These officers had different backgrounds such as age, job tenure and educational background. There were 35 officers in Grade S48 and 86 officers in Grade S41 throughout the country. Thus the total population for this study was 121 officers. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the appropriate sample size was 92. Therefore, by using proportionate sampling, the respondents for Grade S48 were 27 and 65 for Grade S41. However the researcher decided to increase this sample size up to ten percent (10%), as a contingency plan to overcome low return rate. By doing so, the sample sizes for group S41 become 72 and group S48 become 30. Therefore, the actual sample size used in this research was 102. Simple random method was adopted in order to get 30 respondents from Grade S48 and 72 from Grade S41.

**The Instrument**

Based on the review of literature, the competencies model of Hooghiemstra (1992) was the closest to what is required in this study. Therefore this model was used as a guide and further assisted by other questionnaires after an extensive review of the research literature was made (Thomas & Sireno, 1980; Farhad, 1998; Hammersle & Tynon, 1998; Civilian Workforce Needs Assessment Reports, 2000; Abraham et al., 2001; Agut et al., 2003; Case & Branch, 2003; Kreitner et al., 2003; Mayer, 2003).

The required competencies and current competencies level of Youth and Sports officers were estimated based on a given set of Likert-type scale of competencies items questionnaire. The respondents were asked to judge the required competencies necessary for the effective performance of their current roles and to estimate their current competencies level. These assessments used a seven-point Likert-like scale which only the maximum and minimum value was labelled (Allen & Rao, 2000). The two ends of the scale were labelled as ‘Least Required Competencies’ and ‘Most Required Competencies’.

**Pre-testing of Instrument**

The instrument was pilot tested with a random sample of 10 officers in the Ministry of Youth and Sports who were excluded from the sample of this study. This was done to assess the feasibility and reliability of the questions. The pilot survey questionnaire included a section that opened for suggestions...
and comments from the respondents. Content validity was obtained through a discussion with two expert panels who had job experience of more than 20 years and held the highest rank in this service. The final instrument was modified based on the feedback obtained during the pilot survey. The overall reliability for the pre-test instrument was 0.80 with the minimum of 0.60 and maximum of 0.98. In addition, the overall reliability for the actual study was increased to 0.84 with the minimum of 0.83 and maximum of 0.99. This reliability scores exceeded the minimum reliability standard of 0.7. This shows that the questionnaire used in this study was reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

A total of 102 questionnaires were distributed for the study with a 92.16% (94) percent return. The respondents’ profile was described based on age, gender, education background, position and job tenure.

Age: The average age of the respondents for this study was 42.23 years with the standard deviation of 8.26. The respondents’ age were categorised into three equal groups. The groups were selected based on the meaningful percentile value which was given by the descriptive statistical procedures in which 75.5% of the participants were between the ages of 24 and 47 years and 24.5% of the participants were between 48 to 54 years of age. The age range of the respondents varied with the youngest was 24 and the oldest was 54 years old.

Gender: A large proportion (n = 77, 81.9%) of the Youth and Sports Officers were male and only a small proportion (n = 17, 18.1%) were female. This was due to the general trend of male occupancy of Youth and Sports position within the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia which the population of male employees were larger than female. In terms of gender according to grade of employment, 62.8% (n=59) of male respondents were associated with Grade S41 and 13.8% (n=13) were female, followed by 23.4% (n=22) respondents in Grade S48 with 19.1% (n=18) males and 4.3% (n=4) were females. In terms of job location, 31.9% (n=30) of the male respondents were attached to the department in the Ministry and 50% (n=47) to the state department level, followed by 6.4% (n=6) female respondents to the department in the Ministry and 11.7% (n=11) attached to the state level departments.

It can be concluded that based on the above findings, most of the respondents were male (82%) and 61.7% of the respondents in this study were from the State Department. This was due to the fact that the sample concentrated on the State Department rather than that in the Ministry level. Most of the Youth and Sports Officers in the ministry level attached to two main divisions which are Sports Development Division and Youth Development Division. Therefore, the numbers of officers attached to the state level were larger because each state in the country has a Youth and Sports Department. There are 14 state departments and the numbers of officers attached to each state department was in the range of two to six.

Education Background: A majority of Youth and Sports officers (67%, n=63) had a degree. Highest educational level of respondents was master degree (8.5%, n=8) and the lowest was Higher School Certificate of Malaysia (2.1%, n=2). In terms of grade of employment, most of the respondents in Grades S41 and S48 had a degree, which were 47.9% (n=45) and 19.1% (n=18), respectively. Officers with academic qualification lower than degree level were assistant officers who had been promoted to Youth and Sports Officer after they fulfilled a certain number of years in experience and other requirements.

In terms of qualification used to join the service, more than half of the respondents (62.4%, n=58) used their degree and most of them (81.7%) did not specifically majoring in youth or sports area (Table
Study areas of the respondents were varied where 43% in Social Science, 8.6% in Sports Management, 7.5% in Sports Science, 2.2% in Youth Development and 38.7% in other areas. The other areas of qualifications were associated with Islamic study (2 respondents), Business Administration and Management (4), History (2), Political Science (2), Public Administration (5), Human Resource Management (3), Human Resource Development (3), Humanity (1), Economic (2), Performing Arts (1) and Mass Communication (3). Therefore, it can be concluded that almost (91.4%) of the respondents have attained tertiary level of education majoring in the various fields of study. This is actually an advantage to the officers considering the fact that they have multiple functions as a development worker in the community.

**Position:** As explained earlier, the targeted respondents were Youth and Sports Officers from Grade S41 and S48 at the Ministry and State Department levels. The result shows that 45.7% (n=43) of Grade S41 respondents were attached to the State Department level, and the remaining 30.9% (n=29) were attached to the department in the Ministry, 16% (n=15) and 7.4% (n=7) of Grade S48 respondents were attached to the State Department and the Ministry level respectively, giving a total number of respondents at the Ministry level and State Department of 38.3% and 61.7%, respectively.

Respondents’ position was divided into three groups namely, director, assistant director and others. Respondents in the group of other included those who used titles such as Youth and Sports District Officers, Sports Commissioner Officers and Secretariat Officers. Most of the respondents (59.6%) were assistant directors attached to the department in the Ministry (25.5%) and State Department (34.0%), followed by 22.3% of directors who made up of 5.3% and 17% attached at the Ministry and State levels, respectively. The remaining respondents (18.1%) were those who did not use the title of director or assistant director but held similar grade of employment.

**Job Tenure:** All officers who were junior members with one year of service to a senior employees who were retirement-eligible (30 year’s service) are included in this study. The average length of respondents’ service is 15.73 years with the mean of experience in the current position and current department were 5.79 years and 3.61 years, respectively. Job tenure was categorised into four groups. The group were selected based on the meaningful percentile values which were given by the descriptive statistical procedures. Details of the categories are shown as follows:
- Junior officer = less than 5 years of service
- Senior officer = service between 6 to 20 years
- Most senior officer = service between 21 to 23 years
- Super senior officer = service more than 24 years

As a result, 50% of the respondents were those officers who had experiences in this occupation between five to 20 years. Thus, the job experience of the respondents was expected to be varied.

**Required Competencies as Perceived by the Respondents**

The mean of composite score for all job competencies items were calculated and than ranked accordingly from maximum to minimum value. The scores were also divided into three (3) groups; least required, required and most required. The results showed that the respondents’ perception on the required competencies received an average mean of 6.0 from a total of seven. In addition, four out of eight competencies clusters in required competencies were above the average mean. This indicates that the respondents’ agreement towards the required competencies was high. The respondents gave highest response on the computer knowledge competency with the mean of 6.23 and standard deviation of 0.95. Whereby, cultural competency received the lowest mean of 5.76 and standard deviation of 1.05.
However, this mean value still near to the average mean of 6.0 suggesting that all competencies clusters were most required for effective job performance of this occupation.

In Details, it is seen that computer knowledge competency cluster was most required (m=6.23, s.d.=0.95), followed by communication competency (m=6.20, s.d.=1.07), planning competency (m=6.07, s.d.=0.96), analytical competency (m=6.02, s.d.=0.96), promotion and publicity competency (m=5.98, s.d.=1.04), programme development competency (m=5.96, s.d.=0.92), leadership competency (m=5.80, s.d.=0.93) and finally cultural competency (m=5.76, s.d.=1.05).

Cultural competency were not perceived as the most required competencies due to the national integration of Malaysian community in a multi-ethnic and multicultural society where there have been mutual respects among the various cultures and customs. Thus, the personnel in this profession do not face any difficulties to handle their clients from the different cultural backgrounds. All competencies clusters consisted of 45 competencies statements. Thus, means of each statement were examined in order to identify the most required one. These 45 competencies statements received an average mean of 5.87 from a total of seven. It is seen that the understanding of the organization’s mission, vision, goals and objectives were the most (m= 6.41, s.d= 1.26) required competencies in order to perform their work effectively. In contrast, involvement in contract with vendors was the least (n= 92, m= 4.86, s.d= 1.52) required competencies for this group of personnel, but the mean value still near to the cut of point of the most required competencies category (5.0 to 7.0). Again, this finding shows that all competencies items were rated by the respondents as most required for their effective job performance.

The finding shows that none of the competencies clusters and competencies items had been rated as least required. However, this study found that the order of required competencies for the Youth and Sports Officers were different with the findings of past research. This is due to the nature of work of personnel studied in the past, since none of them did on Youth and Sports personnel in their respective studies. This is supported by May (1999) and Hayes et al., (2000) who explained that each organisation has it own characteristics and this will influence and shape its own unique required competencies. They also stress that competencies requirement of each occupation is also different from each other, even though they are still in the same managerial category.

**Current Competencies Level as Perceived by the Respondents**

The second stage of examining the competencies needs was identifying the current competencies level of the respondents. Again, the mean of the composite score for all competencies clusters were calculated and than ranked accordingly to descending order. The results shows that the respondent’s perception on their current competencies level received an average mean of 5.17 from a total of seven. In addition, two out of eight competencies clusters in the current competencies level were above the average mean. This indicates that the respondent’s agreement towards their current competencies level was high. The respondents gave highest response level on the communication competency with the mean of 5.60 and standard deviation of 1.03. In contrast, the current competencies level on promotion and publicity competency received the lowest mean of 4.89 and standard deviation of 1.11. However, this mean value still near to the average mean of 5.17 suggesting that all Youth and Sports officers perceived that they were most competent in doing their job.

In details, it was seen that respondents were most competent in communication (m=5.60, s.d.=1.03), followed by planning (m=5.35, s.d.=1.03), analytical (m=5.16, s.d.= 0.96), leadership (m=5.13, s.d=0.99), cultural (m=5.10, s.d.=1.10), computer usage (m=5.10, s.d.=1.30), programme development (m=5.02, s.d.=1.01) and lastly in promotional and publicity activities (m=4.89, s.d.=1.11).
The current competencies levels were measured by eight competencies clusters with 45 competencies statements. This study also examined the item in which respondents were most competent. Again, each item was ranked based on its means values. Results show that these 45 competencies statements received an average mean of 5.22 from a total of seven. It is seen that the current competencies level in communication with staff received the highest mean (m=5.87, s.d.= 1.12), followed by communication with client (m=5.76, s.d.= 1.16) and other areas. Respondent were least competent in matters relating to making contract with vendors (m= 4.32, s.d.= 1.52) but this mean value is not much different with the average mean of 5.22. This suggesting that respondent perceived they were most competent in those areas.

These findings are similar with that of Hamersley and Tynon’s (1998) study in which the Resorts and Commercial Recreation professionals were found to be most competent in communication. In addition, Abraham et al., (2001) and Thomas and Sireno (1980) also found that communication skills was the most important element for managers in their work. This result also indicated that the lowest level of competent currently possess by the respondents was the art of making contract with vendors, as this skill is least required especially for those officers from the State Department. Officers at the Ministry level were more involved in making contract with vendors compared to the officers at the State Department. In addition, this business related function was also managed by the Financial Department in the Ministry and was not directly involved the Youth and Sports Officers.

**Competencies Need for Youth and Sports Officers**

An average mean of the composite score for the current competencies level (5.17) is lower than the average mean of the composite score for the required one (6.00). This result indicated that the gap existed between the required competencies and the current competencies level. Therefore, it can be assumed that there are areas where the respondents needs improvement (Agut et al., 2003). A further analysis was conducted by using Paired t-test. This analysis was used to identify the statistic significant mean difference between required competencies and the current competencies level of Youth and Sports Officer. There was statistically significant mean different (m=6.68, t=7.58, p=0.0005) between the required competencies and the current competencies level of the respondents. The effect size statistic (eta squared) was calculated to examine ‘strength of association’ between the required competencies and the current competencies level.

Result of Paired t-test proved that there was a statistically significant decrease in the score from (m=48.01, s.d.=6.88) for the required competencies to (m=41.33, s.d.=7.15) for the current competencies level. The eta squared statistic (0.14) indicated a large effect size, which suggesting that the observed mean difference was statistically big. Therefore, the competencies need was actually emerged.

This results also showed that the highest competencies need were emerged in computer knowledge (m= 1.14, s.d. 1.57) followed by promotion and publicity (m= 1.09, s.d. 1.26) and other areas. The gap between the required communication competency and the current communication competency level was the smallest (m= 0.60, s.d. 1.27). Therefore, the lowest competencies need was communication.

The finding of this study revealed that ‘communication with staff’ was rated as the highest items in which respondents were competent. In contrast, competencies needs for this item was rated as the lowest. In terms of competencies clusters, communication competency was rated as the highest area in which the respondents were competent, and in contrast, competencies need for this item becomes the lowest rated by the respondent. In most cases, the pattern was observed where, the higher the current competencies level, the lower the competencies needs and vice versa.
The Differences of Competencies Needs between Officers Attached at the Ministry and State Department level

The second objective of the study was to determine the differences of competencies needs between officers attached in the Ministry and State Department level. An Independent-sample t-test was used to analyse the data. Eta squared was calculated to examine ‘strength of association’ between competencies need score and attached department.

There was significant difference in the mean score for officers attached to the Ministry level (m=9.45, s.d.=6.92) and officers at the state level (m=4.95, s.d.=9.03; t (92)= 2.56, p=0.01). The magnitude of the differences in the means was moderate (eta squared = 0.07). This result indicated that the observed mean difference was statistically at moderate level. It is seen that the mean value of the competencies needs for the officers at the Ministry (9.45) was higher than the state (4.95). Thus the competencies needs for officers attached to the Ministry and the State Departments was unequal. This finding was assumed to be happened because the organisation’s environment of these two locations is different (Thomas and Sireno, 1980). For example, officers at the State Department are directly involved with community and local leader, whereby officers at the Ministry are more involve in meeting with the top management. In addition, an officer at the state level was more involved in conducting programmes, activities or event rather than preparing paper work. Besides, officers at the Ministry level were most involved in preparing paper works such as formulating policies, proposal, rules and guideline.

![Figure 3: Scatter Plot Graph of Competencies Need and Job Tenure](image)

Relationship between Competencies Need and Job Tenure

This section discusses the relationships between job tenure and competencies needs of the Youth and Sports Officers. The scatter plot (Figure 3) indicates that there is a weak relationship between these two variables. The points that centred around the straight line were very few. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between job tenure and competencies needs. The correlation results of r = -0.19 at p = 0.067 show that there is almost negligible relationship between job tenure and competencies needs of the respondents.

Findings of this study are contrasted with the study result of Agut et al., (2003) in which job tenure was positively linked to technical competencies need for personnel in tourist organisation management and organisation infrastructure management. Different educational backgrounds of the respondents were
believed to contribute to this result. Officers who have been promoted from the lower rank position (41.5.1%) have many years of work experience and they did not study or majoring in the related field of youth and sports. In this case, senior officers gain their expertise related to youth and sports through learning at workplace. In contrast, younger officers who have less work experience were majoring in the related fields during their university education. Therefore, both senior and junior officers have relatively similar competencies needs.

CONCLUSIONS

This is the first study of its kind conducted to examine the competencies of the Youth and Sports Officers especially for those who are employed in Grade S41 and S48. This study was developed in an effort to provide a framework of competencies for Youth and Sports officers in the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia. The finding of this study contributed to the understanding of the competencies needs. The conclusions of this article are as follows:

1. All competencies clusters that used in this study received high responses from the respondents suggesting that the entire competencies clusters were accepted by the respondents as indicators to estimate their competencies needs.

2. A basis for identifying the competencies needs for Youth and Sports personnel provide the understanding for identifying the professional development in which the specific areas of enhancement is indicated, either in term of their current responsibilities or as a preparation for them to take on greater responsibilities.

3. The pattern was observed where, the higher the current competencies level, the lower the competencies needs and vice versa. This suggests that the organisation should not conduct a development programme that involves an area in which the current competencies level was high. This is the time where the organisation has to identify the new competencies that needed to be learned, in order to move toward success in the fast changing environment as argued by Ellstrom (1997).

4. Each department has its own characteristics which in turn would influence the nature of the organisation’s activities, service and environment. Therefore, competencies needs for effective job performance could not be generalised to the entire departments in the organisation.

5. In terms of job tenure, there appear to be no significant relationship with competencies needs. Therefore, years of job experience cannot be used to predict the competencies needs for Youth and Sports personnel.

Future research are suggested in relating competencies of the Youth and Sports personnel with objective and subjective performance, career development components such as career aspirations and career mobility, and commitments in developing community.

REFERENCES


