

Quality Management Dimensions for Sustainable Performance in Military Organisation

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between quality management dimensions and sustainable performance in military organisation. Through a comprehensive literature review on quality management (QM), this study had identified the four (4) QM dimensions: leadership, strategy and objectives; best practices and employee focus which led to sustainable performance in an organisation. Questionnaire items were developed for this quantitative research to determine the relationship between the QM dimensions with sustainable performance in military organisation. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents from naval training establishment who implemented quality management in organisation. All data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 to test the relationship between QM dimensions with sustainable performance. The results revealed that leadership, strategy and objectives; best practices and employee focus are related to sustainable performance in military organisation. This study is expected to assist military training organisation in Malaysia to improve its performance to strengthen the training requirement. This study contributes to a better understanding of QM dimensions and sustainable performance within the military context.

Key words: *Sustainable Performance, Leadership, Strategy and Objectives, Best Practices and Employee Focus*

BACKGROUND

Quality Management (QM) is widely used in the management concept and practices around the business world. QM continues to evolve into more focused areas and had attracted the attention of many researcher. Most studies of QM in Malaysia are mainly focused to profit making organisations and industries. Among the still debated issues concerning those studies is the dimensions of QM which would lead to sustainable performance in organisations. Presently, limited studies are being conducted on QM in military organisation. Military organisation globally are service provider organisation. It provides the service of defence and security to the nation and does not generate any monetary gain. Military organisation must strive to sustain and improve its organisational performance to provide the best service for the sake of national security. Therefore, it is imperative to study on the relationship of QM dimensions with sustainable performance. The objective of this study is to identify the important dimensions of QM namely; leadership, strategy and objectives, best practices

and employee focus and how they relate to military organisation performances. These dimensions are relatively relevant to the nature of military training establishment and its behaviour. The author will utilize the naval training establishment as the criteria for the framework of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many studies conducted on QM to improve organisation's performance. The important gap that emerges from the literature is apparent when there is a growing concern on the emergence of sustainable performance for organisation. Based on the QM literatures for sustainable organizational performance, it is found that leadership are mostly emphasized. Secondly, the strategy and objectives is another main consideration. Thirdly, some forms of best practices are also included as an important sustainable performance effort in QM. Next, the focus on the stakeholder particularly the employees are also widely discussed. The sustainable performance could be as diverse as any other factors but four vital dimensions; leadership, strategy and

objectives; best practices and employee focus are mostly mentioned in QM literatures.

Leadership

Leadership precedes as the most important element of QM. It provides guidance and direction for the entire organisation to adopt and implement any quality improvement program. It is also found in a research that a competent leader would be able to execute the important critical factors of QM implementation more effectively [1]. Jitpaiboon and Rao [2] further show that all QM practices are positively related to performance and top management support has had the highest impact on performances. Leadership is the result of combination of tangible and intangible resources such as quality top leaders, knowledge and information to make decisions, and other organisational resources. Elaborating this, top managers are a form of tangible resources, yet their skills, knowledge and experience are intangibles, making leadership a capability as it involves the organisation's top managers with their skills, knowledge and experience. Because leadership is an important capability, this dimension has been included in studies on critical success factors for implementing QM [3]. These leaders make their follower feel secure and comfortable [4]. They are masters of social skills, sensitive to their social environment and are able to adapt quickly to the new organisational climate.

Strategy and Objectives

There are numerous studies which placed an emphasis on strategic implementation in QM [5]. Both strategies and objectives are a crucial source of organisational performance. Therefore, effective strategies and objectives are also considered a sustaining capability for organisations. Leaders must set clear, measurable and achievable objectives so that they will set the right direction for the firm. Once the specific objectives have been set and agreed upon, resources and capabilities can be employed to attain those objectives [6]. The purpose of objectives are to provide direction, aid in evaluation, create synergies, show priorities, focus coordination and provide a basis for effective planning, organizing, motivating and controlling activities [6]. Hence, objectives are fundamental for organisational accomplishment. Connecting to the objectives, being equipped with strategies is the mechanism to achieve long-term objectives. The importance of strategies and objectives and their relation to organisational sustainment and firm performance have been recognized in the literature.

Best Practices

Leadership implements best practices with the belief that they are the organisational solutions [7]. In studying the best practices for organisational

change, Hallencreutz and Turner [8] suggest that the best practice is not universally defined because

"no consistent definitions of the best practice of organisational change are to be found in the literature". Best practices are ultimately those that give an organisation the *"capability to outperform its competitors as well as to produce best value to customers, employees, and stakeholders"* [9]. Best practices can also be viewed as *"me too"* strategies and that organisations should try to come up with new practices that they can offer first to have a temporary advantage over their competitors in building up a strong business platform, as well as revenue and profit streams. Looking from that point of view, best practices are very much related to the effective ways of managing resources. In a resource-based strategy, capabilities are capacities to deploy resources, to affect a desired end [10]. Hence, one type of sustainment is in the form of best practices. It is important for organisations to search for best practices and methods to manage their activities. One way to achieve best practices is through benchmarking. The basic tenet of benchmarking is that, for an organisation to improve its performances, it must be able to measure its current performance against that of others as well as against its own previous performance [11].

Employee Focus

Miyagawa and Yoshida [12] conclude that the QM strategy and employee involvement in Japanese owned manufacturers in the US have a significant effect on external performance in the areas of increased productivity, market share, profit and competitiveness. Employee satisfaction precedes company achievement and therefore should be the aim of any improvement efforts [13]. The implementation of the QM practices also aids companies to improve their image, employee's satisfaction and quality awareness. To satisfy employees, managers need to know what factors constitute toward their satisfaction. It must be said that a company's human resource policies can well affect this factor. Human resource development is a very comprehensive program set to provide the best satisfying conditions for the employees [14]. A QM company usually spends a large amount of its annual budget for employees training and development, hence they become more satisfied with the job and their company. Employees must commit to improvement initiatives, so that a company's program will achieve its targets. Job satisfaction is dynamic in nature, depending on individuals. Usually, an employee who is satisfied with his or her job will contribute better to their company [15]. QM which acknowledge the contribution of workers could also be implemented so that quality and productivity could be improved. This practice will boost employees' morale and level of satisfaction.

The element of employee focus is explicitly emphasized in most performance models for the sustainability of organisations [16].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The focus of the study is at naval training establishment. The study employed a random sampling survey as a method of data collection. 200 questionnaires were gathered from naval training establishment implementing quality management. The questionnaires consist of three sections; demographic, QM dimensions, and sustainable performance. These questionnaires are derived from many QM related studies [7, 15-17].

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The relationship between QM dimensions: leadership (X₁); strategy and objectives (X₂), best practices (X₃), employee focus (X₄) and sustainable performance (Y), was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficients. The correlation analysis in Table 1 shows the strongest linear relationship was

found to exist between leadership (X₁) and sustainable performance (Y) ($r = .991, p = .0001$). The positive correlation coefficient of .991 indicates that as the score for leadership increases so do the rating for sustainable performance. The second highest was found between strategy and objectives (X₂) with sustainable performance (Y) ($r = .988, p = .0001$) and the correlation coefficient of .988 indicates that there was high positive linear relationship between strategy and objectives (X₂) with sustainable performance. The third highest was between employee focus (X₄) with sustainable performance (Y) ($r = .976, p = 0.0001$) and a value of .976 indicates a high positive linear relationship. Finally, best practices (X₃) showed a high positive correlation with sustainable performance (Y) ($r = .975, p = 0.0001$). The importance of QM dimensions: leadership; strategy and objectives, best practices and employee focus with organisation’s sustainable performance are supported in this study as suggested by numerous studies [15-16, 18]. The results of this study suggest that QM dimensions will lead to a greater sustainable performance for naval training establishment.

Variables	Y	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄
Y Sustainable performance	1				
X ₁ Leadership	0.991	1			
X ₂ Strategy & Objectives	0.988	0.989	1		
X ₃ Best practices	0.975	0.975	0.981	1	
X ₄ Employee focus	0.976	0.980	0.984	0.971	1

Notes: zero-order coefficients $p < 0.01$, Bonferroni adjusted alpha = 0.0125 (0.05/4)

Table 1: Zero-order correlations between QM dimensions with sustainable performance

The regression coefficient in Table 2 shows a significant result with R² being 0.985. This indicates that the four dimensions of QM could explain 98

percent of the variation in the sustainable organizational performance at naval training establishment.

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.992 ^a	.985	.984	.61717	.985	3119.966	4	195	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership, Bestpractice, Employfocus, StratObj

b. Dependent Variable: Sustainperformance

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	N
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	3.286	.210		15.613	.000	200
Bestpractice	.055	.034	.277	1.639	.000	200
Employfocus	.008	.052	.209	1.165	.000	200
StratObj	.240	.057	.321	4.231	.000	200
Leadership	.434	.044	.606	9.804	.000	200

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainperformance

Table 2: The Regression Coefficient for Sustaining Performance

Within the QM dimension, leadership has the highest reading of *standardized coefficient* .606 and $p < 0.05$. Employee focus has the lowest reading of *standardized coefficient* .209 and $p < 0.05$. Foregoing results show that leadership is the most significant factor impacting on the sustainable performance of naval training establishment while impact of employee focus is less obvious. This supports the importance of leadership in sustaining organisations performance as suggested by numerous studies [19-20]. In this study, leadership is defined as the quality of a person who led their followers by setting a vision, aligning followers to the vision through effective communication and motivating followers to achieve the vision [4]. As for naval training establishment, the officers are the leaders who provide guidance and direction for the entire naval training establishment to adopt and implement quality improvement program in order to achieve sustainable performance. Being a training establishment, its performance is up most important for training and developing potential officers and soldiers for the navy. Therefore, leadership and sustainable performance are most significant as expected for a military organisation. On the other hand, employee focus is defined as a degree of effort to enhance employee satisfaction. As for this dimension, the working environment in a naval training establishment is a top-down chain of command. The employees' or soldiers in the naval environment should be able to perform their best based on command and instruction from the higher management. Soldiers are rewarded by merits of performance and they should also know their level of achievement. Their achievement are quantified with rewards and recognitions. Nevertheless, most soldiers are able to assist the naval training establishment to sustain its performance merely due to loyalty and commitment to serve the nation rather than reward and recognition.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper is in support of the fact that QM dimensions will bring some impact on naval training establishment's sustainable performance. The relationship between QM dimensions with the establishment's sustainable performance is significantly proven. The results of this research can be extended to others training establishment in military organisation for a better understanding in the effort to sustain its performance. The emphasis should be placed on leadership as it is the key factor in their decision to be sustainable at all time to safeguard and defend the nation.

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