Managerial Competencies: Comparing Conventional and Islamic Perspectives

(Kompetensi Pengurusan: Perbandingan Perspektif Konvensional dan Islam)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to share the authors' understanding of the concept of managerial or executive competencies from the Islamic perspective. The paper discusses managerial competencies models developed by Western researchers and compares them with the Islamic models. The striking differences between the two approaches are in each model's philosophy and stance. The Islamic model holds firmly to the divine principles, which serve as a foundation for managers to achieve their worldly goals, without separating life in this world from life in the hereafter. On the contrary, conventional models are developed based on culture and value of thought.

Keywords: Managerial competencies; conventional perspective; Islamic perspective

ABSTRAK

Objektif artikel ini adalah untuk berkongsi pemahaman pengarang tentang konsep kompetensi pengurusan atau eksekutif dari perspektif Islami. Beberapa model kompetensi pengurusan yang dibangunkan oleh penulis Barat dikemukakan. Model-model ini dibandingkan dengan model-model Islami. Perbezaan ketara antara kedua-dua model terletak pada aspek falsafah dan pegangan masing-masing. Model Islami berpaut kuat kepada prinsip ketuhanan bersumberkan Quran dan Hadis yang meletakkan prinsip ini sebagai dasar dalam mencapai matlamat keduniaan tanpa memisahkan kehidupan di dunia ini dengan kehidupan di akhirat. Sebaliknya model konvensional dibentuk berasaskan nilai pemikiran dan juga budaya.

Kata kunci: Kompetensi pengurusan; pandangan konvensional; pandangan Islami

INTRODUCTION

Organizations need to constantly strive to innovate and change in order to continue functioning and stay relevant in a dynamic and competitive world. Without innovation and change, organizations are vulnerable to decline and failure. Many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have failed. One of the main reasons for their failure is the complacent attitude of firm owners in instituting effective innovation and change in their management.

Many studies have shown direct and indirect relationships between innovation and change with firms' performance. For example, Koellinger (2008) found that various innovations, including product and process innovations, have direct positive relationships with employment growth. According to Edmondson, Bohmer and Pisano (2001), innovation in organization refers to the process of creating and implementing new ideas. On the other hand, Hellriegel, Jackson and Slocum (2005) describe change as the transformation in the design and function of organizations. In order to effectively manage innovation and change, organizations need to hire managers who are competent in various aspects of management.

Competency is an important concept in organization management since it is closely related to excellent work performance (Levenson, Van der Stede & Cohen 2006). Individual competencies, according to Hoge, Tondora and Marrellu (2005), are one of the factors which determine the effectiveness of organization performance. The concept of competencies could also be viewed from the multi-dimension perspective since it involves knowledge, attitude, skill and other personal characteristics which affect an individual's career. An individual's competencies are closely connected to his or her work performance and they could be improved through undergoing training and development (Parry 1998).

In particular, this article shares the authors' understanding of the concept of managerial competencies that is required to manage organizations by analyzing two different approaches or perspectives, i.e., conventional and Islamic perspective. Islamic literature regarding this concept is still lacking. Hence, it is hoped that articles such as this would further improve understanding and confidence of the Islamic managerial competencies model, and hence nurture interest to use it in managing organizations, especially Islamic organizations.

In the next section, we provide the definition of managerial competencies and discuss their functions in organization. This is followed by a discussion on the competencies' models from the conventional perspective in the third section. In the fourth section, we provide an analysis of these conventional models. In the fifth section, we discuss the Islamic perspective of managerial competencies giving evidences from Quran, Hadith, and Sirah. In this section, we also present some relevant frameworks on managerial competencies, based on Islamic perspective. Finally, we provide the study's conclusions and discuss the study's implications for practice.

DEFINITION AND IMPORTANCE OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES

Western researchers have proposed several approaches to help us understand the concept of managerial competencies. McCall (1998) defined competency as a combination of knowledge, skill, behavior, and attitude which contribute towards an individual's personal effectiveness. Ogrean, Herciu and Belascu (2009) defined this concept as knowledge, skill, ability and measurable behavior. According to Spencer and Spencer (1993), competencies at the workplace comprises of six components:

1. Competency in making achievement and taking quality action, taking initiative and searching for information.
2. Competency in aiding and providing human service, including having interpersonal understanding.
3. Competency in exerting influence and making an impact, which includes building relationship in organizations.
4. Management competency which includes ability to work in teams and in cooperation with others, as well as ability to develop others and to provide team work leadership.
5. Cognitive competency which reflects managers' ability to think analytically and conceptually.
6. Personnel effectiveness competency such as self-control, self-confidence, flexibility and organizational commitment.

The concept of managerial competencies, therefore, can be defined as a set of knowledge, skill, behavior, ability and attitude that contributes toward an individual effectiveness in a managerial position. In short, managerial competencies include attributes that a manager should have; these attributes are critical or contribute in a significant way to individual or personal success in managing a firm. The elements in this concept include all attributes proposed by the above researchers, i.e. knowledge, skill, behavior, ability and attitude, as well as other elements that are considered critical in ensuring the success of a managerial work or task. However, the interesting thing about the definition discussed above is the involvement of attitude and values, which are elements that make this concept more complex and interesting. This is evident when Ogrean et al. (2009) admitted that formulating this concept was not an easy task since it is a manifestation of a person's intention, which in turn is affected by his or her motivation, personality, attitude, and value or self-concept.

The importance of competencies in an organization is even more evident in terms of its necessity in various functions of organization management. In the Human Resource Management and Human Resource Development functions, for example, managerial competencies play a crucial role in recruitment, selection, performance evaluation, and training and development. For instance, managers must be competent in making decisions regarding employee selection and giving priority to courses and other learning opportunities that are needed by employees. In the career planning and employment functions, managerial competencies are crucial in planning and predicting the requirements for recruitment. Knowing the competencies required by employees for the future would influence an organization's plan in terms of its structure, recruitment policy and strategy, and staff development in facilitating the achievement of its goals.

CONVENTIONAL MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES' MODELS

Several models or approaches to managerial competencies have been proposed by Western researchers in the field of organization management. Based on our literature review, we find three models that provide clear categorization of managerial competencies, which are by White (2005), Docking (2006), and Hellriegal et al. (2005). This categorization scheme facilitates understanding of the managerial competency concept and its elements. For example, White (2005)'s model focuses on types of managerial abilities; Docking's (2006) suggests four elements in managerial competencies, which are knowledge, skills and attitudes; while the model by Hellriegal et al. (2005) categorizes managerial competencies according to tasks performed by managers. These frameworks are mainly conceptual categorizations, which are developed from the authors' experience and knowledge. On the whole, these three frameworks provide a comprehensive perspective to managerial competencies.

White (2005)'s model gives more focus to business organizations, but it is also applicable to other types of organizations. According to White (2005), there are six competency elements that managers must have to effectively manage an organization.

ABILITY TO OBSERVE

This is an important aspect of managerial work, which managers may not be able to carry out due perhaps to time constraint and tight work schedule, or may be because

it was not seen as crucial. Observation that is usually done concurrent with visits to a workplace is crucial and must be given priority. In fact, according to White (2005), observation should be scheduled in a manager's activity calendar. Observing procedures, work flow and process, and how workers do their work and interact are the basics for implementing improvements. Managers' ability to do this helps to enhance their credibility. In order to be seen as credible, managers need to be visible and perceived as a person who is mindful with the situation in the workplace.

ABILITY TO MONITOR EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Employees' performance and progress must be constantly monitored using reasonable approaches that are acceptable to the employees. It must be treated as a process and not to be seen as a mere routine task. Moreover, related policies and procedures for performance monitoring must be clearly stated. In monitoring employee performance, meetings with the employees must be held periodically and continuously, not only when problems or difficulties arise. Meeting sessions, either individual or group meetings, must also be held for the purpose of planning employees' career, and should be seen as a form of support from the management. During these meetings, managers should take the opportunity to give encouragement and clear explanation regarding work criteria and objective to individual employee and also groups of employees.

ABILITY TO EVALUATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

A good leader or manager must have the ability to evaluate weaknesses identified in individuals and teams and proposes or organizes training and development programs to address such weaknesses.

ABILITY RELATED TO WORK CAPABILITY AND EXPERTISE

A good manager has background knowledge and experience which would contribute to the achievement of good results. If the manager himself does not have the expertise and knowledge regarding the affairs of his work, his credibility would be compromised. It is crucial for the manager to have this ability so that he is able to precisely understand the progress of activities and processes while at the same time manage the workplace.

ABILITY TO MAKE GOOD DECISION

Effective leadership and management are demonstrated by the ability to make good decisions which contribute toward the achievement of organization or task's objective. A good manager should have the ability to assess or analyze the environment and evaluate the relevant factors or reasonable alternative solutions before making his decision. A good decision, along with the willingness and flexibility to adapt to the needs of the environment when

required, will result in confidence in the management and leadership.

ABILITY TO DO RESEARCH AND EVALUATE THE RESULT

The management's ability to conduct a review and continuous research is very important in the management process. Specifically in business, this ability is crucial in support of achievement of a competitive advantage for the company. A competent manager must have the ability not only to manage current excellence but, more importantly, must be able to introspect the future of the organization he is managing or leading. In this regard, the ability to conduct research and evaluate the research result has profound influence on the future plans of organizations. In other words, an excellent management is always proactive rather than reactive. On the whole, this managerial competency model proposed by White (2005) is deemed as necessary to develop a sound foundation for effective and successful management.

Docking (2006) also proposed a competency model which contains four categories of elements that managers should have. The first category is knowledge regarding organization, its administrative process and procedures, and customers. The second category is thinking skill, which includes the skill to analyze and solve problems, write reports, and plan. The third category is competency related to attitudes such as credibility, fortitude, good interpersonal behavior, patience, flexibility and scrupulousness. Fourth is competency related to motor skill such as eye-hand coordination, dexterity, and balancing.

In comparison to these two models, the competency conceptual framework proposed by Hellriegal et al. (2005) is more popular and interesting. They proposed six competency elements that are required by managers. These competencies are related to communication, planning and administration, strategic action, self-management, global awareness, and teamwork.

COMMUNICATION

This competency refers to an individual's ability to transfer information and be involved in information exchange which would lead to mutual understanding between him and others. This is done either formally or informally.

PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATIVE

These competencies involve making decision regarding tasks that need to be completed, deciding how these tasks should be executed, allocating resources that are related to the tasks to be executed, and finally, monitoring progress to ensure that the tasks are properly executed. This competency involves abilities to gather information, make analysis and solve problems, as well as plan and organize. Time management, along with budget and financial management, are also needed expertise under this category of competency.

TEAMWORK

This competency refers to the implementation of task by small groups of employees who are collectively responsible for the task's completion. These small group tasks require coordination among group members. Competent and effective managers are known for their ability to put together teams, nurture supportive group environment, and manage team dynamics.

STRATEGIC ACTION

This competency refers to a manager's understanding of the overall mission and organizational values, and ensuring that employees' actions are consistent with the stated mission and values. This competency includes the ability to understand the external situation of the organization (the industry that it serves and the greater environment of the organization) and the internal situation of the organization, and the corresponding abilities to take strategic actions.

GLOBAL AWARENESS

This competency refers to the ability to understand, appreciate, value and respond to issues regarding politics, culture and economies across the globe. A manager's competencies in this area could be seen through his extensive knowledge and understanding of the various culture and his openness and sensitivity in the context of cultural difference. This openness and sensitivity are closely related to the manager's awareness and acceptance of the fact that culture influences how individuals think and behave.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Competencies refer to the managers' ability to self-develop and take responsibility both at work and in other aspects of their lives. This competency includes managers' ability to show integrity and ethical behavior, and to balance between the demands of work and life. Managers should also have personal determination and fortitude, as well as self-awareness and development.

ANALYSIS OF CONVENTIONAL MODELS OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES

Several conclusions can be made from the characteristics of managerial competencies proposed in the three models. First, competency characteristics can be divided into two main categories, i.e. competency related to personal quality (such as having extensive knowledge, ability to think, ability to analyze, ability to communicate, self-management, having global perspective and team work spirit), and secondly, competency related to management skill (such as planning, making decision, solving problems, monitoring and evaluating). Hellriegel et al.'s (2005) approach is seen as more comprehensive compared

to the models proposed by White (2005) and Docking (2006). The requirements for competency characteristics are different; it is situational or contingent upon the form or complexity of an organization, including its process and structure. The characteristics proposed by Hellriegel et al. (2005) seem more up-to-date and suitable with the environment of big companies or corporations.

However, all competency characteristics proposed by these models could undoubtedly contribute towards effective management and are significant in supporting the achievement of organization's objective from the traditional and rational perspective. For business firms or organizations, the objective is usually to maximize owner's wealth or profit.

Whether or not the proposed characteristics contribute towards effectiveness and support the achievement of organizational goals could be situational, i.e. it depends on the demands of reality or organization's environment and management, as well as the ability of the manager in charge. In other words, the application of the proposed models depends to a large extent on the manager's ability to modify and adapt to the situation that he or she faces.

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES

In general, Islam gives emphasis to the need and importance of competencies in all areas of life, including managing an organization. The Quran and Hadith, which are the most authentic and main source of reference in Islam, provide plenty of evidence to this effect.

EVIDENCE FROM THE QURAN

Among them is the verse of the Quran which narrates the story of Prophet Musa A.S. when he arrived in Madyan and was employed by Prophet Syuaib's family (Surah Al-Qasas 28: 26):

And said one of them (the two women): "O my father! Hire him! Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy."

This verse clearly states two forms of competencies which are important criteria in the context of hiring workers: they must be strong and trustworthy.

EVIDENCES FROM HADITH

Sources from the hadith also emphasize the importance of merit and competencies as the main criteria when appointing a person to a post. As narrated by Muslim (No. 17), Abu Yaala Shaddad bin Aws states that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.

In another hadith narrated by Baihaqi, as cited in Mohd Zaid and Joni Tamkin (2013), Prophet Muhammad SAW was narrated to give emphasize to itqan – virtues of diligence and perseverance, when executing tasks.

Verily, Allah loves those of you who, when doing something, do so with itqan.

The point stated in this hadith is in accordance with a verse in the Quran (Surah An-Naml 27: 88) which says:

And you will see the mountains and think them solid, but they shall pass away as the passing away of the clouds. The work of Allah, Who perfected all things, verily, He is well-acquainted with what you do.

Ihsan and *itqan* as stated above could be seen as two forms of competencies that all employees, especially managers, must have. Islam teaches its followers to strive to achieve the highest performance standard when doing something. In fact, Prophet Muhammad SAW stressed the importance of competencies in executing tasks in a hadith which was transmitted by Al-Hakim and quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah in his work titled Al Siyasatus Shariah Fi Islaahir Raaie war Raiiyyah (Beekun & Badawi 1999).

Whoever appoints someone as a public servant and overlook those who are more competent has committed treason against Allah, His Prophet and the believers.

EVIDENCE FROM *SIRAH*

The Prophet Muhammad SAW himself interviewed his companion, Mu'az bin Jabal and verified his competencies in the presence of other companions when he appointed Mu'az as the *kadi* of Yemen, as in the following narrative:

Thus Mu'az ibn Jabal departed for Yemen. He had to discharge the dual duty of governorship and jurist. Therefore he had the position of an intellectual and a ruler. The Holy Prophet (SAW) told him that he must teach the army men the fundamentals of religion and the Quran. He also had to collect the Zakat funds and send them for spending on the Muslims. At the time when the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was sending this twenty-nine year old young man to Yemen he asked, "O Mu'az ibn Jabal! If a claimant comes to you for legal recourse what judgment would you give?" "I would deliver the judgment in the light of the Holy Quran," replied Mu'az. Again the Holy Prophet (SAW) asked him, "What would you do if you don't find the judgment in Quran?" Mu'az replied, "I would act on the way the Messenger of Allah (SAW) has done, and deliver the judgment according to that." Once more the Holy Prophet (SAW) asked, "What if the solution is not found even in my practice?" Mu'az said, "In such a situation I would myself do Ijtihad (Derive the law)." The Messenger of Allah (SAW) stroked the chest of Mu'az and said, "I thank Allah that the replies of Mu'az have pleased me."

(Narrated by Tirmzi, Hadith: 1227)

We can further understand the importance of competencies from the titles that Rasulullah SAW gave to his companions. Titles such as Abu Bakar 'as-Siddiq' ("truthful"), Umar 'al-Faruq' (one who distinguishes between right and wrong), and Khalid 'Saifullah al-

Maslul' (sword of Allah) reflect the competencies of the companions of the Prophet. Hence, it is clear that Islam views competencies as very crucial elements in the development of human capital.

ISLAMIC MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES MODEL

At present not many Islamic managerial competencies' models have been proposed by scholars. Most of these models were cited from models proposed for leadership. The most relevant model thus far was proposed by al-Attas and Wan Mohd Nor (2007). They have specifically proposed several Islamic managerial competencies characteristics. According to al-Attas and Wan Mohd Nor (2007), an executive should be:

1. Result orientated

a. Ensure that all efforts to achieve result are based on the Islamic *Shariah* and are done to please Allah SWT.
b. Take personal responsibility for the results achieved.
c. Show determination, seriousness, and earnestness in achieving results.
d. Make others take responsibility for the achievement of results.
e. Show tenacity and high endurance in dealing with problems faced in the effort to achieve results.
f. Nurture culture of excellence by setting high standard, benchmark or example in all aspects of work that are related to organization, including system, structure and human resource.
g. Constantly hold discussion, confer, and make consultation and reference in the effort to achieve results.

2. Process orientated

a. Able to identify blessings or relationships in events that do not seem to make sense or have any implications.
b. Able to manipulate and transform alternative and ambiguous situations into sound ideas and plans.
c. Able to modify plans which connect process, events and structure.
d. Able to focus on the details in a process without sacrificing principles.

3. Take action pragmatically and wisely.

a. Always hold on to the *Shariah* principle which states that something is allowable as long as there is no clear evidence that it is *haram* (prohibited).
b. Take wise and pragmatic action in dealing with complex situations.
c. Able to balance between idealism and skepticism in making decision.

4. Possess entrepreneurship qualities.

a. Look for good opportunities which have not been tried and tested.

b.	Create new and novel methods.
c.	Manage uncertainties well and take risks while at the same time managing them wisely.
d.	Take the lead in making change.
e.	Give encouragement to stakeholders as part of the effort to implement change while simultaneously giving priority to societal well-being.

Al-Attas and Wan Mohd Nor (2007) provide a very interesting supporting literature from the Quran and Hadith as well as early Muslim history for each of the above competencies' characteristics. Along with al-Attas and Wan Mohd Nor (2007), Khan (1998) has formulates ten principles of success of Prophet Muhammad SAW that could be used as a guide in management. These principles are some of the competencies that managers or executives should strive to have.

Begin Tasks with Something Simple	This principle is related to one's ability to give priority to a simple and reasonable option when executing a task with the aim of achieving something bigger or more difficult. This is based on the narration by Saidatina Aisyah (RA). She said: "*Whenever the Prophet had to choose between two options, he always opted for the easier choice*" (narrated by Bukhari in Sahih Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Always See Goodness or Opportunity in a Weakness or Deficiency	This principle is based on Surah Al-Insyiraah 94: 5-6 in the Quran. The lesson to be learned from these verses is that for all the hardship that one goes through there is an opportunity to be seized. In other words, a competent manager will focus his attention on and be positive about the opportunities that come with a problem.

> Verily, along with every hardship is relief
> Verily, along with every hardship is relief

Look for Opportunities Outside of the Environment	This principle is taken from the Prophet's migration which teaches us that a leader must always look for opportunities to achieve something better outside the existing environment.

Turn Foes Into Friends	This principle emphasizes on the ability to be patient and always dealing with foes with good moral. This principle is based on Surah Al-Fussilat 41: 34 in the Quran:

The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better, then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.

Turn 'Minus' Situation Into 'Plus' Situation	This principle was formulated based on the action that Rasulullah SAW took on the 70 prisoners from the battle of Badar, the first war during Prophet Muhammad (SAW)'s time that took place on 17th of Ramadhan in Badar. In this battle, the Muslims won. The prisoners of the war were given the task of teaching Muslim children to read and write as a condition for release.

Choose Truce Over Enmity	This principle shows the character of the Prophet; he prefers to be 'gentle' rather than 'harsh' when dealing with enemies. It is this character that allows the Prophet to pacify his enemies and change their hearts.

Does Not Think Dichotomously, Show Far-Sightedness in Making Decisions	This principle was formulated based on the Prophet's attitude in dealing with some of the Muslims who mocked Khalid Bin Walid as a coward when he ordered the Muslim army to retreat instead of battling the enemy during the battle of Mu'tah (See Akram 2004). The Prophet showed far-sightedness in this matter and saw the decision to retreat as a temporary strategy to regroup. This view is in contrast with the dichotomous view of some of the Muslims at that time which only saw two options, win or lose the war.

Avoid Battle in the Field to Gain an Opportunity or Advantage	This principle was formulated based on the Prophet's decision to sign a treaty with the enemy during the battle of Hudaibiyah (See Monjur, 2011). By signing this treaty the Prophet turned a physical battle with the enemy into a battle of ideology. The Muslims' ideological advantage had given them victory in the long term.

Choose Gradualism Over Radicalism	This principle is based on the practice of the Prophet which preferred evolution over revolution in managing his mission. During the first 13 years in Makkah, the Prophet focused on strengthening the understanding and the faith of the Muslims as well as building their awareness. When Islamic laws were revealed during the period in Madinah, the Muslims readily embraced these laws because they had been inculcated with strong basic teachings during the early period of Islam.

Take Action Pragmatically in Regard to Controversial Matter	This principle was formulated based on the decision made by the Prophet during the treaty of Hudaibiyah. The Prophet accepted the enemy's condition to delete the phrase which referred to him as the Messenger of Allah.

In addition to these principles, Beekun (2006) proposed an effective leadership model comprising of five basic practices for manager's self-development. Although the model is related to the implementation of strategy, it could also be seen as representing managerial competencies model. The five effective leadership characteristics proposed by Beekun (2006) are the ability to challenge process, ability to inspire mutual vision, ability to provide opportunity for others to take action, ability to make himself a role model, and ability to be tenacious and gritty.

The ability to challenge process refers to the manager's ability to challenge status quo. In this context, managers need to be innovative and, sometimes, need to review the process and take action. The ability to inspire vision includes the manager's ability to communicate vision to all levels of organization and ensure that the

vision is mutually understood and appreciated. Clarity of vision will facilitate understanding and acceptance of organization's mission and strategy.

The ability to provide opportunity for others to take action refers to manager's ability to put aside his own interest and place public and organization welfare above his self-interest. In this context, managers are transformational servant-leader. The manager's ability to be a role model requires that he clearly understand his belief and "walk the talk."

The ability to be tenacious and gritty means the ability to be persistent (*istiqamah*), never give up and be patient in dealing with all challenges. These are among the characters of the prophets, as stated in this Quranic verse:

O my sons! Go you and inquire about Yusuf and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah's mercy. Certainly no one despairs of Allah's mercy, except the people who disbelieve.

(Surah Yusuf 12: 87)

In another verse, Allah SWT says:

So do not become weak, nor be sad, and you will be triumphant if you are indeed believers.

(Surah Ali Imran 3: 139)

LINKING COMPETENCIES TO SUPERORDINATE GOAL

In one hadith of Sahih Muslim (hadith: 2363 narrated from Anas (Yusuf Al-Qardawi 2007), Prophet Muhammad SAW said, "You understand your worldly affairs better." When related to the need for managers to have the competencies required for them to do their work or task, this hadith proposes that Islam provides ample opportunity in 'technical' terms for individuals to develop themselves and advance in their career. This includes continuously making innovative improvement and executing tasks creatively. In this context, it seems that there is not much difference between conventional managerial competencies and Islamic competencies. Therefore, competencies are a dynamic concept. The methods and approaches to manage competencies may change from time to time and from place to place, or between contexts. Hence, a good management of competencies will focus on improving performance and achieving the objective of a company or task.

The differences between the two approaches lie more in their philosophy and principles. As stated previously, the conventional approach in developing managerial competencies is in the effort to achieve organizational objectives which are more 'worldly' or materialistic compared to the Islamic approach in which the final objective transcends the 'worldly' life. The mission and vision of an Islamic executive, for example, focus on both the world and the hereafter. Hence competencies in the Islamic management are developed to achieve two goals, i.e. the short term worldly goal and the long term *ukhrawi* goal (referring to the goal that one aspires in the hereafter, i.e. achieving the pleasure of Allah). Both these goals must

be aligned. In fact, the worldly goal is seen as a means to achieve the *ukhrawi* goal. In the conventional context, the worldly goal is usually the final goal or objective.

The issue of goal is the issue of principle, and there is no compromise regarding this matter in the Islamic approach; it is closely related to divine values. These values are the foundation for the formulation of Islamic managerial competencies and they influence the measures of performance and success. In contrast, within the context of conventional perspective, thought, norm and culture are the foundation for the formulation of competencies. These values form the basis and influence thought as well as innovative and creative efforts. However, these values are not as established and sound as the divine values. Therefore, in the effort to achieve a target "the ends usually justify the means," which contradicts the religious requirement which states that "the goal must abide by the *Shariah*" and "the means to achieve goals must also be in line with the *Shariah*."

In this regard, a manager with Islamic competencies would internalize the values of accountability, not only in achieving the goals of the organization, but will do it in the most responsible manner for the benefit of organizational members and for the good of the society in general. These values of responsibility or accountability are subject to conformity to the divine values.

On the whole, the Islamic perspective emphasizes both the competencies values and the Islamic values in inducing performance in the workplace. This point conforms to the leadership legitimacy framework proposed in Mohd Ezani et al. (2011), which suggests the need for both task related (competencies) values and Islamic values in promoting the legitimacy of leadership, which in turn would lead to values internalization among the employees and subsequently achievement of organization sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The objective of this article is to share the authors' understanding, awareness and conviction regarding the concept and application of managerial or executive competencies from the Islamic perspective. Several competencies' models developed by Western researchers, including White (2005), Docking (2006) and Hellriegel et al. (2005), were discussed. These models are sound and able to contribute to the achievement of organizations' objectives. The striking difference between these models and the Islamic model lies in their respective source of reference, philosophies and principles. The Western managerial competencies frameworks discussed in this article are mainly conceptual categorizations, derived from authors' own experience and knowledge, and thus shaped by the authors' value of thought and cultures. On the other hand, the Islamic model holds firmly to the divine principles of Quran and Hadith. These sources serve as a foundation for all Muslims, including managers to achieve

their worldly goals without separating life in this world from life in the hereafter.

The implementation of Islamic-based competencies framework within the workplace is able to support a more conducive work environment as well as achievement of one's goals both in this world and in the hereafter. In achieving these goals, Islamic-based competencies and values have to be integrated within the workplace. The first step in this direction is to develop awareness of the managerial competencies concept as it relates to Islamic values amongst the employees. For example, employees must understand some of the criteria of and values related to competencies, which include accountability, responsibility, and trustworthiness (Ball & Haque 2003; Tayeb 1997). Employees' awareness of these values could promote values internalization in their work as well as life in general.

In inducing awareness of these values among the employees and in promoting their internalization, managers need to identify and implement appropriate strategies. Concepts such as managing by example and servant-leadership can be considered in instituting Islamic values-based competencies in the workplace. Such implementation is in alignment with leading by example that is encouraged in Islam (Mohd Ezani et al. 2011).

Future researchers can explore models for employee assessment and reward system that are suitable in assessing competencies and performance that are in congruent with the Islamic values. Moreover, researchers can make a comparison of performance between organizations that internalize values-based managerial competencies, in relation to previous conventional practices. In this regard, we would be able to identify the relations between the values-based concepts and organization performance.

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