

## *Taqwā*-based Competency Framework: A *Maqāṣid* Option

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**N**egara Brunei Darussalam is currently at an interesting juncture where there is a mounting urgency to be more Sharīah driven and compliant in the country's governance, and to be truly grounded in the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The implementation of the Sharīah Penal Code in 2014 and the concept of 'Zikir Nation' proclaimed in 2008 are two such strong push factors, among others, that are expediting the way towards this eventual outcome. In pivoting towards a more religious society that truly supports the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharīah (i.e. the preservation and promotion of Religion, life, intellect, progeny and wealth), the nation must develop and embark upon a holistic human capacity development strategy that is built on a *taqwā*-based competency framework to develop a pious Muslim population. In Brunei, Islamic value-based organisations, such as the Islamic banking and finance providers, educational institutions and the civil service, must deliberate on how to transform their organisations into high-performance virtuous organisations. The question that poses itself now is, what must be included in a local Bruneian competency framework, and can it fulfil the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharīah within the Brunei context? This paper is an industry practitioner's attempt to develop such a framework for Brunei using an existing competency framework produced by the Civil Service Institute, the leading organisation entrusted with human capacity development.

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### Competency Framework: A Western Perspective

According to Bersin by Deloitte, companies have increased their spending in their search to find talented human capital, which is critical to their business sustainability.<sup>1</sup> In 2015, the Human Resource technology industry was pumped with more than USD\$2billion in investment capital that led to the production of new tools for recruitment, performance management, learning, feedback, employee engagement, and analytics. Finding these talented and competent individuals is akin to 'finding a needle in a haystack'. There are increasingly higher costs in searching for the talented and competent employees, especially among the digitally savvy Millennials. Firstly, it is beneficial to capture the different perspectives of the definition of a 'competent' person. For every job, there are core competencies comprising of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other competencies, which are required for any person to conduct their job efficiently and effectively, i.e. to be a competent person who fits the purpose or job. These core competencies are collectively known as a competency framework.<sup>2</sup> They essentially present the capabilities and behavioural indicators that are needed across all jobs. Logically, their importance varies according to the specific job duties and requirements across all levels. Competency frameworks are useful as they outline the critical competencies required for employees to progress upwards the career ladder in multiple industries. Typically, competency frameworks encompass less than twenty core competencies and are further grouped into main clusters. For example, the OECD's competency framework is clustered according to 'delivery-related' (achieving results), 'interpersonal' (building relationships), and 'strategic' (planning for the future) competencies.<sup>3</sup> In accordance with the level of complexity, job scope, job tasks and responsibilities across the jobs, these competencies and related behaviours are further distilled and defined.

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<sup>1</sup> Bersin by Deloitte, "The Bold New World of Talent: Predictions for 2016", 2016, accessed 6 April 2016, <http://www.bersin.com/Blog/post/The-Bold-New-World-of-Talent--Predictions-for-2016.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> CIPD Competence and Competency Frameworks resource summary, accessed 6 April 2016, <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/competence-competency-frameworks.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> OECD Competency Framework, accessed 6 April 2016, [http://www.oecd.org/careers/competency\\_framework\\_en.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/careers/competency_framework_en.pdf)

## The Islamic Competency Framework

On the other hand, the Islamic competency framework is based on the attributes of one man only. Over 1,400 years ago, the most perfect and talented of human beings was born, who was the best role model for all mankind. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent by Allah as a mercy to all creation,<sup>1</sup> who showed superior character and moral standing as the best example<sup>2</sup> for all to be emulated.

{ We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our signs, and purifying you, and instructing you in Scripture and wisdom, and in new knowledge. }<sup>3</sup>

{ The Messenger of God is an excellent model for those of you who put your hope in God and the Last Day and remember Him often. }<sup>4</sup>

{ It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom – although they were before in clear error. }<sup>5</sup>

These three verses clearly state that the Messenger ﷺ represented the best of human attributes, characteristics and behaviour in inculcating spirituality (*Tauḥīd*, i.e. faith in One God), and also in the acquisition of new knowledge. The noble Prophet ﷺ is notably characterised as being *ṣiddīq* (truthful in word and deed), *amānah* (trustworthy and reliable), *faṭānah* (wise), and *tablīgh* (undertook to deliver the 'wahyu' or words of Allah to others). Prophet Muhammad ﷺ served many roles. His multi-faceted personality was amplified in his various roles, first as a prophet, then a teacher and other roles, such as social reformer, political leader, administrator, manager, businessman, strategist and military commander,

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<sup>1</sup> The translation of sūrah al-Anbiyā: 7

<sup>2</sup> The translation of sūrah al-Ahzāb: 21

<sup>3</sup> The translation of sūrah al-Baqarah: 151

<sup>4</sup> The translation of sūrah al-Ahzāb: 21

<sup>5</sup> The translation of sūrah al-Jumu'ah: 2

moral guide, statesman, husband, environmental steward and reformer. Everything he did was divinely guided, and therefore, epitomises excellence and superiority. Despite his considerable influence and power, his humbleness and humility were astounding.

There are various works and studies on Islamic competency frameworks, particularly on the Islamic leadership competency framework. In many of the *aḥādīth*, it has been reported that the Prophet ﷺ has directly and indirectly explained the leadership qualities as well as the importance of leadership. For instance, in two of his *aḥādīth*, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Each of you is a shepherd, and all of you are responsible for your flocks,”<sup>1</sup> and “When three persons go on a journey, let them put one of their number in command.”<sup>2</sup>

Khaliq Ahmad wrote about the Islamic leaders from a management perspective. He summarised the qualities of an Islamic leader, namely, a person who has: knowledge and *ḥikmah* (wisdom, insight), *taqwā* (God-fearing), *‘adl* (justice) and *rahmah* (compassion), courage and bravery, *shūrā* (mutual consultation), decisiveness and being resolute, eloquence, spirit of self-sacrifice, and *ṣabr* (patience).<sup>3</sup> Ghadanfar elucidated the qualities of a Muslim Commander that would, in essence, be the critical leadership competencies of human agents in the area of warfare.<sup>4</sup> The traits are as follows: true, constant and firm Faith; dignified personality; valorous and courageous; steadfast and resolute of purpose; strength of will and ability to execute; charismatic and magnetic personality; eloquent, well-equipped; generosity and liberality; and a sense of justice and fair play.

Rameli and his colleagues proposed nine ‘Muslimpreneurs’ characteristics from the view of Muslim scholars and academics, which are as follows: *taqwā* to Allah as a framework; worship to Allah is a

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<sup>1</sup> The translation of Ḥadīth narrated by Muslim, Ḥadīth No. 1829

<sup>2</sup> The translation of Ḥadīth narrated by Abu Dawud on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, in *Riyād as-Ṣālihin*, Book 8, Ḥadīth No. 960

<sup>3</sup> Khaliq Ahmad, *Management from an Islamic Perspective*, Prentice Hall: Pearson Malaysia, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Mahmood Ahmad Ghadanfar, *Commanders of the Muslim Army*, Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2001

priority; *ḥalāl* as a top priority; do not waste; adopting high moral standards; trustworthy, concern for the welfare of others; knowledgeable; and caring for the society and environment.<sup>1</sup> In business, there are nine particular characteristics of those who qualify to do trade and commerce, which are: *at-tā'ibūn* (penitent and always conscious of mistakes and rectifies the mistakes), *al-ʿābidūn* (serve Allah), *al-hāmidūn* (in constant remembrance and is thankful to Allah), *as-sā'ihūn* (seek goodness and benefits for themselves in their travels and affairs), *ar-rākī'ūn* (who always bow to Allah), *as-sājidūn* (prostrate to pray to Allah), *al-āmirūn bil ma'rūf* (who invite others to do goodness as *da'wah*), *an-nahyu ʿanil munkar* (undertakes *da'wah* to prevent from evil), and *al-hāfizūn li hudūdillāh* (protects and upholds the Sharīʿah). Branine and Pollard outlined the principles and values of an Islamic management system, which includes: *taqwā*, *ihsān*, justice (*ʿadl*), trust (*amānah*), leadership, intention (*niyyat*), conscientious of self-improvement, mutual consultation (*shūrā*), high work ethics, truthfulness (*ṣidq*) and honesty in trade and commerce, courtesy and fairness in employment relationships, knowledge acquisition, righteous deeds, synergistic work cooperation and decision-making, self-reliance, trustworthiness, patience (*ṣabr*), responsibility, sincerity (*ikhlas*), discipline, dedication, diligence, cleanliness, good conduct, gratitude and moderation.<sup>2</sup>

According to Saleemad, the leadership competency framework model for Islamic school leaders encompasses five clusters: 'managing self', 'organisational development', 'relating with people', 'acquiring knowledge', and 'leading & managing'.<sup>3</sup> Saleemad elaborated on the key leadership components for Islamic school leaders as: observing Islamic value system, building a positive culture, managing and leading, relating

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<sup>1</sup> Mohd. Faizal P. Rameli, Muhammad Ridhwan Ab. Aziz, Kalsom Ab. Wahab and Suhaida Mohd Amin, "The Characteristics of Muslimpreneurs from the View of Muslim Scholars and Academician," *International Journal of Teaching and Education* 2, 2013, pp. 47-59

<sup>2</sup> Mohamed Branine and David Pollard, "Human resource management with Islamic management principles: A dialectic for a reverse diffusion in management," *Personnel Review* 39, no. 6, 2010, pp. 712 – 727

<sup>3</sup> Khanittha Saleemad, "Leadership Competency Model for Islamic School Leaders," *International Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences* 3, no. 2, 2015, pp. 86-88, accessed 10 April 2016, <http://www.isaet.org/images/extraimages/P315201.pdf>

with students, relating with community, challenging the process, inspiring shared vision, enabling others to act, modelling the way, encouraging the heart, monitoring/evaluating, intellectual stimulation, involve in curriculum and instruction and assessment, knowledge of curriculum and instruction and assessment, situational awareness, and resource (see Figure 1). Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a 'Teacher Leader' who was mission-driven, passionate, positive and real.<sup>1</sup> Highly effective teachers are those who achieve results. Shah stated that there were 22 teaching methods of the Prophet ﷺ as a teacher, further categorised into five broader topics, namely 'Developing Basic Skills', 'Scientific Methods', 'Psychological Approach', 'Methods of Mass Communication' and 'Techniques of Teaching'. It is highly recommended that a teacher entrusted to teach Muslim children must be a practicing Muslim first, then a teacher, instead of being a teacher who happens to be a Muslim. Having a pious and moral Muslim teacher is more likely to exhibit high moral excellence and character, which students can role-model upon, thus developing the future Ummah leaders of tomorrow. They must also have the relevant knowledge, skill, and other attitudes required to be a high-performance educator.

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<sup>1</sup> Dawood Shah, *Prophet Muhammad ﷺ As a Teacher*, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam Publishing, 2012



Figure 1. Leadership Model for Islamic School Teachers (MORAL Model)

The above leadership examples are highlighted because they offer a range of diverse perspectives on the competency frameworks of a competent Muslim. Based on these examples, the competent Muslim is essentially someone who has the following core competencies: strong faith and belief; high morality and piety; honesty and trust (*amānah*); knowledge and wisdom; excellent communication; courage and determination; mutual consultation and unity (fraternity and brotherhood); justice and compassion; patience and endurance; commitment and sacrifice, lifelong endeavour, gratitude and prayers.

The core competencies and the behavioural indicators outlined in the literature review tend to illustrate the broadest performance parameters, and also highlight the most proficient level of behaviour. In the typical Western competency frameworks, it is usual to have different levels of proficiencies outlined from level 1, being the basic or beginner level, to level 5, being the most proficient and expert level. For example, the behavioural indicator relating to the 'flexible thinking' core competency at level 5 for Heads of Division, Counsellors, Deputy Directors and Directors

in the OECD is 'intellectually agile in response to challenges of internal and external environments; and, solicits ideas and responds positively to those of staff, committees and the Secretary-General.' For level 1, which is related to Assistant, Secretaries, and Operator jobs, the 'flexible thinking' core competency includes 'proposing ways to do things differently, understands and recognises the value of other points of view and ways of doing things, and displays a positive attitude in the face of ambiguity and change'.<sup>1</sup> There is clearly a gap in the Islamic competency framework literature, which must be closed because it is far more useful to have clear demarcations in the levels of proficiency to see the real levels of performance on the job.

### **Application in the Islamic Banking and Finance Industry**

In recent years, the literature has shifted more to Islamic competency frameworks for the highly lucrative Islamic banking and finance industry. This sector is 'conservatively projected to grow by 5.05% per annum for the next five years to reach USD\$77 billion in value by 2019. Ernst & Young, and the Malaysia Islamic Financial Centre predict the size of the market to hit USD\$3.4 trillion by end of 2018, whilst PricewaterhouseCoopers predict a USD\$2.7 trillion market by 2017.<sup>2</sup> The typical competency clusters in the competency framework, such as personal attributes, interpersonal, self-management, information management, and technical knowledge skills based on Shari'ah laws are often outlined. These clusters specify the measurable behavioural criteria to assess proficiency, provide a guideline for staff training needs, define a talent and succession planning process, and are used as a tool for rewards and remuneration, among others.

However, this industry is plagued with strategic talent management problems because the demand for the level of suitably qualified and competent workforce exceeds the existing supply in the labour market.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD Competency Framework, p. 18, accessed 6 April 2016, [http://www.oecd.org/careers/competency\\_framework\\_en.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/careers/competency_framework_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Islamic Funds Industry: 2015 Review and Outlook, accessed 7 April 2016, <http://www.mifc.com/index.php?ch=28&pg=72&ac=159&bb=uploadpdf>



Statistics from Brunei are not known, but the Malaysian Reserve, ISRA, indicates that this industry requires a global workforce of one million professionals by 2020. In Malaysia alone, a total of 22,400 workers are needed, which is 40% of the additional 56,000 workforce required for the financial industry. As a result of this dire lack of talented individuals, the Islamic banks must still recruit and select their team members who are trained in conventional banking and retrain them with Islamic banking and finance knowledge. To overcome the shortage of skilled Islamic finance workforce, various initiatives are being introduced, for example, developing Islamic banking and Finance programmes in universities to increase Sharī'ah knowledge.

### **Competency Framework in the Brunei Context**

The Brunei Government employs close to 54,000 civil servants and has specified various government orders and initiatives designed to instil excellent work ethics and create a culture of excellence among the civil servants. There are three primary agencies that deal with human capacity development in Brunei, namely, the Civil Service Commission (government law and government orders), the Management Services Department (recruitment and selection), and the Civil Service Institute (human capacity development).<sup>1</sup> In October 1996, a book entitled 'The Moral Pillars and Work Ethics of the Public Service of Brunei Darussalam' was produced by the Civil Service Commission.<sup>2</sup> The book specified eleven Islamic core values, supported by verses from the Qur'ān, which all civil servants must adhere to in discharging their duties and responsibilities: 1) clean, honest and trustworthy; 2) efficient, expeditious and accurate; 3) meticulous and values time; 4) knowledgeable, creative and innovative; 5) committed, open and accountable; 6) tolerant, persevering and courteous; 7) productive and competitive; 8) exemplary; 9) solidarity, consultative and participatory; 10) austere; and 11) caring.

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<sup>1</sup> Haji Ghani Haji Metussin, "Preparing the Brunei Darussalam's Civil Service for the 21st Century," *Asian Review of Public Administration*, Management Services Division Brunei Darussalam, 1990, pp. 124-131, accessed 12 April 2016, <http://www.bruneiresources.com/pdf/preparingbruneicivilservice.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Rukun Akhlak dan Etika Kerja Perkhidmatan Awam Negara Brunei Darussalam*, Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 1996

In 2012, the Civil Service Institute developed a competency framework for all civil servants to further inculcate excellence and professionalism among the government servants and the competency framework supports the 11 moral pillars and work ethics. There are 25 core competencies dispersed across three clusters of the framework, namely, 'Self', 'People', and 'Task'. In the 'Self' cluster, creativity and innovation, thinking capabilities, customer service, self-effectiveness, work ethics, and integrity are specified. In the 'People' cluster, team building, interpersonal skill, public relation, customer service, speaking, listening, writing, and human resource management are included. The final cluster for 'Task' includes the following core competencies: strategic management, self-leadership, leadership, change, policy, organisational development, quality management, interpersonal skill, customer service, human resource management, general management and ICT. At the time of writing, the complete set of behavioural attributes and indicators of each competency was inaccessible, hence, it was not possible to see the different levels assigned to each competency, which reflect from the basic proficiency to the highest level of proficiency indicators relevant to that particular attribute. For example, it is logical to assume that 'communication' as a critical competency refers to being able to communicate effectively with colleagues and contacts at the first and most basic level of proficiency, whereas communicating persuasively with higher level and more senior stakeholders, outside of the organisation and worldwide, as appropriate is the highest level of communication proficiency and behaviour. Interestingly, these core competencies are not specifically measured from the basic level to the highest proficiency level in the annual performance appraisal evaluation forms, but instead, are used as a wide parameter for performance review and eventual reward of performance via the annual bonus. It is also observed that the Civil Service Institute offers a wide range of workshops for the continuous professional development of the government servants, but only a handful are Islamic-based (e.g. Islamic Management).

In 2011, the author had the opportunity to develop a competency framework for the Assistant Registrar job in a university setting. It was clustered into five dimensions, namely, 'Leading Others', 'Task Management', 'Innovation', 'Self-Management', and 'Social Responsibility'. Islamic-based critical competencies were not particularly highlighted within this setting. See Table 1 for the summary of the competency frameworks and values-based system extracted from several agencies in Brunei. It is evident that there are similarities of critical competencies required in performing the same job and its related tasks. Although the moral pillars and work ethics are included as the basis for the values-based system, the explicit linkage to the Islamic component must be strengthened and clarified.

#### **The Case for a *Taqwā*-Based Competency Framework for Brunei**

Upholding the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah is a priority for Brunei. The sense of urgency is more critical in today's economic downturn. As Muslims who believe that Allah is *ar-Razzāq*, the provider of all sustenance, we must create a society which is conducive for the worship of Allah and with this goal, Allah's providence will be assured and blessed for the country. The implementation of '*Zikir* Nation' as a tool for spiritual alignment for

MORAL PILLARS AND WORK ETHICS	CIVIL SERVICE INSTITUTE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK	ASSISTANT REGISTRAR COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK
<p>Clean, honest and trustworthy</p> <p>Efficient, expeditious and accurate</p> <p>Meticulous and values time</p> <p>Knowledgeable, creative and innovative</p> <p>Committed, open and accountable</p> <p>Tolerant, persevering and courteous</p> <p>Productive and competitive</p> <p>Exemplary</p> <p>Solidarity, consultative and participatory</p> <p>Austere</p> <p>Caring</p>	<p><b>PEOPLE</b></p> <p>Speaking, Listening, Writing, Public Relation, Customer Service, Human Resource Management, Interpersonal Skills, Team Building</p> <p><b>TASK</b></p> <p>Self-leadership, Leadership, Strategic Management, Change, Policy, Organisational Development, Quality Management, Interpersonal Skill, ICT, Customer Service, Human Resource Management, General Management</p> <p><b>SELF</b></p> <p>Creativity and Innovation</p> <p>Thinking Capabilities</p> <p>Customer Service</p> <p>Self-Effectiveness</p> <p>Work Ethics and Integrity</p>	<p><b>LEADING OTHERS</b></p> <p>Communication Skills</p> <p>Negotiating Skills</p> <p>Coaching</p> <p>Interpersonal Skills</p> <p>Team Leadership</p> <p><b>TASK MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Problem solving</p> <p>Delegation</p> <p>Knowledge of Job Management Skills</p> <p><b>INNOVATION</b></p> <p>Creativity</p> <p>Change Management</p> <p><b>SELF MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Stress Management</p> <p>Professionalism</p> <p><b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</b></p> <p>Acting with Integrity</p>

Table 1. Summary of the Competency Frameworks and Values-Based System  
Extracted from Several Agencies in Brunei

the people of Brunei means that a competency framework must be designed to instil *taqwā* and Faith in the person, especially among their 54,000 employees. The country is pivoting itself to be a global player in the Islamic banking and finance industry. Certain economic factors can also be seen as push factors, for example, having a trustworthy workforce will improve Brunei's investment potential and its position on the Ease of Doing Business and Transparency Index. The country has an excellent Islamic identity brand and is positioning itself to be a powerhouse in the *Halāl* Industry as well as in Islamic Banking and Finance. Foreign direct investors will be more confident in dealing with Bruneian companies as these companies would have better business integrity. Another push would be the need to keep abreast of evolving regulations and standards pertaining to Sharīah issues. With regards to the financial sector, the largest Islamic bank in Brunei, Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam, seeks to expand its operations overseas to achieve immense potential growth. The entire industry must be operated to ensure strict Sharīah compliance by qualified professionals. Hence, the talented workforce must be competent and have the right knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other competencies of finance, economics, and Sharīah principles to be able to advance the industry forward. These advancements require the development of a dynamic workforce who are creative and innovative with the will and capacity to go international.

Another push factor is the changes in the education system in Brunei. In 2007, the Ministry of Education outlined the importance of Islamic Knowledge and Malay Islamic Monarch in their Curriculum Model and this subject is also specified as a Learning Area in the SPN Curriculum Framework.<sup>1</sup> There is also an increase in the number of Islamic learning institutions in Brunei at all levels (e.g. religious primary schools, secondary schools, *Tahfiz* school and two Islamic universities). According to 2011 statistics, there are approximately 114,000 students who are engaged in learning in Brunei in its state and private schools, colleges,

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<sup>1</sup> Hj Rahman Bin Hj Nawī, *Issues, Challenges and Best Practices in Curriculum Implementation*, accessed 13 April 2016, [http://www.vocotech.org.bn/Pdf/Forum030215\\_YMHjRahman.pdf](http://www.vocotech.org.bn/Pdf/Forum030215_YMHjRahman.pdf)

and education institutions.<sup>1</sup> The rise of the Millennials generation in Brunei must be systematically trained, and initiatives focusing on the Islamic re-orientation in education will produce more Islamically-aware workers. Their values would be aligned with *taqwā*-based competency framework, and this criterion should make them more employable if *taqwā* is regarded as being an important employee competency.

### ***Taqwā*-Based Competency Framework for Brunei: A *Maqāṣid* Option**

Competency models should be a tool to drive productivity and performance in any organisation. The development of a conceptual *Maqāṣid* competency framework for Brunei is derived as a result of the synthesis of the documentary research process, in particular, the 'The Moral Pillars and Work Ethics of the Public Service of Brunei Darussalam', the Civil Service Institute, the Assistant Registrar competency frameworks, and the MORAL model by Saleemad.<sup>2</sup> Being an educator, a human capacity developer, and industry practitioner, the author is particularly intrigued on the 'Teacher-Leader' attributes of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The author also draws from her industrial experience and market research, and have observed the following: 1) a majority of Bruneians have identified stress management as their most preferred workshop to attend; 2) many Bruneians have low self-confidence, which can be mitigated through exercising higher *tawakkal* to Allah, and 3) many Bruneians have low self-efficacy and motivation, which hinder continuous progress and innovation. A different competency framework is proposed because this framework is oriented towards achieving a competent Muslim workforce, who can support the *Maqāṣid* of the Shari'ah, and can close the gaps in performance. See the figure below for a visual representation of the framework.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Report: Brunei Darussalam 2013*, Oxford Business Group, 2013

<sup>2</sup> Saleemad, "Leadership Competency Model for Islamic School Leaders"

The author proposes that each individual must focus on building up the 'Self' core competencies cluster first before he can properly build up on his 'People' and 'Task' core competencies. The focus here is on ensuring the person possesses high levels of *taqwā* (Faith), morals, ethics, integrity and *akhlāq* (good manners), so that at he can be more empathetic with his followers and team members. The individual may then develop his disciplined self-leadership, critical thinking and an increased capacity for creativity, self-effectiveness, integrity, and motivation to succeed in any given time for any given situation. The person should also be oriented to perform *dāwah* as a means to disseminate knowledge on Islam, and thereby, developing a stronger Muslim community.



Figure 2. *taqwā*-Based Competency Framework: A *Maqāṣid* Option

### Implications of the *Taqwā*-Based Competency Framework

In pursuing any change initiatives, a holistic and long-term approach must be undertaken. Within the civil service, one can expect that the human agency developers, such as the Civil Service Institute and the Management Services Department, to be required to collaborate more with religious departments to establish a Sharīah-compliant *taqwā*-based competency framework that can explicitly outline the key competencies and functionalities of their jobs. The objective is to ensure that there is effective ownership and implementation of the *taqwā*-based competency framework. The change initiative extends far wider to ensuring that related business and management operations, control mechanisms and processes are also made Sharīah compliant. Best practice initiatives observed elsewhere, such as in Malaysia, in the Islamic Banking and Finance Industry, may be launched such as: creating divisions for Sharīah research capabilities and capacity, Sharīah review and human audit team; different human capital agencies may be established to enhance human capital development in various sectors and industries; establishing one-stop Islamic reference centres that tie in the industry, academia and training provider; providing a wider range of talent booster industry-based training programmes for all levels (undergraduates, graduates, and practitioners); undertaking more research in Sharīah related professional areas; networking with established Islamic leadership institutions and growing the local talent pipeline.<sup>1</sup>

The author proposes that in accordance with the ‘Teacher-Leadership’ model, Islamic propagation, or *da‘wah*, must be considered as a critical competency, as well as the memorisation and correct recitation of the Qurān. This *da‘wah* is part of the ‘Self’ development of the individual because his or her ability to do so will lead to a lofty attainment in the Hereafter. As a person moves up the leadership role and become more influential, his or her ability to do *da‘wah* as a positive role model

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<sup>1</sup> *Islamic Funds Industry: 2015 Review and Outlook*



becomes increasingly important. However, careful consideration should be given when assigning the different behavioural attributes and indicators across the levels, if any. Indeed, proper evaluation of the competency to do *da'wah* is required, and the organisation must specify how this competency is translated into a KPI and how it can affect productivity.

Unlike other systems, Islam does not actively encourage its followers to actively seek leadership positions. Once an individual is appointed as a leader, or for any position for that matter, the leadership position becomes his or her role, the role becomes his or her responsibility, and he or she becomes accountable for the responsibility. If a person does seek the aforementioned role, he or she is considered unfit to assume the role as the individual could be motivated by other material needs (e.g. being power hungry), and not by the desire to serve people by upholding the Divine laws. So, the issue here is: how can organisations promote people fairly? Ahmad proposed that the mechanism for the identification and selection of a person for leadership should be related to the tasks, which the person performs that can spotlight their latent leadership competencies.<sup>1</sup> It is from these tasks that the specific behavioural attributes might be derived. In summary, a leader potential must be a person who can do the following: articulate one's goal or vision clearly and demonstrate a personal conviction with regard to the matter; inspire a group of people to follow; evaluate the prevailing situation accurately and devise appropriate strategies to deal with it, including surmounting problems and difficulties; initiate, guide, direct, and control or change the desired goals; ensure continuous cooperation of a particular movement; continually expand the movement to strengthen it; inspire members of the movement to such a degree that they are prepared to fight, and even die for the cause, and provide satisfaction by allowing the members to feel that their mission has a noble purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad, *Management from an Islamic Perspective*, p. 143

Allah rewards a person on his or her level of *taqwā*, therefore belief must be a cornerstone of the *taqwā*-based competency framework. The productive competent Muslim is not driven by money, but by the hopes of gaining entry into Paradise. A productive competent Muslim can expect to be rewarded in *barakah* (intangible blessings of the *rezeki*) currency as well. Certainly, in terms of business and organisational success, the tangible benefits of having a talented workforce include greater client retention, customer satisfaction, trust ranking, preferred vendor position, happier and more engaged employees, higher resilience, willingness to go the extra mile for the client, and so forth. Establishing a *taqwā*-based competency framework can lead to better performance management because each person has high awareness that he or she is accountable to Allah for his or her own actions. In discharging his or her work duties well, he or she would be able to attain more blessings. Adopting such a framework would help to develop a more motivated and sincere workforce, who have higher intrinsic motivation and lower extrinsic motivation (e.g. cash, recognition awards, promotions), propensity, lower turnover, better teamwork, lower conflict, and achieve harmony in the workplace.

### **Concluding Remarks and Recommendations**

This research paper has explored and reviewed various models of competency frameworks. The need for a more robust competency framework for Brunei to suit its current transitional phase towards achieving a '*Zikir* Nation' status is also discussed. In this exploratory paper, a proposed competency framework was developed, which may be considered for practical application in multiple sectors. This paper has also highlighted several inherent and challenging changes, which must be made to develop a pious Muslim population. These changes include the long-term implementation of strategic initiatives to provide the right Islamic education, moral and religious training systems for any society and human agency developer (such as the civil service and education providers, work organisations) that will develop high moral, intellectual

and skilled Muslims. These agencies must fully understand that the cost of not addressing these critical human development issues will have severe repercussions for Brunei. Therefore, the relevant agencies must commit to the noble objective of developing pious and moral Muslims first, who can serve humanity irrespective of their human agency jobs and roles in any industry and setting, and achieve success now and in the Hereafter.

The main limitation of this exploratory paper is that this research is mainly based on the content analysis of the selected literature. As such, there is opportunity for further research work that employs a variety of methods, such as empirical data, a robust conventional research design, and focus group studies to obtain the opinions of the relevant stakeholders. Much more has to be done to prove the efficacy of such a model within a larger organisation, and to prove conclusively that the model adds towards the productivity of the employees. Research should also be undertaken to see to what extent does the model support the five *Maqāṣid* of the Sharīah. The literature is also limited with regards to cross-cultural perspectives, which are likely to impact on the framework. In terms of future research, the model proposed may be properly applied, and longitudinal studies may be implemented to test the model's usefulness.