

A Comprehensive Review On The Role Of Rewarding Systems In New Public Management Performance: The Case Of Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP)

Bouchra Fninou¹, Nasser A. Saif Almuraqab²

¹Nantes University, France, B.Fninou@hotmail.fr

²University of Dubai, UAE, Nasser@ud.ac.ae or Nasser.Almuraqab@hotmail.com

Abstract

Due to fast pace of globalization and competitiveness Dubai government came to realize the importance of innovative government in this era of globalization. This study aims to analyze the role of the rewards system of the Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP). Based on an extensive literature review, a conceptual model has been developed. The study has adopted both primary and secondary research methods to analyze the drivers and management of the DGEP, as well as the role of the program with a particular focus on the reward system in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Dubai government's operational excellence. The DGEP and the reward system have demonstrated considerable amounts of positive results. Most importantly, its role in strengthening the skills of UAE employees has been phenomenal. This is an award intended exclusively for UAE nationals despite the government's announcement saying that the award is for all employees of the Dubai government. Its implicit objective is to promote Emiratis in the government employment system and to develop a pool of competent and efficient national staff. Furthermore, a conceptual model has been designed. Also, the study discussed the impact of the reward system, followed by the limitations and future research.

Keywords: NPM; Reward system; Excellence; Government Organizations; Dubai; UAE; DGEP

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, there have been a plethora of worldwide public management reforms which are quite different from the Weberian model. The pace of globalization, fiscal crisis,

incessant failures of public service organizations to deliver quality services, the rising expectations of the citizenry, and the developments in the private sector management propelled the scholars and policymakers to look

for alternative modes of managing public service organizations. Since then, good governance, new public management (NPM), network governance, digital government, and so forth have appeared in the intellect and practical domains of public sector management. Despite actual criticisms, NPM remains the most influential model till days (Hood, 1991; Hughes, 2017).

The NPM challenged the orthodox Weberian model on different accounts and recommended certain business management precepts such as corporatization, strategic management, performance measurement, results-based budgeting, service quality, performance incentives, use of competition, and so forth for managing public service organizations for enhanced efficiency, economy and effectiveness. With all these paraphernalia, performance remains key to NPM (Pollitt & Bouchaert, 2011). And for better performance, the role of the appropriate incentive system cannot be overemphasized.

In this era of market-oriented NPM, the adoption of the incentives or awards is found in many countries such as the "Beacon" award in the United Kingdom (Entwistle and Downe, 2005), the "President's Quality Award" and the program "Innovations in American Government Awards" in the USA (Borins, 2008), the "Canada Awards for Excellence"; the "IPAC Innovative Management" award in Canada (Galimberti, 2002) and other national awards in some countries of Africa, Asia, and Europe. These reward systems are becoming more

and more important to the extent that they would be a 'powerful lever of cultural change and public management style' (Chenaux, 1998; Emery, 1994). According to Hartley and Downe (2007), policymakers and practitioners consider these awards both as means of celebrating high performance and also contributing to the dissemination of good practice, with the ultimate aim of improving public services. It is then the classic role of awards, a managerial role, visible and formal. But sometimes these awards have invisible and hidden objectives, those related to the control of human behavior.

This study is an attempt to analyze the significance of the award system which is administered as part of the overall Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP). The program itself is the culmination of several management precepts such as strategic management, quality management, business process reengineering, and the digitalization of services (Rahman & Said, 2015). However, by adding the very lucid incentive system, the DGEP is also heralded as a motivational tool to enhance individual and organizational performance (Ahrens, 2013, 2014). Previously, the traditional bureaucratic model of administration was the order of the day in the Dubai government. But since the introduction of the Dubai Government Excellence Model (DGEM) in 1997, a gradual intrusion of NPM precepts into the Dubai government is found. The model has also been applauded globally for the quality and innovative public service delivery system (Sarker & Aldin, 2018).

The specific research questions that this study aims at investigating are:

- What forces triggered the Dubai government to undertake the DGEP?
- How is the organization and management of the DGEP?
- What is the significance of the incentive system?

2. Literature Review:

Despite disagreements on many opinions, most scholars have agreed that NPM embodied the precepts of business management including hands-on management, performance measures, output, and result orientation, disaggregation of and competition within the public sector, customer orientation, incentive, managerial autonomy, service quality, and so forth (Hood, 1991; Hughes, 2017). One of the criticisms that the NPM exponents raised about the traditional, bureaucratic administration were the lack of incentive in public organizations. Taking clues from the public choice and the principal-agent models, they argue that only market orientation including the adoption of the appropriate incentive system can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery (Hood, 1991; Hughes, 2017; Considine et al., 2018). Therefore, the notion of incentive or award is very much ingrained in private management whose tradition lies in neo-classical economics. Following the NPM precept, incentive or reward has become common in both private and public organizations. These incentives can be applied individually

or to groups of workers. They are financial and non-financial.

The term "award" designated often as symbolic rewards in the form of citations or decorations but also financial incentives, is not new as governments often use them to reward good performance at the individual and organizational levels (Frey 2007). Hartley and Downe (2007) have proposed a conceptual distinction between two forms of award: the award through a competition focused on applications made by organizations (competitive award) and award based on thresholds to all applicants who are deemed to satisfy certain "minimum" criteria (threshold award).

Several studies (Sanders et al., 2018; Aakvik et al., 2017; Coram & Robinson, 2016; Stonich 1984; Blackburn and Rosen 1993; Jacob et al 2004. Lee et al. 2003; Lawler and Worley, 2006 Balkin and Gomez-Mejia, 1990; Tsai Chin -Ju 2010; Ali and Ahmed 2009) have shown that there is a positive relationship between reward systems and individual and organizational performance. According to these researchers, organizations which have introduced reward systems are more successful than those that don't. According to Galbraith (1973), the reward systems are an important tool available to organizations to attract, retain & motivate the skilled people having knowledge and abilities to achieve the strategic goals of the organization.

Ali and Ahmed (2009) have researched the effect of reward and recognition systems on employee motivation and satisfaction and therefore their performance (Grant

2008). They found that there is a positive relationship between rewards and motivation to work. Motivated employees are more productive, more efficient, and more willing to work to achieve organizational goals than employees with a low level of motivation (Hunter et al 1990). These incentives are used by the organization as a human resources management system, but also as an employee behaviors control mechanism (Goodale et al. 1997).

Awards programs implemented by organizations have almost similar objectives (Garvin, 1991; Bohoris 1996; Miguel 2005a, 2005b; Tan, 2002) which can be grouped as follows: recognition and valuation of the performance; communication,

publication, and sharing of best practices; improving and promoting quality approaches; and the development of leadership and competitiveness. However, some programs may have a different logic, a hidden dimension, or an unexpected role that depends on the specificities and context of the organizations. We will demonstrate this by analyzing the local award of Dubai, the DGEP (Dubai Government Excellence Program).

Based on the review of literature, a conceptual model (figure 1) is developed. The model entails three dimensions: drivers of reform, the anatomy of the DGEP, the perceived benefits provided by the DGEP, and the reward system.

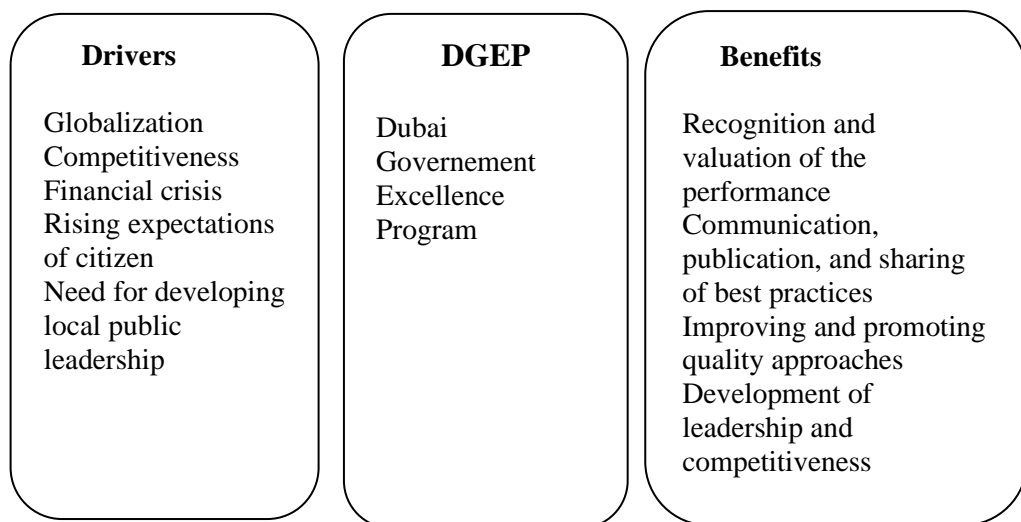


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

3. Methodology:

To understand the place and role of this award in the government of Dubai, we opted for an inductive qualitative study. We did a literature

review on DGEP based on official reports and documents at our disposal (participation guide, documents about the categories and evaluation criteria, list of winners, internal documents,

and presentations). We conducted a historical study of the award program over the period 1998-2020 referring to the local and national press (Gulf News, 2010; Emirate Al Youm, 2012; Al Bayan, 2020). One of the authors did 5 individual interviews in Arabic, English, and French with one organizer of the award, two administrative officers, and two award winners to know their views about the award. These interviews were conducted between the end of 2020 and early 2021 and lasted one hour on average. These interviews have revealed the perception of the respondents' vis the award. Moreover, one of the authors is an employee in the government of Dubai with more than 15 years of experience, she has done many observations that allowed her to better understand the importance given to this award and the process of its implementation.

3.1 The Government of Dubai and the Forces behind the Reform Program

Dubai is the second largest emirate of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE is the federation of seven emirates and is known for its natural resources. As per the provision of the Constitution, natural resources belong to individual emirates. Abu Dhabi is the largest emirate with around 90 percent natural resources of the country. Dubai has been developed as an important platform of services such as tourism, real estate, construction, aviation, finance, information technology, etc. Ahrens (2014, p. 8) cogently observes: « Dubai is not simply a case of modernization through oil. A very significant component of its very fast

development has been the governance and government of the emirate, putting into focus the quality of its institutions of governance and public sector service provision, especially those that are dedicated to providing modern infrastructure elements ».

Dubai has been dubbed as a hybrid, neo-patrimonial state (Davidson, 2009). But what is more significant is its developmental nature. In that sense, Dubai is a developmental state characterized by state-led development, solid partnership with the private sector, and a regional hub of the service economy (Hivdt, 2009; Al-Saleh, 2018).

Globalization, global competitiveness, financial crisis, and local and regional socio-economic conditions largely triggered the tempo of administrative reform in the Dubai government. The pace of globalization necessitated nation-states to open up their economy to speed up international trade. The Dubai government availed the opportunities unleashed by the pace of globalization and moved towards massive economic diversifications. The old bureaucratic administration was to be overhauled to assume major entrepreneurial roles and streamline the local business climate. In another world, national competitiveness was to be heightened to compete in the international arena.

Dubai's government was hard hit by the global financial crisis. Hence, the Dubai stock exchange required to refinance nearly \$4 billion worth of debt. So, the Abu Dhabi government had to step in to rescue Dubai's fragile economy caused by the financial crisis (Joyce and Al Rashed, 2016). Therefore, for practical

reasons, the Dubai government had to accelerate its administrative innovation programs to strengthen market-enhancing capabilities (OECD, 2010).

The most pressing force was the deteriorating public service quality and capability as against the rising expectations of the citizenry that prompted the government to adopt the mode of governance. Particularly, the rapid internationalization of NPM precepts was carefully embraced by the UAE public management system (Mansour, 2017; Mohammed, 2013).

To keep pace with its rapid developments, the Dubai government was required to introduce new inspired management tools from the private sector to meet the following objectives, such as putting the customer at the center of its organizations, simplifying procedures, developing the resources, to document the processes, to encourage the spirit of creativity, providing a motivating work environment that helps governments to support comprehensive development

strategies, and to better serve the business community by offering good investment conditions. In this context, the Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, had launched in 1997 an ambitious program to improve the Dubai public performance called DGEP (Dubai Government Excellence Program). This program is part of the five pillars of the strategic plan of the Emirate of Dubai (Government of Dubai 2011). Its mission is to "promote, evaluate and reward excellence in the Dubai government" with a vision "to achieve international levels of excellence in the Dubai public performance" (Al Nuseirat 2008; El-Kahlout 2010).

3.2 Nature of DGEP

The DGEP is an award of excellence by a competition open to all Dubai government entities. This award recognizes institutional and individual excellence. As shown in (table-1) below

Institutional Awards	Employee Excellence Awards
“Elite Award; Leading Government Entity; Best Entity in Innovation Field; Best Entity Achieving Dubai Plan 2021; Happiest Work Environment; Best Entity in Digital Government; Best Entity in Service Provision; Best Entity in Efficiency and Governance; Best People-of-Determination-Friendly Entity and Best Entity in the Emiratization Field”	“Dubai Medal for Assistant Director-General/CEO; Dubai Medal for Supervisory Employee; Dubai Medal for Customer Happiness Employee; Dubai Medal for Innovative Employee; Dubai Medal for Specialized Employee; Dubai Medal for Administrative Employee; Dubai Medal for Field Employee; Dubai Medal for Young Employee and Special Recognition – The Unknown Soldiers”

Table 1: Awards Categories (DGEP.gov.ae)

The DGEP institutional awards are based on Dubai Government Excellence Model (figure 2). This model has been divided into three

main pillars; each Pillar comprises a set of Criteria. The first pillar (60 percent) is Achieving Vision, which is made up of four primary criteria: Main Functions, Government Services, and Digital Government in the Dubai Plan 2021. The second pillar is Innovation (15%) and

consists of two main criteria: Future Shaping and Innovation Management. Enablers (25 percent) is the third pillar, which is made up of four primary criteria: Governance, Assets Management, Financial Resources Management, Human Capital, and Emiratization.



Figure 2: Dubai Government Excellence Model

The DGEP institutional awards are divided into three levels of evaluation and recognition: Basic, Excellence, and Elite levels.

Assessment of capabilities (through three primary pillars: effectiveness, efficiency, learning, and development), and Evaluation of Results (via four main pillars including assessment of comprehensiveness and usability,

result achievement, performance development, and leading position), and Assessment of elite criteria (through three primary pillars: comprehensiveness and usefulness, result attainment, performance improvement, and leadership position) (via the level of superiority in criteria selected for the Elite model).

3.3 DGEP Assessment Process

level	Assessment Criteria	Assessment section	Final Result
Elite Level	Elite criteria	Capabilities assessment 70% Results assessment 30%	20%
	Results criteria in the government excellence model	Results assessment 100%	80%
Excellence Level	Results criteria in the government excellence model	Results assessment 100%	100%
Basic Level	Capabilities criteria in the government excellence model	Capabilities assessment 30%	100%
	Results criteria in the government excellence model	Results assessment 70%	

Figure 3: Assessment process (DGEP.gov.ae)

The approved coordinators should provide all participating government bodies' submissions (short profiles) electronically, in Arabic and English, using the online assessment management system. They may also revise and follow-up on applications, as well as receive and read assessment reports for candidates and any communication, notices, or alerts connected to DGEP, as well as download and print, reports relevant to the entity's involvement in the current or prior evaluation cycle. (Figure 3).

3.4 DGEP: 24 Years of continuous improvement

Since its journey in 1997, the DGEP has become a high-profile Dubai government entity. However, in its tumultuous journey, the DGEP has taken vital inputs from Dubai Plan 2021, the Dubai Government Strategic Planning System, the Dubai Government Performance Management System "Qarar," Dubai - the Model Centre, Smart Dubai Office, and the Mohammed bin

Rashid Initiative for Government Innovation are all part of the Dubai Plan 2021.

The program aims at enabling public service organizations to provide a high quality of services to the residents, fulfill the requirements and aspirations of the community to achieve a seven-star rating, and the greatest level of efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services. In pursuit of its objectives, the DGEP now offers excellence awards, coaching, training, analyses of customer satisfaction, and various publications (Ahrens, 2014).

The DGEP has done several accomplishments to its credit. In 2007, the Government of Dubai received the United Nations Award (UNPSA - United Nations Public Service Award) in the category of improving service delivery. This award is the most prestigious international recognition of excellence in the public sector. The DGEP was assessed by an international organization BSI (British Standards Institution). This organization studied the impact of DGEP on the Dubai government

(DGEP 2011). In May 2011, DGEP again received the UN award, this time in the category of development of knowledge management.

While awards based on performance management remain the most significant task of the DGEP, it carries out several important tasks about quality public services including the lunching "Knowledge Forums Series", organizing European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) certified training, and smart training initiative for government employees involved in the process of DGEP, publishing a magazine "Excellence" (quarterly), launching Mohammed bin Rashid Initiative for Government Innovation, administering customer satisfaction surveys and "mystery shopping study". The purpose behind all these activities is to spread the culture of excellence among Dubai government officials and promote the concept of constant learning in public service (Ahrens, 2013, 2014).

Since its creation, the DGEP has been developed and upgraded over the years to meet the Dubai Government's needs. On one hand, the number of nominations has increased from 141 applications in 2002 to over 600 in 2020. This increase reflects a cultural change and a great development in the level of performance of the Dubai government. On the other hand, the award categories have been changed over the years and increased from 3 categories at its creation in 1997 to 19 categories in 2020. In addition, the team in charge of the program ensures reviewing these categories regularly to follow the latest changes

in the world of management and quality.

In 2004, the award used the EFQM Model. It has introduced new sub-criteria such as risk management, knowledge management, health, and safety, and energy management. Assessors are trained in international training centers. The duration of their field visits has increased for a better assessment. The employee satisfaction survey began. An annual survey of employee satisfaction is done in all departments and agencies.

In September 2019, DGEP launched radical improvements in assessment and recognition schemes. The DGEP institutional awards are now based on the Dubai Government Excellence Model instead of the EFQM Model. RADAR Approach is no longer used.

In 2020, The assessment cycle of Institutional awards was amended and two categories were introduced People-of-Determination-Friendly category and Best Emiratization Category. The assessment model for the 2020 edition of the Program focuses also on how government entities handled the COVID 19 pandemic.

The assessment criteria for the Dubai Excellence Medals classification have been amended and revised. Personal interviews with candidates have been eliminated from the Dubai Excellence Medals evaluation process, however, competence assessments have been kept. Site visits to each candidate's workplace are also part of the Dubai Excellence Medals evaluation.

3.5 DGEP as a tool for recognizing individual and collective performance

According to Walter (1996), recognizing means "witness of gratitude." The DGEP was created to recognize and reward organizations and individuals for their creativity and effectiveness. The award is celebrated in April each year and accompanied by significant financial and non-financial incentives. Winning government departments/agencies receive the trophy of excellence and a certificate of appreciation from the Government of Dubai. Winning employees receive financial awards ranging up to 27 000 USD and promotions. The awards are given personally by the Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in front of an audience of VIPs, the press, directors, managers, and employees of the government of Dubai. The list of winners is published in local newspapers. This public recognition of employees and administrations is a very effective way to honor them. An interviewee (Ms. S.S., the distinguished specialized employee, Dubai Police) said, "It is an honor for me to be next to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum who gave me the trophy, but also to push others to look for this kind of honor". Another interviewee (Mr. A.AL., the distinguished field employee of Dubai Customs) observed, "I always encourage my colleagues to be excellent and to participate in the award and I share with them my knowledge and my experience".

The DGEP is therefore a tool of recognition and reward that values the achievements of employees and

administrations in Dubai. It promotes the career development of the award winners. According to one interviewee (Ms. S.S., the distinguished specialized employee, Dubai Police), "I was promoted and my picture with Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid was displayed at my workplace. I received letters of appreciation and congratulations from the top management and also from other administrations. My resume is also much improved." It also develops the image and reputation of the winning organizations. She continued, "I became very famous. I was invited to several interviews with the local and Arab press. My administration also was cited in every interview. The DGEP award showed to other governments that Dubai had excellent staff and administrations." Some studies in the international public organizational contexts have also found a positive relationship between non-financial incentives such as recognition and appreciation and performance (Abasili et al., 2017; Kealesitse et al., 2012).

3.6 DGEP as a Management Tool

Since the DGEP is evidence-based Dubai government departments and agencies were forced to develop their information management systems (Ferreira and Otley, 2009). One interviewee (Dr. W. F. Executive Director of Higher Education, KHDA) narrated, "The DGEP allowed us to clarify our objectives and collect evidence on the achievement of these objectives. This instrument has helped us to improve the collection and preservation of data." These departments and agencies are

accountable for their strategic goals and apply KPIs regularly to assess, monitor, and improve their performance. This results in orientation being turned to the satisfaction of all stakeholders (customers, public authorities, staff, suppliers, and society). An interviewee (Dr. Z. AL. Excellence and Quality Advisor, DGEP) observed, "The DGEP created a results orientation. The program asked for the best results in terms of customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, society satisfaction, etc. Moreover, 50% of the assessment score was for the results." The DGEP also allows to identify deviations and take corrective actions (Lebas, 1995). "Our participation in DGEP has indirectly contributed to the improvement of our performance. It is a review of the activity of our organization. Based on this review, there are decisions made and corrective actions taken and this influences the achievement of our goals" (Mr. G. P. CFO, KHDA).

The DGEP has promoted the implementation of certain performance management systems such as the self-assessment based on the CAF (Common Assessment Framework). It allows to establish a diagnosis of the administration and to define the actions for improvement. The CAF model is a management tool for quality management based on the EFQM model. Self-assessments are done twice a year in all government departments of Dubai to measure the progress over time. In some departments, these self-assessments are done by consultants. Hides et al. (2004) have highlighted the positive relationship between self-assessment

and organizational performance. The DGEP has also promoted the establishment of the balanced scorecard that allows applying the strategy at the operational level. One interviewee explained it: "Before the program, no administration had a strategy, objectives, or KPIs because their work was a simple routine. Now each administration has its strategy which is aligned with the strategy of the Dubai government. They become experts in strategic planning using new tools such as the balanced scorecard."

Furthermore, DGEP has improved human resources management through the introduction of the IPA (Individual Performance Agreement). One interviewee (Dr. Z. AL. Excellence and quality Advisor, DGEP) explained the motive: "The DGEP has helped to improve the management of human resources. The program has encouraged administrations to have better working conditions for their employees to have training plans, empowerment, delegation, incentives and motivation systems, etc".

The program has also contributed to the implementation of customer management mechanisms such as complaints systems, customer satisfaction surveys, and mystery shoppers. "Many things have changed with the DGEP. Now the administration puts the customer at the center of their organizations. You will find administrations with 5 stars counters, valet parking, etc. they seek to satisfy and even to regale their clients" (Dr. Z. AL. Excellence and quality Advisor, DGEP).

The DGEP has helped to introduce the International

Standardization Organization (ISO) process and the "benchmarking" which serves to compare processes, practices, initiatives, and results with other organizations (Fninou & Meyssonier, 2013). Moreover, the DGEP puts extra emphasis on innovation and transparency. "The DGEP encouraged employees to innovate, to think differently, 'Think Outside of the Box', to break the routine, to look for new ideas to perform their jobs, to create new services, etc." (Dr. Z. AL. Excellence and quality Advisor, DGEP). The program has taken into consideration the special nature of the Dubai Government and added several sub-criteria to address specific managerial issues such as risk management, governance, environmental management, commitment to Emiratisation that encourage the priority recruitment of nationals (Forstenlechner, 2008). One interviewer (Dr. Z. AL. Excellence and quality Advisor, DGEP) observed :

"The DGEP has helped to achieve the vision of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid for Dubai. The government has been turned from a traditional government to a government that cares about customer satisfaction, about employees, government with strategies that has good process management, good human resources management, etc. The DGEP managed to change the mindset of public employees and to build this culture of excellence".

3.7 DGEP as a Communication and Best Practice Sharing Tool

The DGEP has promoted good internal communication and

coordination of actions in the government departments. Some departments have created teams to manage the criteria of the DGEP model. This criteria management approach has facilitated the implementation of corrective actions and enhanced the interaction and involvement of employees towards continuous improvement. Many meetings were held during the year to discuss the weaknesses detected and corrective actions implemented or to be implemented. The DGEP is thus an effective way to connect employees. It is a tool of communication for the entire organization that aims to promote dialogue on strategy and management practices and processes. It serves to stimulate organizational learning. However, we need to highlight that in some departments, communication on certain aspects of DGEP is limited to top management and not cascaded to all levels of the organization. "Our department has yet to make efforts on the disclosure of DGEP assessment reports " (Mr. G. P. CFO, KHDA).

The DGEP has also contributed to the development of external communication through collaboration with other similar organizations.

"I think that sharing information and knowing the performance of other departments is a positive thing because there is good communication and a good knowledge sharing" (Mr. G. P. CFO, KHDA). Also known as "bench learning", external communication allows an exchange of knowledge and best practices through workshops, conferences, and open days. However, the transfer of learning and the dissemination of best practices must not lead to slavish

imitations. Concerned departments must fit their context and specificities. Also, it should be noted that, unlike the Beacon Award, the DGEP winners are not formally required to share their practices. They do it voluntarily.

3.8 The Socio-Cultural Context of Dubai Excellence Award: a Capacity Building Tool for UAE Nationals

The size of population of Dubai in 2020 is 3,411,200 of which Emiratis constitute 271,050 (8%) and non-Emiratis are 3,140,150 (92%) (www.dsc.gov.ae)

The government significantly depends on the expatriates in the public sector employment. Of the total workforce of 120,069 in government offices, 69,620 are expatriates and 50,449 are Emiratis (www.dsc.gov.ae). That means 58 percent of employees are expatriates. However, the composition of the population doesn't reflect that of the workforce. A large number of Emiratis of the smaller emirates have also joined the Dubai government workforce. Despite the prevalence of the Emiratization policy, reliance on the expatriates has posed a stupendous problem caused by the limited number of qualified and competent Emirati employees. Here is the significance of the DGEP. One interviewee reflected on this issue :

"When the government set up this award, the goal was to create a positive and a creative staff, who would excel in their work. This is true for expatriate employees but especially for national employees who have a reputation for being unproductive and generally

incompetent. The award has come to show that national employees are also good and excellent" (Ms. S.S., the distinguished specialized employee, Dubai Police).

Indeed, the award winners in the employee categories are mostly UAE nationals (95%) with some Arab (less than 5%) and a near absence of foreign employees (one winner in 2008). The DGEP award is for UAE employees. This tendency of recognizing mostly UAE nationals in a context characterized by a great cultural diversity is probably explained by Sheikh's desire to strengthen national capacities as one interviewee explained cogently: "The expatriate employees must have high levels of training and experience to be accepted by the government of Dubai. The DGEP award came mainly to encourage UAE nationals, the minority group, to become productive and innovative. This would create a balance of excellent expatriates and UAE employees." (Mrs. S. S., the distinguished specialized employee, Dubai Police).

It should also be noted that the DGEP winners receive immediate promotion and occupy top positions in the government of Dubai. That is why national employees were privileged over expatriate employees as part of the long-term policy of "Emiratization" launched by the Dubai government, which is to replace expatriate employees with UAE citizens. "The main priority of the Dubai Government is the UAE nationals. The government is working on the Emiratization policy by giving citizenry more opportunities and jobs." (Dr. Z. AL. Excellence and quality Advisor, DGEP). The Dubai

Excellence Award aims to increase the active role of UAE nationals in the public sector and is based on a qualitative approach to enhance the skills of UAE nationals through improved training programs. "The program is indeed designated mainly for UAE Nationals but we need to remember that the vision of Sheikh is to make Dubai a hub and a destination for job seekers from around the world " (Dr. Z. AL. Excellence and quality Advisor, DGEP). This orientation of capacity building for nationals is a management specificity of City-States (Benedict, 1966).

4. Discussion and Analysis

In this study, the critical role of reward in a public sector setting has been analyzed with the aid of a conceptual model. In terms of the model, the DGEP was initiated in response to several critical drivers. The pace of globalization posed both opportunities and threats to the government of Dubai. Economic liberalization and diversifications became a necessity in the competitive world. However, the weaknesses of the Dubai government's bureaucratic administration appeared to be stumbling blocks on the way to enhancing global competitiveness. Internally, there were demands in the Dubai government administration. Externally, there was a supply of necessary tools offered by the NPM model. Another important force as gleaned from this study was the need for rejuvenating the Emirati workforce. It was contemplated that the introduction of the DGEM and the award would raise awareness among the national workforce to become

competitive, innovative, and performance-oriented.

The DGEP was originally modeled along the EFQM. Over the years, further modifications have been made to make the system customized to the Dubai government work environment. Theoretically, NPM precepts may seem discrete. But the DGEP has been designed in such a way to integrate with other vital management tools. Thus, the DGEP is a complex web of quality management, strategic management, BSC, and performance measurement system (Rahman & Said, 2015). The system of reward or incentive incorporated within the DGEP is based on the NPM belief that incentives would motivate employees in general and Emirati employees in particular to demonstrate acceptable performance as per the DGEP.

Interesting findings have been revealed from the interviewees as to how both financial and non-financial incentives induced them to perform well. Recognition of high performance by the government is very precious for the employees. Particularly, it is self-fulfilling for the Emirati employees to receive appreciation and awards from the Ruler of the Dubai government.

The DGEP has become an epitome of efficiency and effectiveness. All interviewers emphasized the critical role that played in their participation in the DGEP. They were involved in the goal-setting process and CAF. They knew that had they accomplished the goals they would qualify for the reward. They became familiar with modern tools of management including benchmarking,

empowerment, delegation, BSC, team learning, team communication, and so forth.

This study reveals the most interesting aspect of the DGEP. The program and the reward can be seen as incentives for the Emirati employees. They are accustomed to the culture of excellence. They come to realize that excellent performance leads to positive incentives – both intrinsic and extrinsic.

Overall, the outcomes of the DGEP have been quite impressive. According to Andrews et al. (2017), state capability is the result of numerous radical reforms. In their analysis, the UAE has been accorded strong state capability. It is one of the eight historically developing countries that has achieved this feat. The authors have used the scores of Worldwide Governance Indicators, Quality of Government Index, and Fragile States Index (Andrews et al., 2017). The rising level of efficiency and effectiveness of the UAE government general and the Dubai government, in particular, is well evident as gleaned from other global studies such as Global Competitive Index, Corruption Perception Index, Human Development Index, E-government Index, and so forth (Sarker & Aldin, 2018; Rahman et al., 2018).

5. Conclusion

This study on the DGEP has reflected on diverse aspects of the DGEP. In terms of the conceptual model, the pace of globalization and competitiveness has triggered the necessity of public management reform in the Dubai government. Dubai government came to realize the

importance of innovative government in this era of globalization. The DGEP initially took impetus from the EFQM. But over time, further modifications were made to customize the model by the local conditions. The DGEP is a complex web of modern management tools including strategy, TQM, BPR, and so forth. The fundamental purpose has been to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the government. The reward system, a hallmark of the DGEP has played a splendid role in making the public officials performance-oriented. The whole program and the reward system have rendered tremendous services in terms of their instrumentality as vital management, knowledge sharing, participation, communication, and contextual tools.

The DGEP has a considerable reputation and is recognized worldwide as a reference. But it has several limitations. First, the award has a multitude of categories which reached 20. This is due to the desire to cover all aspects of performance and also to give the chance to most of the departments to win the award in a category. Second, weaknesses are visible in terms of the lack of expertise of assessors and DGEP coordinators. On one hand, the assessors are not very qualified to assess performance in all areas (finance, HR, Information Systems, strategies, etc.). They have general knowledge and are not specialized in specific areas. On the other hand, the DGEP coordinators involved in preparing the DGEP are generally young employees who lack experience and do not have the necessary skills to make this process

successful. Third, the evaluation mechanisms are not very clear to all departments and sometimes seem pretty subjective. Fourth, the culture of excellence is still not developed at all levels of the organization. The DGEP feedback report is communicated only to top management and not shared with the rest of the organization. Fifth, some managers are not fully engaged in this process. They see DGEP as a heavy process, which creates a bureaucracy that requires a lot of preparations. This is a top-down process and managers are obliged to comply.

Despite the limitations, the DGEP and the reward system have demonstrated considerable amounts of positive results. Most importantly, its role in strengthening the skills of UAE employees has been phenomenal. This is an award intended exclusively for UAE nationals despite the government's announcement saying that the award is for all employees of the Dubai government. Its implicit objective is to promote Emiratis in the government employment system and to develop a pool of competent and efficient national staff. So here we have a motivation, after all, legitimate but highly contingent as determined by the context of the City-States that are open to the world with a population that has a predominantly non-national staff.

REFERENCES

1. Aakvik, A., Hansen, F., & Torsvik, G. (2017). Productivity dynamics, performance feedback and group incentives in a sales organization. *Labour Economics*, 46, 110-117.
2. Abasili, F. N., Bambale, A. J. A., & Aliyu, M. S. (2017). The effect of reward on employee performance in kano state board of internal revenue. *International Journal of Global Business*, 10(2), 1-16.
3. Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., & Woolcock, M. (2017). *Building state capability: Evidence, analysis, action* (p. 288). Oxford University Press.
4. Ahrens, T. (2013). *Assembling the Dubai Government Excellence Program: a motivational approach to improving public service governance in a monarchical context*. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.
5. Ahrens, T. (2014). *Tracing the evolution of the Dubai Government Excellence Program*. *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*.
6. Al Bayane (September 2020), *DGEP...23 years of success and pioneership* (Article in arabic). Link: <https://www.albayan.ae/across-the-uae/news-and-reports/2020-09-08-1.3955085>
7. Al Nuseirat, A. A., El Kahlout, Z. M., Abbas, A., Adebajo, D., Punnakitakashem, P., & Mann, R. (2019). *An analysis of a structured benchmarking project: The case of Dubai Electricity and Water Authority's benchmarking project*. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*.
8. Al-Saleh, Y. (2018). *Crystallising the Dubai model of cluster-based development*. *Place Branding and*

- Public Diplomacy, 14(4), 305-317.
9. Ali, R., & Ahmed, M. S. (2009). The impact of reward and recognition programs on employee's motivation and satisfaction: an empirical study. *International review of business research papers*, 5(4), 270-279.
 10. Balkin, D. B., & Gomez-Mejia, L. R. (1990). Matching compensation and organizational strategies. *Strategic management journal*, 11(2), 153-169.
 11. Benedict, B. (1966). Sociological characteristics of small territories and their implications for economic development. *The social anthropology of complex societies*, 23-36.
 12. Blackburn, R., & Rosen, B. (1993). Total quality and human resources management: lessons learned from Baldrige Award-winning companies. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 7(3), 49-66.
 13. Bohoris, G. A. (1995). A comparative assessment of some major quality awards. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*.
 14. Borins, S. F. (Ed.). (2009). *Innovations in government: Research, recognition, and replication*. Brookings Institution Press.
 15. Miguel, P. A. C. (2005). Quality and business excellence programs in the world. In *ASQ World Conference on Quality and Improvement Proceedings* (Vol. 59, p. 371). American Society for Quality.
 16. Miguel, P. A. C., & Cauchick, A. (2005). A comparison of quality and business excellence programs in the world. *Revista de Ciência & Tecnologia*, 13(25/26), 35-46.
 17. Chin-Ju, T. (2010). *Reward and Incentive Compensation and Organizational Performance*. Dallas, TX: Evidence from the Semiconductor Industry.
 18. Considine, M., Nguyen, P., & O'Sullivan, S. (2018). New public management and the rule of economic incentives: Australian welfare-to-work from job market signalling perspective. *Public Management Review*, 20(8), 1186-1204.
 19. Coram, P. J., & Robinson, M. J. (2017). Professionalism and performance incentives in accounting firms. *Accounting Horizons*, 31(1), 103-123.
 20. Davidson, C. M. (2010). The higher education sector in the Gulf: History, pathologies, and progress. *The EU and the GCC: Challenges and prospects under the Swedish EU presidency*, 95-75.
 21. DGEP web site: <http://www.dubaixcellence.ae/DGEP/>.
 22. EFQM (2003), *Fundamental concepts of excellence*.
 23. El Kahlout, Z. (2010). *Dubai government excellence program: a success story*. Middle East.
 24. Emirat Al Youm (May 2011), DGEP wins UN award (Article in arabic). Link : <https://www.emaratallyoum.com/cal-section/other/2011-05-23-1.396035>

25. Entwistle, T., & Downe, J. (2005). Picking winners to define and disseminate best practice. *Public Policy and Administration*, 20(4), 25-37.
26. Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. (2009). The design and use of performance management systems: An extended framework for analysis. *Management accounting research*, 20(4), 263-282.
27. Fninou, B., & Meyssonier, F. (2013). Un système de pilotage de la performance publique à dominante managériale: analyse de l'expérience de Dubaï. *Politiques et management public*, 30(2), 241-259.
28. Forstenlechner, I. (2008). Workforce nationalization in the UAE: image versus integration. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*.
29. Frey, B. S. (2007). Awards as compensation. *European management review*, 4(1), 6-14.
30. Galbraith, J. K. (1973). Controls or Competition-What's at Issue? Comment. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 55(4), 524-524.
31. Galimberti, J. (2002, October). Chronicling public sector renewal in Canada: the IPAC Award for Innovative Management. In *Congreso Internacional del CLAD sobre la Reforma del Estado y de la Administración Pública* (Vol. 7).
32. Garvin, D. A. (1991). How the Baldrige Award really works. *Harvard business review*, 69(6), 80-95.
33. Goodale, J. C., Koerner, M., & Roney, J. (1997). Analyzing the impact of service provider empowerment on perceptions of service quality inside an organization. *Journal of quality Management*, 2(2), 191-215.
34. Grant, A. M. (2008). Does intrinsic motivation fuel the prosocial fire? Motivational synergy in predicting persistence, performance, and productivity. *Journal of applied psychology*, 93(1), 48.
35. Gulf News (April 2010), Award ceremony to recognize excellence. Link: <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/award-ceremony-to-recognise-excellence-1.611124>
36. Hartley, J., & Downe, J. (2007). The shining lights? Public service awards as an approach to service improvement. *Public Administration*, 85(2), 329-353.
37. Hides, M. T., Davies, J., & Jackson, S. (2004). Implementation of EFQM excellence model self-assessment in the UK higher education sector—lessons learned from other sectors. *The TQM magazine*.
38. Hood, C. (1991). A public management for all seasons?. *Public administration*, 69(1), 3-19.
39. Hunter, J. E., Schmidt, F. L., & Judiesch, M. K. (1990). Individual differences in output variability as a function of job complexity. *Journal of applied psychology*, 75(1), 28.
40. Hughes, O. E. (2012). *Public management and administration: An introduction*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
41. Jacob, R., Madu, C. N., & Tang, C. (2004). An empirical assessment

- of the financial performance of Malcolm Baldrige Award winners. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*.
42. Joyce, P., & Al Rasheed, T. F. (2016). *Public Governance and Strategic Management Capabilities: Public Governance in the Gulf States*. Routledge.
 43. Kealesitse, B., O'Mahony, B., Lloyd-Walker, B., & Polonsky, M. J. (2013). Developing customer-focused public sector reward schemes: Evidence from the Botswana government's performance-based reward system (PBRs). *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.
 44. Lawler, E., & Worley, C. G. (2006). Winning support for organizational change: Designing employee reward systems that keep on working. *Ivey Business Journal*, 70(4), 1-5.
 45. Lebas, M. J. (1995). Performance measurement and performance management. *International journal of production economics*, 41(1-3), 23-35.
 46. Lee, S. M., Rho, B. H., & Lee, S. G. (2003). Impact of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria on organizational quality performance. *International journal of production research*, 41(9), 2003-2020.
 47. Mansour, A. M. (2017). Has the United Arab Emirates federal government succeeded to transform its federal bureaucracy into a new public management system?. *International Public Management Review*, 18(1).
 48. Rahman, M. H., Moonesar, I. A., Hossain, M. M., & Islam, M. Z. (2018). Influence of organizational culture on knowledge transfer: Evidence from the Government of Dubai. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 18(1), e1696.
 49. Rahman, M. H., & Said, W. Y. (2015, February). Public sector performance and leadership in the United Arab Emirates. In *International Conference on Management, Leadership & Governance* (p. 224). Academic Conferences International Limited.
 50. Sarker, A. E., & Al Athmay, A. A. A. R. A. (2018). The changing facets of public administration in the United Arab Emirates. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 41(10), 832-844.
 51. Stonich, P. J. (1984). The performance measurement and reward system: Critical to strategic management. *Organizational Dynamics*, 12(3), 45-57.
 52. Tan, K. C. (2002). A comparative study of 16 national quality awards. *The TQM magazine*.
 53. Walter, J. (1996). *L'entreprise saisie par le social et l'humanitaire. Contribution à l'étude de la reconnaissance d'un monde professionnel*. *Recherches en communication*, 6, 103-124.