ELEVATING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL PATHWAY FOR MCMC USPD OFFICERS

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ELEVATING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL PATHWAY FOR MCMC USPD OFFICERS

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A project report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration

Keywords: Competency, project management, Continuous Professional Development, skillset

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DEDICATION

I dedicated this effort to my dear family members and friends, who are always there to support and assist me as I continue on my learning journey.

Along with all of the diligent and respected lecturers, especially my supervisor, I dedicate my report to my esteemed bosses and colleagues, who have always shared their ideas and offered inspiration to fulfil this project.

This study is my contribution to the telecommunication industry and it is my wish that this study will benefit everybody in the future.

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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. All praise to Allah and His blessing for the completion of this research project. I thank Allah for the opportunities, trials, and strength that have been granted upon me in order to complete this report.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their endless support, as well as for recognizing my efforts. May Allah the Almighty grant all of the above success in their life.

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on improving the performance of Officers in the Universal Service Provision Division ("USPD"). USPD is one of the core Divisions within Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission ("MCMC") responsible for operationalizing the USP Regulations 2002 which is to bridge the digital divide in rural and remote areas, particularly areas with no or limited services. The objectives of this research are to (1) determine competency requirements for USPD and analyse the gap between the officer and its effect on their performance, (2) to determine the best strategies to complement individual competencies and expertise needed for work to enhance the organization efficiency, and to (3) measure and evaluate the impact of the proposed solution on the post-performance of the individual and the organization. The research was conducted using mixed-methods approaches, namely qualitative and quantitative. The data collection starts with qualitative method, where the researcher has conducted an interview session with the respective officers. The information gathered was analyzed using NVivo 12 Plus software for thematic analysis. Then for quantitative, the questionnaires were distributed to 11 respondents for their feedback. The questionnaires cover both pre and post-intervention. The data collected from the quantitative method was analyzed using SPSS 21 software. Using the triangulation convergence model, the results of analysis from qualitative and quantitative method was merged during interpretation phase. Results from the post-intervention in both cycle 1 and cycle 2 show that the respondents are agreed that with the structured training and teaming method have a positive relationship to improve the performance of the officer. The result of this research indeed has a significant impact on how this study help in elevating the professional development of the USPD's officer.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada untuk peningkatan prestasi Pegawai di Bahagian Pemberian Perkhidmatan Sejagat ('USPD'). PPS adalah salah satu Bahagian teras Suruhanjaya Komunikasi Dan Multimedia Malaysia ('MCMC') yang bertanggungjawab untuk mengoperasikan Peraturan-Peraturan PPS 2002 iaitu untuk merapatkan jurang digital di kawasan luar bandar dan pedalaman, terutamanya kawasan yang tidak mempunyai atau perkhidmatan terhad. Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk (1) menentukan keperluan kecekapan untuk PPSMI dan menganalisis jurang antara pegawai dan kesannya terhadap prestasi mereka, (2) untuk menentukan strategi terbaik untuk melengkapkan kecekapan dan kepakaran individu yang diperlukan untuk kerja untuk meningkatkan kecekapan organisasi, dan untuk (3) mengukur dan menilai kesan penyelesaian yang dicadangkan mengenai pasca prestasi individu dan organisasi. Penyelidikan ini dijalankan menggunakan pendekatan kaedah campuran, iaitu kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Pengumpulan data bermula dengan kaedah kualitatif, di mana penyelidik menjalankan sesi temuduga dengan pegawai masing-masing. Maklumat yang dikumpul dianalisis menggunakan perisian NVivo 12 Plus untuk analisis tematik. Kemudian untuk kuantitatif, borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada 11 responden untuk maklum balas mereka. Soal selidik meliputi kedua-dua pra dan selepas campur tangan. Data yang dikumpulkan dari kaedah kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan perisian SPSS 21. Menggunakan model pertembungan triangulasi, hasil analisis daripada kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif telah digabungkan semasa fasa interpretasi. Keputusan daripada post-intervensi menunjukkan bahawa responden bersetuju bahawa dengan latihan berstruktur dan kaedah berpasukan meningkatkan prestasi pegawai. Hasil penyelidikan ini dapat memberi impak yang baik tentang bagaimana kajian in membantu dalam meningkatkan pembangunan profesional pegawai USPD.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USPD	-	Universal Service Provider Division
SPSS	-	Social Sciences Statistical Package
MCMC	-	Malaysia Communication and Multimedia Commission
PDUD	-	Ministry of Finance
IMD	-	Operating Expenditure
DCMD	-	Development Expenditure
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
MCO	-	Movement Control Order
WFH	-	Work From Home
PM	-	Project Manager
EOA	-	Expert Opinion Analysis
MBA		Master of Business Administration
NOA		Notification of Approval

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The competent project manager must have various duties and responsibilities that will determine the success of the project they managed. Previous studies reveal four (4) essential skills required to be an effective project manager: technical, political, human, and conceptual skills. To be a successful officer in the Universal Service Provision Division, they must have excellent technical and other aspects of generic skills of the project manager. It is crucial to compare the type of skills required in the USPD and the current skill set of the existing officer to understand the gap between the required and the current skill set, especially in the context of project management.

According to Project Management Institute, Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements. Project management is accomplished by applying and integrating the project management processes of initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. All these processes require a high-level level of competency and skills for the project manager to complete.

Continuous Learning is essential for the officer to adapt with the rigorous demand and rapid changes in the work environment. It is necessary as part of improving critical thinking, acquiring new knowledge and increasing the level of competency to develop future opportunities and avoid stagnation.

This chapter will cover seven sub-chapters, which include the background of the company, problematic situation in the organization, research questions and research objectives, researcher's role in the research, research ethics, and importance of the proposed research theoretically and practically definitions of terms. .

1.2 Case Company/Institution Information

Universal Service Provision Division

The Universal Service Provision Division ("USPS") is one of the core Divisions within Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission ("MCMC") responsible for operationalizing the USP Regulations 2002. In general, USPD's primary principal responsibilities are finding the effective way within the Commission's legal remit to bridge the digital divide by providing communications infrastructure and services such as towers, fixed links and cables, transmitters, and bandwidth services. It enables rural and marginalized people to access basic telephony, public cellular and broadband services.

The USPD manages a total of RM 10 Billion worth of existing infrastructure projects and expects to oversee the upcoming project known as JENDELA worth RM 4.5 Billion to kick off by the third quarter (Q3) of 2021. There are three (3) departments operating under USPD known as Planning and Development Department ("PDUD"), Implementation and Monitoring Department ("IMD"), Digital Community and Management Department ("DCMD").

PDUD's roles are identifying areas requiring service coverage, recommending, and synchronizing the plan for all initiatives such as JENDELA with the USP Regulation 2002. For IMD, its principal accountability is to closely review, monitor, analyze and troubleshoot all the USP projects to ensure the objectives of the USP Regulations 2002 are fulfilled and its provisions strictly adhere. Both PDUD and IMD are more interrelated, where the latter will monitor the project planned by PDUD. While for DCMD, its roles are exclusion to the operation of the Internet Centres where they need to develop and establish a compliance mechanism to monitor all Internet Centres operations nationwide.

Being an organization, MCMC and USPD specifically face new challenges in today's business environment where projects constitute a significant part of the business process. Projects are complex work systems where technical, procedural,

organizational, and human elements are integrated (Ruska & Vartiainen, 2003). Therefore, being agile and scalable is vital for the USPD. The officer plays a significant role as the engine driving the division to ensure that the division can accommodate the latest developments and demands where multiple projects are running simultaneously. The most desired attribute expected by Management is to be a knowledgeable, professional and versatile officer. The practice of assigning the officer as the project manager only for a specific project is no longer relevant. Multiple and flexible ways of working require organizational structure to be flexible and become more common as knowledge intensiveness in work has grown and the nature of technology changes (Ruska & Vartianen, 2003). The Management has highlighted that staff incompetency and negligence are significant issues that have caused the previous project are not adequately monitored, delayed, and costing MCMC the time overran.

1.2.1 Background of Organization

Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission ('MCMC') is a regulatory body set up under Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 ("CMA '98"). As a statutory body, MCMC's obligation was to promote the wide usage of the network infrastructure and services, regulate and develop Malaysia's communications and multimedia industry. One of the significant legislation under the CMA 98 is the Universal Service Provision Framework ("USP Framework").

The main objective of having a USP Framework is to promote the widespread availability and usage of network services and application services throughout Malaysia. These objectives are accomplished by encouraging the installation of network facilities and providing network services and applications services in underserved areas; or for underserved groups within the community.

This objective is set out by utilizing the licence service provider's contribution known as Universal Service Provision Fund, where MCMC was the custodian for the trust fund ("USP Fund"). The USP Fund's utilization was regulated under the Communications and Multimedia (Universal Service Provision) Regulations 2002. ("USP Regulations 2002").

1.2.2 SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis is a tool used for strategic planning and strategic Management in an organization. It is a simple but powerful tool for sizing an organization's resources capabilities and deficiencies, market opportunity, and the external threat to its future (Gural, 2017). In the case of MCMC, the SWOT analysis conducted by the researcher for the research are depicted as per the following table:

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
1) The project is initiated to provide communications services and governed by the CMA 98 and USP Regulations 2002. 2) The initiatives are to bridge the connectivity gap between the people in remote and rural areas with the urban people. 3) The project is backed by a fund with a healthy financial position.	1) Lack of staffing to oversee the multiple projects. 2) Too many projects with a different scope that require a high level of technical skill to manage it 3) The project manager takes a long time to verify the project's progress due to a lack of competency.
OPPORTUNITY	**THREAT**
1) The Management of MCMC is supportive of the development of the career path of its employees. 2) There is an opportunity to grow and have a career path in the organization 3) MCMC Academy has provided a platform for the employees to learn and develop themselves.	1) All projects are awarded via tender to the service provider. Therefore, the project's completion depends on the service provider's capability to complete it within the given timeline. Project manager roles are limited to planning, troubleshooting, and monitoring the progress and implementation of the project. 2) Delay in approval process at local authority level 3) Political Instability..

Table 1-1 Swot Analysis

1.3 Problem Statement

There are fourteen (14) big-scale infrastructure projects under the purview of USPD comprising 2035 towers, 5340 base stations upgrading, and 874 Internet Centres nationwide. USPD is also expected to oversee an additional 1661 towers by the end of 2022. Compared with the scale and scope of the projects, USPD can be viewed as

understaffing compared with the size and complexity of the projects, as it needs to depend on the fifteen (15) officers within the division to handle the whole project.

No	Name	Department	Designation	Job Description
1	PM1	PUDD	Deputy Director	Project Manager - Planner
2	PM2	PDUD	Deputy Director	Project Manager - Planner
3	PM3	PDUD	Assistant Director	Project Manager - Planner
4	PM4	PDUD	Assistant Director	Project Manager - Planner
5	PM5	PDUD	Assistant Director	Project Manager - Planner
6	PM6	IMD	Deputy Director	Project Manager and Compliance Officer
7	PM7	IMD	Assistant Director	Project Manager, Monitoring and Compliance Officer
8	PM8	IMD	Assistant Director	Project Manager
9	PM9	IMD	Assistant Director	Project Manager
10	PM10	IMD	Assistant Director	Project Manager
11	PM11	DCMD	Deputy Director	Project Manager for Internet Centres
12	PM12	DCMD	Deputy Director	Project Manager for Internet Centres
13	PM13	DCMD	Assistant Director	Project Manager for Internet Centres
14	PM14	DCMD	Assistant Director	Project Manager Internet Centres - Stakeholders Management
15	PM15	DCMD	Assistant Director	Project Manager for Internet Centres

Table 1-2 List of USPD's Officers

As a highly responsible division, competent officers who know the nature and transparency of their position must support it. Overall, the roles of the officer as the project manager include but not limited to the following:

a) The planning and construction of the facilities.
b) Oversight of the project's execution until completed.
c) Monitoring and troubleshooting any issues occurring during and after the implementation of the project.

Therefore, it is expected that all USPD officers as the project manager have the required ability and competency to meet management requirements in terms of the comprehension of legal instruments. They also must have the versatility in coping with various activities of varying degrees of difficulty, use of decision-making resources and tools, and communication and organizational skills.

Having a competent officer is essential to ensure project delivery. However, due to the significant competency gap, the supervisor tends to rely only on a few officers to oversee the work, although that role is frequently outside their job scope and obligation.

It has led the high-performing officer to be frustrated, as the workload for the job is not shared evenly among officers as some officers only do their daily assignments and deskwork. In contrast, others need to conduct several complicated tasks involving critical thinking and quick response time because supervisors/managers often find the shortcut to quickly dump a task in the division to a more competent officer.

1.3.1 Problem Diagnosis

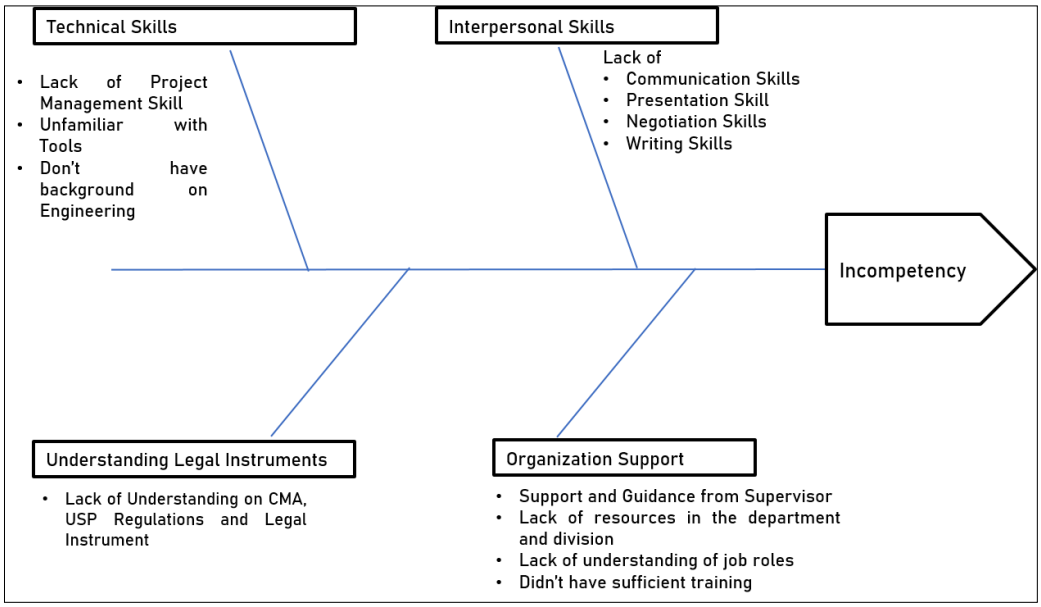

Figure 1-1: Ishikawa Fish Bone Analysis

Appreciation of the USP Objectives and Understanding of Legislation

For every USP initiative, USP Regulations are always the cornerstones. The planning, project executions, claims payment, and any legal action guided by it. Despite that, the officers seem to lack understanding and appreciation of the USP Regulations. For example, there is a case where the Designated Universal Service

Providers licences expired during the implementation time, and the Project Manager is aware of this breach but not taking any action and alerting the Management on this issue. The Project Manager's responsibility is not just to monitor the project execution but also to ensure all the conditions set out in the Notifications of Approval are complied with and adhered to by the Service Provider. The officer's reason for not taking action is their misunderstanding that the Commission's licensing department should only take action on the licence expiry issue, not USPD. Therefore, understanding the regulations is crucial to achieving the goal and objective set out by the USP Framework. Since the officer is the key player in achieving this goal, they must understand what the project aims to produce (Naoum, Fong & Walker, 2004).

Technical Skills

Each project has different technical and specification requirements. In the past, the management direction only assigned one (1) officer as the project manager. The project manager will be involved in the project's implementation from end to end until the project is completed. Back then, the decision was to ensure that the project manager could focus only on managing the project and developing the in-depth technical knowledge and skill of managing the project. However, there is a prominent issue if this practice is continued to be applied by the division. As the officer leaves the department or the division, this proves to be the problem when there is no proper succession plan or knowledge transfer to the new officer.

The problem will become more severe if the replacement officer has no formal technical background. There is no documentation or guidelines prepared for them to make as a reference to manage the portfolio. The lack of technical skill among the new officer is proof to be an issue when articulating or explaining to the Management specific matters. The technical skill of the project is crucial for the project manager to avoid any project cost and time overrun, which is always associated with the inexperienced project manager (Naoum, Fong & Walker, 2004). Technical Skills are the specialized knowledge, analytical ability within that specialty, and facility in using the tools and techniques of the specific disciplines (Sunindijo R.Y, 2015).

Communications and Organizational Skills

As the project manager, the officer has to deal with many stakeholders of the projects. The officer has to liaise with the service providers, local authorities, vendors, and Management frequently. However, it has hampered the Division as the officer is often afraid or uncomfortable talking or meeting with service providers or higher positions.

The officer is also expected to do the recommendation paperwork and present to Management any issues or reports requested by the administration. In terms of paperwork, the officer often failed to clearly articulate the problem that needs to be highlighted to the Management, resulting in the supervisor re-assigning the work to a more capable person. The officers are also avoiding doing the presentation and instead of letting their head of department manage it. This is one reason why it takes so long for some of the USP projects to be completed due to the project manager hesitating to engage actively with the stakeholders. The lack of leadership and poor interpersonal skills are also related to the failure of the project (Naoum, Fong & Walker, 2004).

1.3.2 Theoretical

Based on the analysis made on the keyword "Project Management Competency" in Web Science Website, there are no less than 872 studies on the competencies in Project management for the last five years, and the topic is quite general. Figure 1-2 shows that ninety-three studies have been conducted from the tree map for the past five years in the civil engineering industry; however, it is not limited to just communications services. In Malaysia, the research context on project

management competency is quite frequent with 72 research was conducted for the past five years as shown in Figure 1-3.

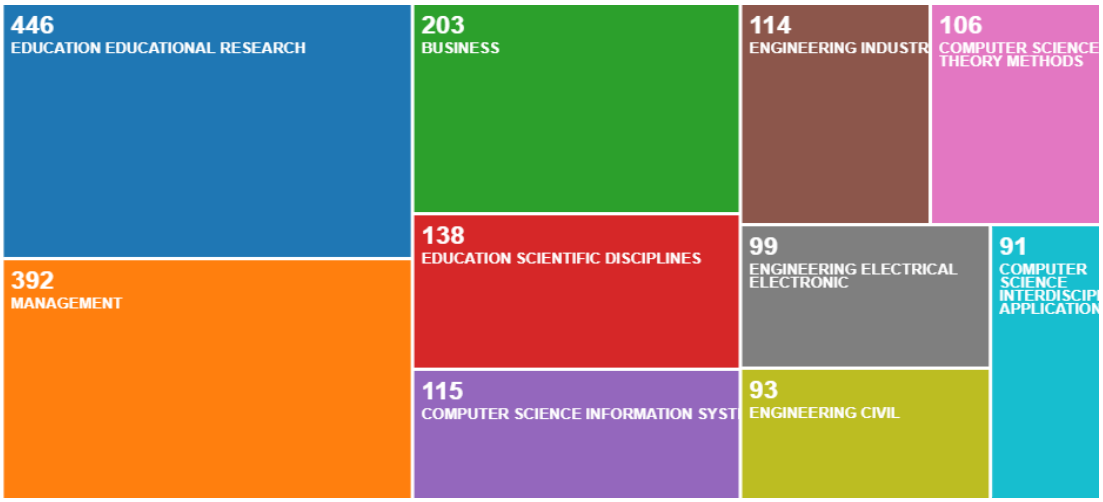

Figure 1-2: Tree Map Analysis on Project Management Competency

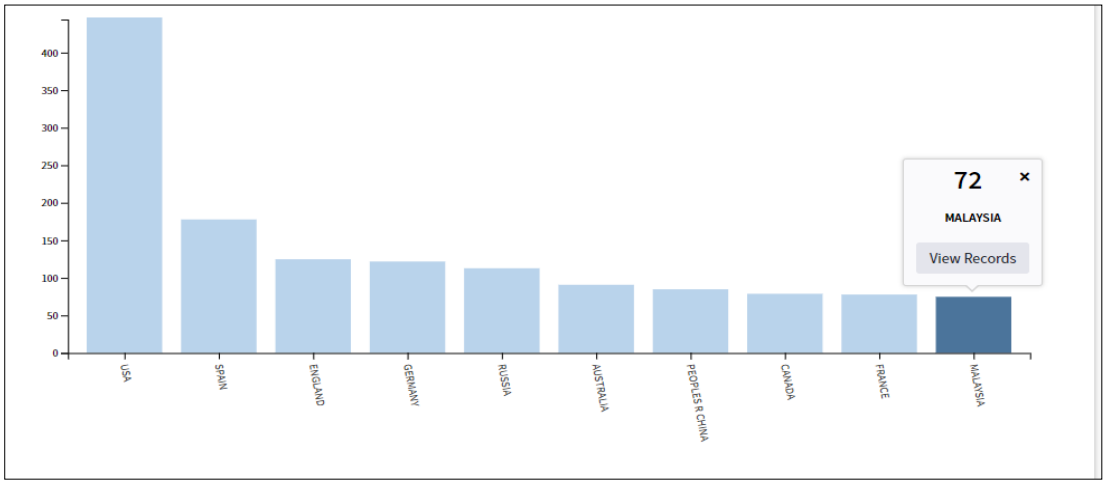

Figure 1-3: Visualization of Bar Graph from Web of Science

1.3.3 Practical

The research scope is limited to the USPD only. It does not reflect on the whole MCMC as the organization, and all the results from the studies are only relevant to the specific division. Nevertheless, the research emphasizes the competency and skill required as the project manager and the project management. Therefore, the process in this research can be replicated in other project-based organizations.

1.4 Research Goal

The researcher will emphasize the research questions based on the problem that has been discussed in depth in the problem statement. Aside from that, the researcher will underline the research objectives of this research.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions have been identified based on the problems that arise. Thus, the questions of the study are:

RQ1: What is the required competency and skills for the officer or project manager to successfully deliver the project?
RQ2: What is the best approach in elevating the performance of the officers?
RQ3: What is the impact of the intervention on the level of competency of the staff?

1.6 Research Objectives

The objective of this research has been identified as below:

i. To determine competency requirements for USPD and analyse the gap between the officer and its effect on their performance. (R01)
ii. To determine the best strategies to complement individual competencies and expertise needed for work to enhance the organization efficiency (RO2); and
iii. To measure and evaluate the impact of the proposed solution on the post-performance of the individual and the organization. (RO3).

1.7 Researchers Role

In this context, the researcher has a role in finding out the critical competencies among the Officers in USPD. To contribute to the organization, the officers need specific competence to be to work in USPS. The researcher will then identify the most

suitable development plan specifically designed for USPD to match the competence required by the profession and the individual's competency.

1.8 Research Ethics

The researcher conducted the research within the ethical principles' boundaries by obtaining consent from the respondent before the engagement for both interviews and survey, respectively. The researcher conducted a briefing about the research objective and the purpose of the data collection to the respondent. Since MCMC is the statutory body, it is bound to the secrecy act. Therefore, the researcher will not reveal the respondent's details, and all information is strictly confidential.

1.9 Importance of the Proposed Research

This research will define and evaluate the skills gap and competencies difference in terms of job awareness, versatility, efficiency, and attitude for each USPD officer that affects the organization's performance. This study is also to promote the proper UPSD process to ensure that staff has an equal level of competence that will contribute to the competitiveness and performance of the Division. The coordinated training and growth path policy using the Continuous Professional Development Method is supposed to define the organization's direction to become more productive and to be the reference for the future recruitment process for the USPD.

1.10 Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
USPD	Mean Universal Service Provision Division – A division that is responsible for operationalizing the Universal Service Provision Regulations 2002.
Competencies	Mean a combination of skills, knowledge, attributes, and behavior that enables an individual to perform a task or an activity within a given job. Competencies are observables behavior that can be measured and evaluated, and thus

Term	Definition
	essential in terms of defining job requirement and recruiting, retaining, and developing staff (IAEA,2018)
DUSP	This means the Designated Universal Service Provider designated by MCMC to undertake the service provisioning such as public cellular services
Notification of Approval	Means the Letter of Award issued by MCMC to the DUSP pursuant to the CMA 1998. The terms and conditions of the designation and the project specifications are detailed out in the Notification of Approval. Notification are part and parcel of the Regulations, therefore a breach to the Notification of Approval means a breach to the Regulations.
Project Manager	An officer who plays the lead role in planning, executing, monitoring, controlling, and closing projects. They are accountable for the entire project scope, project team, resources, and the success or failure of the project.
Continued Professional Development	Continued Professional Development (CPD) refers to describing how practitioners participate in learning programs to strengthen and refine their skills. It allows learning, rather than being passive and reactive, to become conscious and constructive.

Table 1-3 Definition of Terms

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