

THE EFFECTS OF MOTIVATION ON INFLUENCING CIVIL SERVANTS TO ACCEPT E-GOVERNMENT CHANGE

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Abstract

E-government in Brunei Darussalam is still in the early stages. Nonetheless there are a number of ministries that have successfully installed and wired their departments to gear up for a fully functional e-government. This paper outlines the preliminary studies conducted and the lessons learnt as part of a larger research project that investigated the influence of motivation on civil servants' acceptance of e-government. The studies were conducted in two departments in Brunei Darussalam comprising of forty six civil servants. Results from these studies are divided into two parts. The first part describes the lessons learnt from adapting several research methods. From the studies, it was found that there was a limited number of participants willing to take part in the interviews compared to the postal questionnaires. Nonetheless the data collected from the interviews is richer in detail. The second part describes the results as explained by the participants. It is hoped that the results from these preliminary studies could aid in finding the right method for adaptability in future studies. The results could also be used to understand the role of motivation in e-government change.

Keywords: preliminary study, interviews, postal questionnaires, e-government, motivation, career advancement, empowerment, job satisfaction, personal satisfaction, recognition, respect, social acceptance, stability, Maslow hierarchy of needs.

1 INTRODUCTION

E-government in Brunei Darussalam is still in the early stages. It has initially targeted the year 2005 for full implementation of e-government but unfortunately the target has not been met (Othman, 2002). Brunei Darussalam has been slow to adopt e-government which could be due to the nation being a late acceptor of ICT as it was only in the late 1970s that ICT was used by the government's financial departments for data processing (Azaraimy, 2006). Even then, the government departments were still reliant on a dual system of recording data through computers and manual written records. Preliminary studies revealed that this practice is still carried out in some departments as civil servants found it very hard to completely trust ICT. This shows that there is a problem with civil servants' acceptance of change.

The main purpose of this paper is to give an account of the findings from the preliminary studies that were conducted between June to August 2007. The studies took place in two departments that have undergone vigorous changes to implement e-government. The studies were part of a larger research project to uncover the role of motivation in e-government change through the experiences that have been encountered by the civil servants. Several research methods were also tested to find the suitability for future studies. The methods tested were face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, one-on-one interviews and focus group interview. In

addition postal questionnaires were also tested to find out whether it is suitable to be used to collect people's experiences.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

It is said that the biggest challenge for effective change is to ensure the employees in the organisation are prepared for change and know what is expected of them (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1991). In reality, employees are not always change ready. Even though the change is seen as a positive move by the managers and leaders in the organisation, employees do not necessarily see it as such. This is because employees are looking at change from different perspectives. Managers and leaders see the change as achieving the greater good for the organisation but employees are looking at change from their own personal basis. Literature research showed that uncovering the reasons for people's resistance to change could aid in finding the solutions to influence them to accept change. It is found that Maslow's hierarchy of needs could be used to understand what leads people to accept change. It is not fair to say that this model is the only model that should be applied by change managers looking to change their employees. But this model can be used to suggest a number of factors that could influence people's acceptance or rejection to an introduced change.

According to Maslow, there are five needs that should be fulfilled before a person can realize his true potential (Figure 1). This model works by moving from the base to the top, from stage I to V, without skipping any stage. The person should fill his physiological needs first before the next need emerges. After his safety needs have been met, he moves up to fulfil his belonging needs. The next need that he attempts to attain would be esteem needs. The highest need that he aims to fulfil will be self actualization. Table 1 summarizes the definitions of the components of Maslow's model.

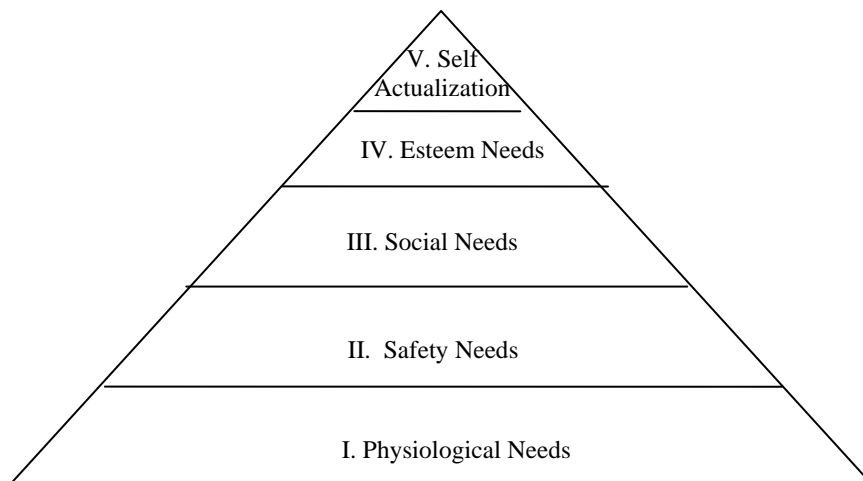


Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of need (Stum, 2001. p.6)

Component	Definition
Physiological Needs	Basic needs for survival such as water, food and air.
Safety Needs	The need for stability in their lives such as the feeling of being protected and the ease of mind that they are in a safe position, away from external harm.
Social Needs	The need of having social relationships with fellow work mates and feeling they belong to the group.
Esteem Needs	The need of being recognized for job well done.
Self Actualization Needs	Realizing their potential such as the skills and capability they can achieve and contribute these to the others (group, colleagues, organisation).

Table 1: Definitions of the component of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Maslow's theory talks about people's needs where they would strive to fulfil them. Needs are different from wants as the former are much greater and these are things that people cannot do without. From these descriptions, it can be seen that Maslow's hierarchy of needs basically describes human motivation. Motivation can be described as a positive behaviour to improve oneself by expending effort to achieve something. Therefore it can be defined as an encouragement to perform better. There is evidence that motivation leads to a high rate of successful task assignments and when people are highly motivated, they have better attitudes and accept the tasks that are given to them (Beaulieu et al, 1997, Laschinger & Wong, 1999; Laschinger et al, 2000; Eysenck, 2004). Therefore, the organisation needs to create a motivational organisational culture that supports the employees to increase their self belief and confidence, which in turn would lead to an increase in their commitment and brings greater productivity to the organisation.

Maslow's theory stressed that realizing and providing for these needs will drive employees to perform their work better. As such, motivation is identified as a strong factor to influence employees' change. Adapted from Maslow's theory, some factors that can bring about motivation are empowerment, job satisfaction, personal satisfaction, recognition and respect, social acceptance with other workers and stability (Figure 2). These factors are not placed in a pyramid because it is difficult to say which factor brings about the greater motivation since the needs of an employee is different from another. Therefore it is up to the individual employee to place the weight and strength of each factor. Increase in pay is not considered as one of the factors in motivation because although it can create temporary satisfaction it does not create long lasting motivation (Robinson, 2005).

This research is trying to discover whether these seven factors of motivation have any influence in civil servants acceptance of e-government change. The descriptions for these seven factors are explained in Table 2 below.

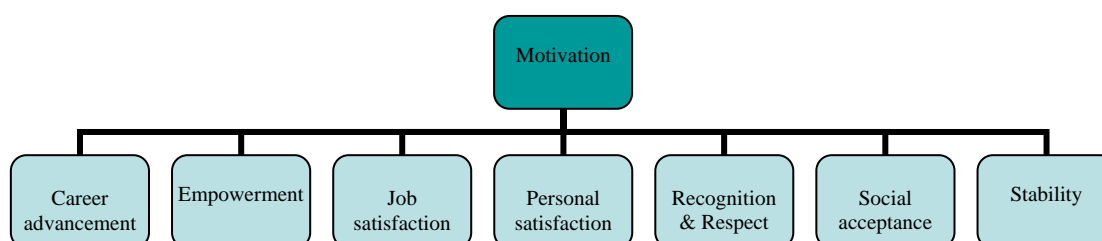


Figure 2: Factors of motivation adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Factors of motivation	Descriptions
Career advancement	The need to move forward in one's career.
Empowerment	The need to increase one's own strength through developing confidence and realizing one's potential such as the skills and capability he can achieve and contribute to others.
Job satisfaction	The need to feel satisfied in his career.
Personal satisfaction	The need to feel satisfied in his personal life.
Recognition & Respect	The need of being recognized and respected for job well done.
Social acceptance	The need for having social relationships with fellow work mates and feel they belong to the group.
Stability	The need for stability in their lives such as the feeling of being protected and the ease of mind that they are in a safe position.

Table 2: Descriptions of the factors of motivation adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Part of the objectives for conducting a preliminary study is to identify potential problems of the data collection method. The author therefore has tried several methods which are:

3.1 Interviews

There were only limited participants who agreed to take part in the study to be interviewed. The main reason, as stated by one of the participants, could be because of the nature of the research topic. It is trying to uncover the effects of motivation on civil servants in the government departments as a result of e-government change. Participants are loyal government servants and are uncomfortable to disclose the problems and hardships they encountered due to the change. The author has explained that any information disclosed are kept in confidence and would not be distributed to anyone without their permission. Nonetheless this has not done much to persuade them to participate.

In the study, the structured questions asked during the interviews are the same, only the methods of interview differed. There were several methods used. Firstly, the author wanted to find out the strength of telephone interviews as opposed to face-to-face interviews. This was also done because the author was in the United Kingdom and wanted to find out whether telephone interviews could be done to collect data from Brunei Darussalam without actually being there. It was found that in the telephone interviews, it took a shorter time to conduct and was cheaper in terms of travelling costs. Nonetheless not many participants were willing to take part. The two participants willing were not very co-operative and were uncomfortable during the interviews. The author felt there was some communication lost when the participants could not be seen face to face. An example is there were a lot of pauses when the participants could not answer the questions asked. Participants were cautious to give confidential details because they could not see whom they were talking to and trust could not be established. In addition, participants had made it clear before the interview that they were not willing to spend a long time over the telephone. This made the author rushed in asking some of the questions. In the end, there were not much useful information that could be collected. Because of this and the other problems mentioned, the author had to discard this method.

On the other hand, in the face-to-face method that were conducted in Brunei Darussalam, the author can directly observe the participants and this added a personal touch to the interviews as the author was able to observe the participants. These also acted as cues where the author could

rephrase or redirect questions accordingly. Participants were more trusting towards someone who they could see and were willing to disclose their personal accounts. The strengths and weaknesses of adopting these two methods as well as the lessons learnt are summarized in Table 3 below.

The author also wanted to find out the best method to collect data between one-on-one interview and group interview. It was found that in the latter only a few questions could be asked per session because there were many participants and they tended to discuss among themselves before giving feedback. Nonetheless this acted as control checks where only true accounts are given, as supported by their peers. The group interview was difficult to control because there were too many responses at one time. In many instances, responses were manipulated by one or two active speakers of the group. On the other hand, there was greater attention and control on the one-on-one interview. It was also observed that participants were more willing to share their personal thoughts to the author and not when their colleagues were around. However this type of interview took a long time to complete. Participants became restless after two hours. The strengths and weaknesses of adopting these methods as well as the lessons learnt are summarized in Table 4 below.

Data collection method	No of participants	Strengths	Weaknesses	Lessons learnt
Face to Face (conducted in Brunei Darussalam)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can observe participants directly as these can add to what they are describing. • Can build trust. • Interviewer has greater control (can explain/redirect/rephrase questions). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to organize (must follow participants' schedules). • Not many participants are willing to be interviewed. • Participants were unwilling to spend more than 1 1/2 hours (they grew restless). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High ranking officers more willing to be interviewed than lower ranking civil servants. • Need to limit the interview time to less than 2 hours per session. • Questions need to be more précised and refined.
Telephone (from United Kingdom to Brunei)	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster to conduct (distance is not a boundary) • Cheaper cost (no travelling cost) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to find participants • Could not directly observe participants. Some important data lost. • Participants were cautious to give confidential statements. • Participants become restless after more than 30 minutes on the phone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not much information could be gathered during telephone interviews.

Table 3: Strengths and weaknesses using face to face versus telephone interviews and lessons learnt.

Interview	No of participants	Strengths	Weaknesses	Lessons learnt
One-on-one interview	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater attention paid to participant. • Participants prefer to share their personal thoughts to the author only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took a longer time to complete. • Many participants were unwilling to spend a long time giving details (when time spent was more than 2 hours, participants grew restless). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High ranking officers more willing to be interviewed than lower ranking civil servants. • Need to limit the interview time to less than 2 hours per session.
Group interview	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can collect more responses in one interview. • Can create control checks, where participants will only give true accounts of the same phenomenon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a few questions can be asked at one time. • Difficult to control (too many responses at one time) • Responses manipulated by one or two strong person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable for experienced researcher who are able to control the interview.

Table 4: Strengths and weaknesses using one on one versus group interviews and lessons learnt.

3.1.1 Lessons learnt from interviews

Telephone interviews took less time to conduct but more preparations were required in advance such as finding participants and preparing the questions to be asked. Questions need to be precise because participants were only willing to spend less than 30 minutes on the phone. There were a lot of flaws that were experienced such as extra precautions taken by the participants in giving details. In addition, there was also a lack of personal feeling and identification when the author could not see the participants they were interviewing. There seemed to be some communication lost between the author and the participant. Since the actual research is on finding out the experiences of participants, this method is not appropriate because participants were not comfortable in narrating their accounts.

There was a lot of information given in the group interview but there was difficulty in collecting responses. It was difficult to control the lines of inquiry. One question asked by the interviewer could lead to a lot of answers by the participants. This method may be suitable for an experienced researcher because through practices he is more able to control the interview.

It was found that high ranking officers were more willing to participate in the face-to-face and one-on-one interview than lower ranking civil servants. Therefore this method is suitable for collecting data from high ranking officers such as managers or head of departments. In addition the questions asked needed to be refined and précised so that only important questions are asked to limit the interview time to less than two hours per session.

3.2 Questionnaires

There were not many participants willing to be interviewed thus another data collection method was used as an alternative. As a result, postal questionnaires were distributed to all of the 21 civil servants working in Department A and collected after one week. Postal questionnaires refer to questions that are given to participants and are answered on their own time without the presence of the interviewer. Upon collecting the questionnaires, there were only 15 completed questionnaires returned. It was quite a high response, with a return rate of 71%. Nonetheless, the main aim of the research was to gather participants' experiences, but it was difficult to

understand some of the answers given. Some participants only gave short answers and it was not easy to comprehend important facts. Furthermore collecting in-depth details of participants' experiences were limited since there was no control over responses. Further questions needed to be asked on some of the answers. These limitations tend to make postal questionnaires an insubstantial method. A sample of the questionnaires distributed to Department A is attached in Appendix 1. The summary of the first postal questionnaire is portrayed in Table 5 below.

Nonetheless, postal method was quite popular with the participants since they preferred this method over the others. Therefore lessons learnt from the first preliminary study were carried over to the second study to test whether questionnaires could be refined and reworded to extract important facts and give detailed accounts from participants.

The second preliminary study was at a different site and with different participants. Questionnaires were distributed to all of the 25 civil servants in Department B and they were also given the same time to complete the questionnaires. After a week, 25 responses were given back. This showed a return rate of 100%. There were some amendments to the questionnaire. Questions were reworded and refined so that participants could share more details of their experience. The questionnaires did help the participants to go into detail. Participants were also asked to provide their e-mail addresses. This act as a checking point where they could be contacted to ensure the details gathered are correct as well as to clarify on responses they gave. Most of the participants provided their e-mail address but it took a long time for them to respond back. Also, this process was tedious since there were a lot of people to contact. All in all, the lessons learnt from the second preliminary study suggested that this method is not appropriate to be used as the main method to collect people experiences. A sample of the questionnaires distributed to Department B is attached in Appendix 2. The summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the second postal questionnaire is portrayed in Table 5 below.

Postal questionnaires	No of participants	Strengths	Weaknesses	Lessons learnt
1st preliminary study	15 out of 21 in Department A (71%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants seem to prefer this method because they could fill in the questionnaires on their own time. • Can standardize questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot get rich details of participants' experiences. • No control over responses. (Difficult to ask further questions to responses). • When participants give short answers, it is difficult to comprehend a holistic view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High response rate from participants. • Try to refine questions to get important facts and richer account of details.
2nd preliminary study	25 out of 25 in Department B (100%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The refined questionnaire was able to help participants give more details. • Correspondents through e-mails were helpful in getting more information from participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took a long time for participants to respond by e-mail. • Responses through e-mails are tedious, as there were many people to contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not appropriate as the only method to gather data of people's experiences. • Can be used to support findings.

Table 5: Strengths, weaknesses and lessons learnt from postal questionnaires.

4 PRELIMINARY STUDIES RESULTS

From the studies it was found that unstructured questions gave broader answers, where the scope and extent of the information provided can lead to further direction to obtain more information. Furthermore unstructured questions give more freedom to the interviewer to

follow on certain pressing questions in accordance to the answers given. Nonetheless the interviewer should have some structured key questions prepared in order to have some control over the course of the interviews. As explained in paragraph 3.2, data collected from interviews are richer in detail. Data collected through questionnaires are used to support the findings from the interviews. Some of the effects of change identified in the two methods differ albeit to a small extent.

The interview responses by the participants on the effects of motivation in influencing them to accept change are summarized in Table 6. Explanations for their responses are also included in the table. Table 7 and table 8 show participants responses from the questionnaires. The figures indicated in the tables show the number of participants choosing the number of points. There were 15 returned questionnaires from Department A and 25 from Department B. Participants were asked to rank between 0 to 5 on the questions asked, where 5 indicate the highest factor that affects their decision to accept change.

Factors of motivation	One-on-one interviews			Focus interview 5 participants	Explanation
	A	B	C		
Career advancement	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Very Low	- Career progression is mostly based on seniority. - Advancement to better position depends on the vacancy of jobs available.
Empowerment	High	High	High	High	- Increase self value and worth.
Job satisfaction	High	Very high	Very high	Very high	- Incentive to increase skills.
Personal satisfaction	High	Very high	Very high	Very high	- Enhance self satisfaction.
Recognition & Respect	Very high	High	High	High	- Civil servants want to feel appreciated and to be involved in the change process. - Increase in self-esteem.
Social acceptance	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	- Being accepted by friends and colleagues is not a strong factor to accept change.
Stability	Medium	Medium	Low	High	- Job security is almost guaranteed in the public sector.

Table 6: Responses of participants on the factors of motivation using interviews.

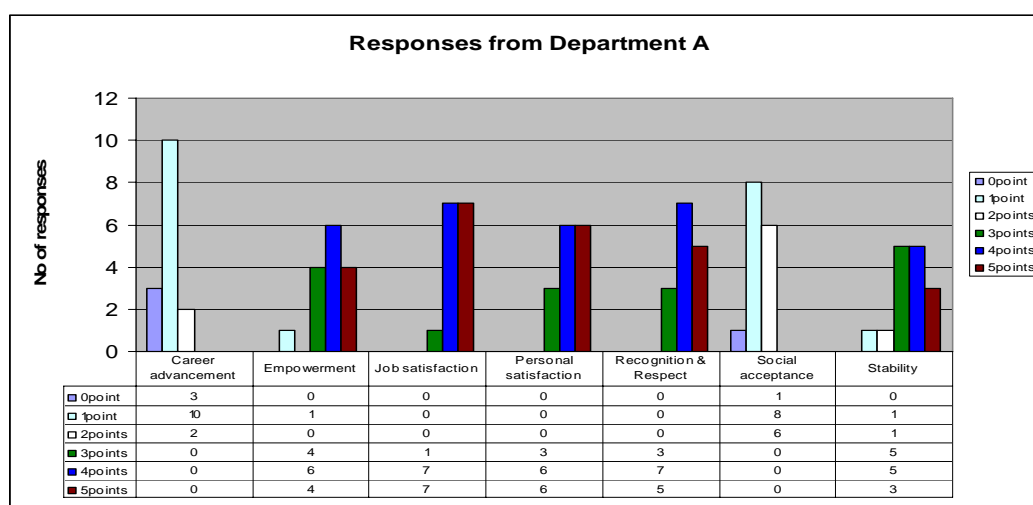


Table 7: Results of questionnaires responses from Department A

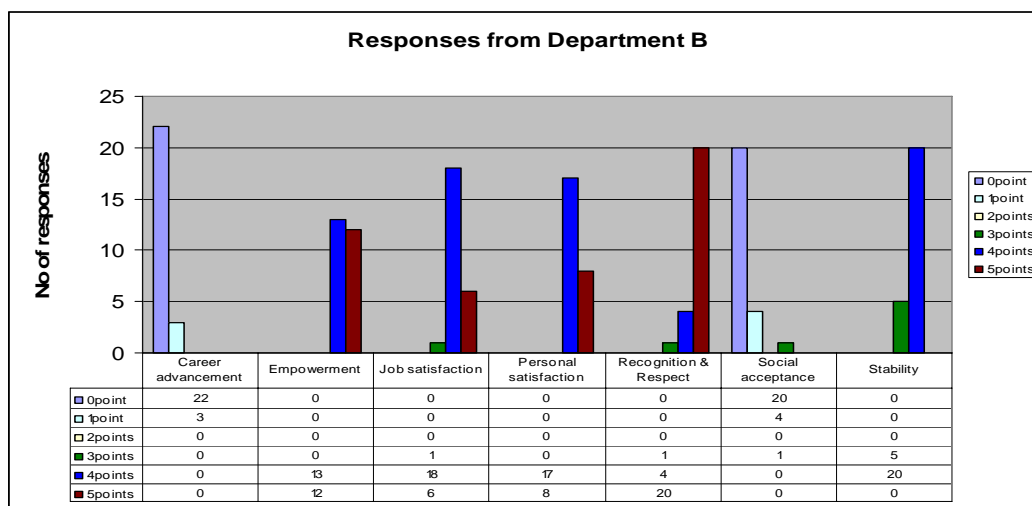


Table 8: Results of questionnaires responses from Department B

From the tables above, it could be seen that career advancement is considered as a low motivating factor for accepting change. In the group interview, participants did agree that career advancement can become a motivating factor to accept change. But from their experience, it is difficult to achieve career progression in the public sector as it is usually awarded based on seniority rather than performance. In the one-on-one interview, one participant also mentioned that career progression is difficult because there needs to be a vacancy for the job before he can be promoted. This is also supported by questionnaire responses from both Department A and Department B where a majority of the participants indicated very low points. Results from interviews and questionnaires indicated that social acceptance was also ranked as a low factor of change. Participants explained that being accepted by their colleagues and friends is not a strong factor for them to accept the change.

From the interviews, participants explained that stability have low effects on change because job stability is almost guaranteed in the public sector and as such is not a strong incentive to comply to change. But the group interview indicated otherwise. The participants were worried about their job security especially those in the lower level. Most of the participants are middle-aged and were afraid to be transferred elsewhere because it would require them to learn new skills and adapt to new environments. This result was similar with the questionnaire responses. In Department A, 67% indicated medium to high influence for acceptance of change. A few participants explained that they would accept the change if they are forced to accept it. This indicates that although job stability is assured, if there is strong enforcement from the top, civil servants would most likely accept the change.

Empowerment by managers and head of departments were considered as one of the factors that help to increase their self value and worth, and as such were deemed as a high incentive by the participants. This was expressed by the participants in the interviews. The results from the questionnaires in Department A and Department B also echoed this sentiment. Some stated that through seminars and workshops they were able to learn new things that made them realize the importance of the change. In addition, a few replied saying that encouragement from the top was by itself an incentive to change.

Other strong motivating factors that were seen as important for civil servants to accept change were job satisfaction and personal satisfaction. Questionnaires participants had difficulty

distinguishing the difference between the two because they believed job and personal satisfaction are similar. Nonetheless interview participants were able to distinguish between the two. Some responded that when the change required them to be involved attending seminars, workshops and conferences, it increased their job satisfaction because they were being educated and learning new things that could help them perform their work better. This was seen as an incentive that increased their job skills. Other replied that learning new things enhanced their personal satisfaction because it gave them personal enjoyment and self satisfaction.

Recognition and respect were also identified as strong factors for change in both interviews and questionnaires results. In the interviews, participants explained that they wanted to be involved in the change process and if their ideas were appreciated it increased their acceptance of the change. Furthermore their self esteem also receives a boost if their contributions are valued by their peers and especially by their head of department and top management. In the questionnaire responses, most participants indicated that having their input valued by their superiors is a strong incentive to accept the change.

5 CONCLUSION

Results gathered from the interviews are more conclusive than the questionnaires. These studies try to find the effects of the seven factors of motivation in influencing civil servants to accept change. The results need to be explanatory and descriptive so that more details of the impact they have on e-government change can be identified. Although postal questionnaires are used, this method is not appropriate for the studies because the results were not detailed enough but the results could be used to support main findings. The seven factors of motivation tested were career advancement, empowerment, job satisfaction, personal satisfaction, recognition and respect, social acceptance and stability. It was found that career advancement and social acceptance were low motivators of change whereas stability showed a mixed response from participants. This differs according to the job levels of the participants whereby those who are in the lower income group were more receptive of change if they were required to accept it. Empowerment, job satisfaction, personal satisfaction and recognition and respect were the top motivators of change. This is because they gave participants fulfilment that increases their satisfaction, enjoyment, and overall value as a person. The preliminary studies have advanced our understanding on the methods and techniques to employ during future research. More importantly the studies have shed some light into comprehending the effects of motivation on civil servants. Lessons gathered, discovered and realized are important because they provide useful knowledge that can be used in future research.

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Please rate from 0 to 5, to indicate the importance of the factors that influence you to accept change.

Where applicable please indicate reasons for your answers.

(0 = non applicability, 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = medium, 4 = high and 5 = very high).

No.	Question	Ratings	Reasons
1	Career advancement		
2	Empowerment		
3	Job satisfaction		
4	Personal satisfaction		
5	Recognition & Respect		
6	Social interaction		
7	Stability		

Appendix 1: Sample of questionnaires distributed to Department A.

Please rate between 0 to 5 to show the effect of the factors that influence you to accept change.

For each of the question please give reasons for your answers.

(0 = non applicability, 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = medium, 4 = high and 5 = very high).

No.	Question	Ratings
1	Career advancement Please indicate an explanation for the rating given	
2	Empowerment Please indicate an explanation for the rating given	
3	Job satisfaction Please indicate an explanation for the rating given	
4	Personal satisfaction Please indicate an explanation for the rating given	
5	Recognition & Respect Please indicate an explanation for the rating given	
6	Social interaction Please indicate an explanation for the rating given	
7	Stability Please indicate an explanation for the rating given	

Appendix 2: Sample of questionnaire distributed to Department B.