

Cambodia hosts course on productivity improvement in the public sector

Productivity and the improvement of productivity are key factors in the economic development of any country. The productivity movements in APO member countries are in different stages of development, but in general productivity improvement endeavors have had relatively greater success in the private than in the public sector in all. Also, while the APO has organized numerous projects focusing on productivity increases in the private sector, similar efforts are also important for the public sector so that it can catch up with the expectations of the public and provide the necessary support and services in an efficient, timely manner. For these reasons and the increasing attention being paid to quality governance, there have been several requests by member countries to focus on productivity improvement in the public sector.

A training course on Productivity Improvement in the Public Sector through Quality Awards was therefore held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 29 May–2 June 2006, hosted jointly by the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy and APO. The seminar aimed to examine the principles and application of quality awards in the public sector along with performance measurement and evaluation criteria to improve quality. The course also offered an opportunity to learn the best practices in productivity improvement efforts through quality awards from award-winning public-sector organizations in Singapore and Malaysia. The 15 participants from 12 member countries were also introduced to various initiatives to promote productivity improvement in the public sector. The training course in Cambodia was facilitated by Kamaruddin Mohamad from Malaysia and Dr. Benjamin Tan from Singapore.

Quality award frameworks like the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, Japan Quality Award, Singapore Quality Award, etc., have all stimulated efforts to improve quality and productivity in both the private and public sectors. The course attendees learned that today more than 80 countries have adopted some form of business excellence framework. The initial four frameworks were developed during 1987–1988 and

included the Australian Quality Award, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (USA), Deming Award (Japan), and Irish Quality Award. This was followed by a wave of adoption in the 1990s by other countries, including such APO member countries as Singapore, Malaysia, Fiji, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Thereafter, many quality award frameworks were developed in other parts of the world and differ only in the way they are presented, assessed, and the specific criteria or model used. There are, however, considerable similarities because all award frameworks emphasize the role of visionary leadership; customer/market focus; valuing and involving staff; actions based on data, information, and knowledge; recognizing systems and managing processes; and promoting continuous learning, improvement, and innovation. Additionally, all award frameworks focus on adding value to ensure sustainability and promoting good governance and social responsibility.

Since award-winning companies and organizations are well managed, their chances of business success are increased. There is research evidence from the USA, Europe, and Australia that award winners achieve better returns on investment, even when compared with S&P 500 companies. All awards provide a clear framework to strengthen organizational capabilities and guide organizational development toward excellence and innovation. 