

PROCESS OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT (CONCEPTS AND DIMENSIONS)

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Abstract

Employee empowerment is one of the most effective techniques to increase employee productivity and optimal use of capacities and capabilities of individual and group in line with organizational objectives. Empowerment is a process that helps to improve continuous performance of people and teams by development and expand their authority and ability. In other words, an empowerment is strategy of organizational development and prosperity. In this paper by a practical approach to concept of employees empowerment is explained its dimensions of the structural and behavioral. Historical background, definitions, factors and dimensions of empowerment are issues that dealt with this paper.

Keywords: Empowerment, the Structural Dimension, Behavioral Dimension

1- Introduction

Productive equipment was a valuable asset of organization in the twentieth century. While the most valuable assets of Twenty First Century institution - including commercial and non-commercial - will be the scientific employees and scientific employee's productivity of institution and scientific employee productivity is the biggest management challenge in the twenty-first century (Drucker, 2007, p167). During past two decades, extensive changes have been developed in the thinking of researchers and scholars of organizational concepts. Most research has focused on designing systems for human resources. Human resources are the most valuable and the rarest organizational resources. Attention to the huge resource of the organization is caused to maintain and to enhance organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Modern organizations due to global competition and dynamic business environment have the need to quality human capital in order to compatibility of organization with existing dynamic changing environment. Empowerment is stimulating of developing work environment (Monavarian, 2007, p192). Employee empowerment is one of the most effective tools for increasing employee productivity and efficient use from capacities and abilities of the individual and group according to Organizational goals (Azarinia, 2008, p2). The process of empowerment increases creativity and initiative of people and individuals committed to work more and increases job satisfaction (Wang, 2012). Empowerment improve organization effectiveness and increase the flexibility and dynamism organization and knowledge and skills (Fardin, 2012). Peter and colleagues have identified seven elements for empowerment that include: responsibility and accountability, knowledge and skills, independence,

information, creativity, initiative and innovation, power and decision-making (Abraiz&Raja, 2012).

2- Definition and Concepts of Empowerment

Word of empowerment in oxford dictionary is defined make (someone) stronger and provides power and enable. The concept of empowerment has been center for research and human resource activities for many years. There is still some debate about the meaning of the concept of empowerment. However, it states as an employee's perception. Empowerment definitions are lacking acceptable and compatible set about key components and applications in process of empowerment. About empowerment means have been discussed very much, but the concept is not defined correctly. Many experts believe that empowerment is rarely clearly defined and It has always been used as innovative. One possible reason for this lack of transparency is a willingness to join the empowerment to managerial programs such as: business process reengineering and quality management. Empowerment is represents the number of horizontal activities, from making empowerment to high levels of participation and delegation of authority. However, the real empowerment includes decision-making authority over the work content and field of work (Greasly et al, 2007, P41).

Empowerment means donate, it means that help people to improve their sense of self-confidence and dominate the feeling of helplessness and mobilize enthusiasm in work, activity and intrinsic motivation for a task (Blanchard, 1999, p65). Empowerment is encouraging more people to participate in decisions that affect their activities (smith, 2002, p1). Empowerment includes work forces that provide flexibility and more freedom for work decisions. It believes when employees have more responsibilities, they will react creatively and are encouraged to participate and help them to be satisfied with their job (Greasly & et .al, 2008, P40). Empowerment exists when people feel that they have control over their working life. This feel include: self-determination, personal meaning, sense of competence and effect perceived (Howard&Foster, 1999, P9).

The main barrier in lack of a common definition for empowerment is belief that thinks it as a unite structure and simple while it is a continuous process that occur in dynamic environments and contains many elements that can be analyzed in different levels, further activities in this area has focused on a percentage of the whole process empowerment that looks to each of them separately and therefore offers an incomplete Image from dynamics of this process (Robbins, 2002, P420).

3- Historical Background of Empowerment

Empowerment exists in fields of psychology, sociology and religion that go back last decades. In fields of psychology "Adler" (1927) motivation of dominate expressed with emphasis on the efforts of individuals to gain dominate their world. "Wite " (1959) Describes the " influential motivation " is a self-motivated that makes things happen. View of "Brehim" (1996) has expressed Empowerment "psychological reaction" to the struggle for freedom from limits (Whetten & Cameron, 1999, p17).

All this contents is similar in concept of to empower means willingness of individuals to self-control importance to own and for own, freedom. In the management, use record of the term

empowerment refers to after human relations movement. Issues such as: engage employees in the decision-making organizations by the various ways of team working, participation and total quality management. This theory was begun initially with the theory y "McGregor" (1960). This theory is based on creating the conditions for moving individuals toward achieving the goals instead of supervising and guiding their efforts. Managers in McGregor's theory by attitude y, they let employees to participate in decision making at all levels, encourage upward communication and attend to the opinions and suggestions of employees carefully and great opportunity of responsibility is given to individuals.

Many methods emphasize on psychological statements or incentive of empowerment. For example "maslow" also stated in his hierarchy of needs that in the highest level individuals stimulated by needs for meaningful work, responsibility and do what is worthy. Similarly, the defense of strengthening jobs, "Herzberg" (1986) states that the only way to motivate employees is giving challenging tasks to them so that able to take responsibility in it. Many drivers identified by Maslow arise from opportunities for self-actualization, self-determination, sense of values in perceptions of psychological empowerment. Competence and impact exist in model of "Vroom" (1964) (Robbins et al, 2002, P422). Follow this topic in the 1990s and then indicating that managers should learn how to promote empowerment, but despite the emphasis on various forms of employee involvement and empowerment, yet the power of employee empowerment in the skill sets managers cannot be generalized (Whetten & Cameron, 1999, p18).

Social - structural perspectives of empowerment is rooted in theories of social exchange and social power. Early research was conducted on men and women of "Counter" company (1977). When more women were entering the labor market, without access to power tools: opportunities, information systems of rewards, social support, and access to resources could not achieve to progress successfully. This research is considered as the most important element of structural empowerment research, base of this view is sharing power between people of superiors and subordinates with goal of loss of decision-making power to lower levels of the organizational hierarchy (Spreitzer, 2007, P3). In this view empowerment refers to the policies, activities and organizational structure that give greater freedom to employees to make decisions and their impact about their work and is seen as a model for the redistribution of power that create equality of power, trust, and cooperation. Researchers have identified activities and organizational structures that power through the development of knowledge and skills, access to information, support, function and responsibilities defined as empowering cases (Creasly et al, 2008). According to studies conducted by Robbins et al, provide a coherent and unified framework to clarify the role of subject variables, structural, cognitive and behavioral in processes of empowerment is important. In this process, the relationship between organizational structure and elements of the work environment (job structure, performance of human resources and management performance) is effective (Robbins & et .al, 2002). The most important step in empowerment process is providing the environment that creates an opportunity for individual skill to the extent from powers and intrinsic motivation in employees (Farokhi, 1997).

The three elements of empowerment in the workplace include: Attitude - Relationships and Organizational Structure that each element of the organization must change to create

empower employees otherwise the effort will loss. Empowering work environment is where employees are the main driving force (Niazi, 2009, p22).

4 - Dimensions of structural Empowerment

4-1- Access to Information

Access to information is a dimension of structural empowerment. It means necessary information should be easily available to employees so is caused the confidence and their awareness from the current state of the organization, strengthened a culture of trust and empathy and also includes communication and easy access employees to managers and supervisors, transparency and clear communication working with managers and supervisors and staff awareness from current affairs of the company in relation to its work domain and ... (Blanchard, 1999). With more information, people tend to experience self-regulating, self-control and more confidence (Yazdanpanah, 2006).

Accurate and timely and relate information is considered one of the most important factors in creating authority and accuracy of decision making. Continuous supply of employees with the job information needed has been important support in their ability to make decisions independently and by increasing the probability of accuracy of decisions taken will provide their capabilities and growth in self-reliance (Ghafarian, 1998, p39). Manager, who wants to increase sense of empowerment in employees, should give them all the information necessary to perform the work (Abdollahi, 2004, p 64). Of course information should provide for employees that increase their efficiency, not information confuses them (Mohammadi, 2001). The main element in the empowerment is to share employees in information and appropriate communicate and the relationship between manager and employee provide possibility of taking advantage from the knowledge of employees to manager (Abtahi & Abbasi, 2007, p186). Thus, participation in information: a) it is the first key in empowerment of people and organizations. B) To allow people to clearly understand from the current state. C) Makes confidence throughout organization. D) eliminates the traditional hierarchy mentality. E) To help people for most responsible. F) Raises people so act like owners of the organization (Bazaz Jazayeri, 2005, p20).

4-2- Reward System

Reward system is process that can improve field of initiative and creativity as the highest level of reward in employees continually (Robbins, 2002, p421). Studies indicate that organizations gain benefits from processing of empowerment that increased job satisfaction of members, improved quality of work life, increased quality of goods and services, increased organizational productivity, ready for competition are its benefits (Bowen & Lawler, 1995, p87).

In some studies has been investigated the impact of employee performance on customer satisfaction and often was done with the goal of understanding to mechanisms of interaction between employees and customers and factors of employee empowerment has identified such as: 1. Having the knowledge and skills 2. Self-confidence 3. Communication and rapport in job 4. Reward system (Melhem & Jordan, 2004, p75).

Reward system is the set of factors that increase the frequency of optimal behavior. Reward program is in order to 1. It will communicate friendship with their organization 2. It does their duties willingly 3. Their actions do at the highest level of quality and quantity and job performance will lead to higher levels (Soltani, 2002).

Other variable work structure is a system of incentive and encourage of rewards based on performance that can be important for empowerment. For empowerment, a reward system must identify the share of each wage. Although the rewards may be beneficial to the organization or group, but most often people cannot have a clear understanding of how impact of their activities on a higher level of performance. Consequently rewards based on individual performance are important for empowerment. Incentives of individuals facilitate the empowerment by the following items: 1. Identify and enhance individual competence 2. Providing people to incentives for participate and influence the decision-making processes at work (Spreitzer, 1995).

5- Dimensions of psychological Empowerment (behavioral)

Dimensions of psychological empowerment are far from traditional study of management activities and instead emphasized on employees perception (Greasly et al, 2008). Most definitions of empowerment refer to some aspect control over the work process, control over objectives, performance measurement or control over other people (Howard & Foster, 1999). If control does not understand by employees, little ability has to affecting a person motives and behavior. Many employees believe that empowerment actions are only for display and their aim isn't a sustainable change, but also more it is an instrument by management (Robbins et al, 2002).

"Conger" and "kanungo" (1998) has been claimed through such an approach on perception that empowerment is a concept of self-effectiveness. "Thomas" & "Velthouse" (1990) this issue has been redefined and it have expressed as a cognitive model from empowerment. They ensure four knowledge for it that is base of empowerment: impact, competence, meaning and Self-determination (Greasly, 2008).

5-1- Meaning

Meaning involves a fit between the requirements of work role and a person's beliefs, values, and behaviors (Spreitzer, 2007, p7). Employees should want to feel that doing work and or finally completing it, is valuable (Roobbinz .al, 2007). When employees know their jobs valuable or importance, meaning is expressed value of work during compared to a standard or ideal of person (Dickson & Lorenz, 2009). Research has concluded about meaningful work that people in meaningful job are more committed and become more involved it (Whetten & Cameron, 1999, p30).

5-2- Competence

It refers to self-efficacy specific job of an individual's, or believe in employees based on the necessity of having this feeling that have competence to participate in the functions from the environment (Robbins et al ,2002,P422). It refers to knowledge that say a person has the

necessary skills to perform tasks successfully in a specific area and for a particular purpose (Samad, 2007, P256)

Bandura (1997) has suggested that three conditions are necessary to sense of effectiveness. 1. The belief of the capacity to work. 2. Believed to have the capacity to apply the necessary effort. 3. Believed to any external barrier them from doing the work will be preventing (Whetten & Cameron, 1999, p25).

5-3- Self-determination

Self-determination is a sense of choice in initiating and regulating actions. Self-determination reflects autonomy over the initiation and continuation of work behavior and processes; making decisions about work methods, pace and effort are example (Sprietzer, 2007, p7). Employees should understand an opportunity to perform choice (Robbinz et al 2007, p422). Self-determination deal with the efforts of individuals and group to increase their control over how their work is done and is related to Job satisfaction (Diskson, 2009, p170).

The World Bank in its annual report on human development and research about empowerment was conducted in 2002 know a choice in people is three components: first, having the opportunity to choose, second: the use of individual from the chance to choose. Third, ability to obtain the desired result that is successful in his choice (Sabzikara, 2007, p37).

5-4- Impact

Impact is the degree to which a person can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work (Spreitzer, 2007, p7). Employees need to know that their behavior will impact on what happens in the environment (Robbins et al, 2002). The impact is distinct from competence to be able to do. Also vary with the control center which has more general in nature (Dickson & Lorenz, 2009). So having a sense of personal control is essential for empowerment. On the other hand the most powerful people cannot even control what happen for them. Despite to empower help to increase control in people (Whetten & Cameron, 1999, p28).

6- Conclusion

People are empowered through knowledge and self-motivated and empowerment is not giving power to the people, but empowerment is to release the power. Empowerment provides potential capacities for exploiting the capabilities of human that don't use completely. Employee empowerment is considered main driving force, employees with a feeling of competence, meaning implement selecting the best innovations and their ideas. Empowerment is more than a subjective view. It is considered symbol of the collective and group behaviors and organizational policies. Empowerment is a process requires a clear vision and dynamic that will be provided the participation and continuous learning opportunities for employees and managers.

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