Empowerment and Organizational Change

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ABSTRACT: Today, humans are regarded as the most important asset of organizations, and those who are in charge of organizations have found out that human resources are the main actors in all organizations. Therefore, it is important, by empowering human resources through democratic management together with preparing the staff for dealing with changes, to create an organizational environment in which both the humanity and the potential of human beings flourish; to make it possible for achieving organizational growth and target development; and finally, to improve the organization to a level beyond development. Humans, according to their personal talents, can be responsible in the development of organizations and in their own flourishing. Therefore, in this paper, we aim to clarify the concepts of empowerment and organizational change beside the role of human resources in organizational change, and finally to present the relationship between empowerment and organizational transformation in the form of diagrams and various models, hoping that organizational managers take it into account for further efficiency.

Key words: Empowerment, Organizational, Change

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment and Organizational Change

Individuals are one of the most important factors in extensive organizational changes. Excellence in the field belongs to organizations that are willing to take risks and to assign decision making to the lowest possible organizational level. This new paradigm is based on empowering the individual. Organizations are designed in a way to use the energy and ability of individuals in order to accomplish their job and to achieve their goals. If managers are able to increase the capabilities of the employees, organizations will naturally develop and improve. Therefore, since individuals are the center of organizational change, in order to achieve an acceptable level of organizational development, we should improve the level of human resources, let them grow from within and develop themselves.

Concepts of empowerment and organizational change

There are numerous definitions for empowerment and organizational change, some of which are described below:

- Empowering means releasing the internal power of individuals to achieve extraordinary results and it is a technique for increasing productivity and enhancing employee commitment to the organization and vice versa.
- Empowering means a process through which managers allow their employees to gain power and influence within the organization. To overcome the complexity and the pace of challenges which we are confronted with in today's environment, the success of an organization is dependent on how much power can be allowed to all employees (Irannejad Parizi, 2002).

Organizational change

Lipit defines organizational improvement as reinforcing operational processes and human resources in organizations to improve the quality of performance by different parts of organizational systems (Taheri Larry, 1998). Organizational change is an attempt planned throughout the organization and managed by the senior management to increase organizational effectiveness and health through transformation programs planned in organizational processes using behavioral science. Objectives of organizational development are:
1. Increasing the compatibility between the structure, processes, strategies, individuals and culture;
2. Developing new and innovative solutions in the organization
3. Developing renovation ability of the organization (Alvani, 2006)

French Wendell states that organizational improvement is a long-term effort to strengthen the problem-solving ability of the organization and renovating its processes based on effective management and participatory culture using transformative (intervening) factors and behavioral sciences (Alhosseini, 2000).

The role of human resources in organizational development

Organizational improvement and change is a new and multidimensional cycle administered by human agents who must show the energy, power and flexibility needed to fulfill this. The most important factor of change and development is mature behavior at the individual and group level. In a systematic approach, improvement can be seen as a positive outcome of changes that leads to the survival and stability of the system in the environment. The issue of change and improvement is a comprehensive concept and includes changes in more than one of the main organizational components including human, technology and structure. Since organizations are creations of man and individuals play an important role in their survival and viability, the main factor for organizational change is humans. If we consider change pattern as composed of three components: dynamics of change; mechanisms of change; and agents of change, man is considered as the core and the actual trigger in each of these components. The fact is that humans always play a pivotal role in the rise and fall of civilizations, in scientific and technological progress, in the evolution of organizations and incremental changes in culture. However, change is also an essential truth. Required sources for change include: financial resources; information resources; the quality and quantity of specialized staff; time and power required. Since humans, technology and infrastructure are the main components of any organization, either separately or simultaneously, they may be subject to change:

1. Humans with a set of values and abilities;
2. Technology, involving changes in equipment, training and abilities;
3. Structural factors, changes in procedures, infrastructure as the framework for organizational processes.

Changes in the structure require positive and constructive change in the set of rules, norms, procedures, and organizational conditions. Gary Dessler introduces three methods for real organizational change:

1. Methods based on unilateral power, including: using administrative options for announcing a case unilaterally; replacing key personnel to apply changes; or making changes in the structure of an organization to effect what is desirable.
2. Methods based on power sharing, the use of teamwork and group problem solving. Methods based on power sharing, the use of teamwork and group problem solving. In these methods, change is not imposed from top to down; but rather, opportunities for change are assigned to groups to let them discuss over and decide strategies for change and even identify the subject of change.
3. Methods of delegation for making changes; methods of inducing sensitivity toward the processes of individual and group behavior to improve performance, since organizations and environment are considered the constructs of human and ecology. Two important factors of change are: 1. the synergy of science; and 2. the synergy of individuals. Organizations are inexorably dynamic, and organizational efficiency needs to change, evolve and improve (Alhusseini, 2000). Organizations are composed of different human factors with various interests, priorities, criteria and functions. In total, beneficiaries within the organization are a significant force for change. Richard L. Daft summarizes organizational change in four categories:

- Administrative changes, including: change in the structure, goals, and the needs of structure, reward systems, information and accounting systems.
- Changes in the personnel of an organization including: changes in attitudes, skills, experiences and behaviors of individuals.
- Changes in technology. This type of change is related to the production process, which includes: the knowledge, understanding and skills that will determine the competency of the organization. The purpose of making such a change is to increase the efficiency, the amount and the rate of production.
- Changes in goods and services, related to producing new products, changes in production methods or starting new lines of production. In general, change or innovation typically consists of some reforms in one or more key components. Key elements in organizational change include:
  1. Organizational Structure: a pattern of interactions and coordination designed by the management in order to link the roles of individuals and groups to each other to achieve organizational goals.
  2. Technology: includes the knowledge, tools, and ways of doing tasks that an organization uses for its...
production and distribution services.

3. Human Resources: Creating changes in the personnel at organizational environment; and improving skills, perceptions, interpretations, and attitudes necessary to do the tasks. Changes are essential to human resources in order to increase the impact of changes made in other organizational elements, such as in organizational structure and technology.

4. Organizational Culture: a set of shared values, commitments and beliefs that connects the members of an organization to one another (Taheri Larry, 1998).

**Improving the level of human resources**

Improving the level of human resources refers to a set of activities in which human resources find the competency and power necessary for organizational changes, and which, by bringing it to its fullest, makes it possible to expand organizational creativity and creation to result in humane, thriving organizations; that is, activities that through which employees step forward in line with constant organizational change and growth. Some of the methods for improving the level of human resources include: establishing a system of meritocracy, career development, job enrichment, collaboration, human resources rehabilitation, behavioral rationality and philosophical mentality. In other words, placing qualified persons in positions and jobs they are able to do (meritocracy), increasing the number of operations in a job (career development), and allowing employees to take responsibility for some of the tasks performed by supervisors (job enrichment) increase employee satisfaction, meet their emotional needs, empower and prepare them for further compliance with changes and developments in the environment on the one hand. And on the other hand, the strengthening of human resources through cooperation, power allocation, and granting independence can lead to the development of organizations and individuals; hence, an improved level of development - an issue that should be accompanied by wisdom and seeking perfection. In order to establish behavioral rationality, the mutual efforts of individuals and organizations is necessary; that is, and individual should have the knowledge, scientific spirit, and rational understanding to benefit from behavioral rationality. An organization should use the means - such as training skills to improve behavior, reward and punishment, etc. - and adopt a democratic management style to aid the development of rational behavior. As a result of these efforts and the rationalization of individuals and the organization, individual and organizational development becomes possible; and hence, individual and social development. Individuals who have the wisdom and thoughtful behavior in dealing with problems have a sort of positive philosophical view. Creating a positive philosophical view is a commitment major through which value judgments and individual problem-solving abilities improve in proportion to individual comprehensiveness, profundity and flexibility.

**The relationship between empowerment and organizational change**

Experts in organizational management and development have introduced a new variable titled Empowerment as a factor affecting the performance and optimization of human resources. There are steps to empower human resources:

1. Domination stage: A manager will be able to empower her/his personnel only when she/he is fully aware of their potentialities. At this stage, the manager decides because she/he has the authority, and the personnel implement the decisions she/he makes, and in this way their capabilities increase.

2. Consultation stage: The purpose of this step is to learn. At this stage, the manager will consult with employees and agrees with them even when she/he knows they are wrong.

3. Cooperation stage: At this stage, decisions are taken jointly.

4. Delegation stage: At this stage, individuals are authorized to make decisions.

One of the main principles of organizational change is the application of Cooperation-Empowerment model. Participation in organizational development programs is not excluded to the elite or high organizational positions; but rather, it can be spread broadly across the organization. Increased cooperation and empowerment are considered as one of the most basic goals and values of organizational development. Cooperation is a powerful elixir favored by individuals and significantly improves individual and organizational performance. Individuals should be given responsibility to be empowered. This can be achieved by authorizing individuals to participate, make decisions, express ideas, exert influence, and take responsibility. For this reason, cooperation is an effective means of empowerment. Cooperation increases empowerment, and empowerment, in turn, improves individual performance and health. In the field of organizational development, development programs are designed so accurate to increase the involvement and cooperation of leaders and members of an organization. The main core of organizational change is Empowerment. Blasco cites four steps to describe the empowerment process:

1. Preparation
2. Creating a true self-image
3. Envisioning the future
4. Change

He was of the opinion that:
- Comprehensive changes are necessary for the survival of organizations in the future;
- Individuals do not easily accept the necessary changes;
- Empowerment is the key to getting individuals to participate in the change.

According to him, envisioning the future is one of the most important components of empowerment; that is, a clear, valid picture of the desired future. Developing a strategy for achieving future goals and associating the mental and physical capabilities of personnel to realize the anticipated future are also among the cores of Empowerment according to Blasco. Therefore, Cooperation-Empowerment is an effective model in improving the organization and this is part of the principles of organizational change (Alvani & DanaeeFard, 2006: 75). The following four factors have an important role in the sustainable transition and development to progress, in each of which individuals have a unique position:

1. Desire for change
2. Research and development
3. Creativity and innovation
4. Suitability and feasibility of progress

The desire and impact of the group play a greater role in achieving organizational goals than those of the individual. The culture of an excellence-seeking group is comprised of three components: freedom, rationality, and hope for the future, in which the group coordinates the synergy of powers to enhance performance, to realize preset objectives, and to develop new organizational and individual goals by organized power and synergy - activities that improve the organization, development, self-actualism and individual growth. Since continual, productive change can only occur on the basis of goal development, the incidence of talents and potentials is the secret to a lasting, productive change (Alhussein, 2000).

**Empowerment as a management policy**

Nickson introduces a five-part empowerment strategy for organizational improvement:

1. Creating an insight;
2. Prioritization and action where the greatest impact will occur;
3. Developing and improving a strong relationship with colleagues;
4. Network development
5. Using internal and external support groups (Margaret, 1996).

**Training**

According to Nicholas, there is a three-stage structure for personnel empowerment:

Stage 1 - Analysis of the current capabilities of personnel and helping them to work with their maximum potential
Stage 2 - Employing instructional techniques by managers to help the personnel work beyond their current capabilities
Stage 3 - Achieving employee engagement by the sharing of ideas and values. With the completion of this stage, Empowerment is achieved.

Cooperation is also a process through which individuals achieve change. They make changes by themselves and are considered as part of the change, and change their “be’s” to desired “becomings” (Toosi, 1991). One of the practical methods of empowerment is Self-management or work group. Working on group projects expands the scope and the space for group members and increases staff motivation. Self-management will also create conditions for improved performance. A comprehensive definition of employee participation has four key components:

1. Power: This includes equipping the individuals with enough options for decision making.
2. Information: Access to appropriate information is vital for making effective decisions.
3. Knowledge and skills: The role of employee participation in organizational effectiveness, at the level of enjoying the knowledge and skills necessary for decision making, is desirable.
4. Reward: This can have a major effect to engage employees in the organization.

The more these four components are transferred to the lower levels of organization, personnel cooperation will be higher (Mohammadzadeh, 1996). One of the most important strategies for organizational change is the strategy of sharing power, which establishes the values and assumptions that will lead to support for proposed changes. This
process is slow, but leads to high commitment. This method is based on empowerment and is cooperative in nature. It also relies on engaging the personnel in assessing the needs and values, group norms, and operational objectives. The agent of change shares its power with other individuals who work together to reach consensus on the support necessary to changes. Managers who use power sharing as a method of planned change need authority and skills to effectively work with others in groups. They should be able to allow others to participate in decision making processes that affect the nature of planned change and its implementation. Because cooperation requires a high level of mental and emotional involvement, a formal re-education strategy is often very time-consuming; but most likely, it will lead to permanent, internalized changes.

CONCLUSIONS

Humans, as an essential element of organizational development, play an important and critical role in the framework of group and organizational activities. Today, the development of organizations depends on the use of human resources. Theorists in the field of management maintain that the human factor is the most important element in the existence and survival of organizations, by recognizing humans as a complex element in organizations. They also increasingly pay attention to human resources as a powerful tool in organizational change and development. Empowerment of human resources is a very efficient tool based on a change creating managerial perspective so that by using it, organizations can take very long and fast steps toward growth and development. Since individuals are the center of organizational change, in order to achieve an acceptable level of organizational development, we should improve the level of human resources, let them grow from within and develop themselves. Some of the methods for improving the level of human resources include: establishing a system of meritocracy, career development, job enrichment, collaboration, human resources rehabilitation, behavioral rationality and philosophical mentality. Also, employee cooperation and empowerment is a new technique to release human potential and ability in organizations which includes four key components: power, information, knowledge and skills, and reward.

REFERENCES