

A Study On Operational Empowerment: Kanter's View Of Empower Tools

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to acquaint the globalized topic empowerment. This study sought to put forth the environment of the organization and linkage with employees working factors that enable the empowerment. Regarding the ailments of empowerment dealt with the theories of empowerment and factors implemented along with empowerment in practice. Consequently current study developed with scope of which reveals Kanter's factors for employee empowerment.

KEYWORDS: Empowerment, Structural empowerment, Power, Information, Support.

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is being made good impression among researchers and the practitioners nowadays. Empowerment is reckoned as one of the management concept. Since it has rooted from intrinsic task motivation, job enrichment, participative decision making (Conger and Kanungo 1988). Therefore empowerment is the amalgamation of ideas thrived from the different theoretical works such as organizational behavior and management literature around 20th century. According to theories related to management styles within the organization, proved that most of the organization is structured with as self-directed, participated oriented, team based and employee involved. These concepts are congruent with the concept of empowerment (Spreitzer et al 1997). Hence empowerment has the foundation of idea of participation and involvement. According to Bowen & Lawler 1995, declared that high involvement is as the component of empowerment. Since high involvement is comprised of sharing information, developing knowledge, rewarding performance and distribution of power.

Therefore it is conceived that empowerment has various facets and having scope to cover the work environment (Wall et al 2004, p.4). Then empowerment is conceptualized and delved as structural concept called structural empowerment. It is also considered as macro perspective based on structures and policies of organizations (Liden & Arad 1996).

STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT

It is described as the power has on whom by who and how it is dispersed (Koberg et al 1999). Mintzberg 1979 define structural empowerment "a formal process of horizontal decentralization of authority such that decisional power flows to employees from the formal structure". From this, structural empowerment is precipitated in changes in structure so as power shifted to employees. Elyon & Bamberger (2000, p. 357) describe structural empowerment as "empowering acts characterized by the purposeful manipulation of structural and contextual factors by organizational elites with the intent of affecting the individual empowerment cognitions of employees". Apparently, structural empowerment is entrenched in job design, and thus, is concordant with job enrichment practices (Hackman & Oldham 1976).

By the way empowerment from the structural perspective is to share power through the distribution of responsibility through the whole organizational chain of command. Consequently the top management may have more time to spend in taking forward organization more strategically and innovatively (Speritzer 2008).

DIMENSION OF STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT

Earlier researchers have found various structural dimensions in organizing empowerment. Kanter (1977) has been vanguard of this concept. She developed elucidative outline for empowerment from an ethnographic study. She found structural determinants which enhances the behavior. The concept has reposited on the term that taking out of conditions which foster dependence and powerlessness in the organization will lead to positive employee behavior and better performance (Conger & Kanungo 1988; Kanter 1977).

Kanter gave two contributions to the management world. It has made colossal influence on theories and practices in management. 'Men and Women in 1977' and 'The Change Masters in 1983' two books made an explosion of research and applications that focusing on organization culture and empowerment. In addition, the books set forth new strategies to investigate structure of organization and how employee being shaped by culture and systems (Sheela M. Puffer, 2004).

Kanter theory is based on conditions and situations of where employees are set to work and how their behavior is being influenced by it. For empowering employees, the organizations should be considered with structural arrangements. Consequently, structural change is composed of space to be free and reducing hurdles for making decisions. The theory declares three variables which plays pivotal role in empowering work unit environment. Structural of opportunity, structure of power, and the social composition of peer clusters (Kanter 1977 p.246).

STRUCTURE OF OPPORTUNITY

It deals with the job conditions that promote advancement in growth, knowledge, and skill development. These matter for employee's promotion, accepting challenging tasks. Opportunity is also confirmed in which circumstances the knowledge can be applied and further developed (Wall et al 2002). Employees are provided with high opportunity seek to develop high ambitions, greater organizational commitment. Creating opportunities for employee empowerment become an important component for problem solving skills (Bowen & Lawler 1992).

STRUCTURE OF POWER

Kanter (1977, p.247) defines power as "the capacity to mobilize resource". Here power refers to the capacity of an employee to access the resources available in the work setting. She confirmed power as formal and informal. Formal power is derived from the formal job characteristics whereas informal power from informal alliances. Formal power is developed by providing flexibility in decision making, visibility and centrality. Informal power is derived from the environment which enhances socio political support by through the bonding of superiors or peers (Kanter 1983). These formal and informal powers further facilitate to access the information, support and resources. These three are certainly linked to power (Barbalet 1987).

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information regarding work tasks, organizational goals, strategies and plans. The information plays an inevitable role in enhancing empowerment (Eylon & Bamberger 2000). Moreover information related to work unit direction and performance feedback incites creative behavior and has the confidence in employee to achieve task goals (Menon & Pethe, 2002). Access to information is selectively needed for the empowered employees who want to act responsibly and independently. Such responsibility requires informed decision making, which can be aided by access to the right information at the right time. When employees couldn't avail necessary information to make good decisions, they may be ended up in uncertainty (Siegal & Gardner, 2000). Therefore empowering environments is created only if information should be avail at levels.

ACCESS TO SUPPORT

Employees gain support from membership in organizational networks. Support is consistent with 'connection power' (Hersey & Blanchard (1982). Support majorly comes about from the superiors, peers or sub ordinates. A sit allow employee to act in a way which optimize effectiveness by receiving positive feedback from superiors. If employee is being supported by their peer groups, they will be ready to take risk and practice their freedom to apply right decision (Appelbaum and Honeggar, 1998). When employee is supported he is empowered (Wallach & Mueller (2006).

ACCESS TO RESOURCE

Resources is referred to employee who able to acquire the resources such as fund, materials, space and time to get things done (Spreitzer, 1996 ; Kanter, 1988). The deprivation in accessing the resources of organization leads to powerlessness and dependency (Homans, 1958). Individual's sense of self efficacy is increased when the employee is able to access the resources and it also put forth control over uncertainty happened (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The determination of internal time lines and resource allocation such as staffing enhanced the employee empowerment (Nonaka's 1988).

MODELS OF EMPOWERMENT

Over the years, many researchers have developed different models. These models concentrated on the successful implementation of empowerment in organization. A degree of consensus exists plenty of papers regarding structural empowerment are taken for scrutinizing the variables which affect it. In response to different organizational framework, different models of empowerment have been developed by researchers. At the structural level two models have been put forth.

RANDOLPH MODEL

Randolph in 1995 had done a study in ten different companies. Consequently he drew near three critical factors which have been promoted for successful implementation of empowerment. He identified with his colleagues three variables which highly extend the organizational practices associated with empowerment. Those are follows:

- Information sharing,
- Autonomy through structure
- Team accountability.

Information sharing entails about the provision of information which associated with possibly thoughtful information on cost and efficiency. Autonomy through boundaries involves structures and practices that enhance the independent decisions cover vision, goals and work procedures and duties. Team accountability comprises the understanding of teams in point of decision making and performance. It is also acknowledged that the sharing of information does not induce empowerment but it preceding the steps for empowerment process. Gradually it encourages the autonomy when the employee defy against the change, they implement the new structure. Then teams are replaced by hierarchical structures (Steve, 2014).

MATHEWS MODEL

Mathews et al 2003 demonstrated a model which comprised of both relational and psychological perspectives. It manifested the proposal of Speritzer (1997) and Siegall (2000). The facilitation of macro-level environment for empowerment is based on the following factors:

- Dynamic structure framework
- Control of workplace decisions; and
- Fluidity in information sharing

Dynamic structure framework (DSF) consists of guidelines that should be modifiable in nature to support in making decisions. The non-dynamic structure leads employees to learned helplessness (Campbell and Martinko 1998). Learned helplessness is a state of cognition when people appraised with poor performance even though they are skilled but they ascribe the past failures to unalterable causes. DSF is an organic component which is to be more flexible to change with the current business environment. The second factor is consists control of workplace (CWD) decision which is based on the Spreitzer (1998) and Wilkinson (1998) conceptual understanding. Some companies do not allow its employees to take part in making decisions. It doesn't mean that organization cannot empower employees. Rather to extend the CWD. Meanwhile companies also

Instruct employee about the situation prevails in workplace. It is confirmed that the employees are allowed to take part in response to their professional career. Third factor is consists of fluidity in information sharing (FIS). It occurs when all individuals in the company should able to access the information. Here the information is not only regard with information deals with company but also employee's ideas and grievances (Wilkinson, 1998). These are the different model which is discussed above in favour of implementing the empowerment in a structural approach.

EMPOWERMENT IN PRACTICE

Most of the organizations facing the challenges in implementing the management systems that pave way to individuals to workout in effective way by utilizing the resources in a right manner. The workforce is empowered ultimately by requirement of time, energy and resources. Since it is discussed most of the authors earlier. The workforce is empowered by

through the following factors performance evaluation, rewards, error tolerance, communication and generalists. It is discussed by Periperi in 1997.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

As the empowered organizations are being decentralized in doing work tasks, employees are stepped aside from the supervisor. Knowing the level of performance of an employee is noted by through the feedback. Once the performance is evaluated the employee strengthened to work his tasks in a meaningful way.

REWARDS

The rewards consist for recognizing the employee's achievements. But the rewards of empowered organization should be synergizing their work methods in a team level base.

ERROR TOLERANCE

Empowered structure of workplace leaves space to their employees to think out of the box. They can take risk in order to carry out new innovations by learning it from mistakes also. "Employees are not punished for honest mistakes but rather encouraged to compensate for their errors and to do it better the next time" (Steve, 1998).

COMMUNICATION

The provision of data that is needed for to put forth right decision on time. Nowadays organizations depend on the management information systems. Therefore employee freed to access the information that is updated.

GENERALISTS

Empowered organizations are needed their employees to more generalist. Generalists are being more flexible and versatile in work nature.

CONCLUSION

Success of organization is depending on the scale in measuring the view of practicality. Hence, heart of empowerment relies on practical thing. So the empowerment will be achieved when hard work and support plays an important role. Furthermore empowerment is a key to unlock the energy and talent remain in the organization. It is believed that the empowered organizations of the future will be concerned on the trust and reliance, time off for hierarchy, and the individual autonomy in bearing the competitiveness (Ehin, 1995).

"Empowerment is more than a technique, more than a process, and more than a means to end" (John.O.Burdett, 1991).

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