

Managers' Empowerment in High School by Knowledge Management

B. Azizi Nejad, M.M. Seiied Abbaszadeh

Abstract—The purpose of the present study is the investigation of the relationship between knowledge management and enabling managers based on achieving proper function. This research is descriptive and investigative. The sample includes all male and female high school managers of first and second regions of Urmia including 98 school and accordingly 98 managers. The instrument applied was a questionnaire. To sum up, there is a statistically significant relationship between knowledge management and empowering managers. In the end, several suggestions are provided.

Keywords—Empowering managers, high school managers' efficiency, knowledge, knowledge management.

I. INTRODUCTION

MANAGEMENT is one of the most important and controversial topics. Years after Francis Bacon stated that knowledge is power, Alvin Tafler, once more in the late 1980s, considered knowledge as the best type of power from among the three famous types involved, strength, money, and knowledge [1].

During the same period, Peter Drucker and Strusman, management theoreticians emphasized the increasing importance of information and knowledge for flourishing and development of organizations[2]. All above-mentioned points illustrate that nowadays, knowledge is considered as the winning trump for organizations, institutes as well as humanistic and social processes. The degree to which organizations are successful at knowledge management within and outside themselves would be considered as a determining factor for their achievement of goals and maintenance of power in the competitive world [3].

Organizational knowledge, in the present rat race world, is an appropriate opportunity for the organizations which recognize and manage it well, at the same time, it is a serious threat for the ones which are unaware of or less attentive to environmental changes [4]. Application of knowledge management in organizations, especially educational institutes, is absolutely essential; as a result, the managers must try to have a thorough understanding of the principles and methods of gaining required skills and their application to bring about changes in their management boundaries [5]. Therefore, the significance of knowledge management on the one hand, and the role and the relationship of enabling

managers on the other, justifies the importance of the present research.

A. Concept of Knowledge Management

There are many definitions of knowledge management, but the easiest definition is organizing the learned things. It seems that the definition provided by Davenport and Prusak is greatly agreed on by researchers: Knowledge management is the use and expansion of the knowledge properties by an organization in order to fulfill its goals. The knowledge that is managed includes both explicit and recorded knowledge and the mental and tacit one. The management of the knowledge includes all relevant processes to identifying, sharing and producing knowledge. This necessitates a system to produce and protect knowledge storages; in addition to spread and facilitate sharing knowledge and organizational learning.

By reviewing different definitions, knowledge management is defined as below: Knowledge management is the implementation of the management and providing the appropriate conditions for changing explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge and vice versa within an organization through collecting, sharing and using knowledge as an organizational capital in order to achieve the goals [3].

B. Knowledge Management Levels

Nasiri (1996) has recognized nine levels for knowledge management as follows:

Concentration: Identifying the basic processes of function in an institute such as strong and weak points, opportunities and threats.

Identification: Identification of the basic resources yielding organizational knowledge. There are special sectors in an organization that produce the main knowledge of the organization that must be identified in order to receive more attention. The basic resources of knowledge production are individuals or a group of individuals.

Extraction: It is extracting things learned, experiences and technological knowledge of expert and experienced individuals or a group of individuals which is done in different ways, for example, holding meeting for finding information, retelling success stories and so forth are of this type.

Improvement: It is essential to improve useful knowledge and experiences of experienced and expert individuals after they are extracted. Improvement is done through providing essential facilities and conditions in order to make knowledge more applicable.

Organization: It is possible to use the exiting knowledge in an organization through careful analysis, appropriate organization, and discovering the relationship between its

B. Azizi Nejad is with Ph.D. Student of Faculty of Literature and Humanities Urmia University, Urmia, P.O.Box:5719884375, Iran, Fax:04413369 716, Mobile:0914-388-5393; (e-mail: Bahareh19@gmail.com).

M.M. Seiied Abbaszadeh is with Faculty of Literature and Humanities Urmia University, Urmia, P.O.Box:5719884375, Iran; (e-mail: Bahareh1957@yahoo.com).

components. Of course organizing and analyzing knowledge require special skill which must be acquired by individuals.

Sharing: If selected, improved and organized knowledge is not shared, it cannot be used by individuals in the organization, creating a good condition for sharing mental resources and properties of individuals is one of the levels of knowledge management.

Administration: Educating individuals for using knowledge, storing and recycling their experiences and others' in the framework of organization's knowledge management system helps to use knowledge in order to achieve to organization's goals and consequently, individuals can share their useful experiences with those of others.

Evaluation: Evaluation of the exiting knowledge according to patterns and its effectiveness is one of the levels to be considered by managers to enable them to identify obstacles and deficiencies and overcome them.

Compatibility: After periodical administration of the previous levels and use of evaluation results, it is time to educate individuals to record and right down what they have learned. This would improve the findings of using mental properties of individuals and based on that the processes can be moderated. This cycle continues frequently from step 1 to 9 in organizations [3].

C. Enforcement

Several definitions have been provided by researches and theoreticians. The following sentences almost covers all proposed definitions: Enforcement means knowing people's value and the role they might have in doing a task. Enforcing human force means generating essential capacities among staff to enable them to produce added value in the organization and to do their responsibilities together with effectiveness and efficiency [6].

One of important and remarkable definitions of enforcement is proposed by Blanchard and his colleagues in a book named 'Three Enforcement Keys'. He defines enforcement as releasing individuals' internal powers in order to gain wonderful results [7]. As he states enforcement is not providing people with power, for individuals have power because of knowledge and motivation and in fact, enforcement means releasing this power [7]. Enforcement provides potential capacities to exploit humanistic abilities that are not used fully. In a strong organization, staff is considered as the main running force, and it is the staff that administers their best inventions and ideas with excitement, ownership and honor [8].

D. Enforcement Process

Enforcement is neither a duty nor a means to an end; rather it is the process of becoming and must be considered as a part of organizational culture. Enforcement Process is explained in three steps:

1. Sharing information: It means that the necessary information must be given to the staff.

2. Work independence or self-centeredness: It means that work independence must be within the definite boundaries of organization or field of responsibilities to avoid energy waste.

3. Responsibility or the philosophy of the organization's existence: It means what the purpose of its establishment, business values, and scope of activities, foresights, goals and roles are [9].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge management is one of the important and vital issues; although it was considered and welcomed only during the last decade, Week (1997) and Prusak (2001) claim that it is rooted in 3000 years B.C. Managers' awareness of mental resources has preoccupied them with ways of extracting these capacities and capabilities; so that Nonaka and his colleagues (2001) have admitted that knowledge in an organization is the source of gaining stable dominant and efficient competition. Peter Drucker was the first who drove public attention to this issue 25 years ago and since then management theoreticians and leaders together with top companies have paid great attention to it. Later some research studies carried out in Iran and other countries will be mentioned about empowerment as well as knowledge management.

Eskandari (2004) has discussed about the framework of a three-dimensional behavior, structure and field pattern in his Ph.D. thesis on Designing and Introducing Haj and Pilgerange carvans' Managers' Empowerment in Islamic Republic of Iran', in Tehran University, and has confirmed the meaningful relationship between field dependent and behavior dependent branches and enforcement; however, no meaningful relationship was found between structure-dependent branch and enforcement. Mohammadi (2001) has discussed the approaches and analyzed dimensions and influential factors on enforcement in his thesis for M.A. degree on 'Evaluation of Staff Empowerment Methods in Birjand University', Tarbiat Modarres (Teacher Training) University of Tehran.

Babani (2003) in his M.A. thesis on 'Evaluation of Empowerment Capability of Human Force in Education and Training Organization of Mazandaran' has proved that organization goals, promotion of staff satisfaction, creating mutual reassurance among individuals, self-governed groups with definite goals, and staff participation in making decisions can lead to empowerment. Pirzadeh (2006), Barvar (2004), Asefzadeh and Froozankhah (2005), Lajvardi and Khanbabayi (2007) have carried out studies regarding the above-mentioned topic and areas related to it. As regards the research projects done outside Iran, it is worth mentioning the following cases: Sweet (2002) in his M.A. thesis on 'Application of Staff Empowerment as a Means of Promoting Organizational Competitions in Business Market' has done a case study in Technology Institute of U.S. Air Force. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) claimed that so far, few managers have been able to perceive the meaning of knowledge management; in addition, they enumerate two types of interactions to create knowledge: interaction between Explicit and Tacit knowledge (interaction between two forms of knowledge), and the interaction between Individual and Organizational Knowledge (interaction of two levels).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The present research is descriptive and of the survey type. The sample includes all managers of first and second regions' high school managers in Urmia (N=98). The sample is as great as the population counted. Data collection instrument is a questionnaire designed in three parts. The first part includes five questions about demographic information of participants and the second and third parts contain 23 questions about empowerment and knowledge management variables including giving freedom of power and choice to staff for doing their work, or giving independence and freedom to carry out their responsibilities, attempting to create, transfer, and use knowledge, together with better fulfilling the tasks and increasing efficiency and potentials, creating cooperation among staff as well as making work groups and encouraging sharing knowledge and creating new and useful ideas. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated through SPSS software whose reliability was 77% which is in an acceptable range. The independent variable in the present study is the effective factors on managers' empowerment which includes knowledge management and participation in making decisions. The dependent variable is empowerment. The moderator variables are work experience, age, field of study, and university degree.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. In order to test the hypothesis through SPSS software, one-way t-test for hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, and independent t-test for hypothesis 4 were used.

Hypothesis 1: There is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and access to function and better fulfillment of responsibilities of high school managers in Urmia.

As the observed t ($t=19.392$) at 99% confidence level, with ($df = 87$) is greater than critical t ($t=2.617$), there is a significant relationship between better functioning and performances of responsibilities and knowledge management; in addition, it leads to the managers' empowerment in this field.

Hypothesis 2: There is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and increase of potentials and efficiencies of high school managers in Urmia.

As the observed t ($t = 15.128$) at 99% confidence level, with ($df = 87$) is greater than critical t ($t = 2.617$), there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and increase of potentials and efficiencies.

Hypothesis 3: There is a meaningful relationship between school manager's management and creation of modern and useful ideas and solutions.

As the observed t ($t = 21.244$) at 99% confidence level, with ($df = 87$) is greater than critical t ($t = 2.617$), there is meaningful relationship between knowledge management and creation of modern and useful ideas, and it empowers managers to make better decisions.

Hypothesis 4: There is a difference between knowledge management and empowerment of managers based on their gender (male/female).

As the observed t ($t = 0.809$) at 95% confidence level, with ($df = 86$) is lower than critical t ($t = 1.98$), there is no meaningful difference between knowledge management and managers' empowerment of male and female managers.

Main Hypothesis: There is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and empowerment of high school managers in Urmia.

As the observed t ($t = 23.13$) at 99% confidence level, with ($df = 87$), is greater than critical t (t critical = 2.617); therefore, there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and managers' empowerment.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The existence of powerful individuals, who can do their work effectively and efficiently, is one of the most important factors for development and progress in each organization. Passing the uneven path of development requires an appropriate condition for enhancing potential capabilities of human force in an organization, because individual's behavior is the common product of their personal characteristics and the environment in which they live. Provided that the appropriate conditions are catered for, skillful human force can have the greatest productivity and efficiency by the lowest number of facilities. According to the collected data and the findings it can be concluded that:

1. Data analysis for hypothesis 1 indicated that 78.5% of the participants evaluated the effect of knowledge management on managers' empowerment based on accessing the functions and better execution of responsibilities, and found it effective. In other words, managers had a positive view about hypothesis 1. Also, t-test was calculated at 99% of confidence interval and it was greater than the critical t ; it means that with 99% confidence level, it can be stated that knowledge management is effective on empowering managers based on accessing function and better handling of responsibilities. Of other variables of knowledge management for empowering managers to access function and better fulfillment of tasks, one can introduce the participation in group work, mutual reassurance among working groups, having enough power and freedom to do organizational work. Babania's (2001) research justified staff satisfaction about participation in group works and mutual reassurance among staff for their empowerment. Also, Eskandari (2002), in his Ph.D. thesis, believes that participation in making decisions, relationship with managers at higher levels, diversity of responsibilities, evaluation of management function, job development, access to essential resources and finally, frequent education are the elements that directly support and strengthen managers and indirectly increase their empowerment.

Sweet's (2002) research indicated that staff's frequent education and relationship with managers and their participation in key decisions of organizations empower staff. In Lajavardi's and Khanbabayi's research, the existence of honesty among working groups as well as providing freedom of choice and independence to them were considered as the most important factors for facilitating knowledge management. The findings of the above-mentioned studies are in accordance with the findings of hypothesis 1; therefore, the

development of personal and organizational skills is crucial for survival in the territory of organizations' competition.

2. Data analysis for hypothesis 2 revealed that 83.8% of participants believed that knowledge management was effective on managers' empowerment to increase their efficiencies and capabilities. In other words, managers had a positive view about hypothesis 2. For 99% confidence interval, t observed was greater than the critical t ; it means that with 99% confidence level, it can be stated that knowledge management is related to the managers' empowerment based on increasing capabilities and efficiency. Regarding the variables of knowledge management for empowering managers based on increasing capabilities and efficiency, permanent promotion of skill and educational level of the staff, sharing knowledge, transferring and using knowledge, documenting knowledge together with coworkers' experiences and perception of information value can be mentioned.

Barvar's (2004) research showed that in order to have greater productivity of human force, the organizations must consider staff empowerment, reduction of expenses, competition dominance, improvement of services to customers through simplification and reduction of servicing time, increase of creation as well as innovation and etc. Managers must start knowledge management and gradually make it permanent; this study justifies the effect of knowledge management on staff's empowerment. Accordingly, Asefzadeh and Froozan Khah (2005) believed that the criteria for exploiting knowledge are transferring, identifying, referencing, attempting, accessing and using knowledge together with the most critical step of knowledge exploitation is transfer of knowledge. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) believed that the only stable advantages of an organization as a complete unit are creating new knowledge, spreading it in different parts of the organization, and applying it in products and processes of services as well as organization systems. The findings of these projects confirm hypothesis 2.

3. Data analysis of hypothesis 3 showed that 89.3% of the participants believed that knowledge management was effective on managers' empowerment to create new and useful ideas. In other words managers had a positive view about the third hypothesis. Also, the observed t was greater than the critical t at 99% confidence level; it means that with 99% confidence interval, it can be stated that knowledge management is related to managers' empowerment based on creating new and useful ideas. As regards the variables of knowledge management related to the managers' empowerment for creating new and useful ideas, participation in decision making process of the organization and administration of confirmed decisions, creating new ideas and using innovations and experiences of those retired need to be mentioned.

In Barvar's (2004) M.A. thesis, it is indicated that organizations, in order to achieve human force productivity, staff's empowerment, improvement of services to customers through simplification and reduction of service time, increase of creation and innovation as well as many other factors, should start knowledge management and make it permanent. Also Pirnia (2006), Mohammadi (2001), Eskandari's (2002) Ph.D. thesis, Sweet's (2002), and Bill Lamperz (2004)

justified the relationship between group work and participation of the staff with their empowerment, in their model the staff has the maximum level of productivity and efficiency with the lowest number of facilities. These findings are in accordance with findings of hypothesis 3.

4. Independent t-test for hypothesis 4 that there is a difference between male and female managers regarding knowledge management and their empowerment indicated that observed t is less than critical t at 95% confidence level; therefore, there is no difference between male and female managers based on the relationship between knowledge management and empowerment.

5. Findings of t-test for the main hypothesis indicated that as observed t , at 99% confidence interval, is greater than critical t in the table, with 99% confidence it can be indicated that there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and empowerment. As a consequence, hypothesis 1, 2, 3, and the main hypothesis are confirmed, but hypothesis 4 is rejected.

VI. SUGGESTION

According to the findings of the present research which indicated a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and empowerment, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. According to the findings of the first hypothesis which indicated the existence of a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and empowering managers to get to required function and better fulfillment of responsibilities, it is suggested that managers and officials in education and training offices increase appropriate and up-to-date educational facilities as well as the use of internet to assist managers to have access to modern knowledge; as a result, increase their capabilities. Also, the managers should let the staff to choose their own approaches and methods and do their work without any need for supervisors, this way they can recognize and express their own capabilities.

2. Research results for hypothesis 2 revealed that there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and managers' empowerment for increasing their efficiency and capabilities; therefore, the managers must pay great attention to creating, transferring and sharing knowledge in organization and respect staff's experiences, document and reread them.

3. Research findings for hypothesis 3 showed that there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and managers' empowerment for creating new and useful ideas and decision making; consequently, managers must pay a great deal of attention to them, value group work, and seek for staff's assistance for making decision for the organization; in addition, they need to use the previous colleagues' experience to avoid repeating outdated approaches, and apply new ideas together with innovations. Also, considering the following points might be useful.

The following suggestions are derived from the findings of the present study:

1. Providing open and free communication channels for group activities of the staff.

2. Giving independence to working groups which follow their own work plans according to their own approaches.

3. Clarifying organization's goals for the staff in different ways such as holding seminars and explaining their responsibilities together with the methods to fulfill them.

4. Providing appropriate conditions to expand knowledge management concept and to have a better understanding of knowledge management and information sciences concepts.

5. Clarifying the status of knowledge management in the development of knowledge-centered organizations.

6. Using and administrating the concept of knowledge management in education and training.

7. Interacting thoughts and experiences in the field of knowledge management in organizations.

8. Increasing communication of lower level such as boards, instruction books as well as introduction and survey meeting for the staff.

9. Increasing communication of higher level such as proposed plans of staff which are used to promote and improve organization.

10. Holding work shapes for managers to familiarize them with knowledge management and its different aspects.

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B. Azizi Nejad (Place of Birth: Urmia, Iran and date of Birth: 15.06.1978), Ph.D. Student of Educational Administration in Urmia University, I am Ph.D. student now. My education background and my major is in social science, (Humanities and social sciences).

M.M. Seied Abbaszadeh is Pro. Dr of Educational Administration in Urmia University, His books are (The Research Methods in Human Science; 14.04.2009 Urmia, Iran, Publisher: Urmia University of Iran) and (Self Management 22.05.2007 Urmia, Iran) and (Traslated book of Theory, Research and Practice of Hoy and Miskel, 15.11.2007, Publisher: Urmia University of Iran).