

Investigating the Relationship between Knowledge Management and Employee Empowerment (Case study: Education Organization of Bojnourd City)

Atefeh Khansharifan¹, Mahboubeh Soleimanpour Omran² and Hashem Askarzadeh³

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the relationship between knowledge management and employee empowerment in Education Organization of Bojnourd City in the educational years of 2013-2014. The present study is a descriptive survey and application, which done by the descriptive-correlational method. The target population includes all employees of Education Organization of Bojnourd City, which include 120 employees. According to the Morgan table, a sample including 92 employees selected randomly. Research tools are two standard questionnaires, including Nonaka and Taguchi (1995) about measurement of the components of the knowledge management process and Spritzer (1995) about measurement of dimensions of the psychological empowerment of employees. Validity of these questionnaires has already approved by experts. The reliability based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient method for the knowledge management and empowerment was 0.71 and 0.65, respectively, indicating good validity and reliability of the above questionnaires. Collected data using the Pearson correlation test used to examine the relationships between the research's hypotheses. To evaluate the effect of each component of knowledge management on the employee empowerment, data collected using the Pearson correlation test analyzed by SPSS 18.0. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between knowledge management and employee empowerment. It means that there is a significant positive relationship between the roles such as internalization, externalization, combination and socialization of knowledge with employee empowerment. On the other hand, there is a significant positive relationship between dimensions of knowledge management and empowerment so that the role of internalization, externalization and socialization on the employee empowerment was the most and the role of the composition was the least, among others.

Keywords: knowledge management, empowerment, human resource, management components

1. Introduction

Today, we consider the human resource as the most important, most expensive and most valuable capital and organizational resource. It is the only beneficiary element with the central role, among all other elements, in coordinating other institutional elements. We can simply say that without having efficient employees, achievement to the organizational goals is impossible. Hence, human resources play a fundamental role in the growth, dynamism or destruction of organizations. The importance of this factor as the most important factor in the operational chain and thought of organizations has long been proven and organizations that have made significant achievements has given significant attention to the human being in their works (Hashemi Aminzadeh, 2010). A new approach that with a little flexibility can be implemented by managers of organizations and lead to the future competitiveness,

¹ Graduated M.A. student in Educational Management, Department of Educational Management, Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bojnourd, Iran.

² Corresponding Author: Department of Educational Management, Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bojnourd, Iran.

³ Director of Educational Management, Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bojnourd, Iran.

leadership in new products and services, and retain knowledge investment is knowledge management. Since one of the main challenges of the current world leaders in organizations is inefficient use of resources, mental abilities and potential capabilities of human resources, but in most organizations, managers are unable to employ the ability of employees optimally. The discussion of knowledge management is an emerging topic in management, which has been highly popular to the scientific of management. The most important element of knowledge management is its implementation and effectiveness. Understanding of knowledge management as a spirit ruling on the corporate actions is necessary for its implementation (Azari, 2003, p. 2). Thinkers of evolution management and organizational improvement introduce empowerment as an effective strategy on the performance and human resources improvements. They believe that human resources empowerment is one of the attitudes of the new era, which organizations use today (Dennis Kinlaw, 2008). Empowerment is one of the most promising concepts in the business world, which less attention has given to it, but now it has become a matter of days. Despite much talk about the benefits of empowerment, exploitation of it has been little. Although empowerment allows employees to use of the knowledge, skills and experience of all the people in the organization, but the number of employees and groups who know the way of creation of a culture of empowerment is low (Blanchard et al., 1999, p. 11).

2. Problem description

Today, knowledge and information have become decisive factors in the success and competitiveness power of organizations and knowledge management as an important organizational issue has emerged in the management science. Knowledge management means achieving to the organizational goals by motivating employees and providing facilities for them, according to the organization's strategy, so that their ability through giving meaning to the information will increase (Shirgholami, 2013). Giant and complex organizations created decades ago were not effective and they were similar to the dinosaurs that were not able to adapt to their environment and hence doomed. Large organizations with traditional structures lack the power and flexibility needed for alignment and compliance with environmental changes, especially globalization, and they forced for their survival change their structure and to equip themselves with means that enables them to deal with these global changes (Amiri, 2008). In the present era that the knowledge is determinant, promoting technological infrastructures in companies, especially in Iran, is very vital. The use of IT systems that is organized around organization's standards and its staff development unit increases interactions of this unit with other units highly (Mousavi, 2011). Current managerial status in our society indicates an imbalance between the increasing complexity of organizations and the inability of these organizations in prediction and dealing with these changes and complexity. Among the main requirements of leaders in the face with environmental changes is increase in their ability to manage the change process (Stoner et al., 2000). In this line, education organization is among the most important organizations that need to manage about the knowledge management and employee empowerment in organizations (Norouzian, 2005, p. 3). Empowerment begins with a change in beliefs, thoughts and attitudes of the staff. This means that they have come to the belief that they have the needed ability and competence for doing the tasks successfully and to feel that freedom and independence in carrying out their activities. They should believe that they have the ability of influencing and controlling on results of their work and have the feeling that they follow meaningful and valuable purposes and they are treating honestly and fairly (Abdullahi, 2006). Empowerment is one of the most important and the most basic characteristics of the human being that influences almost on the all the aspects and dimensions of its life completely and, thus, its creation methods should be considered and the best method should be selected and if necessary some solutions should be presented. Now, the question

that arises is that: is there any relationship between knowledge management and empowerment in employees of the Department of Education in the city of Bojnourd?

3. Methodology

Since the results of the present is applicable to other organizations it is an application and since it study relations between variables in the existing conditions it places in the category of descriptive researches. Because the research concerns the relationship between variables, it places among correlational researches. The target population consists of all the elements and people that locate in a specific geographic scale, with one or more traits in common. Whatever the target population is smaller, we can more accurately study it. The target population in our study consists of 120 employees from the Education department of Bojnourd city. Based on Krejcie and Morgan table, 92 people selected. Simple random sampling method used to collect data. To collect data in the study, the field method and the library method used. Library methods used to collect information about the general principles such as the definition of the key and operational concepts, the necessity of research, stating applications and explaining their importance. In this study, to collect the required data different resources used including internal scientific documents and Latin resources (library studies), Internet research and scientific websites, interviews with experts and professionals of the area and questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. To measure knowledge management components, the standard questionnaire by Nonaka and Taguchi that containing 26 questions used. It consists of four main components of knowledge management including externalization, combination, internalization and socialization and bases on the 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1: questions related to the knowledge management components

The main component of knowledge management	Questions	Count
Externalization	1-2-3-4-5	5
Combination	6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16	11
Internalization	17-18-19-20	4
Socialization	21-22-23-24-25-26	6
Sum		26

To measure dimensions of employee empowerment, the standard questionnaire by Spreitzer, containing 22 questions, on a 5-point Likert scale used. It evaluates empowerment dimensions of employee psychology through the five dimensions including the usefulness feeling on the job, the competency feeling in the job, the sense of having the choice right, the feel of effectiveness, the feeling of partnership with others. In this study, Cronbach's alpha used to assess the reliability of knowledge management questionnaire. To assess the reliability of knowledge management, Cronbach's alpha coefficients calculated and Cronbach's alpha value at the 0.05 level for this questionnaire obtained 0.714, which indicates that the questionnaire is of high credibility. Using SPSS 18, the value of reliability coefficient calculated using Cronbach's alpha and Table 2 show results.

Table 2: Results of the reliability of knowledge management questionnaire

Questionnaire indicators	Count	Cronbach's alpha
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Exterior building	5	0.839
Composition	11	0.683
Internalization	4	0.655
Socialization	6	0.710

Results in Table 2 shows that the knowledge management questionnaire is of high reliability. In other words, it is of a good reliability and the overall reliability of the questionnaire is 0.714. In addition, the reliability of the psychological empowerment questionnaire is equal to 0.657. The research hypotheses are as follows:

The main hypothesis: there is significant relationship between the role of knowledge management and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city.

Sub-hypothesis:

1. There is significant relationship between socialization and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city.
2. There is significant relationship between externalization and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city.
3. There is significant relationship between combination and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city.
4. There is significant relationship between internalization and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city.

4. Findings

In the following, we have analyzed information and data gathered from the questionnaire through drawing table and descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics used for summarizing the collected data and better understanding of the society and the inferential statistics used for analyzing the information available in the sample data and measuring uncertainties in deduction. In the present study, we have studied the relationship between the role of knowledge management and empowerment in education organization of Bojnourd city during the educational year of 2013-2014.

5. Testing Hypotheses

The main hypothesis: there is significant relationship between the role of knowledge management and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city. Table 3 presents results of Spearman correlation test between knowledge management and employee empowerment.

Table 3: Spearman correlation matrix between the role of knowledge management and employee empowerment

Variable names	Empowerment	Knowledge management
Empowerment	1.000	

Knowledge management	**0.813	1.000
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** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Considering the value of statistics, the significance level obtained equal to 0.00, which shows significant correlation at the level of 99 percent between the role of knowledge management and employee empowerment. In addition, the results from Spearman correlation test show that there is significant correlation between the role of knowledge management and employee empowerment. This result indicates a direct relationship between studied variables. Comparison of data shows that the direction correlation between the role of knowledge management and employee empowerment is 0.813, i.e. with improvement in the role of knowledge management, the amount of employee empowerment will also improve.

Sub-hypothesis

1. There is significant relationship between socialization and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city during the educational year of 2013.

Table 4: Spearman correlation matrix for the variables socialization role and employee empowerment

Variables	Empowerment	Socialization
Empowerment	1.000	
Socialization	**0.743	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the statistics at the significant level of 0.00, a significant relationship at the confidence level of 0.99% between the role of socialization and employee empowerment obtained. In addition, the results from Spearman correlation test show that there is significant correlation between socialization roles and employee empowerment, which in turn indicates a direct relationship between the studied variables. Comparison of data suggests that correlation between the role of socialization and employee empowerment is direct and equal to 0.743, i.e. with improvement in the role of socialization, the employee empowerment will also improve.

2. There is significant relationship between externalization and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city during the educational year of 2013.

Table 5: Spearman correlation matrix for the variables externalization and employee empowerment

Variables	Empowerment	Externalization
Empowerment	1.000	
Externalization	**0.798	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the statistics at the significant level of 0.00, a significant relationship at the confidence level of 0.99% between externalization and employee empowerment obtained. In addition, the results from Spearman correlation test show that there is significant correlation between externalization and employee empowerment, which in turn indicates a direct relationship between the studied variables. Comparison of data suggests that correlation between externalization and employee empowerment is direct and equal to 0.743, i.e. with improvement in externalization, the employee empowerment will also improve.

3. There is significant relationship between combination and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city during the educational year of 2013.

Table 6: Spearman correlation matrix for the variables combination and employee empowerment

Variables	Empowerment	Combination
Empowerment	1.000	
Combination	**0.628	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the statistics at the significant level of 0.00, a significant relationship at the confidence level of 0.99% between combination and employee empowerment obtained. In addition, the results from Spearman correlation test show that there is significant correlation between combination and employee empowerment, which in turn indicates a direct relationship between the studied variables. Comparison of data suggests that correlation between combination and employee empowerment is direct and equal to 0.628, i.e. with improving combination, the employee empowerment will also improve.

4. There is significant relationship between internalization and employee empowerment among employees of education organization of Bojnourd city during the educational year of 2013.

Table 7: Spearman correlation matrix for the variables internalization and employee empowerment

Variables	Empowerment	Internalization
Empowerment	1.000	
Internalization	**0.744	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the statistics at the significant level of 0.00, a significant relationship at the confidence level of 0.99% between internalization and employee empowerment obtained. In addition, the results from Spearman correlation test show that there is significant correlation between internalization and employee empowerment, which in turn indicates a direct relationship between the studied variables. Comparison of data suggests that correlation between internalization and employee empowerment is

direct and equal to 0.744, i.e. with improving internalization, the employee empowerment will also improve.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The use of knowledge management in organizations reduces costs and improves quality, productivity and profitability of the organization. At present, organizations despite geographic dispersion can by using new technologies and through virtual group and telecommunications to work together. Selection of appropriate tools and systems for implementation of knowledge management is one of the managerial considerations for the more beneficial considerations of the apparent and latent knowledge in organizations. Indicators show that although for the implementation of a comprehensive system of knowledge management, we needed a systematic and long-term approach, but we can implement levels of this system in organizations (Martin, 2000; Nonaka and Taguchi, 1995). Organizations that have committed themselves to empowering their employees have motivated their employees and have been loyal to them (Stoner et al., 2007). Accordingly, knowledge committed management can increase employee motivation and to empower them in their profession and organization. The following suggestions can help to implement knowledge management and employee empowerment in organizations:

1. Involving organization's people in the creation, sharing and application processes and knowledge evaluation through the design and implementation of appropriate mechanisms to empower employees;
2. The authorities of organization, given the importance of knowledge management, must have a specific plan for its promotion,
3. Considering the culture (employee involvement), relates the managers' thoughts to the organization's knowledge capitals,
4. Using capacities of potential managers and employees for making capacity, improving productivity and doing tasks efficiency,
5. Using effective strategies to help knowledge management for making a sense of effectiveness in employees,
6. Making the process of employee empowerment systematic,
7. Applying accountable and responsible management,
8. Using new communicational technologies to enhance the productivity level of individuals and the integrity of information within the organization so that social systems interpret information through offering different perspectives on a specific field, and
9. Appropriate implementation of information tools, which support coordinated information and do collect it.

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