



## Occupational Characteristics of Physical Education Teachers and its Relationship to Empowerment

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study has been established and implemented in order to identify occupational characteristics of physical education teachers and its relationship to empowerment of teachers in the city of Karaj. The type of study is a descriptive study and the statistical population of this study is consisted of all headmasters and teachers of the mentioned high schools, that 292 of them were selected as sample by Cochran's sample size calculation formula and multi-stage random sampling. Considering the research objectives, for data collection, empowerment questionnaire of Whetten and Cameron and researcher made questionnaire of occupational characteristics were used. Content and face validity of the instrument was approved on the basis of the opinions of specialists and experts and its reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0/92 for empowerment questionnaire and 0/73 for occupational characteristics questionnaire. Data were analyzed by using the methods of descriptive and inferential statistics.

The results showed that: 1- On the basis of factor analysis, the occupational characteristics mentioned in the Hackman and Oldham model can be reduced to two factors. 2- Respondents evaluated the occupational characteristics of teaching occupation, which was presented in the mentioned model, in a relatively high level. 3- There are significant differences between the opinions of headmasters and teachers about the characteristics of teaching occupation. 4- The examined teachers evaluated their psychological empowerment at a high level and, finally, there is a significant positive relationship between characteristics of teaching occupation and psychological empowerment of teachers.

**Keywords:** occupational characteristics, empowerment, job design, teachers

### INTRODUCTION

During the recent decades, the educational institutions have paid more attention to human resource management. The issues of job design and empowerment have found a special position in new studies of this branch of management and are among the factors that have been encountered with a special interest in educational organizations, because in this kind of organizations the subjects that are related to human factors, which are main principle and technical core of this institutions, are welcomed. Educational organizations of the twenty-first century, in addition to specialized capabilities, need the intellectual power and creativity of teachers. In these circumstances, not only the hierarchy of command would not be appropriate, but also employees must show their own initiatives and take action to solve problems quickly and participate in the processes of planning, decision making, and setting of the goals and more power and authority be delegated to them. Establishing an appropriate the link between occupation and the abilities of the employee in the

current environment, is essential. Nowadays, less attention is made towards attracting obedience of members through compulsion and there are more tendencies towards the inner commitment and the increasing of union in organizations. All of these factors had increased the urgency and importance of the process of empowerment in organizations (Scott and Jaffe 1375). The familiarity of the people involved in the field of human resource management with the factors affecting empowerment of employees, for making appropriate decisions and proper operations plans, especially in educational institutions, justifies the necessity and importance of the present study. Since empowerment is associated with many organizational factors, occupational characteristics are one of these factors. The more recognition of factors related to these features can be effectively helpful in the course of empowerment. By continuous analysis of jobs and the development of efficient and effective ways of doing things, we can take more practical steps implementation of empowerment.

Experts believe that whatever a profession is richer in terms of features, employees feel better about their job and work with more motivation (Abbas Poor, 1382). The main asset of Education is its teachers who bring added value to the community through their knowledge, skills and motivation. Today, schools that enjoy having such an asset, have competitive advantage among schools, because in schools competitive advantage is a function of skill, creativity, independent functioning and capabilities of teachers. Meanwhile, one of the main challenges of organizations in general and educational institutions in particular is an inefficient use of intellectual resources, mental ability and potential capacities of this human capital. However, educational institutions in order to achieve higher effectiveness and productivity have no choice but to provide the necessary conditions for the optimal use of these assets. Among the techniques that management experts recommend to accomplish this goal is the job design (improvement of occupational characteristics) and empowerment of employees. Empowerment in educational institutions is more important than other organizations, Education is an inclusive, dynamic, and influencing institution which effects on the behavior and overt and covert moral, political, economic, religious, legal, social and cultural norms of individuals, the nature of its activities and objectives are to enhance the morale of creativity, prosperity and development of talents, raising the level of public awareness, expertise, and determination of strategies to achieve excellence, development, prosperity and growth, but studies conducted in the country show that at present, human resource management systems of the Ministry of Education lack a framework for empowerment of its employees. Considering what was mentioned before, we can say that teaching, like any other profession possesses some features that can influence the enhancement of the capabilities, performance and motivation of teachers. But the problem is that in our studied population, what are these features? Do they have an effect on teachers' empowerment?

Accordingly, the present study has been established and implemented in order to identify occupational characteristics of physical education teachers and its relationship to empowerment of teachers. Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model and empowerment model of Whetten and Cameron form the theoretical framework of this study. Job characteristics model contains five components of skill, job identity, job significance, autonomy and feedback and the empowerment model contains the five components of competency, a sense of being significant, a sense being

effective, a sense of self-autonomy and trust. Therefore the main objective of this study is to identify the relationship between job characteristics of physical education teachers and psychological capability of teachers. In this regard we attempt to find the appropriate answers to the following questions:

1. What are the main components of characteristics of the of physical education teachers' job on the basis of Hackman and Oldham model?
2. At which level the headmasters and teachers of the city of Karaj have evaluated the characteristics of the physical education teachers' job?
3. Is there any significance difference between the perspectives of the headmasters and teachers of the city of Karaj regarding the characteristics of the physical education teachers' job?
4. At what level are physical education teachers in the city of Karaj, in terms of ability?
5. Is there any significance difference between the physical education teachers' job characteristics and psychological empowerment of teachers in Karaj?

#### *A. Research and theoretical principles*

According to Hackman and Seattle, job design is the application of changes in specific jobs or continuous set of occupations to enhance the quality and productivity of employees during operation (Abbas pour, 1382), these changes can include items such as: specialization of jobs, job enlargement, job enrichment, job rotation, socio-technical systems design, providing a conditions for creating positive working motivation and personal development. In the field of design and determination of characteristics of the job, several studies have been conducted. Perhaps the first person, who examined this issue consistently was Taylor, Taylor's emphasis was on finding scientific ways of doing things, standardization and specialization of jobs. As it is clear, this view, which is known as the mechanistic approach and have neglected sociological and psychological aspects of individuals in the organizations (Alagheband, 1381), that its theory under the title of motivation hygiene has been the basis for job enrichment, believes that managers can create motivation in the occupation of individuals by application of motivational factors, (Kreitner and Kinicki 2007), attitudes of job characteristics that has a motivational approach to job is the result of the studies of Turner and Lawrence (1965), Hackman and Lawler (1971). These researchers focused their research on the motivational characteristics of job and considered the position of individual differences in employees' response to a job (Kirmakel and Breslin, 2008). According to Turner and Lawrence (1965), complex and challenging jobs are more attractive for employees who are attractive.

They proposed six characteristics for the job which are related to the job satisfaction of employees. These features include: diversity, responsibility, independence, knowledge and skills, and necessary social connections (Robbins 2003). Hackman and Lawler (1971) conducted their researches on the basis of the results of Turner and Lawrence studies and divided the six mentioned characteristics into two groups. They named the first four dimensions as the main dimensions. They considered the two dimensions, which were related to communication, as social dimension of job that do not preciously interfere in performing of tasks. Hackman and Oldham (1975) extensively studied the results of previous researches. The results of their studies was the model of job characteristics, which proposed the five characteristics of skill, job identity, job significance, autonomy and feedback (Moorhead and Griffin, 1385), so an occupation is enriched that in terms of mentioned characteristics possess higher scores. According to this theory, these features affect the attitudes, behavior, and the work results of employee through the affecting employees' psychological states (Abbas pour, 1382). Three important psychological states which are created in individuals under influenced of five mentioned characteristics are: sense of being meaningful, sense of responsibility and awareness of results. These states in their turn lead to more practical results such as more motivation, higher job satisfaction and higher effectiveness (Robbins, 2003). In addition, the improvement of job characteristics creates meaningful jobs that will reduce or eliminate employees' self-alienation (Carroll, 2003). In general, when a job is redesigned to increase its reliability in terms of job characteristics, we predict that the motivation, satisfaction and performance of the operators of jobs will be improved (Ye *et al*, 2009). Kevin (2006) examined the impact of job characteristics and came to the conclusion that the five job characteristics reduce the occupational stress of the staff. Vidal (2007), in a study concluded that employees have relatively low satisfaction from the traditional forms of work and job characteristics are effective in job satisfaction. Debnath and Tandon (2007), in a study entitled as design of jobs for school training courses, to develop motivation of students on the basis of application of Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model, concluded that application of this model in the design of effective programs and provision of instructional strategies increases the motivation of students in the classroom and causes the achievement of the desired educational goals. Tousi (1381) concluded that the relation between the components of job characteristics and the degree of tendency to leave the job is significant and reversed.

In addition to mentioned psychological states, improvement of job characteristics may lead to an increased sense of psychological empowerment in the people who are themselves the result of the process of empowerment. Empowerment means strengthening which means to help people to improve their sense of confidence and overcome their sense of powerlessness or helplessness and the creation of the enthusiasm to work and to act on the basis of the intrinsic motivation to perform a task. Capable people, not only possess the ability to do some great things, but also their thoughts about themselves is different from what they have been before the empowerment (Whetten and Cameron 2005). In terms of management, empowerment refers to the process through which managers help other employees to acquire the necessary power for making decisions in affairs related to them and their work (Cheng and Liu, 2008). In other words, psychological empowerment is manifested as motivational cognitive features through working in environment and reflections of the individual role of work (Wang and Li, 2009). The result of empowerment process is the creation of a sense of empowerment in individuals with recognizable and unique psychological characteristics. Conger & Kanungo 1988 have summarized these features into four components which include: sense of competence, a sense of meaningfulness, feeling of being effective and sense of self-autonomy (Wang and Li, 2009). Whetten and Cameron 2005 while confirming the above mentioned four dimensions also added the sense of confidence to it. Researches indicate that organizations gain profit by performing the empowerment process that increased job satisfaction of members, improvement of the quality of working life, improvement of the quality of goods and services, increase in organizational efficiency and preparation for competition, are among these benefits (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). Also the studies show that empowerment can increase motivation, strength and self-efficiency of the staff, because in the light of the achieved power they will be able to improve the effectiveness and creativity and select the way of doing things (Daft, 2001). Feizi Zangineh (1384) has concluded that there is significant relationship between empowerment of staff of the General Department of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Ardabil province with their performance. Various factors have effect in the increase of empowerment. Delegation of authority, participation, team building, and making the information available, development of skills, specifying the scope and objectives, modeling, support and gratitude, confidence and providing the possibility of freedom of action are among these factors (Whetten and Cameron 2005, Abdullah and Naveh Ibrahim 1386).

Matthews and colleagues in a study found that the dynamic structural framework, control over workplace decisions and the fluidity of the flow of information sharing are positively related to psychological empowerment components and whatever the amount of these items are maximum, the level of psychological empowerment of employees will be higher. Soleimani (1386) concluded that motivation, job satisfaction, information technology, participation and training, respectively, affect the empowerment of human resources in Ministry of Cooperatives. Authorities consider the occupational enrichment and enhancement of job characteristics as one of the factors affecting empowerment (Mishra, 1994).

For example, several studies conducted in some companies have shown that delegating authority and freedom of action to employees to solve problems, not only increases customer satisfaction, but also dramatically increases the sense of empowerment in employees, also assigning identity to the job, creates the same feeling in the employees. In contrast, when people perform just one piece of work, they never see the final result of their works and become excluded from observations of its effect, and they become depressed lose their sense of empowerment (Whetten and Cameron 2005). In addition, several studies confirmed that there is a positive relationship between job characteristics and psychological empowerment of employees. Researches of Gong et al (1997), Kraimer, Seibert and Leiden (1999), Agero (2006), are examples of these researches.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study is a descriptive correlational study and the data were collected through field studies. The statistical population of this study is consisted of all physical education teachers of Alborz province, that 300 (region one = 72, region two 71-person, region three 97 and region four 60) of them were selected as sample by Cochran's sample size calculation formula and multi-stage random sampling and the survey questionnaires were distributed among them and eventually 292 returned questionnaires were diagnosed as usable. Survey instruments included individual characteristics, job characteristics questionnaire and empowerment questionnaire.

**Individual characteristics questionnaire:** This questionnaire was research made and information such as age, gender, education and employment services of staff was obtained through it.

**Occupational Characteristics Questionnaire:** This questionnaire was research made and variables of skill, job identity, job significance, autonomy and feedback were evaluated which consisted of 15 items and its scale was determined in terms of Osgood Semantic.

**Differential Questionnaire.** This questionnaire has been used frequently by various researchers in the country and its validity and reliability have been verified. Empowerment questionnaire of Whetten and Cameron measures the variables of sense of competence, sense of self-autonomy, a sense of being effective, a sense of being significance, and sense of confidence and consists of 20 items, that its scale has been determined on the basis of a five- point Likert-type scale. In this study, to determine the primary validity research questionnaires were distributed among 10 professors and experts of this field that the received proposals have been included in final edition and to determine the reliability of questionnaire a study guide was conducted on a sample of 30 and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0/73 for occupational characteristics questionnaire and 0/92 for empowerment questionnaire that with this value of the coefficient, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was approved. Considering the nature of the study, descriptive statistics were used to summarize and classify the raw data and in inferential statistics of data the univariate t-test with the measure of 5 was used to determine the significance of statistical findings related to the variables of job characteristics and psychological capabilities; independent t-test was used to determine the difference between the means of the two groups of teachers and headmasters, as well as Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine relationships between variables.

## ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In this section each of the research questions, are separately analyzed.

**First question:** What are the main components of characteristics of teaching on the basis of Hackman and Oldham model?

Measures of job characteristics are reducible into two factors: the first factor is about 25/78% and the second factor is about 9/8% of the total variance and after the varimax rotation, the two mentioned factors were identified and finally it was determined that all of the item have factor loadings of 0.3 or higher on the first or the second factor. According to the data, with the exception of item 11 which has a factor loading of 0.3 and higher on the second factor, other items, i.e. 14 items have a factor loading of 0.3 and higher on the first factor. The first factor is called as the nature of the job and the second factor as skill variety. This indicates that all of the items have measured the structures or concepts of job characteristics and although Hackman and Oldham, in their researches, have identified five components for job characteristics but based on the findings of this study, these factors are only classifiable in two components.

**Second question:** At which level the headmasters and teachers of the city of Karaj have evaluated the characteristics of teaching?

Findings show that the obtained averages for all components and the total with the mean of 5/95 variable and job characteristics are higher than the average in range of 7 degrees. This means that the state of characteristics of teaching have been evaluated relatively high by the respondents. Therefore to test the significance of the findings univariate tests with criterion of 5 (expected average) was used. Considering that the calculated significance level ( $p = 0/001$ ) is smaller than  $p = 0/05$ , the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Third question:** Is there any significance difference between the perspectives of the headmasters and teachers of the city of Karaj regarding the characteristics of the teaching?

The headmasters with the average of 6/36 and teachers with the average of 5/88 confirmed the job characteristics proposed in Hackman and Oldham

model for teaching profession and with 99% confidence we can say that there are significant differences between the opinions of headmasters and teachers about characteristics of teaching profession.

**Fourth question:** At what level are physical education teachers in the city of Karaj, in terms of ability?

In general averages obtained for all the components of capabilities and the total with the average of 4/3 and standard deviation is of 0/48 higher than average. This means that teachers in target population possess higher mental capabilities.

**Fifth question:** Is there any significance difference between the job characteristics and psychological empowerment of teachers in Karaj?

Findings show that in general there is a significant relationship between teacher characteristics and psychological empowerment of teachers with  $r=0/48$  and  $p<0/05$ . These findings suggest that whatever the characteristics of the teaching profession are at higher levels, teachers feel more empowered.

Trust	Being effective	Significance	Self-autonomy	Competence	Capability	Correlation
0/32**	0/44**	0/25**	0/52**	0/29**	0/48**	Job characteristics
0/25**	0/35**	0/23**	0/40**	0/31**	0/40**	Skill variety
0/14*	0/17**	0/05	0/21**	0/02	0/16**	Having identity
0/14*	0/20**	0/12*	0/29**	0/20**	0/25**	Having importance
0/22**	0/34**	0/23**	0/38**	0/23**	0/36**	Independent functioning
0/37**	0/43**	0/17**	0/50**	0/19**	0/45**	Feedback

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The present study has been established and implemented in order to study and identify occupational characteristics of teaching profession of physical education teachers in Karaj on the basis of Hackman and Oldham model and to determine its relationship to empowerment. Analysis of data of research has led to the following results which are significant with at least 95% of confidence level and they are generalizable to the statistical population.

1. Factor analysis results indicate that the job characteristics proposed in the model of Hackman and Oldham are reducible into two factors of job and skill variety, that each has determined about 25 and 9 percent of the total variance. This indicates that the

prepared scale measures the structure or conception of job characteristics in a desirable way and also the significant and high correlation between the variables of job characteristics with the overall score of scale indicate the internal consistency and therefore the validity of the structure of the scale. In the same study, Goudarzi 1381 through factor analysis has identified seven factors of empowerment in the municipalities of provinces of Lorestan and Markazi which include: a sense of competence, a sense of meaningfulness, a sense of being effective, a sense of independence, a sense of trust, clarification and reconstruction of regulations, and enhancement of organizational learning. As is known, the above results are not consistent with the results of this study.

2. The headmasters and teachers of the city of Karaj have evaluated the job characteristics proposed in Hackman and Oldham's model for teaching profession as relatively high. This means that from the perspective of the respondents the physical education teachers' job possess lot of skill variety, identity, significance, independent functioning and feedback, however, there are significant differences between the views of these two groups, in a way that headmasters were somehow teachers and still they are, so they have had more positive judgments about teaching profession characteristics. Nature of teaching, make this result justifiable that from long ago in Iranian culture the teaching profession was considered as an important occupation which had social status, a job that at the heart of it there is a freedom of action and allows the teachers to be aware of the results of their own works.

3. The studied physical education teachers have evaluated their cognitive abilities at a high level, that is, they had sense of competence, a sense of meaningfulness, a sense of being effective, a sense of self-autonomy and feeling of confidence to a large extent. This finding also was predictable given the nature of teaching. Teaching is in a way that enhances feelings of worthiness, dignity, effectiveness and autonomy in individuals. These findings are consistent with the results of the research of Vidal (2007), who examined efficient production, employee empowerment and job satisfaction. In his study the empowerment variables were also approved with 95% confidence level.

4. Research findings showed that, in general, or with the separation of the characteristics and dimensions, there is positive and significant relationship between teaching profession characteristics and psychological empowerment of teachers. These findings suggest that whatever characteristics of the teaching profession are at higher levels, teachers are feeling more empowered. These findings are consistent with the results of Gong *et al.*, (1997) who concluded that the different characteristics of the job can predict different components of empowerment. Kraimer, Seibert and Leiden (1999), in a study concluded that job characteristics including: significance, autonomy and feedback have different relationship with the aspects of psychological empowerment including: meaningfulness, competence, autonomy, and the effectiveness. Also Agero (2006) concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between job design, empowerment and organizational commitment. In general, given the above mentioned results, the following points are noteworthy:

According to the results of this study, it is recommended that relevant authorities make every effort to select and implement programs to improve

characteristics of educational staffs' job. It is suggested to review and validate the issue in different groups. It is recommended to use other methods such as observation and interviews to collect information.

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