



The Relationship between Empowerment and Organizational Learning of Physical Education Teachers

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research was to evaluate the relationship between empowerment with organizational learning of physical education teachers. The research method was correlational. Spritz empowerment questionnaire ($r = 0.883$) and Nief organizational learning questionnaire ($r = 0.843$) and a demographic questionnaire, were used to collect data. Validity was confirmed by 12 persons of university professors and reliability was analyzed through initial sample consisted of 45 questionnaires. The population of this research was 512 physical education teachers, of these 220 individuals were selected randomly according to the Morgan table. Statistical method was descriptive and inferential (multivariate regression). The results showed that, there is a very strong and positive relationship between empowerment and organizational learning of physical education teachers. Also, the results of this research showed that, the main predictors of organizational learning were the sense of effectiveness ($r = 0.410$), the sense of competency ($r = 0.261$) and the sense of significance ($r = 0.197$) respectively. The relationships indicated that with increasing each of empowerment indicators, organizational learning will increase. On this basis, increasing the employees' competence, believe in their ability and capability, ability to influence on strategic outcomes, personal feelings about the right to choose and the sense of trust will increase the organizational learning of physical education teachers.

Keywords: Empowerment, learner organization, teachers

INTRODUCTION

In today's business environment, changes occur at rapid strides. Organizations in competition arenas in the global business environment are required to have a favorable reaction to the constant change or be disappeared. Business world, changes from the dominance of investment in knowledge supremacy. An organization should develop its human resources and should increase its amount of information and knowledge in order to outreach the other organizations. Employees and their knowledge are a valuable resource for the organization. Hence, organizational learning and knowledge production have been taken into consideration in recent years (Paaanen & Kantola, 2008). Many organizations have detected the solution in increasing organizational learning and empowerment programs and they have tried to overcome internal and external obstacles and create the context for fostering employees' empowerment by implementation of these programs along with modifying variables affecting individuals' feel with use of learning and individual empowerment (Zare, 1385). In the present era, the

organizations in which employees strive to improve their capabilities are successful and the manager's duty is providing suitable conditions for this educational process. Organizational learning is a dynamic process that enables organizations to quickly adapt to changes. This process involves the production of new knowledge, skills and behaviors and includes specific organizational behavior which is applied in a learner organization. In such organizations, all of the learning conditions are provided for the members and individuals attempt continuously to apply what they have learned (Zhang *et al*, 2009). The concept of organizational learning which was dramatically considered since 1990 by many academic and industrial centers is the result of two main factors:

1. The rapidly changes in the nature of the world in which we live.
2. The competitive environment in which organizations operate. The key point is that, how they should learn and generate new knowledge. Learning requires that individuals apply the knowledge in their behavior which they gained in their organization.

Learning has three stages: Recognition (learning new concepts), behavior (developing new skills and abilities) and function (doing work, actually). According to Garvin, organizations need five skills to use new ideas in improving organizational performance to turn them into practical applications. These are: Problem solving, gaining experience, learning from their experience and history, learning from others and transmission or run. The term of organizational learning apparently referring to individual learning in the organization, but organizational learning refers to the group or level of organizational learning. Individual learning is done through research, interviews, knowledge, experience, training, and development of effective mental models in mind, but organizational learning occurs when group learns to interact, share knowledge and collectively act, so that the combined capacity of group increases and gain the ability to understand and do effective actions (Bennet & Bennet, 2008). Dimensions of organizational learning from the Nief viewpoint (2001) include: Shared outlook: The importance of a shared outlook is for becoming a learner organization: First, a shared outlook provides the focus and energy for learning. Second, the outlook leads people into action. Third, the shared outlook creates the final goal and encourages the risk taking and innovation. Fourth, values and common meanings are important in determining the type of knowledge that is stored and transmitted (Marquard, 2002).

Organizational learning culture: When members of a community, organization or group endeavor to adapt to the external environment and internal integration problems, unconsciously they have attempted to learning. Because in term of theorizing, learning and problem solving are not only different but also it can be said that different viewpoints have a same basic process.

Group work and learning: In group work and learning, the emphasis is on the importance of alignment in forces and personnel of the organization. Collective learning is a process by which the capacity of members has been developed and aligned in a manner in that the results were desired (Senge, 1990).

Knowledge sharing, transmission and distribution of knowledge, organizational and technological transmission of data covers information and knowledge. The capacity of an organization to transfer knowledge represents the transfer ability and sharing power, which is also the prerequisite for success. Knowledge needs to be carefully and rapidly distributed throughout the organization or company fields (Marquard, 2002).

Systemic thinking: Systems thinking means using a systematic approach to analyzing and considering the impact of corporate governance and organizational factors on each other.

With holistic thinking, business activities, and in general, all other human endeavors are systems. They are limited by the interrelated built-in activities. These activities usually require years of time to complete their effect on each other. Since we are a part of this series, we faced additional difficulties to understand the pattern of the change (Senge, 1990).

Participative leadership: The outcome of participative leadership is a sense of partnership in employees. The result of this effort is that employees feel that they are needed and have a useful existence. Research has proven that participation reduces resistance to change, increases the organizational commitment and decreases the psychological pressure.

Development of employees' competencies: Competence is a set of knowledge, skills and measurable and visible behaviors which are contributed to the success of a job or a post. For proper management of human resources, the level of knowledge, information, skills and abilities should be improved and the competence should be created. Human resources development can't be achieved with high education, but also human resources should act in a planned and systematic practice.

Empowerment means to empower the employees, that will help them to reinforce their sense of confidence and overcome their powerlessness or helplessness feeling and give them strength and motivation to carry out their activities. It includes five dimensions, the sense of significance, the sense of competency, the sense of self-determination, the sense of trust and the sense of having impact. In empowerment, more self-determination and autonomy and decision-making responsibility are assigned to the employee. In other words, vertical surcharge and other similar methods to increase the employees' freedom of action are called Empowerment (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001). According to the definitions and active presence of the organization in the field of competition, technology and the creation of new jobs and the need for multi-skilled employees, make their empowering inevitable. Empowerment is a novel and effective technique for improving productivity in organizations by taking advantage of power in employees. Employees have occult power through their knowledge, experience and motivation and empowerment is releasing this power. This technique provides potential capacities to exploit human abilities and in a healthy organizational environment suggests a balanced approach for applying complete control by management and complete freedom of employees. Through empowerment programs, delegated operational capacities, increasing responsibility and autonomy in decision-making and sense of self-efficacy will increase and consequently organizational productivity and efficiency also will rise.

The main feature of empowerment is aligning the individual and organizational goals. In the empowerment, employees are not only need authority, but also they should have adequate training and financial credit and basic information to be accountable for their decisions (Tubbs & Moss, 2000). Some others have defined empowerment as a form of decentralization which involves delegating authority of fundamental decisions to subordinates. Empowerment enables employees to participate in management and it is larger than restraint (Lussier, 2002).

Crossan (2003) found that organizational learning improves organizational efficiency. This improvement is evaluable by customers (Crossan, 2003). Real et al. (2006) found that information technology acts as an enabler and engendering for organizational learning and influences the organization's specific and technological capabilities. The product is better business performance (Real, 2006). Abdolmaleki (1381) said that there is a high correlation coefficient between organizational learning and the rate of change and innovation in organizations (Abdolmaleki, 1381). Feterman concluded that empowerment evaluation consists of three steps: a) The stability of mission and purpose, b) Roots, c) Planning for the future. He stated that empowerment evaluation helps creating a learning culture in the organization or community group (Feterman, 2005). Tippins and Suhi found that there is a significant relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance framework (Tippins, 2003). Nourozi in investigating the relationship between psychological factors of empowering of the employees and organizational performance in Mellat bank branches concluded that there is a significant and direct relationship between them. In general, it can be concluded that the branches which had a higher average in psychological factors (sense of significance, competency, effectiveness, having a choice and trust) had higher efficiency and vice versa (Nourozi, 1384). Chufy stated that there is a significant relationship between employees' empowerment and organizational learning. He also noted that the management in which the sense of competency, having choice, effectiveness, significance and trust is higher among the employees, they have more organizational learning. Accordingly, increasing competencies in employees, belief in their power and ability to influence the strategic outcome, individual feels for making choices and the sense of trust will increase the organizational learning (chufy, 1385). It should be recognized that organizations are exposed to extensive and rapid environmental changes as a collection of individuals and human groups and over the time, they will acquire lessons in their actions and activities. In other words, organizations must have the ability to learn as individuals.

Thus, the issue of organizational learning concentrates on new theories of organization and management, and it is concluded that a major challenge in different levels of management increases the organizational learning. Education organization which is the most important educational institutions in the country, like other organizations and government agencies must provide conditions in the workplace and the organization in order to increasing productivity and improve organizational performance, in that teachers, especially teachers of physical education who are directly deal with physical education students feel the necessary empowering and like other organizations requires continuous learning at all work levels of the organization in order to achieve organizational goals. Accordingly, in order to cope with increasing, fast, complex and uncertain changes in the environment and explore potential opportunities in the field of sports, the organizations need creative, innovative and empowered teachers with the ability to explore and teach the new opportunities. The nature of innovation needs specific and different conditions. Of course, having a competitive advantage depends on the organization's attributes, but certainly employees of each organization and their knowledge, play a critical role in this pathway. Therefore, identifying the appropriate attributes to attract and develop the employees is the first and most essential step on the issue of education organization. Due to this necessity, the researcher of this study investigated the relationship between empowerment and organizational learning of Tehran province's physical education teachers.

RESEARCH METHODS

The present study is correlational descriptive and the data was collected in fieldwork way. In this study, variables of significance, effectiveness, competence, self-determination and trust, organizational learning and predictive variables are the criterion variables. The population of the study includes all teachers of physical education in Tehran province ($n = 512$). Research sample was selected by using Morgan table and simple random sampling ($n = 220$).

Measurement tools: Two questionnaires were used in this study. Spritz empowerment questionnaire was used to measure the empowerment which was standardized by Abdullahi in 1384. Nief organizational learning questionnaire was used to measure the organizational learning. The scale of both questionnaires is Likert-type. In this study, validity of the questionnaires was approved by using the sport and governmental experts' opinions and reliability of the questionnaires obtained respectively 0.88 and 0.84 through Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

RESULTS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

Pearson's correlation test results showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between organizational empowerment subscales (sense of significance, effectiveness, self-determination, trust and competency) and organizational learning of physical education teachers. The direction of relationships show that with increasing each empowerment attributes, organizational learning will increase (Table 1).

In order to determine the effect of each predictor variable on the criterion variable, the regression analysis was performed. Therefore, all the predictor variables selected by the stepwise method and were used in a regression command to obtain the final equation. Table 2 shows the multivariate regression model to explain organizational learning.

Table 1. The correlations between the subscales of empowerment and organizational learning.

Criterion variable	Predictor variable	Correlation value	P-value
Organizational Learning	Sense of significance	0/798	0/001
	Sense of effectiveness	0/845	0/001
	Sense of self-determination	0/825	0/001
	Sense of trust	0/750	0/001
	Sense of competency	0/812	0/001

Table 2. Regression results between empowerment components and organizational learning.

Variables that have been entered in the equation.						
Variables	B	S.E		t	p	
Sense of effectiveness	1/716	0/380	0/410	5/639	0/000	
Sense of competency	0/953	0/290	0/261	3/323	0/001	
Sense of significance	0/932	0/380	0/197	2/221	0/015	
Intercept	-0/682	1/321	-	-0/435	0/643	
Variables that have been removed from the equation.						
Variables				p	t	
Sense of self-determination				-0/620		-0/054
Sense of trust				1/854		0/128

The results of the above table show that the sense of effectiveness ($P = 0.000$, $T = 5.639$) effects on respondents' organizational learning more than other variables. Effect direction of this variable is positive and direct and shows that with increasing the respondents' sense of effectiveness organizational learning will also increase. After the sense of effectiveness, sense of competency ($P = 0.001$, $T = 3.323$) has a moderate effect on organizational learning. The third entered variable into the model is sense of significance ($P = 0.015$, $T = 2.221$) and the relationship of this variable is direct with respondents' organizational learning. Two components including the sense of self-determination and trust are qualified by these terms. The standardized coefficient indicates that the components of sense of effectiveness ($\beta = 0.410$), the sense of competency ($\beta = 0.261$) and the sense of significance ($\beta = 0.197$) are the most important predictors of organizational learning. According to test

results, null hypothesis is rejected and the default assuming is confirmed.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between empowerment and organizational learning of physical education teachers. Results showed that there is a strong and significant relationship between empowerment factors and organizational learning of physical education teachers. These findings are consistent with results of Zare (1385), Nourozi (1384) chufy (1385), Spritz (1997), Ozarali (2003), and Bowen (2006). Zare (1385) obtained a significant correlation in a study of psychological empowerment factors and entrepreneurship in the physical education organization in which the highest ratings were related to the sense of competency, the sense of self-determination and finally the sense of trust.

Nourozi (1385) in an evaluation of the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational performance Mellat bank branches of Tehran, concluded that there is a significant relationship between the sense of trust in colleagues and efficiency of branches and obtained correlation coefficient indicates the direct relationship between them. In general, it can be concluded that the branches in which psychological empowerment factors (sense of significance, competency, effectiveness, having choices, trust) had higher average were more efficient.

Doting et al. (2003) during research on psychological empowerment in the workplace investigated the relationship between empowerment psychological factors and emotional and behavioral responses of employees. They stated that empowerment psychological factors significantly associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Also, a significant correlation was observed between psychological empowerment and employees' performance.

Chufy (1385) studied the relationship between empowerment of employees and organizational learning in national distribution of petroleum products in a research and concluded that there is a significant and positive relationship between employees' empowerment and organizational learning. Based on the present results, it is clear that whatever the sense of trust increases and the employees in the organization be assured that they will be treated fairly and equally in fair view, the organizational learning will increase. Formidable employees believe that, finally no damage will come to them as a result of the trust. They were more research-oriented, adaptable, self-esteem and eager to learn. Also, whatever the sense of self-determination and having choices increases and the employees in the organization have more freedom for implementation and promotion of activities related to their job, their organizational learning will increase. Whatever the employees have more right to choose in decisions about work methods and level of efforts, this causes learning and interest in the activity and attempts to deal with adverse work situations. Whatever the sense of significance among employees increases and they accord more value to the activities that they do and their mental aspirations and standards be more fit with what they do, their learning in the organization will increase. Employees who have the sense of effectiveness try to retain their dominance over what they see and enhance their learning in the workplace, instead of having reactive response to the environment to be effective in programs. Finally, whatever the sense of competency increases and the employees in the organization have capability and expertise to do successful works, the organizational learning will

increase. The sense of competency causes the effort, compliance, high expectations, excellent performance and resistance toward critical conditions for employees in the workplace and as a result, their organizational learning will increase. Also, employees' belief to their capacity leads to increasing the organizational learning in their workplace. The results showed that, emotional factors of influence, the sense of competency and the sense of significance have a direct impact on organizational learning. Education managers in general and administrative experts of Physical Education in particular should have more attention to these factors to transform their organization into a learner organization and try to flourish these factors in the organization's employees. This will be possible through holding the educational classes, special attention to the creativity and innovation of employees, respecting and encouraging them, delegation of authority and assignment of tasks, giving autonomy and freedom of action to employees, team formation and development of participatory management.

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