Terms of Organizational Psychology, Personnel Empowerment and Team Working: A Case Study

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Abstract

Personnel empowerment is described as increasing authority of employees to make decisions and process of enhancing employees in organizations by means of training, sharing and team working. It is the perception that employees can help determine their own roles, accomplish meaningful work and influence workplace decisions. Empowerment has been studied from different perspectives, such as employee perceptions, leadership behaviors and team working. Researchers suggest that empowerment strategies and team working can offer real benefits for employees and managers. Personnel empowerment in organizations is the perception by members that they have the opportunity to help determine work roles, accomplish meaningful work, and influence important decisions. Empowerment is commonly considered important because of the potential benefits that can result from it, including increased employee commitment, improved quality, more innovation, increased job satisfaction and productivity. Thus, organizational teamwork is a tool in making use of the synergistic effect of the personnel empowerment.

1. Introduction

In modern organizations, effective team working and personal empowerment are important for productivity. By team working and empowering, organizations gain synergy. This synergy requires teams to work together, enhance mutual problem solving, continue learning and increase innovation abilities. In the new organizational concept organizations must use team work and empower their personnel. By this method managers’ workloads can be lessened and save them time for control. This study examines the team work and empowerment in an organization that uses “self-managed teams” in the Izmir province of Turkey.

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2. Team work

Teams are characterized as having joint and integrative accountability, processes, and reward structures in accomplishing tasks (Solansky, 2011). They have become important building blocks of organizational effectiveness and gain benefits by increasing productivity in the workplace, improved product/service quality (Somech, 2005) a reduced management structure, lowered levels of absenteeism, reduced employee turnover, and increased industrial harmony. The opening discussions of the teams doing similar or the same task are likely to develop distinctive approaches, which structure the progression of their activities (Wood et al., 2011). Teams with high levels of identification have members who are committed to the team and the team’s goals rather than individual goals. The strength of identification within the team plays a critical role not only in whether teamwork occurs, but also the performance of the team (Solansky, 2011).

In general, highly effective teams are characterised by having a clear goal, competent team members (Hertel, 2011), a result-oriented structure, collaborative climate, recognition, external/management support, motivation, a high level of commitment and principle centred leadership (Sudhakar et al, 2011).

Teamwork is the interaction spontaneously or prompted by management’s demand for a group of employees to reach a specific organisational goal (Valscechi et al., 2012). Therefore, the implementation of teamwork (Rolfsen & Langeland, 2012) is widely believed to enhance performance in the workplace (Rutti et al., 2012). Teamwork is a collective way of organizing and working. It offers the potential benefits of synergy (Hertel, 2011) from the creation and implementation of work. Furthermore, it offers tangible benefits from “social labouring” and social interaction which can positively affect self-esteem and self-actualization (Staniforth, 1996).

Team vision is important for a team (Wahid et al., 2011). Because product development requires coordination and alignment of the functions involved, all team members must be able to make sense of project goals so that they can support them and internalize them as being aligned with their own (Revilla & Knoppen, 2012). Cultural miscommunication and lack of understanding or ignorance are typical cultural diversity conflict factors (Opute; 2012).

When team members are open to learning and change, there may be higher levels of participation in decision-making and greater and faster changes (Revilla & Knoppen, 2012). Educating the team members is also necessary to optimise the team’s organisational effectiveness (Somech, 2005). A positive team climate (Mathisen, 2012) results in more innovation and team performance in teams engaged in knowledge work (Sudhakar et al., 2011). The extant literature shows that team climate is a composite construct consisting of three dimensions: affiliation, trust, and innovation (Tuuli, 2012). Affiliation is equivalent to cohesion in nature and refers to the perception of a sense of togetherness among members. Cohesion, defined as members’ attraction to the team, can be considered as a psychological force that binds people together. Trust in the team environment is defined as a member’s willingness to accept vulnerability based on a confident expectation of teammates’ competence, integrity, and benevolence. More importantly, trust can result in the “groupthink” phenomenon (Erdem, 2003). Group thinking is the phenomenon that exists when people being in a group focus more on reaching a decision than on making a good decision (Thamizhmanii &Hasan, 2010). Brought about by communication and team members sharing, mutual trust (Ghosh et al., 2012) occurs in the prevailing work environment. Innovation in a team refers to the degree to which change and creativity are actively encouraged (Humborstad & Perry, 2011) and rewarded within the team (Xue et al., 2011).

3. Personnel empowerment

Empowerment is a concept that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems and proactive behaviour to social policy and social change. Empowerment links an individual’s motivation (Somech, 2005) and his or her wellbeing to the wider social and political environment in which he or she functions (Thamizhmanii & Hasan, 2010). Team psychological empowerment reflects “team members’ collective belief that they have the authority to control their proximal work environment and are responsible for the team’s functioning” (Tuuli et al., 2012).
A supportive culture (Erkutlu, 2012) that values employees and their contributions facilitates empowerment. Shared values, beliefs, and norms held by members of an organization are known as organizational culture. Creative problem solving is supported by an organizational culture, strong values for information sharing and fair and constructive judgment of ideas (YuKL & Becker, 2006). Shared leadership provides team members with both control and the opportunity to manage their demands actively (Erkutlu, 2012).

Leaders in an organization may energize the people they manage, causing them to approach tasks actively and enthusiastically, as they have high levels of confidence in their ability to succeed (Lam & O’Higgins, 2012). Several studies have investigated both the direct link (Mathisen et al., 2012) between leadership factors (Schechter & Ganon, 2012) and employee creativity (Thamizhmanii & Hasan, 2010). In other words, managers might not only ask themselves whether their team is working at its potential performance level (Humborstad & Perry, 2011), but also whether the team can go beyond the expected performance level based on the capabilities of its individual members (Hertel, 2011).

All in all, the main characteristics of empowered personnel in working life can be summed up as follows (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997): They have a sense of self determination, a sense of meaning, a sense of competence and they have a sense of impact (this means that people believe they can have influence on their work unit).

As can be seen in Figure 1, some factors lead to employee empowerment (Thamizhmanii & Hasan, 2010). These factors are: personnel knowledge and skill, personnel communication, organizational and personal trust, and using incentives.

![Empowerment model](Figure 1: Empowerment model)

4. Relationship between teamwork and empowerment

Self-managed work teams offer a number of potential advantages for an organization. Greater autonomy and variety can result in more satisfied employees with lower turnover and absenteeism (Pais, 2010:364). Having team members cross-trained to do different jobs increases the flexibility of the team in dealing with personnel shortages resulting from illness or turnover. Increased knowledge of work processes helps team members solve problems and suggest improvements. Employees who can make decisions and initiate changes are more likely to take responsibility (Thamizhmanii, 2010) for their work and may be more motivated to produce a high-quality product or service. Finally, the changeover to self-managed groups typically reduces the number of managers and staff specialists in an organization, which lowers costs (Yukl & Becker, 2006).

If individuals within the autonomous group are to experience a high degree of motivation, the following conditions must be satisfied:
- The group task must require a variety of skills;
- The group task must constitute a complete component of work;
- The results of a group task are different from other peoples’ task in the organization;
- The group task gives individuals substantial latitude for decision-making about how to carry out the work, including work methods, management of priorities, work pace of work; and
- The whole group receives reliable information about its work and its performance (Pais, 2010, p. 363).

When team members feel accepted by their colleagues, their creativity may be more readily revealed.
5. Case study

İzeltas, İzmir El Aletleri Sanayi ve Ticaret San. ve Tic. AŞ.

İzeltas was established in 1968 in İzmir with 100% Turkish capital through Turkish and German technical collaboration as the first Turkish hand tools manufacturer. Today, as a result of technological investments which increase the capacity and improve quality, İzeltas has a production capacity of 4000 tons a year, equivalent to 16 million pieces and 2,500 types of hand tools within its four facilities covering a total area of 155,000 square meters, of which 40,000 meters square is covered.

Human resources policy

As a principle of human resource to employ a person means to agree to employ him until retirement and this is a very serious responsibility. For that reason, while employing employees, it is important to display sensitivity.

The use of Total Quality Management (TQM) application shows that education is considered to be paramount. Since 1997, educational facilities have been continued efficiently. In future years, in-house and outside education will be continued to keep alive the idea of improvement. In future years, by giving importance to education that encourages and improves teamwork, a quality circles environment will be created with the 5S team groups to focus on new applications. To improve the facilities of the new teams, education will be given to "systematic problem solving techniques" and the "5S system". The firm’s executive and administrative personnel will be educated in "motivation and administration skills" and "leadership" education.

In firm’s activities in TQM continues with "Total Efficient Care" education and is aimed at increasing machine efficiency to a high level, without a pause, without a fault and without any accidents. When they have passed the employees are considered to have the concept of "MY MACHINE". Other important education includes the subjects of "how to teach" and "education program developing". In this education, the operators who were chosen from the employees how to teach the work, how the existing situation can be transformed to on the job training, how the educational program will be written and that skills will be used to achieve the educational objectives.

Performance measurement and evaluation

Productivity target

After the improving process, both productivity and the proportion of piece number and duration increased. After the time and motion studies, some improvement results are realized. Productivity increased between %20-%59. Group’s performances are different from each other’s.

- Cost target

| Table 1: Results from improvement operations |
|---------------------------------------------|
| Before Improvement | After Improvement | Change |
| Labor cost | %55 | %45 | %81 |
| The cost of 3 process in total cost | %11 | %8 | %27 |
| Total cutting machine cost | 9,939,291 TL | 8,481,671 TL | %15 (Monetary) |

- Duration target

After the team working studies, there are some improvements related to consuming time. Piece number of production increased.

| Table 2: Financial results |
|---------------------------|
| Before studies | After studies |
| Total cutting cost | 9,939,291 TL | 8,481,671 TL |
| Side cutting improvement | 1,457,620 TL |
- Standardization of products

By team working, standardization of the products is increased in İZELTAŞ A.Ş. Team working affects teams for continues improvement and standardization of products.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, personnel empowerment and team working were discussed in brief. Empowerment means engaging personnel in the thinking processes of an organization. Personnel empowerment and team work require a change in an organization’s culture, but this does not mean that top management abdicate their responsibility or authority. Personnel empowerment and team work are necessary for the effective functioning of the skill of personnel. Each person in a team should be given a chance to act thoughtfully to achieve their goal or targets. Personal empowerment and team work are essential for the effective utilization of resources and manpower. This system improves the problem solving skills of teams and makes for good decision making. Consequently, team working and empowerment contribute to both the productivity and profitability of a firm.

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