

Chapter Seventeen

Empowerment and participation

Objectives;

To develop an understanding of:

Empowerment

- Process of empowerment
- Randolph's Empowerment model
- Strategic performance empowerment model

Participation

- Features of Workers participation in management:
Benefits of Participation
- Prerequisites of participation
- Expectations from employees and managers
- Programs for participation
- Guidelines for participation

What Is Empowerment?

Taken from ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR Human Behavior at work (TENTH EDITION) by JOHN W. NEWSTROM and KEITH DAVIS, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited, NEW DELHI

Most work organizations have a number of employees who believe that they are dependent on others and that their own efforts will have little impact on performance.

This powerlessness contributes to the frustrating experience of **low self-efficacy** – the conviction among people that they cannot successfully perform their jobs or make meaningful contributions. Problems with self-efficacy are often caused by major organizational changes that are beyond the employees' control (such as mergers).

Problems may also stem from having to work under an authoritarian leader, within a reward system that fails to reinforce competence or innovation, or in a job that lacks variety, discretion, role clarity.

Fortunately, individual perceptions of low levels of self-efficacy can be raised by empowering employees. **Empowerment is any process that provides greater autonomy to employees through the sharing of relevant information and the provision of control over factors affecting job performance.** Empowerment helps remove the conditions that cause powerlessness while enhancing employee feelings of self-efficacy. Empowerment authorizes employees to cope with situations and enables them to take control of problems as they arise. Five broad approaches to empowerment have been suggested:

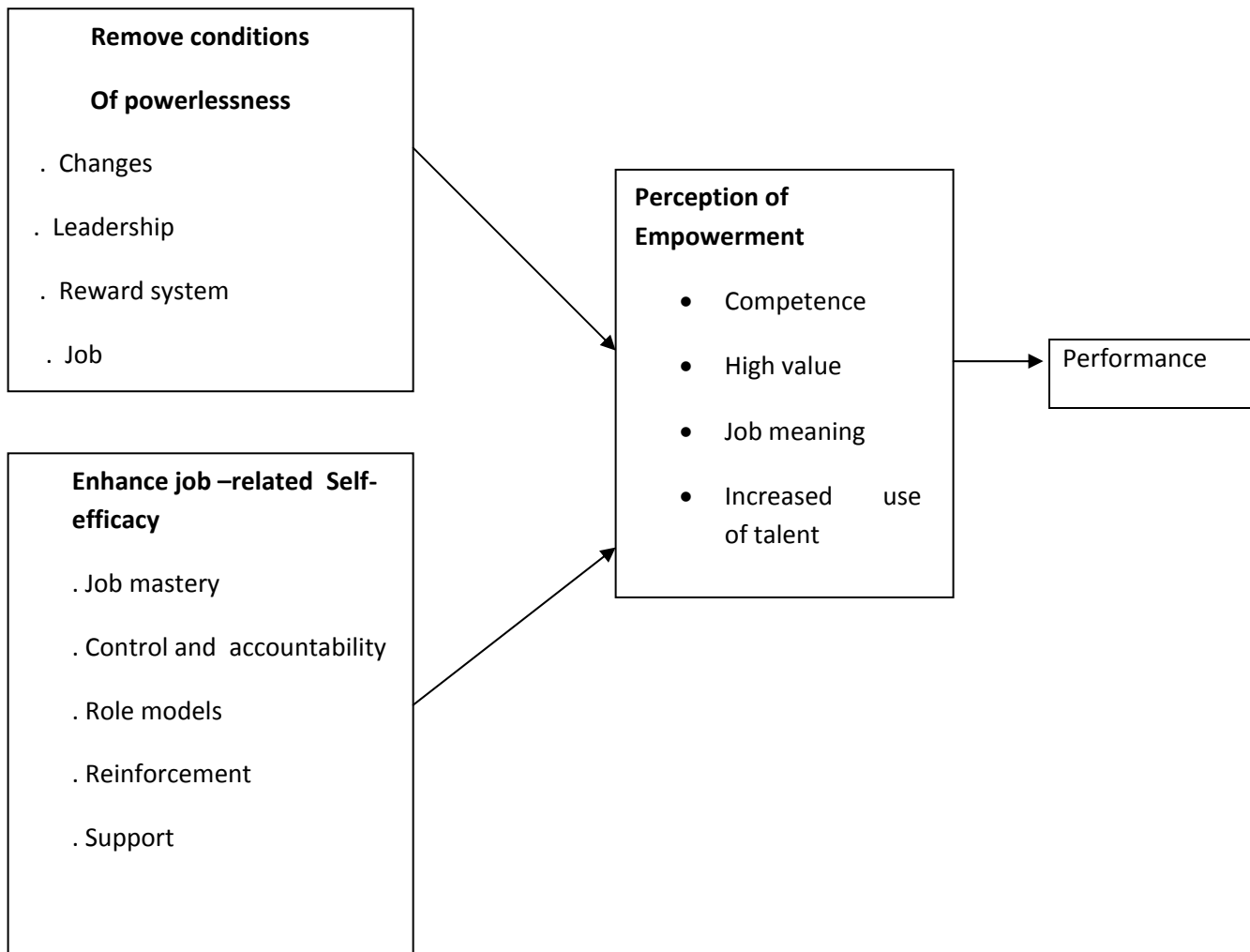
1. Helping employees achieve **job mastery** (giving proper training, coaching, and guided experience that will result in initial successes)
2. Allowing more **control** (giving them discretion over job performance and then holding them **accountable** for outcomes)
3. Providing successful **role models** (allowing them to observe peers who already perform successfully on the job.)
4. Using social **reinforcement and persuasion** (giving praise, encouragement, and verbal feedback designed to raise self-confidence)
5. Giving **emotional support** (providing reduction of stress and anxiety through better role definition, task assistance, and honest caring)

When managers use these approaches, employees begin believing that they are competent and valued, that their jobs have meaning and impact, and that they have opportunities to use their talents. In effect, when they have been legitimately empowered, it is more likely that their efforts will pay off in

the kind of performance that the organization values. This chain of events is illustrated in the Figure below.

Managers have many behavioral tools available to them to attack the powerlessness problem. Some of these tools, such as mutual goal setting, job feedback, modeling, and contingent reward systems. A major approach, however, lies in the use of various programs for participative management. Such programs provide employees with varying degrees of perceived ownership, input into various steps in the decision-making process, and the key feeling of choice in their work environment.

The process of empowerment



Randolph's Empowerment model

Share Information

- Share company performance information
- Help people understand the business
- Build trust through sharing sensitive information
- Create self monitoring possibilities

Create Autonomy through Structure

- Create a clear vision and clarify little pictures

- Create a new decision making rules that support empowerment
- Clarify goals and roles collaboratively
- Establish new empowering performance management processes
- Use heavy doses of training

Let teams become the hierarchy

- Provide direction and training for new skills.
- Provide encouragement and support for change.
- Gradually have managers let go of control
- Work through the leadership vacuum stage.
- Acknowledge the fear factor

Randolph, A.w (1995) Navigating the journey to empowerment, Organizational Dynamics

IMPORTANT READING

Strategic performance empowerment model- Geroy, Wright and Anderson

Empowerment in Organizations, Vol. 6 No. 2, 1998, pp. 57-65. © MCB University Press, 0265-671X states that coaching, modeling and career path development should be present in the organization to provide necessary guidance to employees to become empowered employees.

What Is Participation?

Participation refers to involvement of individuals or group of individual for common purpose .Workers Participation in management refers to the emotional and mental involvement of an employee to contribute for the goals and share responsibilities of an organization. It will be effective only if there is interaction among individuals or groups. Participative managers consult with their employees, bringing them in on problems and decisions so that they work together as team. The managers are not autocrats, but neither are they free-rein managers who abandon their management responsibilities. Participative managers still retain ultimate responsibility for the operation of their units, but they have learned to share operating responsibility with those who perform the work. The result is that employees feel a sense of involvement in group goals. It follows that **participation is the mental and emotional involvement of people in group situations that encourages them to contribute to group goals and share responsibility for them.** There are three important ideas in this definition –involvement, contribution, and responsibility.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT First, and probably foremost , participation means mental and emotional involvement rather than mere muscular activity. A person's **entire self** is involved, not just his or her skill. This involvement is **psychological** rather than physical. A person who participates is **ego-involved** instead of merely task-involved.

MOTIVATION TO CONTRIBUTE A second concept in participation is that it motivates people to contribute . They are empowered to release their own resources of initiative and creativity toward the objectives of the organization., just as Theory Y predicts. In this way participation differs from “ consent”. Participation is more than getting consent for something that has already been decided. Its great value is that it taps the creativity of all employees.

Participation especially improves motivation by helping employees understand and clarify their paths toward goals. According to the path-goal model of leadership, the improved understanding of path-goal relationship produces a heightened sense of responsibility for goal attainment. The result is improved motivation.

ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY Finally, participation encourages people to accept responsibility in their group's activities. It is a social process by which people become self-involved in an organization and want to see it work successfully. When they talk about their organization , they begin to say “we,” not “they.” When they see a job problem, it is “ours,” not “theirs.” Participation helps them become good organizational citizens rather than non-responsible, machinelike performers.

As individuals begin to accept responsibility for group activities , they see in it a way to do what they want to do, that is, to get a job done for which they feel responsible. This idea of getting the group to want teamwork is a key step in developing it into a successful work unit. When people want to do something , they will find a way. Under these conditions employees see managers as supportive contributors to the team. Employees are ready to work actively with managers rather than reactively against them.

Features of Workers participation in management:

- a)Emotional and mental involvement
- b)Contribute for the goals
- c)Share responsibilities of an organization

Objectives of Workers participation in management

Primary objective:

- a) industrial harmony
- b) sense of commitment
- c) sense of belongingness
- d) good communication skills
- e) handles the resistance

Secondary objectives

- a) Economical
- b) Social
- c) Psychological

Why Is Participation Popular ?

Managers have for years recognized various benefits of participation, but these benefits were first demonstrated experimentally in classic studies in industry by Roethlisberger, Coch and French, and others. Their collective results suggested the general proposition that , **especially in the introduction of changes, participation tends to improve performance and job satisfaction.** Participative practices offers to increase productivity or to speed the introduction of products to market. These practices expedite these goals by placing more responsibility at lower levels of the organization and by speeding up the approval process. Participative practices may also provide power opportunities earlier to minority workers in an increasingly diverse workforce, since such workers need not wait until reaching higher organizational levels before being allowed to contribute meaningfully.

Participation also seems to help satisfy the awakening employee need for meaning and fulfillment at work.

Other reasons for the popular use of participative practices are noteworthy. The educational level of the workforce often provides workers with unique capacities that can be applied creatively to work problems. These employees have also acquired both a greater **desire** for influencing work-related decisions and an **expectation** that they will be allowed to participate in these decisions. An equally strong argument can be made that participation is an **ethical imperative** for managers. This view rests on the conclusion that highly non-participative jobs cause both psychological and physical harm to employees in the long run. As a result of these factors , managers need to create participative conditions that will allow interested employees to experience feelings of empowerment in their work.

Benefits of Participation

Participation tends to improve motivation because employees feel more accepted and involved in the situation. Their self- esteem, job satisfaction, and co-operation with management also may improve . The results often are reduced conflict and stress , more commitment to goals and better acceptance of change. Turnover and absences may be reduced because employees feel that they have a better place

to work and that they are being more successful in their jobs. Finally , the act of participation in itself establishes better communication as people mutually discuss work problems. Management tends to provide workers with increased information about the organization's finances and operations, and this sharing of information allows employees to make better-quality suggestions.

Merits of Workers participation in management

- a) Increase productivity
- b) Increase efficiency of employee.
- c) Establish industrial peace
- d) Establish industrial democracy
- e) Well being of individual
- f) Personality development
- g) Mutual understanding
- h) Social well being
- i) Welcome changes
- j) Rapid industrialization

Demerits of Workers participation in management

- a) Inactive trade union
- b) Chances of suspicion
- c) Employee may lead a careless life
- d) Industrial anarchy

Prerequisites for Participation

1. Adequate time to participate
2. Potential benefits greater than costs
3. Relevance to employee interests
4. Adequate employee abilities deal with the subject
5. Mutual ability to communicate
6. No feeling of threat to either party
7. Restriction to the area of job freedom.

Contingency Factors

DIFFERING EMPLOYEE NEEDS FOR PARTICIPATION Different employee need for participation will determine whether employees will accept and be satisfied with the degree of participation offered by organization

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES AND MANAGER A critical contingency element in the success of any participative program is the degree to which all employees recognize that the opportunities provided are accompanied by a set of responsibilities. Ideally, all employees would agree to

Expectations for employees

- .. Be fully responsible for their actions and their consequences
- .. Operate within the relevant organizational policies
- .. Be contributing team members
- .. Respect and seek to use the perspectives of others
- .. Be dependable and ethical in their empowered actions
- .. Demonstrate responsible self-leadership

These responsibilities of employees provide a balance to those of the manager :

Expectations for managers

- .. Identifying the issues to be addressed
- .. Specifying the level of involvement desired
- .. Providing relevant information and training
- .. Allocating fair rewards

PROGRAMS FOR PARTICIPATION

Methods for implementing Workers participation in management

- a)Co-partnership/co-ownership
- b)Workers committee
- c)joint management council

- d)suggestions
- e)board representation

Consultative Management

Consultative management is the kind of participation that managers often practice even though the people above them do not apply it. **Consultative management** , as the name implies, means that managers ask their employees to think about issues, share their expertise, and contribute their own ideas before a managerial decision is made.

Suggestion Programs

Suggestion programs are formal plans to invite individual employees to recommend work improvements. In most companies the employee whose suggestion results in a cost savings may receive a monetary award in proportion to the first year's savings.

Quality Emphasis

For many years, both union and non-union firms have organized groups of workers and their managers into committees to consider and solve job problems. These groups may be called work committees, labor-management committees, work-improvement task forces, or involvement teams. They have broad usefulness for improving productivity and communications because most of the employees can be involved. Popular approaches for this purpose are quality circles and total quality management.

QUALITY CIRCLES Voluntary groups that receive training in statistical techniques and problem-solving skills and then meet to produce ideas for improving productivity and working conditions are known as **quality circles**.

To be successful, quality circles should be used according to these guidelines:

- .. Use them for measurable , short-term problems.
- .. Obtain continuous support from top management.
- .. Apply the group's skills to problems within the circle's work area.
- .. Train supervisors in facilitation skills.

.. View quality circles as one starting point for other more participative approaches to be used in the future.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The TQM approach gets every employee involved in the process of searching for continuous improvements in their operations. The total quality management approach constitute a formal program with direct participation of all employees. Almost any issue is subject to exploration, and the process is a continuing one of long duration. Consequently, TQM holds promise as a substantial program in participative management.

Middle-Management Committees

Middle-Management Committees are group mechanisms to improve participation of managers below top organization levels. Their core is a junior board of directors that is given the opportunity to study any problem and to recommend courses of action. Such programs encourage careful study of ideas before they are presented to top management: therefore top management rarely vetoes a recommendation.

Self-Managing Teams

Some firms have moved beyond consultative and democratic forms of participation, allowing a number of major decisions to be made by employee groups.

A more formal version of the group-decision approach is the self-managing team. Sometimes called semi-autonomous work groups or socio-technical teams, self-managing teams are natural work groups that are given a large degree of decision-making autonomy ; they are expected to control their own behavior and results. A key feature is the diminished (or dramatically changed) role of the manager as the team members learn to acquire new skills.

Employee ownership Plans

Employee ownership of a firm emerges when employees provide the capital to purchase control of an existing operation. The stimulus often comes from threatened closings of marginally profitable plants, where workers see little hope of other employment in a devastated local economy.

Guidelines for participation program success

1. Let workers progress from involvement on simple issues to more complex ones.
2. Provide employees with relevant training so that they understand broader organizational issues and financial statements.
3. Communicate in advance their areas of decisional freedom and the associated boundaries.
4. Don't force workers to participate if they do not wish to do so.
5. Provide counseling for supervisors so that they will know how to handle power sharing.
6. Set realistic goals for the early stages of any participative process.
7. Keep the guiding philosophy behind participation firmly in mind at all times.
8. Never attempt to manipulate a decision under the guise of participation.
9. Maintain a delicate balance between over participation and under participation.
10. Monitor employee perceptions of the level of empowerment experienced.

New Roles For Managers

Managers need to start relinquishing their roles of judge and critic and begin viewing themselves as partners with employees. They still need to communicate a direction for their unit, help set challenging goals, and monitor resources. But their new role invites them to view themselves as stewards of a broad range of human and technical resources. This stewardship paradigm shifts their emphasis from direction and control to that of servant leadership, where their challenge is to help others attain relevant goals while developing their skills and abilities.

Questions

1. What is Empowerment? Describe the process of empowerment.

2. Write short notes on (a) Randolph's Empowerment model (b) Strategic performance empowerment model
3. What is Participation? Describe the features of Workers participation in management
4. What are the benefits of Participation? What are the prerequisites of participation
5. State with examples the expectations from employees and managers. In this connection describe the guidelines for participation
6. Describe the different Programs for participation. What are the contingencies of participation.

