Study of the Relationship between Knowledge Management and Managers’ Empowerment in Urmia Payame Noor University

Bahareh AziziNejad1*, Hossein Jenaabadi2

1Assistant Professor, PhD of Educational Administration, Department of Educational Science, Payame Noor University, Tehran Branch, Iran
2Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Sistan and Baluchestan, Iran

*Corresponding Author: Bahareh AziziNejad

ABSTRACT: The purpose of the present study is to survey relationship between knowledge management and managers’ empowerment which includes achievement of revenue and better executed duties, increasing ability and efficiency of management, the ability of managers to create ideas and new solutions, determination of the influence of knowledge management on empowerment of managers for male and female. The research method is descriptive survey. The statistical population consists of all managers of Urmia Payame Noor University. The number of all managers was 98 and the size of the statistical sample was 98. The instrument for data gathering is the questionnaire which the validity and the reliability is calculated. After distributing the questionnaires and collecting the data, SPSS software was used with two methods of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics including of one sample T-test for hypotheses number 1, 2, 3, in depended t-test used for hypothesis number 4. The obtained results of this research consists of: knowledge management, increases the managers ability to achieve revenue and better execution duties, increase the ability and efficiency, such as creating ideas’ profitable and new ideas and solutions. The effect of knowledge management on empowering managers in each of two groups (male and female managers) is equal. Consequently knowledge management has relationship with empowerment managers.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Managers’ empowerment, Managers’ efficiency ability, Payame Noor University.

INTRODUCTION

Management is one of the most important and controversial topics. That the studies about management are still up-to-date indicates that management has different aspects and specific complications (Fiedler, Gibson & Barrett, 1993). Years after Francis Bacon stated that knowledge is power, Alvin Tafler, once more in the late 1980s, considered knowledge as the best type of power from among the three famous types involved, strength, money, and knowledge (Tafler, 1998). During the same period, Peter Drucker and Strusman, management theoreticians emphasized the increasing importance of information and knowledge for flourishing and development of organizations (Seonghee, 2000). All above-mentioned points illustrate that nowadays, knowledge is considered as the winning trump for organizations, institutes as well as humanistic and social processes. The degree to which organizations are successful at knowledge management within and outside themselves would be considered as a determining factor for their achievement of goals and maintenance of power in the competitive world (Hasanzadeh, 2007). Since the beginning of the present century, knowledge management has given priority to constant changes and progress. If an organization does not attempt for progress and make no changes, it is condemned to extinction (Stacey, 2007). Once upon a time, speaking about innovation seemed unnecessary and farfetched, but the current of promotion in the world, dragged people and organizations to a point in which doubtlessly one could not achieve his goals without innovation, and the nature of life and survival would be under question (Mir Moezzi, 2008). Managers must lead their organizations to an unknown future in which, with the great number of problems, the success depends on their ability of imagining and perceiving the world around them (Torenton, 2005.). Knowledge and its management are considered one of the most important factors to create a stable competition condition, and the leader organizations through the world, have gained.
successful experiences about knowledge management. Accordingly, Drucker believes that the future companies will be organized around knowledge rather than production (Jashapara, 2004). Knowledge management has created an enormous revolution about management issues. As knowledge management does not rely only on documented knowledge, most companies and organizations around the globe attempt to promote their competitive status and increase their effectiveness and exploitation by means of their tacit and overt knowledge (Carneiro, 2001). In order to achieve these goals, knowledge management seeks to exploit knowledge, wisdom, valuable experiences of the staff and to implement, recycle and maintain knowledge as the properties of the organization. Nowadays, knowledge plays an important role in the development of the developing and even developed countries (Hasanzadeh, 2007).

During the last two decades, the increase of the amount of information in organizations and the importance of its use in making decisions have created a phenomenon known as knowledge management which is considered as the most recent and pivotal discussion about management (David, 2007). Information and knowledge are so intermingled with human life that the present century is also called Information Century. Nowadays, in knowledge-centered economic systems, there has been a great attempt in order to change information into knowledge and manage knowledge-based properties (Hasanzadeh, 2007).

Knowledge Management Levels: Beckman (1998) has recognized nine levels for knowledge management as follows: Concentration, Identification, Extraction, Improvement, Organization, Sharing, Administration, Evaluation, Compatibility.

Enforcement: Enforcement means knowing people’s value and the role they might have in doing a task. Enforcing human force means generating essential capacities among staff to enable them to produce added value in the organization and to do their responsibilities together with effectiveness and efficiency (Beckman, 1998). One of important and remarkable definitions of enforcement is proposed by Blanchard and his colleagues in a book named ‘Three Enforcement Keys’. He defines enforcement as releasing individuals’ internal powers in order to gain wonderful results (Belanchard, Carlos & Randolph, 2001). As Beckman (1998) states enforcement is not providing people with power, for individuals have power because of knowledge and motivation and in fact, enforcement means releasing this power.

Enforcement Process: Enforcement is neither a duty nor a means to an end; rather it is the process of becoming and must be considered as a part of organizational culture. Enforcement Process is explained in three steps:

1. Sharing information: It means that the necessary information must be given to the staff.
2. Work independence or self-centeredness: It means that work independence must be within the definite boundaries of organization or field of responsibilities to avoid energy waste.
3. Responsibility or the philosophy of the organization’s existence: It means what the purpose of its establishment, business values, and scope of activities, foresights, goals and roles are (Aghayar, 2003).

Enforcement process starts from lower rank staff and functions and step by step moves on to top executive of the organization. Staff’s ability does not mean manager's disability; rather capable staff can use time and energy in an effective way (Kalseth, 1999). In a company like Mazda, the application of this process has increased their eagerness and motivation and helps them to use their skill to achieve the goals. David (2007) has identified five essential choices for enforcement strategy of staff which helps an organization to improve and the staff can, individually or in a group, move towards determined goals. The five choices are as follows: developing and expanding the views, classifying applicable activities, developing and supporting relationships, development of networks, and using inside and outside supportive groups (Aghayar, 2003).

Knowledge management is one of the important and vital issues; although it was considered and welcomed only during the last decade, Panagiotidis and Edwards (2001) claim that it is rooted in 3000 years B.C. Managers’ awareness of mental resources has preoccupied them with ways of extracting these capacities and capabilities; so that they have admitted that knowledge in an organization is the source of gaining stable dominant and efficient competition. Peter Drucker was the first who drove public attention to this issue 25 years ago and since then management theoreticians and leaders together with top companies have paid great attention to it. Later some research studies carried out in Iran and other countries will be mentioned about empowerment as well as knowledge management. Eskandari (2004) has discussed about the framework of a three-dimensional behavior, structure and field pattern in his Ph.D. thesis on ‘Designing and Introducing Haj and Pilgeranage carvans' Managers' Empowerment in Islamic Republic of Iran’, in Tehran University, and has confirmed the meaningful relationship between field dependent and behavior dependent branches and enforcement; however, no meaningful relationship was found between structure-dependent branch and enforcement. Mohammadi (2001) has discussed the approaches and analyzed dimensions and influential factors on enforcement in his thesis for M.A. degree on ‘Evaluation of Staff Empowerment Methods in Birjand University’, Tarbiat Modarres (Teacher Training) University of Tehran. Babania (2003) in his M.A. thesis on ‘Evaluation of Empowerment Capability of Human Force in Education and Training Organization of Mazandaran’ has proved that organization goals, promotion of staff satisfaction, creating mutual reassurance among individuals, self-governed groups with definite goals, and staff participation in making decisions can lead to empowerment. Piri and Asifzadeh (2006), Barvar (2004) have carried out studies regarding the above-mentioned topic and areas related to it. As regards the research projects done outside Iran, it is worth mentioning the following cases: Sweet (2002) in his M.A. thesis on ‘Application of Staff Empowerment as a Means of Promoting Organizational Competitions in Business Market’ has
done a case study in Technology Institute of U.S. Air Force. Stein and Zwass (1995) claimed that so far, few managers have been able to perceive the meaning of knowledge management; in addition, they enumerate two types of interactions to create knowledge: interaction between Explicit and Tacit knowledge (interaction between two forms of knowledge), and the interaction between Individual and Organizational Knowledge (interaction of two levels).

**METHODOLOGY**

The present research is descriptive and of the survey type. The sample includes all managers of Payame Noor University (N=98). The sample is as great as the population counted. Data collection instrument is a questionnaire designed in three parts. The first part includes five questions about demographic information of participants and the second and third parts contain 23 questions about empowerment and knowledge management variables including giving freedom of power and choice to staff for doing their work, or giving independence and freedom to carry out their responsibilities, attempting to create, transfer, and use knowledge, together with better fulfilling the tasks and increasing efficiency and potentials, creating cooperation among staff as well as making work groups and encouraging sharing knowledge and creating new and useful ideas. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated through SPSS software whose reliability was 0.81 which is in an acceptable range. The independent variable in the present study is the effective factors on managers’ empowerment which includes knowledge management and participation in making decisions. The dependent variable is empowerment. Four hypotheses and main hypothesis have been tested in below in part of results.

**RESULTS**

In order to test the hypothesis through SPSS software, one-way t-test for hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, and independent t-test for hypothesis 4 were used.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and access to function and better fulfillment of responsibilities of Urmia Payame Noor managers

| **Table 1. T-test findings for H₁** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Element** | **t** | **df** | **Sig.** | **M** |
| Function and Better Performance | 19.392 | 97 | 0.000 | 0.57955 |

As the observed t (t=19.392) at 99% confidence level, with (df=97) is greater than critical t (t=2.617), there is a significant relationship between better functioning and performances of responsibilities and knowledge management; in addition, it leads to the managers’ empowerment in this field.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and increase of potentials and efficiencies of Urmia Payame Noor managers.

| **Table 2. T-test findings for H₂** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Element** | **t** | **df** | **Sig.** | **M** |
| Increase of potentials and efficiency | 15.128 | 97 | 0.000 | 0.63636 |

As the observed t (t=15.128) at 99% confidence level, with (df=97) is greater than critical t (t=2.617), there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and increase of potentials and efficiencies.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a meaningful relationship between Payame Noor University manager’s knowledge management and creation of modern and useful ideas and solutions.

| **Table 3. T-test findings for H₃** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Element** | **t** | **df** | **Sig.** | **M** |
| Modern ideas and solutions | 21.244 | 97 | 0.000 | 0.71916 |
As the observed \( t (t=21.244) \) at 99% confidence level, with \( (df=97) \) is greater than critical \( t (t=2.617) \), there is meaningful relationship between knowledge management and creation of modern and useful ideas, and it empowers managers to make better decisions.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is a difference between knowledge management and empowerment of managers based on their gender (male/female).

**Table 4. Independent T-test findings for \( H_4 \)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( df )</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>( M )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge management and managers’ empowerment</td>
<td>0.809</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>0.04490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the observed \( t (t=0.809) \) at 95% confidence level, with \( (df=96) \) is lower than critical \( t (t=1.98) \), there is no meaningful difference between knowledge management and managers’ empowerment of male and female managers.

**Main Hypothesis:** There is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and empowerment of University managers in Urmia.

**Table 5. Independent T-test findings for \( H_5 \)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( df )</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge management and managers’ empowerment</td>
<td>0.809</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the observed \( t (t=23.13) \) at 99% confidence level, with \( (df=97) \), is greater than critical \( t (t=2.617) \); therefore, there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and managers’ empowerment.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The existence of powerful individuals, who can do their work effectively and efficiently, is one of the most important factors for development and progress in each organization. Passing the uneven path of development requires an appropriate condition for enhancing potential capabilities of human force in an organization, because individual's behavior is the common product of their personal characteristics and the environment in which they live (Thornton & Cracken, 2005). Provided that the appropriate conditions are catered for, skillful human force can have the greatest productivity and efficiency by the lowest number of facilities. According to the collected data and the findings it can be concluded that:

1. Data analysis for hypothesis 1 indicated that 78.5% of the participants evaluated the effect of knowledge management on managers' empowerment based on accessing the functions and better execution of responsibilities, and found it effective. In other words, managers had a positive view about hypothesis 1. Also, t-test was calculated at 99% of confidence interval and it was greater than the critical \( t \); it means that with 99% confidence level, it can be stated that knowledge management is effective on empowering managers based on accessing function and better handling of responsibilities. On other variables of knowledge management for empowering managers to access function and better fulfillment of tasks, one can introduce the participation in group work, mutual reassurance among working groups, having enough power and freedom to do organizational work. Babania's (2003) research justified staff satisfaction about participation in group works and mutual reassurance among staff for their empowerment. Also, Eskandari (2004), in his Ph.D. thesis, believes that participation in making decisions, relationship with managers at higher levels, diversity of responsibilities, evaluation of management function, job development, access to essential resources and finally, frequent education are the elements that directly support and strengthen managers and indirectly increase their empowerment. Sweet’s (2002) research indicated that staff's frequent education and relationship with managers and their participation in key decisions of organizations empower staff. In Lajavardi’s and Khanbabayi's research, the existence of honesty among working groups as well as providing freedom of choice and independence to them were considered as the most important factors for facilitating knowledge management. The findings of the above-mentioned studies are in accordance with the findings of hypothesis 1; therefore, the development of personal and organizational skills is crucial for survival in the territory of organizations' competition.

2. Data analysis for hypothesis 2 revealed that 83.8% of participants believed that knowledge management was effective on managers' empowerment to increase their efficiencies and capabilities. In other words, managers had a positive view about hypothesis 2. For 99% confidence interval, \( t \) observed was greater that the critical \( t \); it means that with 99% confidence level, it can be stated that knowledge management is related to the managers' empowerment based on increasing capabilities and efficiency. Regarding the variables of knowledge management for empowering managers
based on increasing capabilities and efficiency, permanent promotion of skill and educational level of the staff, sharing knowledge, transferring and using knowledge, documenting knowledge together with coworkers’ experiences and perception of information value can be mentioned. Barvar's (2004) research showed that in order to have greater productivity of human force, the organizations must consider staff empowerment, reduction of expenses, competition dominance, improvement of services to customers through simplification and reduction of servicing time, increase of creation as well as innovation and etc. Managers must start knowledge management and gradually make it permanent; this study justifies the effect of knowledge management on staff's empowerment. Accordingly, Asefzadeh and Foruzankhah (2005) believed that the criteria for exploiting knowledge are transferring, identifying, referencing, attempting, accessing and using knowledge together with the most critical step of knowledge exploitation is transfer of knowledge. Stein and Zwass (1995) believed that the only stable advantages of an organization as a complete unit are creating new knowledge, spreading it in different parts of the organization, and applying it in products and processes of services as well as organization systems. The findings of these projects confirm hypothesis 2.

3. Data analysis of hypothesis 3 showed that 89.3% of the participants believed that knowledge management was effective on managers' empowerment to create new and useful ideas. In other words managers had a positive view about the third hypothesis. Also, the observed t was greater than the critical t at 99% confidence level; it means that with 99% confidence interval, it can be stated that knowledge management is related to managers' empowerment based on creating new and useful ideas. As regards the variables of knowledge management related to the managers' empowerment for creating new and useful ideas, participation in decision making process of the organization and administration of confirmed decisions, creating new ideas and using innovations and experiences of those retired need to be mentioned. In Barvar's (2004) M.A. thesis, it is indicated that organizations, in order to achieve human force productivity, staff's empowerment, improvement of services to customers through simplification and reduction of service time, increase of creation and innovation as well as many other factors, should start knowledge management and make it permanent. Also Asefzadeh et al (2006), Mohammadi (2001), Eskandari's (2004) Ph.D. thesis, Sweet's (2002), justified the relationship between group work and participation of the staff with their empowerment, in their model the staff has the maximum level of productivity and efficiency with the lowest number of facilities. These findings are in accordance with findings of hypothesis 3.

4. Independent t-test for hypothesis 4 that there is a difference between male and female managers regarding knowledge management and their empowerment indicated that observed t is less than critical t at 95% confidence level; therefore, there is no difference between male and female managers based on the relationship between knowledge management and empowerment.

5. Findings of t-test for the main hypothesis indicated that as observed t, at 99% confidence interval, is greater than critical t in the table, with 99% confidence it can be indicated that there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and empowerment. As a consequence, hypothesis 1, 2, 3, and the main hypothesis are confirmed, but hypothesis 4 is rejected.

According to the findings of the present research which indicated a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and empowerment, the following suggestions are proposed: According to the findings of the first hypothesis which indicated the existence of a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and empowering managers to get to required function and better fulfillment of responsibilities, it is suggested that managers and officials in education and training offices increase appropriate and up-to-date educational facilities as well as the use of internet to assist managers to have access to modern knowledge; as a result, increase their capabilities. Also, the managers should let the staff to choose their own approaches and methods and do their work without any need for supervisors, this way they can recognize and express their own capabilities. Research results for hypothesis 2 revealed that there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and managers’ empowerment for increasing their efficiency and capabilities; therefore, the managers must pay great attention to creating, transferring and sharing knowledge in organization and respect staff's experiences, document and reread them. Research findings for hypothesis 3 showed that there is a meaningful relationship between knowledge management and managers’ empowerment for creating new and useful ideas and decision making; consequently, managers must pay a great deal of attention to them, value group work, and seek for staff's assistance for making decision for the organization; in addition, they need to use the previous colleagues’ experience to avoid repeating outdated approaches, and apply new ideas together with innovations. Also, considering the following points might be useful.

REFERENCES