

Concept, Types and Skills of Empowerment

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Introduction

Empowerment is process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. They do this by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve their access to resources and transform their consciousness through beliefs, values and attitudes. Empowerment is based on the idea that giving people skills, resources, authority, opportunity, motivation, as well holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, will contribute to their competence and satisfaction.

Concept

The concept of empowerment also depends upon power that can expand our second stated requirement. Understanding power as zero-sum, as something that you get at my expense, cuts most of us off from power. A zero-sum conception of power means that power will remain in the hands of the powerful unless they give it up. Although this is certainly one way that power can be experienced, it neglects the way power will remain in the hands of the powerful unless they give it up. Although this is certainly one way that power is experienced, it neglects the way power is experienced in most interactions. Another brief exercise highlights the importance of a definition of power that includes expansion.

Understanding Empowerment

Empowerment is a construct shared by many disciplines and arenas: community development, psychology, education, economics, and studies of social movements and organizations, among others. How empowerment is understood varies among these perspectives. In recent empowerment literature, the meaning of the term empowerment is often assumed rather than explained or defined. Rappoport (1984) has noted that it is easy to define empowerment by its absence but difficult to define in action as it takes on different forms in different people and contexts.

Even defining the concept is subject to debate. Zimmerman (1984) has stated that asserting a single definition of empowerment may make attempts to achieve it formulaic or prescription-like, contradicting the very concept of empowerment.

A common understanding of empowerment is necessary, however, to allow us to know empowerment when we see it in people with whom we are working, and for program evaluation. According to Bailey (1992), how we precisely define empowerment within our projects and programs will depend upon the specific people and context involved.

Introduction

Empowerment has been defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'to authorise, to enable'. The underlying message is that position in the hierarchy, status and expected corporate and individual behaviour comes second to the dynamics of operational performance and achievement. As Champy (1995) states, empowerment may be the more fashionable term for enabling but, unfortunately, it has been repeated so often and so indiscriminately that it has lost much of its potency. How can power be positioned for strategic change by managers in a constructive fashion? Drucker (1995) believes that what is intended with empowerment is not a shift in power but a shifting authority and accountability. Furthermore, it can be argued that it is not a great step forward to devolve power out from the top and place it at the bottom. It is still power. To build competitive and achieving organizations, power must be replaced and legitimized by the practice of shared responsibility. Increasingly, organizations are positively stressing to their employees the importance of being answerable for the planning of their own personal development as a principal ingredient for enhanced human resource effectiveness.

In the last decade, there has been a significant move from the command and control

culture towards both the empowerment philosophy and the more formal shaping of ethical values within the business. Empowerment can form a sound basis for improved employee satisfaction, total quality management and increased personal and organizational productivity. Yet, it must be genuine, planned and, above all, managed in an ethical climate. According to Randolph (1995), in order to empower the workforce, a dramatic organizational strategic change is required. The key steps, such as the evolution of an information sharing culture and the creation of autonomy through structural change, seems deceptively straightforward but are frequently very difficult to implement. Therefore, top management should perceive empowerment more as a gradual planned process rather than as an automatic magic formula. It should endeavour to utilize human capacity to its full, providing people with the necessary skills, competencies and resources for the jobs ahead.

Empowerment in operations strategy

As discussed by Kizilos (1990), 'powerlessness' is one of the root causes of many of the problems attributed to managerial frustration. There are both economic and psychological reasons to champion the empowerment ideals. Essentially, empowerment means that employees, when delegated responsibility, should act as if they are the organization itself. This requires a process of change or re-engineering which would lead to a more responsive corporate culture, facilitating advances in entrepreneurship. In this way; employees would act as part of independent self-directed teams. Effective leaders empower others to perform, develop and advance with the consequence that there are considerable benefits for all concerned. In consequence, there should be a greater sense of purpose which can translate into continuous productivity and performance improvement. If this philosophy fails, it is often the lack of training and management support for the new approach which is likely to be blamed. As Ridgeway and Wallace (1994) have stated, effective corporate change is frequently valueless and transient unless it seeks to empower. In relation to the human resource role in change management,

their analysis compares the traditional with the empowering scenario, bringing to the fore the changing role from 'personnel management' to autonomous 'internal HR consultancy'. This implies the ability to demonstrate added-value advice and service.

Empowerment is only effective when everyone has a common understanding of the concept, the performance objectives and their part in the effort. Empowerment relies on a well defined set of Values that are subscribed to by all. Beliefs and values create a sense of identity and clear expectations. They become the moral criteria by which decisions are made and prioritized. It is essential that the members of the group hold similar values. To nurture the proper values, we must develop a common mind-set around shared responsibility.

Empowerment requires the personal value of Self- Responsibility! It requires self-choice; the belief that one can change if one chooses to change. It requires one to accept responsibility for one's actions, feelings and beliefs and understand that they are the foundation of one's behavior. It requires the desire and ability to determine and direct one's actions and thoughts.

Types of Empowerment

Empowerment examines six interdependent dimensions: psychological, community, organizational, economic, social and cultural.

- A. **Psychological Empowerment** enhances individual's consciousness, belief in self-efficacy, awareness and knowledge of problems and solutions and of how individuals can address problems that harm their quality of life. This dimension aims to create self confidence and gives persons the skills to acquire knowledge.
- B. **Community Empowerment** focuses on enhancing the community through leadership development, improving communication, and creating a network of support to mobilize the community to address concerns.
- C. **Organizational Empowerment** aims to create a base of resources for community including voluntary organizations, unions and association that aim to protect, promote and advocate for the powerless.
- D. **Economic Empowerment** teaches entrepreneurial skills, how to take ownership of their assets and

imparting various employment trainings for the people and creating an required capability of working and it teach how to have income security for the economic growth.

- E. **Social Empowerment** teaches youth about social inclusion and literacy as well as helping kids find the resources to be proactive in their communities.
- F. **Cultural Empowerment** aims to recreate cultural practices and redefine cultural rules, norms and traditions for the youth. Through these dimensions of empowerment, programs can work on empowering youth in one or more aspects of their lives.

The concept Empowerment Includes the Developing Skills

Empowerment, on an individual level, is accepting responsibility and acting accordingly. To develop an empowered workforce it is necessary to grow people's capacity to assume more responsibility. This requires education and training that develops key skills. Some key skills and the training necessary to develop them are provided in the following. .

- Critical thinking skills: Goal Setting, Problem Solving, Decision Making, Risk Analysis.
- Performance analysis & feedback skills:
- Action Planning Skills: Coaching Skills, Relationship skills.

Conclusion

Empowerment as an process which empowers the people through the various programs across the globe that empower the youth through many different tactics and programs. Empowerment programs can operate in a variety of settings. The majority of programs operate in more than one setting. This may be key factor in their success. The beneficial outcomes to youth empowerment programs are improved social skills, improved behavior, increased academic achievement, and increased self-esteem self-efficacy.

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