The Impact of Participative Decision-Making with Regards to Empowering Employees

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Abstract- **There is a growing realisation that in the complexity of the post-modern world, it is becoming less and less feasible to concentrate leadership and decision-making solely at the top of the organisation. Hence, one of the reasons for empowering employees is that employees are able to take decisions quickly, without looking for manager's approval all the time, in a participative decision-making capacity. But, the lack of knowledge about employee empowerment and the absence of a framework for implementation has created problems.**

Although there is high consensus in the management literature that employee empowerment is necessary for the survival and success of organisations, there are still considerable gaps in our knowledge and understanding of a range of issues concerning employee empowerment, both at the conceptual and practice levels [Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Morrell and Wilkinson, 2002; Huq, 2008; 2010; 2015]. This lack of knowledge is dangerous, as it has serious implications how 'managers and non-managers conceptualize employee empowerment' [Hill and Huq, 2004: 1025].

The aim of this research titled: An Investigation of What Employee Empowerment Means in Theory and in Practice [Huq, 2008] was to investigate the meaning of employee empowerment both at the conceptual and practice levels. An interpretivist approach employing qualitative methods was adopted; it involved conducting two in-depth information-rich case studies, described in this paper as Large Organisation and Small Organisation respectively.

The knowledge drawn from the management literature review proved unsatisfactory, hence this author felt the need to conduct a multi-disciplinary research review in order to draw knowledge from another discipline, namely social work [Huq 2008; 2015], where empowerment is an important construct. However, it is important to note that due to limited space, this author is unable to go into details of both the literature reviews, management and social work, in this paper.It is sufficient for this paper to report that a number of 'themes' of employee empowerment exist, but they are fragmented in the management literature. These 'themes' are not found in any one place, which leads to confusion when organisations try to implement employee empowerment. Furthermore, there is a gap with regards to the knowledge of employee empowerment in the management literature and it is important to look at another discipline to get a fuller understanding of 'empowerment'.

A multi-disciplinary literature review thus enabled this author to put together themes of empowerment from the management and social work literature that are relevant to employee empowerment. These seven themes of employee empowerment are as follows: power-sharing, participative decision-making, devolution of responsibility, people-oriented leadership style, access to information, collaboration and enablement, described as a *'kaleidoscope of themes'*Huq's Model C, [Huq, 2015], as illustrated in the 'Introduction' section of this paper.

One of the conclusions of this research is that leaders and managers need to pay attention to the impact of participative decision-making with regards to empowering employees, which has significant implications for human resource management and if implemented properly can lead to a more judicious utilisation of human resources at all levels.

Key words: **Case studies; Human resource management; Employee empowerment; Participative decision-making; Psychological empowerment; Social work and empowerment.**

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