

TO STUDY THE ROLE OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEES (CASE STUDY: TAMIN-E-EJTEMAEI¹ ORGANIZATION, ARDABIL PROVINCE)

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ABSTRACT

This research studies the role of distributed leadership in individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization. Research method is surveying-descriptive, but it is applied by goal. Sampling was done through simple random method. Data collection was done through document and library method, and the required data for hypothesis testing was collected using questionnaire. Then the obtained data were described through descriptive and inferential statistics. Hypothesis testing was done through Pearson's correlation coefficients and multi and uni-variant regression analysis. For determining questionnaire reliability we used Cronbach's alpha and SPSS software. Research findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between variables of shared decision-making, professional development of information, defining the vision and missions of the organization, building trust, comprehensive support, leadership behaviors, and individual development of human resources. All research hypotheses were confirmed.

KEYWORDS: distributed leadership, human life, individual development, Tamin-e-Ejtemaei, shared decision-making

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly manpower is the major building block of every organization that can lead the society toward development goals. Nowadays, training and improving human resources are considered among the main strategies of organizations for obtaining competitive advantage. Hence, improving manpower productivity must be considered as one of the main goals of every organization or institute and we must provide an exact and sound planning for it (Shabazi, 2010). Human resources form the real capital of every organization. Employing wise and sophisticated human resources who can make change in the organization they work in, is one of the main concerns of today's modern economic institutes (Abbaspour, 2003). Some scholars believe that in discussing human resources besides their training we must also consider some other aspects such as job specifications, attracting and employing manpower, suitable wages, employee appraisal, establishing communication and motivation among employees, employee welfare, retirement etc. Human resources development is defined as "a set of systems, methods, and measures taken by organization and management to improve and increase efficiency, productivity, motivation, quality development, performance appraisal, job satisfaction, creativity, effort and generally growth and success of organization, in this regard organization must employ manpower according to the goals of organization and employees." Distributed leadership is another variable related to the development of human resources. The main concept of distributed leadership was passive up to 1950, but in 21st century it was revised by Spillane (2002) and Elmore (2000). 21st century leadership model emphasizes on the concept of delegation of responsibilities to different organizational groups, while all groups are moving toward common values, cultures and traditions. The concept (i.e., distributed leadership) has seriously been revised from late 1990s.

Peter Gronn (2005) was the one who contributed more on the subject of distributed leadership. Gronn (2005) summarized distributed leadership in two terms: distributed leadership as a dynamic relationship among leaders and followers; and distributed leadership as allotting affairs among all members (collegiality) and allowing others to take part in leadership roles. Gronn (2000) and Spillane (2002) define leadership as the process of identifying, acquiring, assigning, and social and cultural application of the required resources through cooperation to pave the way for teaching and learning; therefore, distributed leadership is defined as the leadership distributed experiences (or practices) that are developed through social and positional context of a school. Another researcher in this field is Gordon (2005). Gordon aimed to define the effect of distributed leadership on student achievement; he concluded that in schools with

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leadership experiences, school performance is assessed through student achievement. It is said that the increase in classroom experience and leadership and its repetitious observation by other teachers will improve the sense of teacher efficiency and their attitude toward their professional development (Yasini, 2012). The performed researches indicate that distributed leadership effects psychological health and work experience of employees (Stouten et al, 2011).

Therefore, distributed leadership style is effective on organizational efficacy due to the existence of relationship among intra-organizational variables (such as individual development of employees). In today's industrial society having a secure and safe environment is one of the legitimate rights of every organizational employee. Researches indicate that providing healthy and secure environment will improve employees' productivity and their organizational trust. In this regard for identifying work environment healthiness first we must identify environmental indicators of psychological health. Due to the existence of some problem with regard to distributed leadership and the impact of this problem on individual development of employees, this research studies the relationship between them and tries to answer to these questions: what is the condition of distributed leadership in the organization? How is the relationship between distributed leadership and individual development of employees? On the basis of answer to these questions how can we help an organization to promote the level of employee individual development? All in all the main question of this research is to answer to this question: what is the role of distributed leadership in individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization.

Research hypotheses

Main hypothesis: The effect of distributed leadership on individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization is significant.

1. The effect of shared decision-making on individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization is significant.
2. The effect of professional development of knowledge and information among public on individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization is significant.
3. The effect of defining vision and missions of organization for employees on individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization is significant.
4. The effect of building trust on individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization is significant.
5. The effect of comprehensive support on individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization is significant.
6. The effect of leadership behavior on individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization is significant.

Literature and theoretical principles

Human resources and individual development

Nowadays, manpower is considered as a valuable capital that has the power to reproduce. In fact in all developed and developing countries the quality of manpower is assessed through its equipping and optimization and maintaining it dynamically. The first report of UN development plan in 1990 defines human resources development.

Man is the pivot point of productivity, and all organizations with any related missions must allocate most of their capital and resources to training manpower from different dimensions; in a way that an organizational man must be of the capacity to be trained and to apply individual, group and organizational productivity.

Human resources development in the organization is turned to a kind of mutual commitment and expectation between individual and organization. On the basis of this mutual commitment and expectation and beside commitment to their practical obligations in line with organizational goals, employees must define mutual rights for themselves. The most important part of this right is to have opportunity to continuously develop work knowledge and skills and to develop different personality aspects of employees. On the other hand on the basis of its legitimate right the organization wants employees to try their best to fulfill organizational goals (Abili, 2002, quoted from Hassanzade et al 2004).

Open and close approaches to human resources development

Open and close approach is one of the human resources development model that introduces human resources development as a practical field in human resources. This model does not exactly study the tasks and strategies of human resources development in the process of human resources management; but it emphasizes the fields and realms in which developmental orientation of human resources are formed. Human resources tasks and business strategies are exist on the basis of two distinct and sometimes contradictive approaches to views of Mabi and Salaman (1995). We can refer to these two approaches as open and close approaches. They exist at the two ends of a continuum and affect the role of human resources development and the manner in which they act.

Open approach supports the harmony between strategy and human resources development and states that there are distinct and limited choices and processes for a special business strategy. Therefore we cannot determine a desirable method for human resources development before having a clear understanding of strategy (Loma 1999; quoted from Tounkenejad and Davari, 2009). This approach to human resources development can be considered as equivalent to intellectual approach to the relationship and harmony between business strategy and human resources strategy; on the basis of this approach without having a clear strategy at the company and business level we cannot imagine a clear and codified strategy for human resources. On the other end of the continuum, close approach refers to the relationship between human resources tasks especially human resources development, and organization strategy.

This approach introduced by Pitters and Waterman supports the idea in which irrespective of business and its strategies there is a set of useful human resources activities. The aim of such activities is usually to create or improve man-oriented processes such as participation, quality, and team work etc. that will lead to a desirable performance in a competitive environment (Loma, 1999; quoted from Tonkenejad and Davari, 2009).

Definition of individual development planning

Individual development planning is an agreed document between employees and managers of an organization that identifies annual planning and objectives with the centrality employee individual development. In individual development planning there is an effective collaboration between employees and managers and this identifies training needs of employees; identifying these needs is very important in improving individual skills and proficiencies (Hassanzade *et al*, 2005).

In this plan it is tried to develop employees with regard to their capabilities and proficiencies in line with their job and organizational goals; moreover it is tried to build a dynamic relationship between their individual development needs and their job functions and responsibilities. An individual development plan is a written timetable for reaching to development goals in line with practical and strategic plan of organization (Hassanzade *et al*, 2005).

The importance of leadership

Leadership is such a mysterious process that has attracted the attention of many scientists and researchers from long ago. Hence, there is a reach literature on the subject of guidance and leadership and the number of definitions may be as many as the people who have tried to define management and its functions; therefore general people have always looked for the leader by the help of whom have tried to analyze different leadership factors and aspects and may reach to the required leadership characteristics of the time. Moreover, the existence of brave and proficient leaders who led nations, groups and organizations at the most crucial moments has been the essence of many myths and legends of different nations. The effect of leadership is so important that in assessing the successes or failures, we rarely consider other related factors (Moradi, 2008). Due to its role in individual and group efficacy, leadership is a very well-known title in human resources management and since this is the subject that has attracted the attention of many people during different ages, there is a wide variety of its definition (Rezaeian, 2004).

Distributed leadership

We can describe the effects and advantages of participation and participation management from two aspects:

1. Social aspect of participation: It includes awareness of goals and efforts to obtaining them, and increasing creativity;
2. Economical aspect of participation: It includes creating more harmony in production, improving the quantity and quality of productions, decreasing wastes, optimum use of equipment, and contribution in removing economical issues and decreasing conflictions.

Generally there are ten major values as the principal guidelines of participation institute: customer-orientation; commitment to participate; common power, rights and responsibilities; access; internal supervision; considering logical and illogical balance; having practical thoughts; comprehensive legitimacy; diversity; and comprehensiveness (Patricia Mc Logan and Cristonel, 1998; quoted by Jahanian 2009: 157). The establishment of a participation system in organizations requires employing approaches such as providing cultural basis, attracting the attention of top management to practice participation system, attracting employee attention and improve their understanding of participation management methods, defining a certain framework for primary preparation and participation of managers and employees (Hamedani, 2000; quoted by Jahanian (2009).

Leach Lopez et al (2009) in their researches on effective participation have defined following conditions:

- Subordinates must be of capability to engage in participation activities psychologically;
- Subordinates must consider participation activity as a desirable and useful activity;
- Time must not be a critical factor;
- Costs of participation must be low enough to preserve its positive values;
- People must not feel their participation will endanger their job security;
- Managers must not feel their participation will endanger their position;
- For having an effective participation people must continuously access to communication channels;
- For participation effectiveness all employees in an organization must be trained.

Abili (2007) believes that the existence of some factors (such as having a clear organizational goals and vision, serious and practical support of top management from participation system, creating culture and developing the required basis for the execution of participation system, and promoting participation spirit among employees) is essential for the fulfillment of a participation system.

All in all we can say the establishment of a participation decision-making system requires some measures that must be taken by the managers of executive systems. Some factors such as strengthening goals, values and priorities; information transfer; defining responsibilities, limitations and expectations; defining decision-making process; participation training planning; modifying environmental condition of organization; creating participation culture; and defining the structure of participation are among the prerequisites for the success of a participation decision-making system (Miller and Mong 1986; Luke and Shojer 1979).

The concept of distributed leadership

The main concept of distributed leadership was passive until 1950, but in 21st century it was revised by Spillane (2002) and Elmore (2000). 21st century leadership model emphasizes on the concept of delegation of responsibilities to different organizational groups, while all groups are moving toward common values, cultures and traditions. When the concept (i.e., distributed leadership) underwent a serious revise in 1990, the researchers in this area such as Elmore, Gronn, and Spillane had tried to find a conceptual framework for distributed leadership. Elmore defined five macro-variables or dimensions for distributed leadership that are effective on student achievement; these variables or dimensions are mission, vision and goals; school culture; decision-making; evaluation and professional development; and leadership practices (or experiences). Elmore (2000) focused mainly on the effect of distributed leadership on student achievement and school optimization. He states that in school optimization we must study skills, knowledge and goals of individuals for completing leadership functions (Harrison, 2005; quoted by Yasini, 2012: 131). Pitter Gronn (2005) was the other researcher and scientist in the field of distributed leadership. Gronn (2005) summarized distributed leadership in two terms: distributed leadership as a dynamic relationship among leaders and followers; and distributed leadership as allotting affairs among all members (collegiality) and allowing others to take part in leadership roles. Gronn (2000) and Spillane (2002) define leadership as the process of identifying, acquiring, assigning, and social and cultural application of the required resources through cooperation to pave the way for teaching and learning; therefore, distributed leadership is defined as the leadership distributed practices that are developed through social and positional context of a school. Another researcher in this field is Gordon (2005). Gordon aimed to define the effect of distributed leadership on student achievement; he concluded that in schools with leadership experiences and practices, school performance is assessed through student achievement. It is said that the increase in classroom experience and leadership and its repetitious observation by other teachers will improve the sense of teacher efficiency and their attitude toward their professional development. The sense of efficacy in this regard is referred to teachers' judgment of themselves in obtaining desirable results from the activities and learning of students even from those students who do

not have any motivation to study; it is believed that having such a belief is effective in training, hence the study of the relationship between distributed leadership style and the sense of efficacy is very important (Tarter and Hoy, 2007; quoted by Yasini, 2012: 131).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- a) **Research method:** It is applied by goal but by method it is surveying-descriptive of correlational kind.
- b) **Population:** Research population is all employees of Tamin-e-Ejtemaei in Ardabil province (n=300).
- c) **Sample volume and sampling method:** Sampling includes a set of measures taken select individuals from a population in a way the selected individuals represent the population as a whole. In this research sampling is done through simple random method. For defining sample volume we have used Morgan table according to which the number of samples is 169 subjects.
- d) **Data collection and measuring tools:** Data collection is done through field method and using questionnaire. For data collection we have used two questionnaires:

Distributed leadership: For assessing this variable we have used Ahmadi's 21-itemed scale (2012). Responses to the items were provided on a 5-point Likert scale format (ranging from very slight, slight, medium, high, very high).

Individual development: For assessing individual development we have used a research-made 13-itemed questionnaire.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire: Validity is referred to the condition in which the measuring tool measures what is supposed to measure. Content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by some authorities and experts in the field of management and behavioral science; the obtained reliability for dependent variable and independent variables has been proven to be high with Cronbach's alpha coefficients well over 0.85.

- e) **Methods of data analysis:** At the present research we have used SPSS software for data mining and analysis.

Findings

Main hypothesis: There is a meaningful relationship between distributed leadership scales (dimensions) and individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization.

Table 1- The results of Pearson correlation coefficient between distributed leadership scales and individual expansion

	Statistics	Individual expansion
Distributed leadership	Significant level	0/737
	Correlation coefficient	0/000
Shared decision-making	Significant level	0/460
	Correlation coefficient	0/001
Professional development of information	Significant level	0/484
	Correlation coefficient	0/000
Defining organizational vision and missions	Significant level	0/584
	Correlation coefficient	0/032
Building trust	Significant level	0/493
	Correlation coefficient	0/000
Comprehensive support	Significant level	0/489
	Correlation coefficient	0/000
Leadership behaviors	Significant level	0/792
	Correlation coefficient	0/000

According to the results of table one and with regard to the fact that the significant level of test error is smaller than 0.01 for confidence level of 0.99, hence we can say that hypotheses one to six are accepted and there is a meaningful relationship between all scales of distributed leadership and individual expansion. Moreover, the correlation coefficients of distributed leadership, shared decision-making, professional development of information, defining

vision and missions of organization, building trust, comprehensive support and leadership behavior with individual development are 0.73, 0.46, 0.48, 0.58, 0.49, 0.48, and 0.79, respectively.

Table 2- Regression analysis of different scales of distributed leadership with individual development of human resources

Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients	T-value	Significant level
	B	Beta	T	
Shared decision making	1.012	.443	2.062	.000
Professional development of information	1.198	.350	1.964	.000
Defining vision and mission of organization	1.551	.156	2.632	.009
Building trust	1.770	.232	4.022	.000
Comprehensive support	1.012	.433	3.060	.002
Leadership behavior	2.673	.668	5.509	.000

According to the above table from these six variables, leadership behavior with the coefficient of 0.66 is of highest capacity to predict individual development of human resources. All in all shared decision-making (with coefficient of 0.44), comprehensive support (0.43), professional development of information (0.35), building trust (0.23), defining vision and missions of organization (0.15), predict and define dependent variable of individual development of human resources.

DISCUSSION

The obtained results from the research indicate that the effect of different scales of distributed leadership on individual development of employees in Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization is significant; and there is meaningful relationship between all scales of distributed leadership (shared decision-making, professional development of information, defining vision and missions of organization, building trust, comprehensive support, and leadership behaviors) and individual development of human resources. Moreover, leadership behavior with the coefficient of 0.66 is of highest capacity to predict individual development of human resources. All in all shared decision-making (with coefficient of 0.44), comprehensive support (0.43), professional development of information (0.35), building trust (0.23), defining vision and missions of organization (0.15), predict and define dependent variable of individual development of human resources.

Applied suggestions

With regard to the effect of distributed leadership on individual development of human resources and on the basis of studied parameters (shared decision-making, professional development of information, defining vision and missions of organization, building trust, comprehensive support, and leadership behaviors) we suggest followings to the managers and authorities of Ardabil Tamin-e-Ejtemaei organization:

1. To give more importance to some factors such as manager accountability, collegiality (delegating decision making to all employees) and defining and planning goals collaboratively with employees.
2. Research results indicate that there is a meaningful relationship between professional development and individual development of human resources and professional development affects individual development of human resources, so it is suggested to pay more attention to continuous organizational learning. Moreover, it is suggested to pay more attention to the development of in-service employee training, and to performing activities on the basis of professional and organizational needs.
3. The results of research indicate that building trust is effective on individual expansion human resources; therefore, it is suggested to pay more attention to mutual regard and trust among employees and between management and employees, and to rely on employees' honesty.

4. Hypothesis result indicate that comprehensive support is effective on individual development of human resources, so it is suggested to support employee plans, to cooperate with employees in doing delayed works, and to accept suggestions for better execution of management official guidelines.
5. With regard to the variable of vision, mission, and goals and leadership behaviors it is suggested to consider following factors: clear regulation of organization mission, clearness of organization goals, clear regulation of organization vision, encouraging management for regulating organizational development goals, manager's dominance and influence through inspiring employees, and encouraging employees to improve organizational achievements.

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