

EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCESS

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with an investigation of the existing level of employee participation in management decision making within the manufacturing sectors. The study involved a survey in which a total of two hundred and twenty seven (227) employees drawn from BHEL ancillary industries were used as subjects. Interview schedule and in-depth interview were the main research techniques adopted for data collection while percentage distribution and chi-square statistical techniques were used to analyze the data collected for the study. Results show that employees demonstrate a high interest in participation in the decision making process within their respective work places. However, the actual level of involvement in management decision making demonstrated by the employees was found to be relatively low. There is significant relationship between education and employees' involvement in decision making at BHEL ancillary industries, there is a significant relationship between age and employees' involvement in decision making as well as between frequency of employees' consultation and organizational commitment. The study reveals a growing desire of BHEL ancillary industries employees in the work environment to exercise greater involvement in the decision making process of their enterprises.

Keywords: Employees, Democracy, Involvement; Attitude, Work.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of employee participation represents a popular theme in the analysis of the world of work among scholars in the fields of Industrial Sociology, Industrial Relations as well as management. It refers to any arrangement which is designed to involve low cadre employees (workers) in the important decision making within the workplace. This implies that rather than saddling only a group within the enterprise (for instance, management) with the responsibility of making decisions, all those who are to be affected by these decisions (including the workers) would be involved in its formulation and implementation. These concerns reflect a growing interest in finding ways to make work more meaningful and satisfying to the workers. This rest on the belief that the organizational goals of high productivity and harmonious industrial relations are best achieved when the higher level needs of the human elements (workers) are satisfied. Worker participation implies arrangements designed to involve workers in the enterprises decision making process. This allows for workers' involvement in the initiation, formulation and implementation of decisions within the enterprise. The concept can also be understood in terms of a new approach to industry and society in which people want to be interested with the taking of decisions which have direct bearing on them. It is a special case of delegation in which the subordinate gain greater control, greater freedom of choice with respect to bridging the communication gap between the management and the workers.

THE PROBLEM

The spread of democratic value to virtually every society today has brought the need to examine the implications of this trend to other spheres of life. With respect to economic sector, employees are faced with the dilemma of how to cope with authoritative management in the work places while living in a democratic society which guarantee basic fundamental freedom.

In addition, the denial of workers active involvement in decision making is held to be one of the major causes of the problems which are manifested daily in the work lives of the modern employees. The implication of these employees of increasing exposure to a monetized society, rising education and wider contact among people resulting from the break-up of artificial barriers was to shift these aspirations to a more satisfying work experience, greater control over the organization of work, greater opportunity for personal development and wider scope in exercise of initiatives.

Specifically, the refusal of work organizations to recognize the human factor in industrial production through greater involvement of employees in its management decision making would tend to create several human problems in this setting.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The specific objectives are,

- To ascertain workers level of involvement in the decision making process of their work places,
- To establish the general attitude of workers towards employee participation in management decision making,
- To determine factors which aid or hinder the observed level of participation and ,

- To investigate the implications of employee participation to work and their organizations.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale for the study is anchored on the need to raise the productivity level of employees through appropriate motivational techniques. The involvement of employee in management decision making is considered as a means for inducing motivation in the employee leading to positive work attitude and high productivity. The study is also deemed desirable in view of the benefits of employee participation to organization and the society at large. Employee participation has been seen as capable of providing employee conducive work environment, opportunity to exercise their innate potentials and willingness to pursue corporate goal of the organization.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Worker participation has been explained as a plank of industrial democracy (Adewumi 1991). Mills (1977) described the spread of industrial democracy to Western Europe in the 1970s a story of capitalism in transition. In his words, in countries where it is occurring, industrial democracy, affects the nature, control and even ownership of private enterprise; the nature control, power and bargaining areas of the labor unions...and the roles and contributions and rights of the individual worker in contemporary and future industrial society. The last force is what Mills (1977) called the revolution of rising entitlements prominent in western Capitalist and democratic societies. This egalitarian spirit manifested itself in, growing public distaste, desire and disillusionment with traditional institutions and their leadership, growing aberrant social behaviors including crime and drug abuse new demand for participative right of every kind including women's rights. Worker participation implies arrangements designed to involve workers in the enterprises decision making process. This allows for workers' involvement in the initiation, formulation and implementation of decisions within the enterprise. The concept can also be understood in terms of a new approach to industry and society in which people want to be interested with the taking of decisions which have direct bearing on them. Mc Gregor (1960) contends that worker participation consists basically in creating opportunity under suitable conditions for people to influence decisions which affect them. It is a special case of delegate ion in which the subordinate gain greater control, greater freedom of choice with respect to bridging the communication gap between the management and the workers. This serves to create a sense of belonging among the workers as well as a conducive environment in which both the workers would voluntarily contribute to healthy industrial relations. According to the International Institute for Labor studies "Workers Participation in Management is the participation resulting from practices which increase the scope for employee's share of influence in decision-making at different tiers of organizational hierarchy with concomitant assumption of responsibility". In the words of Davis "It is a mental and emotional involvement of a person in a group situation which encourages him to contribute to goals and share responsibilities in them.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the case study approach for the purpose of conducting an empirical investigation to the issue of worker participation in management decision making in the BHEL ancillary working environment. Main data were collected both through the primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data were derived from the questionnaire and in-depth interview while secondary sources were got from company records, bulletins and other official documents. The adoption of these tools helped to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was in three sections – the first contained questions on respondent's personal data, the second on the level of employee participation while the third is on employee participation structures. The study population comprises of employee in two selected from BHEL ancillary industries. A total of two hundred and twenty seven (227) subjects drawn from the ancillary industries. The subjects were selected through a combination of clustering and systematic sampling methods.

HYPOTHESES

The following testable hypotheses were formulated to guide the attainment of the research objectives. There is a relationship between employees' socio-economic status and the level of involvement in decision making such that:

1. An employee in higher job position tends to exercise more involvement in management decision making than another in lower job position.
2. An employee who possesses higher educational qualification would tend to have more influence in management decision making than other who possess lower educational qualification.
3. A young employee would more likely demonstrate more involvement in management decision making than his older counterpart.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings on respondent's frequency of involvement in the decision making process of their organization as reflected from the table those respondents from BHEL ancillary industries. However we found that employees in BHEL ancillary industries

have a higher frequency of involvement than those in other ancillary industries. In addition in this company, there are a larger number of professionals who are more willing to seize the opportunity of participation in management decision making:

Results of in-depth interview conducted with some respondents attest to our findings. When asked about the extent to which the employee involved in the making of decisions within the company, The management in this company does not consider it as its duty to contact junior employees on how decisions are made.

It is possible to observe the obvious variation in reasons advanced by the two informants on why they demonstrated low involvement in management decision making. While the informant from BHEL ancillary industries expressed that his low or lack of involvement was due to management unwillingness, the respondent from ancillary industries, indicated that respondents was not much involved in management decision making because of their busy schedule work.

It is also interested to know that a number of the respondents indicated that they had no interest in participating in the management decision making of their work places. This category of employees demonstrated a non-chilling attitude towards their involvement in the management decision making. As a respondent in BHEL ancillary industries. It is evidenced from these findings that an individual's educational qualification could influence the level of involvement he could exercise. This finding is not surprising since those with higher educational qualification tend to have more knowledge about management decision making and are also more likely to seize the opportunity to be involved in the affairs of their organizations.

BHEL ancillary industries

Respondents Educational Qualification.

Educational Qualification	No.	%
Primary Sch. Cert.	2	2.2
Sch. Cert. & Equivalent	38	42.2
Diploma cert	30	333.3
First Degree	11	12.2
Post Graduate	9	10
Total	40	100

Respondents by Frequency of Involvement in the decision making Process of the work place.

Frequency of Involvement	No.	%
Not at all	25	27.8
occasionally	43	47.8
Often	20	22.2
No responds	2	2.2
Total	90	100

Respondents Involvement in the decision making in administration of the work place

Extent of Involvement	No	%
Not at all	38	42.2
Not at much	32	35.6
Much	20	22.2
Total	90	100

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study it could be conclude that employees in the study establishments are generally not much involved in the management decision making within their respective establishments. On the other hand, the employees generally demonstrated high interest in management decision making. The study therefore confirmed that while the employees demonstrated positive attitude towards involvement in decision making, the actual level of involvement they exercise is negative. However, we found that employees in BHEL ancillary industries demonstrated more involvement in management decision making. This implies that employees in the manufacturing sector are more involved in management decision making than those in the Manufacturing sector of the BHEL ancillary industries.

Employee who are subjects of this study generally demonstrated willingness to accept the responsibility of involvement in management decision making whenever such opportunity arises. However many hold the view that management decision making is the preserve of the management. This implies that while the employees are willing to accept the responsibility of greater involvement in management decision making they are not ready to challenge the management in this regard.

Finally, from the respondents' assessment of management attitude towards employees participation, it could be concluded that the management in the BHEL ancillary works are not favorably disposed towards granting employees significant measure of involvement in management decision making. This finding would lead us to conclude that a lot needed to be done to change the current negative disposition of the ancillary industries management towards employee's involvement in management decision making. More importantly, the current obstacles against effective employees' participation in ancillary could be tackled through. Enlightenment program for employee on their rights to seize the opportunity of involvement in decision making. Provision of monetary and other incentives for employees to encourage them sustain the current interest in participation. Liberalizing management structure so as to allow for greater employees involvement, and lastly, training programmers for employees in management functions as a way of properly equipping them on their decision making role.

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