THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHANGE

Burcak Cagla Garipagaoglu[*]

Abstract

Educational systems all around the world have been undergoing unprecedented changes. Schools continually embark on new change programs, and greater responsibilities are being placed on teachers as well as school administrators for the skillful completion of these programs. Teachers' positive attitudes towards change, in this sense, play a pivotal role in the successful achievement of these change initiatives in schools. In order to describe teachers' attitudes towards change and to better understand the potential relationship between psychological empowerment and attitudes toward change, a case study was carried out in one of the large K-12 state schools in Turkey. Data were collected through the scales of psychological empowerment (Menon, 1999), and attitudes toward change (Dunham, Grube, Gardner, Cummings, & Pierce, 1989). A significant positive relationship has been found between psychological empowerment and teachers' attitudes toward change. The results of the study are expected to give insights to school administrators by revealing relationship between psychological empowerment and teachers' attitudes towards change.

Keywords: psychological empowerment, attitudes toward change, Turkey, case study

[*] Faculty of Educational Sciences, Bahçeşehir University, Turkey

Introduction

One of the most important challenges educational institutions confront in today's competitive environment is to make sure that the teachers are all equipped with the necessary skills that enable them to adapt to the changes taking place in education. 21st century witnesses a rapid transformation of education from kindergarten to higher education. With the widespread availability of the Internet and the democratization of access to information, mere knowledge is no longer the power but the utilization of knowledge is. In the current climate of competition which is characterized by uncertainty, dynamism and change, soft skills are becoming more important than the hard skills. There are major shifts in the delivery of school education; mainly from teacher-centered, teacher-driven, classical models to student-centered, student-driven, technology-oriented, more innovative models (Bassett, 2011). Making school education meaningful and self-rewarding is becoming one of the most, if not the most important concern for educators. The world wants the future generations learn by doing and demonstrate what they know not just by a test but by action in the real world (Bassett, 2011).As it claimed by Bassett (2011), this signals a shift from the mere consumption of information to construction of meaning. It is also evident that teachers and students isolated in their own physical locales are not only outdated but also unsuitable. Teachers and students are now active participants of larger networks which are composed of many team-players regardless of time and space. All of these shifts taking place in educational communities which welcome inventiveness and innovation signals for one important message: For the healthy functioning of educational systems, teachers must stay tuned to all kinds of changes taking place in the educational systems all around the world and be equipped with a mindset that allows them to adapt to these dramatic changes.

Change is the single most defining characteristic of our world at the turn of the 21st century. The changing landscape brought about by the globalization, blurring boundaries and increasing swiftness of information transfer placed a greater responsibility on educational institutions and teachers (National Institute of Education [NIE], 2012). Today's teachers have to be equipped well to deal with the complexities, uncertainties and risks presented by this new global and digital landscape. They must continually develop their skills, adapt to the changes and even to drive the change themselves. Most importantly, teachers must arm their students with the skills and the competencies required for the 21st century (NIE, 2012). Thus, positive attitudes to

change by the teachers can be considered as the hallmark of a well-managed educational system, and can be associated with many positive outcomes including national competitiveness, wealth and social health. Therefore, there are needs for the studies in order to identify the factors contributing to positive attitudes towards change. In order to achieve this end, the present study proposes a relationship between psychological empowerment and attitudes towards change.

Psychological Empowerment

The notion of psychological empowerment has started to become a topic of ever-increasing interest to organizational managers and academicians alike as global competition and change demand more and more employee initiative and innovativeness (Drucker, 1988). While the earlier work conceptualized empowerment as a set of supervisor behavior based on giving freedom and delegating decision-making authority (Blau & Alba, 1982; Harari, 1994; Mainiero, 1986, Spreitzer, Kizilos, Nason, 1997), recent work focused more on the psychological state of subordinate when conceptualizing empowerment (Bitmis & Ergeneli, 2011). Relying on the work of Conger and Kanungo (1988), Thomas and Velthouse (1990) operationalized psychological empowerment based on the individual's intrinsic motivation towards his or her work. Menon(1999), on the other hand, conceptualized psychological empowerment as "a multi-faceted construct reflecting the different dimensions of being psychologically enabled" (p. 162) and defined the psychologically empowered state as "a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization" (p. 161). According to Menon (1999), perceived control includes beliefs about authority, decision-making latitude, availability of resources, autonomy in the scheduling and performance of work, etc; perceived competence includes role-mastery, which besides requiring accomplishment of one or more assigned tasks, also requires coping with non-routine role-related situations; and lastly, the goal internalization dimension refers to the energizing property of a worthy cause or exciting vision provided by the organizational leadership. Research into literature regarding psychological empowerment reveals that psychological empowerment is one of the strongest predictors of many positive organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and motivation (Bitmis & Ergeneli, 2011; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005).

Attitudes toward change

"The change, rather than the stability is the norm today" (Daft, p.370). Parallel with the new maps of engagements taking place in all the spheres of life brought about by the unprecedented breakthroughs in knowledge and technology, the educational systems all around the world are undergoing dramatic changes (NIE, 2012). Schools, like many other organizations continually embark on programs of organizational change (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). These "ongoing and seemingly endless efforts" (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005, p.160) require greater positive attitudes towards change not only from the administrative bodies but also from the teachers.

Arnold, Cooper, and Robertson (1995) state that "attitudes reflect a person's tendency to feel, think or behave in a positive or negative manner towards the object of the attitude" (cited in Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005, p.162). Many researchers acknowledge that positive attitudes towards change are fundamental to achieving organizational objectives and in succeeding change programs (Eby, Adams, Russell & Gaby, 2000; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Martin, 1998). On the other hand, the failure in the accomplishment of most organizational goals is often attributed to employees' resistance to change (Bovey & Hede, 2001). A review into the literature regarding the organizational change and development identifies a variety of potential factors concerning how and why people support or resist a change (Genc, 2010). People's attitudes can play a critical role in determining how a person can react to a change (Kirton & Mulligan, 1973; Patchen, 1965). Attitude towards change generally consists of a person's affective, cognitive and behavioral reactions to change (Dunham, Grube, Gardner, Cummings, & Pierce, 1989). Each type of these reactions may cause an individual to support or resist to a change (Genc, 2010). The affective component consists of the feelings associated with dissatisfaction and concern in making changes; the cognitive component refers to the knowledge possessed about the requirements, benefits, advantages and the disadvantages of the change; and lastly the behavioral component concerns the action taken or to be taken in the future in the face of change or in resisting change (Faghihi & Allameh, 2012).

Organizational change challenges the 'way things are done in the organization' and put a lot of strain on individuals, as a result, individuals experience a great uncertainty and eventually fear from the potential failure in coping with the new situation (Coch & French, 1948). Yet, the

individuals with favorable attitudes toward change are more likely to welcome change and proactively participate in change efforts as they believe that they can adapt to change or even drive it with little effort. Therefore, it is highly critical to reveal the relationships between attitudes toward change and its potential antecedents. In an attempt to achieve this end, this study proposes a relationship between psychological empowerment and attitudes toward change.

Research Questions

The main research question framed for the present study is as follows:

1) Is there a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and attitudes toward change?

The sub-research questions are as follows:

1) What is the level of teachers' psychological empowerment?

2) What is the level of teachers' attitudes toward change?

3) Is there a significant difference by the level of teachers' psychological empowerment and teachers' attitude toward change according to demographic attributes?

Method

In order to explore the relationship between psychological empowerment and the teachers' attitudes toward change, an explanatory (hypothesis-testing / correlational), cross-sectional type of research design was used in the study. The quantitative data were collected by a survey-based case study in one of the state schools in Turkey.

Participants and Procedure

A total of 158 teachers from a large K-12 state school in Turkey participated in the study. A total of 92 participants (57.5%) were female and 66 (41.3%) were male. The majority of the participants (39.2%) were younger than 30 years old. A total of 118 of them (74.7 %) were teachers with no administrative duties, while 40 of them (25.3%) had administrative duties at the school. A total of 80 of participants (50.6 %) were married, and 78 (49.4 %) were single. Regarding their willingness to pursue a post-graduate diploma program, 110 of them (69.6 %) reported that they have neither completed nor willing to complete a post-graduate diploma

A Monthly Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Refereed Open Access International e-Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories
Indexed & Listed at: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory ©, U.S.A., Open J-Gage, India as well as in Cabell's Directories of Publishing Opportunities, U.S.A.
International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences
http://www.ijmra.us

53

program, while the remaining 48 (30.4 %) reported that they have either completed or willing to complete a post-graduate diploma program.

Apart from the demographic data, respondents were also asked to fill a self-reported questionnaire including measures of psychological empowerment and attitudes toward change. Researcher informed the participants about purpose of the study and told them that the participation in the study was completely voluntary. There was no incentive for the participation in the study.

Measures

Pychological empowerment. Teachers' psychological empowerment was measured by a 9-item, 3-factor, 6-point interval scale which was developed and validated by Menon (1999). The psychological empowerment was operationalized from the perspective of individual employee, and a working definition of psychological empowerment proposed as follows: "the psychologically empowered state is a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization" (p. 161). The scale had three 3-item sub-scales with sub-scale reliabilities of .83, .80, and .88 for perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization respectively. The scale was translated into Turkish by the researcher by the combination of back and parallel translation, and the reliability of the Turkish scale was found to be .87, with the subscale reliabilities of .90, .86, and, .80 respectively for perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization. Higher psychological empowerment is reflected by higher scores obtained from the scale.

Attitudes towards change. Teachers' attitudes towards change were measured by the modification of a 18-item, 3-factor, 7-point interval scale which was developed and validated by Dunham et al. (1989).Dunham et al. (1989) described factor 1 as a measure of affective reactions toward change and operationalized it as the extent to which an individual tends to enjoy change in organizations. They described the factor 2 as cognition toward change, and operationalized it as the extent to which an individual recognizes that change is occurring and tends to benefit an organization and its members. Lastly, they described the factor 3 as an individual's behavioral tendency toward change, and operationalized it as the extent to which a person would take actions

to support or initiate changes. The sub-scale reliabilities of the scale ranged from .82 to .92.Modifications done by Huang (1993), and Klecker, and Loadman (1999) for the use of the scale with public school principals resulted with high sub-scale reliabilities ranging between .90 and .98. A similar modification for the use of scale with Turkish teachers was done by the researcher for the present study. In the modified version, the changes brought about by the Movement of Raising Opportunities in Education and Improving Technology (FATIH) Project in Turkey were introduced to precede the 18-item instrument in order to measure the respondents' attitude towards changes regarding the FATIH Project. The reliability of the Turkish scale was found to be .92, with the subscale reliabilities of .91, .88, and, .80 respectively for affective reactions toward change, cognition toward change, and behavioral tendency towards change. A high score obtained from the scale indicated positive attitudes towards aforementioned change.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics along with the Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for the constructs used in the study. The mean score of 3.29 obtained from the 6-point likert type psychological empowerment scale indicates that our sample had low psychological empowerment, and mean score of 4.67 obtained from the 7-point likert type attitudes toward change scale indicates a somewhat high level of positive attitudes toward change. Internal consistencies of the scales used in the study are found to be high enough (above .70) to continue with further analyses.

Table 1

Descriptive statistic of the scales used in the study with Cronbach's alpha reliabilities (n=158)

Scale	N of items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Psychological empowerment	9	3.29	.99	.870
perceived control	3	3.50	1.38	.905
perceived competence				
goal internalization	3	2.28	1.34	.863
	3	4.08	1.03	.806
Attitudes toward change				

_____

affective reactions toward change			
cognition toward change	18	4.67	1.13	.923
behavioral tendency toward change	6	4.83	1.42	.907
	6	4.85	1.50	.885
	6	4.35	1.08	.806

Table 2 shows the analysis of the psychological empowerment and attitudes towards change scales with respect to gender, age, marital status, employment, and willingness to pursue a post-graduate degree.

In order to investigate whether gender affects psychological empowerment and attitudes toward change, independent t-tests were conducted. As can be seen on Table 2, females (m=2.43, sd=0.14) scored higher than males (m=1.91, sd=0.14) on perceived competence dimension of the psychological empowerment scale [t (156) =2.54, p<0.05] suggesting that females tend to feel psychologically more competent than males. In terms of attitudes toward change no significant difference was found between female and male participants. With respect to marital status, results of the independent sample t-tests indicated a significant difference between single and married participants both on psychological empowerment [t (156) =-3.89, p<0.05] and attitudes towards change scales [t (156) =-3.27, p<0.05]. Married participants (m=3.51, sd=0.09; m= 4.95, sd=1.08) scored higher than single participants (m=2.95, sd=0.94; m=4.38, sd=1.08) both on psychological empowerment and attitudes toward change scales respectively. As far as age is concerned, no significant difference has been found between the participants on neither of the variables investigated. Furthermore, t-test results indicated that participants with administrative duties scored higher (m= 3.75, sd=1.07) than the participants who have no administrative duties (m=3.06, sd=1.07) on psychological empowerment scale. Finally, participants who have completed or willing to complete a post-graduate diploma program on their own field scored significantly lower (m=3.71, sd= 1.01; m=4.30, sd=1.40) than the participants who did not complete or not willing to complete a post-graduate diploma program (m=4.10, sd=0.90; m=4.83, sd=0.92) both on the goal

internalization dimension of the psychological empowerment scale and the attitudes toward change scale.

Table 2

Analysis of the scales with respect to demographic data (n=158)

Scale	Sex	Age	Marital status	Admin. duties	Post-graduate
Statistical criterion	t	F	t	t	t
Psychological empowerment	1.71*	0.34	-3.89*	-4.17*	1.70
perceived control	0.76	0.44	-4.27*	-4.10*	1.45
perceived competence	2.54*	0.73	-1.73	-2.68*	0.43
goal internalization	0.59	1.82	-3.04*	-2.11*	2.41*
Attitudes toward change	0.74	0.87	-3.27*	-1.39	2.79*
affective reactions toward change	1.36	1.57	-1.87	-1.13	2.60*
cognition toward change	0.22	0.27	-4.25*	-1.66	2.38*
behavioral tendency toward change	0.23	0.81	-1.86	-0.54	1.93

Notes:* $p < 0.05$.

Table 3 shows the inter-correlation matrix of the studied constructs. As can be seen on Table 3, attitudes toward change has a significant positive relationship ($r=0.55$, $p<0.05$) with psychological empowerment. Despite somewhat weak correlations in some cases, significant positive relationships were identified between the sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment

and the sub-dimensions of attitudes toward change; except for the relationship of perceived competence to affective reactions toward change and to cognition toward change.

Table 3

Inter-correlation matrix of the studied constructs (n=158)

	PEF1	PEF2	PEF3	ATC	ATCF1	ATCF2	ATCF3
PE PEF1	.85*	.77*	.70*	.55*	.43*	.47*	.47*
PEF2		.45*	.49*	.53*	.41*	.54*	.36*
PEF3			.29*	.17*	.15	.07	.22*
ATC				.63*	.49*	.53*	.58*
ATCF1					.86*	.87*	.78*
ATCF2						.60*	.53*
							.53*

Notes: PE=psychological empowerment, PEF1=perceived control, PEF2=perceived competence, PEF3=goal internalization, ATC=attitudes toward change, ATCF1=affective reactions toward change, ATCF2=cognition toward change, ATCF3=behavioral tendency toward change

Conclusion

Research findings indicate a significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and attitudes toward change. This finding also confirms the evidence from the literature showing that the psychological empowerment is one of the most important factors contributing to behavioral support for organizational change (Lamm & Gordon, 2010). Almost all the factors of psychological empowerment were significantly related to the positive attitudes toward change. More specifically people who have a sense of higher perceived control, competence and goal internalization at the workplace seemed to have better attitudes toward

change in the organization.

The present study has several practical implications for school administrators particularly in countries facing frequent changes in their educational systems as in the case of Turkey. Psychologically empowered teachers can facilitate implementation of change programs, as they are more likely to welcome changes taking place in their environment. Therefore, it is wiser for school administrators to pave the way for more empowerment for teachers, if they want to finalize their change programs in their organizations successfully. For instance, by increasing teacher participation to administrative decisions, by providing opportunities for professional development within school, or by increasing decision making latitude and autonomy of teachers, school administrative can generate psychologically more empowered teachers who are less resistant and more supportive to continuous changes taking place in educational systems. It is then suggested that administrators in schools faced with frequent change implementations should take into account the findings of the present study and attempt to address the issue of teachers' psychological empowerment by actively reinforcing teachers' competence in non-routine role-related situations, energizing teachers toward an exciting vision, and lastly increasing their participation into decision-making. By doing so, schools can become healthier while they try to adapt and cope with the continuous changes taking place in their environment. However, the findings of the present study must be interpreted in the light of its inherent limitations. First of all, as all the measures are obtained from the same participants, the results may have been contaminated by common method variance. Yet, the existence of multiple factors as a result of factor analyses weakens the probability that the results are significantly affected from common method variance. Furthermore, because the present study adopted a cross-sectional, non-experimental research design, the study cannot provide affirmative causal explanations. Future studies can use additional measures to cross-validate the findings of the relationships between the studied variables or adopt a longitudinal or an experimental research design to help the better understanding of the issue at hand. Lastly, the study can be replicated with other samples in order to generalize the results.

References

Bassett, B.F. (2011). *Schools of the future: The big shifts.* Retrieved from http://www.connor-associates.com/sites/default/files/resources/Schools%20of%20the%20Future%20-%20The%20Big%20Shifts%209%201%2012.pdf

Bitmis, M. G. & Ergeneli, A. (2011). Contingency approach to strategic management: A test of the mediating effect of leader member exchange on the relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction in 21st century workplace. *Journal of Global Strategic Management, 10,* 90-100.

Blau, J.R. & Alba, R. D. (1982). Empowering nets of participation. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 27*, 363-379.

Bovey,W. & Hede, A. (2001). Resistance to organizational change: the role of cognitive and affective processes. *Leadership & Organizational Development Journal, 22*(1), 372-382.

Coch, L. & French, J. (1948). Overcoming resistance to change. *Human Relations, 1*(4), 512-532.

Conger, J. A. & Kanungo, R. N. (1988). The empowerment process: Integrating theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review, 13,* 471-482.

Daft, R. L. (2010). *Understanding the theory and design of organizations* (10th ed.). Mason, Ohio: Thomson South-Western.

Drucker, P. F. (1988). The coming of the new organization. *Harward Business Review,66* (1), 45-53.

Dunham, R. B., Grube, J. A., Gardner, D. G., Cummings, L. L., & Pierce, J. L. (1989). *The development of an attitude toward change instrument.* Paper presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.

Eby, L., Adams, D., Russell, J. & Gaby, S. (2000). Perceptions of organizational readiness for change: factors related to employee's reactions to the implementation of team-based selling. *Human Relations, 53*(3), 419-428.

Faghihi, A. & Allameh, S. M. (2012). Investigating the influence of employee attitude toward change and leadership style on change readiness by SEM (Case Study: Isfahan Municipality). *International Journal of Academic Reseach in Business and Social Sciences, 2*(11), 215-227.

A Monthly Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Refereed Open Access International e-Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories
Indexed & Listed at: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory ©, U.S.A., Open J-Gage, India as well as in Cabell's Directories of Publishing Opportunities, U.S.A.
International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences
http://www.ijmra.us

60

Genc, M. O. (2010). *The influence of organizational culture, leader-member exchange (LMX) and employees' attitudes toward change on information systems implementations in Turkey* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Yeditepe University, Istanbul.

Gilmore, T.N. & Barnett, C. (1992). Designing the social architecture of participation in large groups to effect organizational change. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 28*(4), 534-548.

Harari, O. (1994). Stop Empowering Your People. *Small Business Reports*, *19*(3), 53-55.

Huang, T. (1993). *The relationships between elementary school principals' psychological types and openness to selected changes in organizational culture* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

Klecker, B.M. & Loadman, W.E. (1999). Measuring Principals' Openness to Change on Three Dimensions: Affective, Cognitive and Behavioral. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 26*(4). Retrieved from http://www.freepatentsonline.com/article/Journal-Instructional-Psychology/62980770.html

Lamm, E & Gordon, J. R. (2010). *Empowerment, predisposition to resist change, and support for organizational change, 17*(4), 426-437.

Mainiero, L.A. (1986). Coping with powerlessness: The relationship of gender and job dependency to empowerment-strategy usage. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 31*(4), 633-653.

Martin, M. (1998).Trust leadership.*Journal of Leadership Studies, 5*(1), 41-48.

Menon, S. T. (1999). Psychological empowerment: definition, measurement, and validation. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 31*(3), 161-164.

National Institute of Education [NEI] (2012). A teacher education model for the 21st century. *Report of the NIE on a teacher education model for the 21st century*. Retrieved from http://www.nie.edu.sg/about-nie/teacher-education-21

Spreitzer, G.M., Kizilos, M.A., & Nason, S. W. (1997). A dimensional analysis of the relationship between psychological empowerment and effectiveness, satisfaction, and strain. *Journal of Management, 23,* 679-704.

Thomas, K.W. & Velthouse, B.A. (1990). Cognitive elements of empowerment: An interpretive model of intrinsic task motivation. *Academy of Management Review, 15*(4), 666-681.

Vakola, M. & Nikolaou, I. (2005). Attitudes towards organizational change: What is the role of employees' stress and commitment? *Employee Relations, 27*(2), 160-174.