JOB SKILL: THE ESSENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY

(Recibido el 04-07-2017. Aprobado el 05-09-2017)

Mahdi Abolhassani
Management Department, Rafsanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rafsanjan, Iran.

Malikeh Beheshtifar*
Associate Professor, Management Department, Rafsanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rafsanjan, Iran.

Abstract. A major factor associated with the occupation of every individual -whether successful or not- is believing in one’s abilities and strengths. It can be said that self-efficacy plays an important role in the successful execution of tasks, along with the basic skills for doing so. Effective performance requires both skills and the belief in one’s own ability in performing those skills. Managing the ever changing, uncertain, unpredictable and stressful situations in our lives requires multiple skills. According to Bandura, self-efficacy is a constructive power through which the cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral skills of an individual are organized efficiently to achieve various goals. Hence self-efficacy is a critical factor in one’s success or failure throughout life.

Belief in self-efficacy can enhance a person's job skills and trigger his progress towards occupational success. In this research, attempt was made to describe the concept of self-efficacy and job skills and the interplay between them.

Keywords: Job skills, Self-efficacy

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of self-efficacy originates from the social cognition theory of the well-known psychologist, Bandura (1997), which refers to an individual’s beliefs in or judgments of his ability to fulfill tasks, assignments and responsibilities. The theory of social cognition is based on a triple reciprocal causation model of behavior, personal factors and the environment. This pattern emphasizes on the interrelationship between behavior, environmental influences and personal factors (such as cognitive factors). Based on this theory, people impact their own motivation and behavior in a triple causation system (Bayanati, 2011). Bandura believes that life advancement is owed to persevering people rather than disappointed people. While belief in oneself does not necessarily guarantee success, the lack of self-confidence certainly paves the way for failure. Meeting one’s own performance criteria and maintaining them enhances one’s sense of self-efficacy and failure to meet these criteria lowers self-efficacy.

People who set very high and unrealistic standards of performance; i.e. those who ground their behavioral expectations on the basis of highly successful and effective behavior of their role models and consistently endeavor to meet those criteria in spite of successive failures, may severely punish themselves when they fail to meet those standards. This can simply lead to depression, disappointment and feelings of inferiority. People with weak self-efficacy, feel helpless and are incapable of influencing the events and conditions they encounter; hence they believe that their efforts are futile. Not surprisingly, they are distressed and extremely worried, and when faced with an obstacle or a problem, they will quickly surrender if their initial efforts fail.

People who are strong in terms of self-efficacy, believe that they can effectively manage their life events. They persist in their endeavors, are persevering in their tasks and their performance is at a high level (Tork Ladani, 2010: 5).

With respect to managers’ performance too, Stuart identified the most important reason for unemployment in the current century to be the lack of job skills among individuals. Obviously, transformation of organizations and jobs calls for new skills. The skills one needs to work on depends on his interests, abilities and talent as well as his career goals and resources.

Nevertheless, given the uncertain economic situation of the contemporary world, it is vital to acquire the skills that will be useful in one’s career prospects and future. In fact, individuals should be aware of their unique skills, talents, abilities, facilities and features, because self-awareness is a path which leads a person towards a satisfactory job.

Possessing job skills can both pose a great opportunity and a threat for the effectiveness of the organization. Via proper and systematic management of job skills, employees are encouraged and their performance level increases, whereas if employees do not possess the necessary job skills, they will be disappointed. This in turn has negative effects, lowers personal performance, reduces organizational commitment, increases health complaints and depression and finally reduces individual transmission capacity (Mehrizi, 2015). Durenso (2010) also found in his research that high self-efficacy could be achieved through high job skills. This study attempts to investigate the concept of self-efficacy and job skills.

1.1 The Origin of Self-Efficacy

The motivational effect of self-efficacy can be significant. Once the perception of self-efficiency is high, individuals engage in activities that accelerate their skills and capabilities development. People who feel highly self-efficient believe they can effectively deal with events and situations, because they expect to succeed in overcoming obstacles, they persist in tasks and often depict high levels of performance. They are more confident in their abilities than those who have a low level of performance and manifest meager self-belief. They consider the problems more as a challenge rather than a threat, and actively seek for new opportunities. High levels of self-efficacy reduces fear of failure, generates high expectations and improves problem solving and analytic thinking skills. Highly self-efficient individuals create their own future, rather than simply predicting their future (Bandura, 1997).

Nevertheless, when self-efficacy is low, people will refrain from engaging in new activities that may result in learning new skills. People who have low self-efficacy are overwhelmed with feelings of helplessness and inability to control life events. They believe that any attempt they make is futile. When they encounter obstacles, they will quickly become disappointed when their initial attempt to solve the problem is futile. Those who feel to have
a very poor self-efficacy do not even try to cope, because they are convinced that attempt at any level is doomed to fail (Liaw, 2009). Bandura (1997) rejected the one-dimensional effects of the environment on individual behavior, which was one of the most important hypotheses among behavioral psychologists. He believes that humans are equipped with a kind of self-control and self-regulating power through which they control their thoughts, feelings and behaviors and play a decisive role in their own destiny. Thus human behavior is not only controlled by the environment, but cognitive processes play a major role in human behavior. Human’s performance and learning is rooted in cognitive tendencies and influences the events of his life. Man is influenced by psychological factors and actively influences his motivations and behavior. According to Bandura, individuals are driven neither by internal forces nor by their environmental stimuli, but by psychological functions which determine their performance, behavior, environment and their motivations (Abdollahi and Naveh Ebrahim, 2016: 98). Bandura believes that the expectation of efficiency exerts an influence in two areas: 1) the amount of effort in performing a task and 2) the activities that individuals choose to perform (Liaw, 2009).

Bandura (1997) argues that self-efficacy is a constructive power through which the cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral skills of humans are efficiently organized towards achieving their goals. As he explains, possessing the knowledge, skills and accomplishments of previous generations are not good predictors of the future performance of individuals. In fact, it is humans’ belief in their ability to fulfill duties that affects the manner of their performance. There is a clear distinction between possessing different skills and the ability to combine them in appropriate ways to perform tasks in different situations. Individuals are fully aware of what tasks they must perform and what skills they need. Yet they are often unsuccessful in the proper implementation of the skills (Bandura, 1997: 75). Self-awareness is activated through the processing of cognitive, motivational and emotional skills that are responsible for transforming knowledge and abilities to a skillful behavior.

In short, self-efficiency does not refer to possessing skills, but to the belief in the ability to perform tasks in different job positions. The conception of efficiency is an important factor in the constructive system of human competence. What determines the performance of individuals with similar skills but in different situations in a weak, moderate or strong level is changing their conceptions of self-efficacy.

Skills can be easily influenced by self-doubts. Thus, even those who are very talented tend to make limited use of their abilities in situations where they have weak belief in themselves. For this reason, self-efficacy triggers individuals to manage extraordinary tasks using skills to deal with obstacles. Therefore, perceived self-efficacy is an important factor for the successful fulfillment of tasks and also the basic skills necessary for doing so (Abdollahi and Naveh Ebrahim, 2016: 99).

1.2 The Concept of Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura, self-efficacy is a concept by which the experiences, abilities and ideas of individuals are integrated into one direction. Self-efficacy and other anticipatory attitudes all embrace beliefs in understanding individual’s abilities. However, self-efficacy diverges from this category because it is the perception of an individual’s capabilities in order to achieve other predetermined performances and outcomes. Therefore, self-efficacy is different from the anticipatory beliefs (Pajares, 2012). Bandura defines self-efficacy as the beliefs of individuals in their own ability to perform tasks successfully (Bandura, 2010).

Self-efficacy means the judgments of individuals of one’s own abilities, which in turn impacts their effort and perseverance, proportionate to their abilities (Afrooz and Motamedi, 2015: 91). Self-efficacy varies according to the ideas and actions of humans (Bandura, 1997). It is generally considered to be domain-specific; i.e. a person can have a fairly strong self-confidence in a range of domains or specific functional situations. Nevertheless, several scholars have conceived a general concept of self-efficacy which is based on the general belief of individuals in the ability to transcend a wide range of new needs or situations. Public self-efficacy is grounded in clarifying the merits and abilities of an individual, to effectively deal with numerous stressful situations (Lakzayi, 2014). Self-efficacy beliefs are the result of the process of comparing, compiling and evaluating information about an individual’s abilities that influence selection and the amount of effort to fulfill tasks (bagheri Jolgehzadeh, 2013).

In other words, self-efficacy is one's belief in the ability or inability in performing a task (Lakzayi, 2014). Poler et al. argue that self-efficacy or the perception of self-efficacy involves a person's
pleasant feelings in fulfilling assignments, which is intertwined comprehensively with the motivation and success in the fulfillment of tasks (Afrooz and Mo’ tamedi, 2015: 91).

1.3 Job Skills

What can be inferred from these studies is that it is not just remuneration which connects individuals, jobs and organizations with one another, but psychological, behavioral, cultural, social, and sometimes even physical and physiological factors which influence the improvement or disruption of the link. The complexity of these behavioral and personality traits complicates these relationships. With respect to managers’ performance too, Stuart identified the most important reason for unemployment in the current century to be the lack of job skills among individuals. Obviously, transformation of organizations and jobs calls for new skills. The skills one needs to work on depends on his interests, abilities and talent as well as his career goals and resources. Nevertheless, given the uncertain economic situation of the contemporary world, it is vital to acquire the skills that will be useful in one’s career prospects and future. In fact, individuals should be aware of their unique skills, talents, abilities, facilities and features, because self-awareness is a path which leads a person towards a satisfactory job. Possessing job skills can both be a great opportunity and a threat for the effectiveness of the organization. Via proper and systematic management of job skills, employees are encouraged and their performance level increases, whereas if employees do not possess the necessary job skills, they will be disappointed. This in turn has negative effects, lowers personal performance, reduces organizational commitment, increases health complaints and depression and finally reduces individual transmission capacity (Mehrizi, 2015).

1.4 Required Job skills

According to the US Department of Labor, 10 job skills are always included in the Employers’ list (Rangier and Siadat, 2009: 44):
1. Technical and vocational skills: Today, technology has expanded in all fields of science. The installation, testing and repair of most electrical-mechanical equipment in engineering, communications, automotive, transportation and aerospace areas calls for technical and vocational skills.
2- Problem solving skill: Most of the tasks and duties we face in our lives are difficult and complex. Individuals who identify problems correctly, think of various solutions and make appropriate decisions. In fact, they possess the expertise in business management, public relations management, medical science, and engineering fields of occupation.
3. Public relations skills: Companies face inevitable problems that are rooted in the interactions of individuals with each other. Success of a company is mostly influenced by the extent of the cooperation of the staff as a team member. This is human resource management, employee management and the managing director’s responsibility to fully understand the needs of their employees and attempt to find the best ways to meet their needs in the job.
4. Computer programming skills and computer knowledge: Proper computer programming to meet the specific needs of a particular company can increase the opportunities for employment and professional development.
5. Educational skills: Nowadays, state of the art information is constantly being produced and recorded. Hence there is a high demand for employing people who have the skills to gather this information and to apply them in the fields of education, social services, management consulting and business.
6. Information management skills: In the current century, information is considered to be the core of economic systems. People who have knowledge and information management skills are deemed suitable for most businesses. System analysts, information technologists, database administrators and communication and telecommunication engineers are among those who possess information management skills.
7. Financial management skills: Economic planning is essential to ensure a comfortable life after retirement. Capital brokers, financial programmers and accountants are always asked for to meet this demand.
8. Knowing foreign languages: knowing a language other than one’s mother tongue provides new communication and learning opportunities. Moreover, countries today have mutual need to materials and products and exchange in various fields. That is why the ability to speak a foreign language offers good job opportunities.
9. Business and commerce management skills: It is critical that the objectives of a company are directed and managed in a parallel manner. The core of these skills include the following capacities: the ability to manage individuals,
systems, resources and financial assets, customer knowledge and the method of changing these needs to business opportunities. Another division is offered by Rahimzadeh et al. (2013: 17):

1. Communication skills: The ability to create relationships and offer acceptable performance, idea, etc. to the boss or client can boost one’s job. Computer and digital systems can provide individuals with all the information they need. This is the operator who chooses these devices’ application method towards achieving a particular objective or specific policy making.

2. Time management and organization: The ability to organize and prioritize tasks can result in a team’s success. Although a particular computer application can perform a task in less than a millisecond, it is the operator who decides where to use that application.

3. Goal setting: No business work can blossom without setting objectives and prospects.

4. Teamwork: No matter how clever and educated, no one can afford to do all the work alone. According to the famous saying: no man can serve two masters. Teamwork can enhance one’s abilities and help him achieve his goals (Bagheri Jolgehzadeh, 2013).

5. Public speaking and presentation skills: The ability to communicate and present ideas to the audience and friends can enhance one’s business and occupational level. Today, internet and web conferences can also provide audience with ideas. Nevertheless, the impact of direct and face-to-face interactions will be much higher (Sheikholeslam Kandelosi, 2017).

6. Creating relationship: Nothing more than appropriate business relations can advance business projects. Although communication is facilitated through social networks, it must be noted that such methods are merely appropriate for continuing an already existing relation, not for the creation of a decent and strong relation (Talebzadeh, 2015: 48).

7. Participating in conferences and professional groups: The best way to exchange ideas, learn new topics and expand job network is to participate in conferences and workshops that are relevant to one’s job. There are many specialized websites and forums that work in conjunction with different domains and users can communicate in such environments.

8. Passion and willpower: Motivation is the constant trigger for achieving goals. Motivation along with determination and willpower, perpetuates the striving for reaching goals. These are factors which can never be gained through technology.

9. Courtesy, decency and respect: mutual respect among colleagues is the most important factor in the workplace and should be observed as a golden rule in every company or startup.

10. Entrepreneurship and innovation skills: Even in the most technologically advanced realms, there are ways to innovate. New ideas are not created by machines, but by humans (Bagheri Jolgehzadeh, 2013).

11. Interest in learning: No one can deny the value of education and learning. Learning is achieved either through academic environments or via spending time in a workplace and experience.

12. Flexibility and compatibility: Rigidity will never lead to progress. Attending to the ideas of others can open up new horizons for people (Sheikholeslam Kandelosi, 2017).

2. CONCLUSION

Top human resources are assets for every organization and can play a major role in the success of the organization. Yet that is only achieved by the human resources who believe in themselves and intend to use their strength and energy. Lack of self-efficacy among employees in the organization is a challenge for organizations, a matter that should be focused on, so that employees can use their power. That is why organizations play a major role in this area.

On the other hand, profound changes such as globalization, increased various workforce and technological advances take place in the organization's milieu and these changes lead to new realities of job skills. Processes such as downsizing and internal rebuilding often leads to the termination of service and variety of job categories. Nonetheless, occupational success is defined as a positive set of psychological or work-related achievements, deriving from the experiences of job skills or the skills one gains throughout his life.

REFERENCES


Pajares, A. L, 2010, the influence of group decision making on indecisiveness-related decisional confidence, Judgment and Decision Making, Vol. 6, No. 1, P. 163.


Ranjbar, Gh, and Siadat, A, 2009: Investigating the Relationship between Personality Traits of Managers and their Job Skills from the Perspective of High School Students in Shiraz, Educational Sciences-Education Management, Isfahan University


Talebzadeh, A, 2015: A Look at Job Success Strategies, Job Skills is the Key to Success, Web article downloaded on April 21, 2016 at: http://motamem.org