

# Examining Challenges and Providing a Tool for Assessing the Delegation of Authority Competency in Project Managers

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**Abstract**— Project managers should get help from interior and outer resources of projects to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in their work. After a while Project managers must devolve the majority of project tasks to others. Delegation of authority is a process which the manager will entrust part of his authority but not ultimate responsibility and it is one of the most important competencies of a project manager. In connection with the delegation of authorities and duties, the project manager must take important account to the three questions of what dose delegate? When does delegate? And how does delegate? By delegation of authority at projects accurately, it causes numerous benefits for project managers and his subordinates too. In this paper, which is a descriptive survey research is considered, reviewing the literature issue, we deal with major challenges and obstacles of delegation in Iran and in the following we analysis the data collected from certified individuals and then use Cronbach's Alpha test for designing a tool for assessing the delegation of authority competency level in project managers.

**Keywords**— Delegation of authority, Successor training, people management in projects, Assessment tool, Project managers competency

## I. INTRODUCTION

The existence of the decent project manager is crucial for the success of a project [1]. Researches show that project manager has direct impact on 34 to 47 percent of the success [2]. An organization can maximize the continued success in projects by hiring, developing, and maintaining a superior project managers [3]. The importance of this issue is so much that the shell company as an example is one of the pioneers in training project managers based on competency and for this purpose has devoted 450 million dollars budget for reeducation and upgrading its competency [1]. Extensive studies in this area has identified the essential skills and competencies of project managers in different industries. For example, Fryer presented a list of social skills, decision-making skills, issue-solving skills, the ability to recognize the opportunities and abilities to manage change as important personality characteristics for successful project manager [4].

In accordance with past studies, project managers

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competencies, including the delegation of authority that is the main subject of this paper, has a very important role in the success of the project. At the same time, despite of extensive researches on the identification of essential project managers competencies, in less research discussion about presenting assessing evaluation tools and developing of their competencies is found. Hence the main goal of this research is to provide a tool for assessing and evaluating existing approaches and challenges for the development of more delegation of authority competency for project managers.

## II. PROJECT MANAGERS COMPETENCIES

The ability and capability to perform a role by an individual in a work means competency. It includes knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviors that are associated with better job performance [5]. One of the most important existing theories in the field of competency related to 1992 that expresses an organization has three categories of core competency, technical or functional competency and management competency. The core competencies are those that all people need to have. Technical or functional competencies are those that are specific for a unit or department and managerial competencies coordinate some specific people such as senior managers or project managers [6]. In this classification focus on our research is on managerial competencies.

It can be said that at the mid-eighties identifying and developing the competencies of managers considered. Researches show nearly 75 percent of organizations have acquaintance with the concepts of competency and use them [7]. Regarding the recognition of the major factors and criteria of competent project manager, Dogbegah pointed to the large number of studies that focuses on the project managers competencies [8]. Crawford presented a triple category with the names input competency, personal competency and output competency can be offered. According to this classification, the input competencies refer to the knowledge and skills that a person brings to the work with itself. The personal competencies means the personal characteristics of an individual for showing an ability to do the job and output related to the functional competencies that a person shows in works [1].

A lot of researches have done in which the ability of project managers are identified and classified. For example Kerzner provided features needed for a successful project manager in 13 items including initiative, leadership abilities, ambition, creativity, flexibility and adaptability, personal commitment,

vision, creating trust, ability to persuade, effectiveness, ability to make decisions, ability to identify problems and ability to organize work to subordinates [9]. Turner & Muller in their article, using the development leadership questionnaire explained the correlation between success and project management and leadership is the key factor for the success and represent 10 main criteria for success of projects that are related to project managers [10]. Reviewing past researches classified the characteristics of a qualified project manager into two areas of knowledge and skills that include 17 area of knowledge and 22 skills. In this article, delegation of authority is the only skill that has been mentioned in each of the five studies reviewed [11]. In another study of Dziekonski, competencies of the project managers has been divided into behavioral, management skills and knowledge [12].

In assessment centers, various tools is used that some of these include case studying, descriptive interview, teamwork, role play, management games, job activities questionnaires, personality test. Each tool consists of two parts, structure and content. The purpose of the structure are features that refer to training, simulation and evaluation way. Content also includes the specific design of the content of the tools. Each tool is more suitable structure for assessing some trend; but the content of the tool plays a more decisive role. Job activity questionnaire is very common, Because of being easy understanding and comfortable in using [13].

#### *A. Competency Standards for Project Managers*

In the field of managers competencies, there are several standard models that are very similar about (more than 80%) [14]. Project Manager Competency Development framework (PMCD Framework) is provided by the American project management association. This standard refers to three competency kinds of knowledge, performance and personal competency in the project management knowledge. The personal competency in project manager is the most important characteristic and behavioral features. Performance competency in project managers means what managers capable to do and finish their project by applying the management knowledge. Personal competency for project management is the Main personality characteristics and behavioral practices. The project management institute defines knowledge competencies in accordance with the 10 knowledge scopes of PMBOK. Performance competencies in accordance with the use of this project knowledge scopes and ultimately personal competency in the scope of six ability [5]. It should be noted that this framework can be used in the most projects (regardless of their type) to evaluate and improve the project manager's performance [12]. In the Sixth edition of PMBOK also is added a part called the role of project manager and it mentioned the competency of managers briefly [15].

The Individuals Competence Baseline provided by the international project management association (IPMA) offered the three competence categories. The perspective competences is 5 element consists of the techniques, tools and methods that project managers can interact with their environment including individuals, organizations and society to be successful in the

project. The people competences with 10 elements include individual and interpersonal skills in project managers and practice competences with 14 element include techniques, tools and the specific methods used for success in projects [16]. The national standard of project management competence of England (ECITB) includes the competencies of the knowledge, performance and behavioral. The differences of this standard with the PMCD framework are in a number of areas of competence and management levels. This standard contains two management levels. The national standard project management competencies of Australia (NCSPM) is one of the first and the most Common competency Standards of Project Management in the World. This standard also is very similar to the PMCD framework but has 4 levels of management including project manager assistant, project manager, program manager and etc. The South Africa Qualification Authority (SAQA) is a management standard by one level and the main difference is that the ability of speech and computer skills, are also considered in competency components. The standard of education and assessment based on the competency of the project human resources is organized by the Research Center and project management development of Iran in petrochemical industry. This standard has five levels of management and is dedicated to very big projects of Iran's oil Ministry projects and include the 13 areas of competency [17]. The Elena's people management guideline is a framework for the assessment and development of managers and leaders that defined on 5 levels including principles, competencies, habits, duties and tools. 8 core competencies of this framework are leadership, delegation of authority, motivation, negotiation, teamwork building, conflict resolution, behavior shaping and discipline. This framework is part of Elena's guidelines kit that is a native Iranian approach for project management in all levels of organization (project, program and portfolio) [18]-[23].

### III. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY, BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

In the definition of Robins the delegation of authority means transferring a part of the executive director authorities and duties in a special organization, regardless of its origin, to subordinates and departmental heads, in order to expedite the works and achieve the Organization's objectives [24]. In another definition, delegation of authority means assigning works, project or specific action that a person is responsible for, but another person dose that, so that the person committed to carry out the assigned work, but eventually the person who confer power is responsible [25]. O'Donnell and Koontz believe that delegation of authority is a key factor in the performance of the Organization's management that is necessary for doing tasks easily in an organization [26]. In a research three main elements in the delegation of authority include the authority for doing a task, responsibility for it and accountability. Delegation of authority divide into the three main steps .The first step is to assignment the exact action that must be done by other department or individual. The second step is granting of authority to the appropriate individual or department and the third step is creating responsibility and accountability for them [27]. A research has identified, ranked and compared management skills in traditional and green construction

projects. In this research project, delegation in traditional projects has the first place among 10 management skills and has the second place in green projects [11]. Harvard Business Review has mentioned benefits and barriers for delegation, which are summarized in the table below. The magazine has also expressed a five-step method for delegation.

TABLE I: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF PROJECT MANAGERS DELEGATION

The benefits of delegation to the project team	The challenges of project managers involved in delegation
Reducing the stress and workload of managers	The fear of managers in losing direct control on people and works
Increasing the trust between the manager and employee	The fear of managers in losing organizational responsibilities and portions
Assessing the abilities of the team and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of individuals	Managers' believes that tasks are accomplished better and faster by themselves
A right opportunity to develop the skills of subordinates	Personality crisis for managers because they must leave many years of experience and expertise
Increasing motivation of subordinates in order to have advancement and promotion	The lack of trust and belief of the directors towards their employees
Increasing the popularity and position of the manager between subordinates	Not having sufficient knowledge and skills in managers in field of delegation

The fear of the change arising from delegation is also one of the important factors in managers refusing to delegate that is origination of some of the mentioned factors. In a research by the World Bank found that the most important reason for refusing in delegating from the administrator to their subordinates is fear of subordinates succession and loss of position [28]. In Iran and other developing countries, because the project management knowledge is not in its actual position, delegation is not taking place properly in project-oriented organizations. The important factors that prevent effective delegation by project managers are as follows: discretion of projects managers in short time, changing members of the project team while doing the project, lack of stability of job positions, lack of adaptability in project manager's authority with their responsibility, interferences of employers and project owners in key decisions of the project [29].

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

At first, with considering literature review and comments of 10 persons certified in project management (master's and higher education and more than 5 years related work experience), main steps and stages of delegation by project managers identified and separated. In order to provide a competency assessment tool for project managers delegation, a job activity questionnaire has been used. This questionnaire included rated 40 questions of 12 delegation steps. A Likert scale in five-grade was used in this questionnaire. The scale quantified in order to clarify competency level (1: never, 2: rarely, 3: sometimes, 4: often and 5: always).

#### A. Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

The validity indicates what extent a measuring instrument takes the size of an item we consider [30]. For validity and accuracy of questions, the questionnaires distributed among 10 project management experts with master and higher degrees and the questionnaire distributed in statistical research sample (60 project managers with at least 5 years of work experience) after assuring obtained results.

The reliability of a tool is the degree of consistency in measurement of anything it measures. In other words, how much are the same results achieved in same conditions [30]. The reliability of the questionnaire calculated using Cronbach's Alpha in the statistical software SPSS. Cronbach's Alpha number for delegation of authority assessment of project managers was 0.914, which show high reliability of the questionnaire.

#### V. PROVIDING EFFECTIVE STEPS OF DELEGATION

For delegation by the project managers, 5 stage in level 1 and 12 steps at level two have been extracted and shown in the table below. These steps must be followed in order, except the steps of fourth stage that can be done at the same time. It's necessary to say that delegation could mean the delegation of a specific task, a work package or a project.

#### VI. THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ASSESSING THE DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY COMPETENCY OF PROJECT MANAGERS

In Table 3 shown at the end of the paper we have put the designed questionnaire. It should be noted that the directors were asked to answer the questionnaire carefully and choose the option that it is closer to their experience. Given that the questionnaire designed without asking the managers' name, it was asked to respond to questions honesty.

##### A. Questionnaire evaluation index

To evaluate the administrators we used a numerical index that obtained from total points of all questions. The index includes three bounded sets in the name of "Needing to improve the competency", "acceptable competency" and "very competent".

40 to 100 points: not only the knowledge and skills of delegation is not effective but not enough. Project managers must learn to prioritize more important tasks, choose the most skilled representatives and trust them.

101 to 140 points: some of the delegated work is taking place well, but there are also some gaps. In this case, project managers should find their weaknesses and try to improve them.

141 up to 200 points: The project manager delegates very well; but in any case the progress can be taken place.

**TABLE II: STAGES AND STEPS OF PROJECT MANAGERS DELEGATION**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Description</b>
1 analyzing tasks to delegation	1	Specifying the reasons for delegation		-
		2	Specifying what must and must not be delegated	-
	3	Selecting the appropriate workload for delegation	Including 3 levels of work, work packages and project	
		4	Determining necessary skills for the selected work	It includes 3 parts of physical, mental and tool skills.
2 Identifying the right person for delegation	5	Identifying skills of the subordinates		-
		6	Comparing and matching the skills of individuals with the necessary skills of that work	using people - skills matrix
3 Assigning the work	7	Selecting the most appropriate person		-
		8	Justifying the selected person	Establishing a meeting
4 Monitoring and support	9	Monitoring and following up the trusted work		-
		10	Supporting the representative	-
5 The final evaluation	11	Evaluation of the work and representative		-
		12	Registering and documenting of experiences	-

sufficient knowledge about their strong and weak points and not to develop these competencies.

The project manager should remember that no matter how much the success rate is it, they can continue to develop skills. It is very clearly that if the steps listed for delegation happen fully and with the help and skills of project managers, most obstacles which they have in their minds about delegation, will be lost. In Iran, the challenges of effective entrusting by project managers is more than developed countries and it is suggested that centers of project manager's assessment and development, receive more attention and support so that they can exert the available knowledge to the project managers.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of this research is to provide effective and practical delegation steps and design a simple and trusted tool for delegation competence assessment of the project managers. The type of the research is descriptive-measure and from the goal aspect, is categorized in applied researches. The source of data collection in this research project was managers of governmental organizations and private companies. Based on the findings of the investigation, it can be concluded that the participants neglect delegation of authority as an important competency. Incorrect assumption of administrators about their capacities, abilities and competencies make them not to have

TABLE III: THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ASSESSING THE DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY COMPETENCY OF PROJECT MANAGERS

Question Number	Question	Answer				
		Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
1	I do not delegate as much as possible.					
2	I'm sure that my subordinates will work in an effective way, because I myself appointed them.					
3	My time is free enough for planning, training and developing myself.					
4	I am loyal to my staff and I expect the same loyalty to me.					
5	I delegate big projects too and I'm not scared of giving much authority to my staff.					
6	If a work has a direct connection with my priorities and important goals, I won't delegate it and try to do it myself.					
7	I also delegate works which are vital and important for the success of the project.					
8	Without constantly interfering in the representative work, I control his/her progress.					
9	Wherever necessary, I convey new and necessary information to my employees.					
10	I try to do works that only I can do them and delegate the other ones to employees.					
11	I have enough time to manage the project.					
12	I'm careful about improving my knowledge and competency in delegation.					
13	I don't have different behaviors toward my different representatives.					
14	I'm sure that the representatives know their responsibilities clearly.					
15	I'm sure that there is no responsibility overlap in the work of the representatives.					
16	If necessary, I can appoint or replace the representatives immediately.					
17	I evaluate the employees with consideration both of their positive and negative features.					
18	I choose the best person for delegating without considering personal relations, age and position of staff.					
19	I'm sure that the representatives have necessary support from me.					
20	If it is necessary to prepare a complete and detailed report for my boss, I will consider my representative comments.					
21	I encourage my representative in deal with problems to be creative instead of relying on my help.					
22	I blame and reprimand the person who has failed in the early stages of her job.					
23	I use an organized and pre-determined system for obtaining reports from representatives.					
24	I have good behavior toward representatives in any situations and provide positive feedback.					
25	I'm sure that the delegation process I use, have been tested and confirmed.					
26	I have a clear method and program to review work progress of any representative.					
27	When justifying the representative, I easily express the consequences of not working properly to him.					
28	I prefer to delegate the work to a person whom I have a better feeling to, instead of exact reviewing.					
29	I register delegated tasks and the name of people who are responsible for doing them and I will always control them.					
30	I am always available for meeting staff and handling the problems that my intervention is required.					
31	I see delegation as a suitable opportunity to develop the skills of employees.					

32	I extract and record main goals of delegated work to recognize important achievements.				
33	I prefer to explain the problem completely and provide solution instead of giving a hint when problems arises in the delegated work and the representative comes to me.				
34	I provide appropriate opportunities to encourage and appreciate the successful representatives.				
35	I may delegate confidential or sensitive management works that must not be delegated for my convenience.				
36	If I commit a mistake, I will take the responsibility without any excuse and pretext and I won't relate it to my representative.				
37	I basically consider my role in success more than my representative's when finishing the work and getting the desired results.				
38	I will ask the representative an acceptable excuse about his/her wrong work and I will react in a positive and effectual way.				
39	I analyze the delegated activities to learn things from successes and failures, and I will teach these experiences to others too.				
40	In the future, I will review and consider past valuable experiences and I will use them.				
<b>Total points</b>					

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